

VIOLENCE AND FREEDOM: THE POLITICS OF KURDISH CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
IN URBAN SPACE

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by

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*“Devlet dersinde öldürölmüş” Kürt çocuklarına...*

## ABSTRACT

### FREEDOM AND VIOLENCE: THE POLITICS OF KURDISH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN URBAN SPACE

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This thesis analyzes the politics of Kurdish children and youth in Gündoğan neighborhood, a slum area in Adana, populated predominantly by the forcibly displaced Kurds. Through their everyday practices and subjective narratives, I explore the ways youth and children construct their subjectivities in urban space. Post-memory, the spatial order of the neighborhood and violence emerge as overall themes in the narratives and ethnographic research. I argue that memory of violence transmitted by the older family members has imminent role in the formation of political subjectivities of youth and children. Children and youth, most of whom were born in city space have a sense of belonging to the neighborhood. The appropriation of urban space is inevitably linked to the struggle and violence. The politics of youth and children opens up a space to rethink the concepts of struggle, freedom, and the political in Kurdish movement/politics as well as contemporary Turkey.

Keywords: Kurdish Movement, Childhood, Youth, Urban Space, Violence,  
Landscape, Post-memory, Turkey

## ÖZET

### ŞİDDET VE ÖZGÜRLÜK: KENTLERDEKİ KÜRT ÇOCUKLARININ VE GENÇLERİNİN SİYASETİ

Haydar Darıcı

Kültürel Çalışmalar MA, 2009

Tez Danışmanı: Leyla Neyzi

Bu tez Adana'nın çoğunlukla zorunlu göç mağdurlarının yaşadığı Gündoğan mahallesindeki Kürt çocuklarının ve gençlerinin siyasetini analiz etmektedir. Gündelik pratikler ve öznel anlatılar üzerinden gençlerin ve çocukların kent mekânında öznelliklerini nasıl kurduklarını analiz ediyorum. Saha araştırması ve anlatılarda post-bellek, mahallenin mekânsal düzeni ve şiddet temel temalar olarak beliriyorlar. Bu tezde, ailelerin yetişkin üyeleri tarafından aktarılan şiddet hafızasının çocukların ve gençlerin politik öznelliklerinin kuruluşunda çok önemli bir rolü olduğunu iddia ediyorum. Çoğu şehirde doğan bu çocuklar ve gençler yaşadıkları bu mahalleye bir aidiyet hissediyorlar ancak bu aidiyet yürütülen mücadele ve şiddetle kuruluyor. Çocukların ve gençlerin bu siyaseti hem Kürt hareketi/siyaseti hem de daha genel olarak Türkiye için mücadelenin, özgürlüğün ve siyasi olanın yeniden düşünülmesi için bir alan yaratıyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kürt Hareketi, Çocukluk, Gençlik, Kent, Mekân, Şiddet, Postbellek, Türkiye

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is about the politics of Kurdish children and youth in Gündoğan<sup>2</sup> neighborhood, a slum area in Adana, populated predominantly by the forcibly displaced Kurds. Scrutinizing everyday experiences and subjective narratives, I intend to explore the ways youth and children construct their subjectivities in urban space. Thinking about the experiences of children and youth living in a metropolis can open up a space to rethink the Kurdish issue and the metamorphosis of the Kurdish movement, which, after forced migration, transformed into an urban-based opposition, gaining new dimensions and contradictions. Youth and children constitute the most mobilized and radicalized segment(s) of the movement. In fact, from its debut to the present, youth has been at the forefront of the movement. Besides the youth, particularly since the 2000s, children have appeared as political actors within the movement and as threats against the state and the order.

In this thesis, I approach childhood as a historically and politically constructed category that changes depending on time and space rather than as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon. I argue that in the context of internal displacement

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis is a collective work. My advisor Leyla Neyzi and my thesis committee, Nazan Üstündağ and Sibel Irzık, contributed to and shaped this thesis by their invaluable comments, critiques, and ideas throughout the research and writing process. I want to thank them for all they have done for me. I also want to thank Nükhet Sirman for her interest, comments, and ideas. Lastly, I want to thank my friends and children and youth of Gündoğan who shared their stories with me.

<sup>2</sup> To protect my interviewees, I used pseudonyms. This is also the case for the name of the neighborhood.



that restructured power relations within Kurdish families, Kurdish children became actors challenging conventional power relations. Children became the primary economic actors in the family by providing sustenance and gained power through their politicization within the Kurdish movement. I suggest that rather than being abused by politicized adults as often suggested in the media, Kurdish children craft a political agency that challenges/transforms the discourses, practices and agenda of the Kurdish movement itself.

Situated in the periphery of Adana, Gündoğan was formed in the 1980s when the Kurds who migrated for economic reasons started to build shanties. Mass migration to Gündoğan took place during the 1990s when the Turkish state used internal displacement and the burning of villages as a strategy to fight the PKK under its State of Emergency Regime. Displaced Kurds in Gündoğan who were mobilized within the Kurdish movement in the village initiated a mass upheaval and the neighborhood became an important base for the Kurdish movement in the 1990s. Yet, by the end of the 1990s, the PKK shifted its strategy: rather than establishing a separate nation state, the PKK aimed at becoming a democratizing force in Turkey. Accordingly, the militants began to retreat to the rural areas. As a result of the weakening of the PKK presence, the state increasingly intervened in the neighborhood. Drug trafficking and gangs became visible. Islamic reading houses opened. Accordingly, new ways of belonging emerged for the youth and children in the neighborhood. In this thesis, I argue that the politics youth and children conduct, the strategies they develop, and the decisions they make to deal with urban life, the ways they narrate their experiences, and the meanings they give the movement and their life, should lead us to reconsider the content of Kurdishness and the Kurdish issue particularly in the present context where the dominant feeling is that “the solution to the issue has never been so close”.

I conducted fieldwork in Gündoğan neighborhood for two months. Since I grew up in that neighborhood and my family still lives there, I did not have difficulty entering the field and finding informants. I conducted lifestory interviews with youth and children between the ages of eleven to twenty seven. In addition to narratives of the interviewees, I use my observations in the neighborhood in this thesis.

The majority of the youth and children that I interviewed are members of internally displaced families. Most of them did not personally experience displacement as they were born in Adana; yet they grew up with circulating stories of state violence in the village. In the first chapter, I argue that memory, whether experienced or inherited, plays a crucial role in the formation of political subjectivities of youth and children in Gündoğan. Stories concerning explicit and extreme forms of state violence are repeatedly narrated in every household and in the public spaces of the neighborhood. Reiteration of these stories constructs a collective repertoire that anyone can utilize and perform, which signifies the individualization of collective and prepared memory. This repertoire also forms the ground upon which the oppositional subjectivities of the children and youth express themselves and frames how present grievances are represented. Furthermore, this reiteration itself makes up the content of Kurdishness in the universe of urban space. Also, the memory of the intense presence of the PKK in the neighborhood with its own order and morality, and its weakening at the end of the 1990s appear as main themes in all narratives. The state is embodied in the image of the soldier and the police in the lives of Kurds. Since violence of the police and the soldier is experienced unexpectedly, arbitrarily and irrationally, the state appears as an immoral and mythical force. The PKK, on the other hand, is rendered as a real, accessible force and a desired authority through the narratives of the recent past.

In fact, the oscillations between collective and individual memory that I aim to show in the first chapter through the formation of repertoire and internalization of other's memories (post-memory) by youth and children operate also in the formation and (re)appropriation of urban space. Analyzing the spatial order of the neighborhood, in the second chapter, I argue that the spaces of Gündoğan slip between the private and the public as the public constantly becomes privatized and the private becomes publicized by the practices of youth and children. Actually, it is performativity that determines what is public and what is private. These performances are informed by the relationship between the state and the Kurdish community as the bodies of the Kurds are always accessible to the state's interventions. The body, the home, and -in some cases- the neighborhood that are supposed to be private spaces become spaces of the state. Furthermore, I argue that

youth and children are continuously “pushed out” to specific places. While girls are confined to the houses or in spaces that are perceived to be non-public, boys are confined to public spaces as they are unwanted in the houses. Yet, both male and female youth and children feel claustrophobic and employ strategies to make the places they are confined to “theirs.” Through these performances the meaning of the places they are “pushed out” to change and a feeling of freedom emerges. In fact, for the whole neighborhood, privatization the public by performance during demonstrations against the state is a shared and politically signified act. Accordingly, I argue that, children and youth have a sense of belonging to the neighborhood. Unlike the first generation of migrant youth and children who aimed at going back home, the present generation of youth and children recognize the irreversibility of migration and perceive Gündoğan as their home. Gündoğan becomes home through its history of resistance in the past and the current struggle of youth and children, which means that remaking urban space is inevitably linked to violence and struggle against the state. Similarly, in the Irish context, Alan Feldman argues that “violence becomes a crucial factor in transforming spatial structure” (Feldman, 1991: 26). This also signifies a turning point in the politics of the Kurdish movement in the sense that the Kurdish issue and the struggle of the Kurds has gone beyond the territory of “Kurdistan” and spread to the western metropolises. Furthermore, I argue that the word Kurdistan does not refer to the Kurdish region anymore, rather it became simultaneously an empty signifier filled and given content by performance, and a dream space always a little bit far away.

In the third chapter, I investigate the functions of violence in the formation of subjectivities and socialities within the neighborhood including its link to freedom. I argue that violence is a constitutive element of societal relations within the neighborhood as everything including bodies is given meaning by violence. In conceptualizing violence and freedom, I am inspired by Bataille: “Freedom is nothing if it is not the freedom to live at the edge of limits where all comprehension breaks down. To live at this edge, where all comprehension breaks down, is to live with sovereignty as an impossible experience that combines violence with freedom” (Noys, 2000: 10). According to Bataille, oppressed people become free when they become sovereign, thus sovereignty is the moment of freedom. He locates violence

and transgression at the center of the struggle for sovereignty. He adds: “Tendency of violence to be connected to opening, the relation of violence to violation, makes it essential to any thought of freedom” (Ibid, 66). In the case of Gündoğan, I argue that violence is the only way for youth and children to transgress the norms of the state and to challenge its sovereignty. Furthermore, as the bodies of Kurdish youth and children are accessible to the state interventions, children and youth implement violence to their own bodies to claim their rights on their own bodies by avoiding state interventions. In this sense, children and youth make themselves private through violence.

Yet, Bataille states that eternal freedom is also eternal defeat as violence that transgresses the norms is a kind of self-destructive practice. Therefore, I argue that although violent performances implemented by hashish-using children and youth and by those enrolled in the Islamic reading houses are individualized transgressions (and hence momentary freedoms followed by defeat, self-destruction and further confinement), the transgressive practices of the ones who are mobilized within the Kurdish movement attempt to form alternative sociabilities.

## CHAPTER 2

### INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND THE FORMATION OF GÜNDOĞAN NEIGHBORHOOD

As represented in Orhan Kemal's novels and Yılmaz Güney's films, Adana has long been a place where seasonal and permanent workers from Southeastern Turkey come to work in farming. The formation of Gündoğan --where I conducted my field research-- situated in the periphery of the city Adana, began in the 1980s. Nevertheless, up until the 1990s, the area was still covered with orange trees, and only a few houses existed. These houses were built by migrant Kurds who came to Adana seasonally in order to work in the farming and construction sectors. Mass settlement in Gündoğan occurred during the 1990s when the Turkish state systematically used internal displacement and the burning of villages as a strategy to fight against the PKK guerillas under its State of Emergency Regime. Most of the internally displaced came from Diyarbakır and Mardin.

Emerging in 1978, the PKK had a radical discourse claiming a national as well as a social transformation of the Kurdish community. The PKK conceptualized Kurdistan as a colony divided by four colonizer countries (Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran) and initiated an armed struggle for "Free Kurdistan" as a framing discourse against both the Turkish army and tribal landlords "collaborating" with the colonizer (Öcalan, 1978; Bruinessen, 2000; Romano, 2006). In the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the PKK movement gained mass support from the Kurdish population and declared *Serhildan*, the mass upheaval, against the Turkish state. Accordingly, the state launched a counter-insurgency strategy. In the 1980s and 1990s, thousands of villages were evacuated and/or burnt down and millions of Kurds were forcibly displaced in Southeastern Turkey. Evacuation of villages (the displacement of inhabitants) was the constitutive element of Turkey's counter-insurgency strategy

against the PKK. The aim of the state with this new resettlement project was destruction of rural settlements where the PKK came to be the hegemonic power and forced migration of the Kurds in order to destroy the environment which nourished the PKK (Jongerden, 2007: 282). These spatial practices of the Turkish state signify the debut of a “new social order based on an urban settlement structure” (Ibid). According to Jongerden, policies and practices of settlement and resettlement signifying “the territorial production of space” and “forming Turkish subject/citizens” implying “the cultural production of society” came to be the prominent theme in the grand narrative of the Turkish modernization project (Ibid, 281). The organization and reorganization of space concerns the production of social subjects. Therefore, the formation of social subjects vis-à-vis the organization of space is the “cornerstone of nationalism as a geographic project” (Ibid). From the beginning of the centralization process to the present, the Ottoman Empire/Turkish state has performed its geographic project as “spacing people” (Ibid) by the deportation of Armenians in 1915, exchanges of population with Greece in 1923, displacement of the people of Dersim in 1938, and mass forced migration of the Kurds in the 1980s and 1990s, among others.

The PKK, which emerged as an urban revolutionary student movement in Western Turkey and developed into an insurgent strategy in the rural areas of Kurdish region, shifted its strategy and organized a mass movement against counter-insurgency practices in urban spaces. People who migrated to centers of the Kurdish regions and Western Turkey like Istanbul, Adana, and Mersin formed counter-public spaces and constructed political communities that initiated mass uprisings in the urban space. In this process, the Kurdish struggle emerging as a territory-based movement went beyond the borders of the Kurdish region by diffusing Western cities and carried new dimensions as well as contradictions. Furthermore, from its debut to the present, the Kurdish movement has been a transnational movement as it was also organized in Syria, Iraq, and Iran. In addition, according to Mesut Yeğen, the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War, the formation of Southern Kurdistan in Iraq, the rise of Kurdish Diaspora in Europe, and the effects of globalization made the Kurdish question a global concern (Yeğen, 2006: 31).

Gündoğan neighborhood is a place where the displaced Kurds established a mass radical movement. However, what differentiates Gündoğan from other slum areas populated by Kurdish migrants in western Turkey is the fact that the residents were already mobilized in the Kurdish resistance in their respective villages and continued to support the PKK after they came to the city. In other words, since the neighborhood was created mainly by politicized Kurds, it became one of the main places in Adana where the PKK could organize, mobilize people and find logistical and ideological support.

People in Gündoğan refer to their neighborhood in the period between 1990 and 1995 as a safe haven. During these years, armed militants of the PKK were located in the neighborhood, there was no police station, and no representative of state institutions could enter the neighborhood, including those who brought water and electricity bills. Though there had been attempts to establish a police station, this was not realized until 1997 since until then all the stations in construction were bombed. From 1995 onwards, the militants began to retreat to the rural areas as part of the change in PKK's goal from establishing a separate state to becoming a democratizing force in Turkey and consequently its willingness to conduct a politics of peace as long as the safety of the guerillas were guaranteed. In other words, instead of taking an aggressive role and establishing safe havens within Turkey, PKK chose to use its force as a means of pressuring the state to democratize. In fact, Abdullah Öcalan, in *Bir Halkı Savunmak*, states that although the slogan "Free Kurdistan" was used by the PKK in its debut, they were not sure that the Kurdish problem would be solved if the Kurds had their own state. Thus, "the Free Kurdistan" was rather a framing device that mobilized people as it referred to an imagined homeland. (Öcalan, 2004: 257).

The retreat of the PKK opened up a sphere for state intervention in Kurdish-populated slum areas. The different socio-political context in Gündoğan of today is based on this history of ceasefire beginning with 1995 and the consolidation of the state power in 1997 with the establishment of the police station. Beginning with 1997, gradually, drug trafficking, the emergence of gangs and radical Islamist

organizations like Hizbullah came to alter the texture of the neighborhood along with similar neighborhoods in Kurdish region and elsewhere in Turkey.

Despite the strength of state intervention, the Kurdish movement is still vibrant in the neighborhood. With the disruption of the more homogenous socio-political texture of the neighborhood constituted by the first generation migrants who were already politicized in the village, and who transferred this politics into the city space, various political subjectivities emerged among the youth and children. This change of actors, the shifting of public political visibility and ideological leadership from heads of families and generally entire households to the youth and children opens up new questions regarding what is political and what is a political act. One complication I encountered in the interviews that I conducted with people between the ages of 11 and 27 is the fact that although they were raised in the post-1997 context, these people also harbored the memory of state violence, forced migration and the safe haven within the neighborhood as older generations narrated their experiences in the households and counter-public spaces established in urban space. Thus, besides tracing the history of Gündoğan through the experiences of the youth and children and understanding how “the political” changed over the years, figuring out the role transmitted memory plays in the constitution of subjectivity became central question for me in addressing the construction of the “political” both publicly and subjectively.







## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

My research took place in Gündoğan, a slum area of Adana, mainly constructed by displaced Kurds in the 1980s and 1990s. The population of the neighborhood is about 60.000. For this study I focus on twelve interviews that I conducted with Kurdish youth and children of the neighborhood whose ages are between eleven and twenty seven. The reason why I chose to listen to the stories of youth and children rather than adults is that they currently constitute the most radical and mobilized segment of the Kurdish movement. I believe that their experiences, the way they narrate their lifestories and the meanings that they inscribe to them open up a space to re-think crucial political and social phenomena. This enables us to rethink the politics of the Kurdish movement not through the grand narratives and publicly visible discourses of the movement but through the concrete experiences and narratives of the invisible actors; whose presence is acknowledged, yet whose voices cannot circulate within public discourses.

I conducted life history interviews and participant observation for this study. Life history narratives do not constitute “transparent” registers of experience or representations separated from “real” life (Riessman, Cited in Üstündağ, 2005: 15). Indeed, an event only makes sense when it is transposed into narrative (Riesmann, 1987). These narratives form significant means which connect subjects to social relations (Fransozi, Cited in Üstündağ, 20). In other words, rather than promising direct access to experience, life history interviews, as a qualitative research method, give us clues about how experience is transformed into self-knowledge and knowledge about others, and about power relations that condition this transformation. The question that should be raised in relation to life histories is how

particular narratives and meanings are produced under specific conditions by individuals in relation to wider social relations, public and historical representations and the unequal distribution of economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital in society. This approach has also the potential of revealing how people construct their subjectivities and agencies by appropriating, negotiating, and/or resisting existing discourses. Analyzing experience by focusing on life histories can pave the way for an understanding of how subjects deal with different forms of power and desire by forming particular representations of themselves and their own practices. Lastly, the way within which narrative is formed also guarantees the coherent construction of the self. In other words, it is through narrative that the person who speaks communicates his or her “I” to the listener. Hence, in narrative analysis, not only the content of the narration, but also the context within which the interview has been conducted and the textual form of the narration should be considered. It should be remembered that the production of meaning takes place at these three levels at the same time. This is to say that narratives are not only interpretive but they also require interpretation at all these three levels (Üstündağ).

I started conducting interviews in the summer of 2008 and returned to the field several times in 2009. I gathered from my discussions and observations in Gündoğan that during the 1990s, the neighborhood was composed of a relatively homogenous group of youth. The presence of the PKK affected the universe of the neighborhood considerably. Besides mobilizing the struggle against the state, the PKK influenced the social relations among individuals and groups particularly between Alevi and Sunni (religious sects in Islam) communities. In addition, it tried to form a community with specific moral norms. In the 1990s when the PKK was a real physical force in the neighborhood, no state institutions, Islamic groups or drug traffickers could enter the neighborhood. Yet after the shift in the strategy of the party which led to the retreat of the guerillas from the neighborhood, a police station was constructed at the center of the neighborhood, radical Islamic groups gained considerable support and drug trafficking entered the neighborhood, thereby increasing the number of hashish users and sellers dramatically. Youth and children were the objects and subjects of these transformations and interventions. In this

process, rather than a unique and homogenous Kurdish youth identity, various identities and subjectivities emerged.

In order to map the youth and children in Gündoğan, I tried to analyze the different life trajectories of children and youth. However, I came to realize that it difficult to make clear distinctions, as while there are many different life-choices, there are also many shared experiences and political imaginaries. Still, I could detect some distinct practices that constitute friendship groups, form familial relations and determine the way individuals use time and space. For the male youth and children, hashish using, Islamic affiliations, gang activities, and political activities are determinant practices in the neighborhood. Female youth and children do not use hashish, and only a few attend political activities. For the female youth and children, attending Islamic groups is more common. Politics is the overreaching theme among the youth and children in the neighborhood. State violence and struggle of the PKK against the state has resulted in the formation of a shared politicized Kurdish identity. Positioning one's self against the state and connecting all grievances to Kurdishness are common attributes of youth and children in the neighborhood.

I conducted interviews with those who attended the Islamic organizations, who were politicized and mobilized within the Kurdish movement, and who use hashish and/or are involved in gangs. Almost all politicized children belong to forcibly displaced families. On the other hand, displacement is not the determinant element for the youth as much as children since I met many politicized youth whose family migrated to the city for economic reasons. As this he youth experienced the era of the PKK in the neighborhood, all of them became politicized. Children were born in post-war conditions in which forms of oppression are more implicit and the effects of displacement are deepened. In other words, under the hegemony of the PKK there was a homogenously politicized youth regardless of their religious identity or their reason for migration. But after the weakening of the presence of the PKK, new forms of subjectivities emerged with the emergence of drugs and Islamist organizations and gangs. Today, mostly displaced children whose families experienced extreme forms of state violence constitute the most politicized segment.

Religious sects are more important in the life of female youth. Young women are confined to the home and can go out only for work and school. Since young women who belong to Alevi families are allowed to go to school and work more often than Sunni ones, religious sects which young Sunni women belong to are determinant elements in their lives. However, I encountered interesting stories that break down these distinctions. For example, I met an Alevi family who migrated to Adana due to economic concerns and who has three sons. The oldest son belongs to a Naksibendi organization. The middle son is a hashish user and seller. And the youngest son is mobilized within the Kurdish movement. Therefore, although the reason for migration is important in the formation of identity, the choices of the youth and children of the neighborhood remain unpredictable, complex, and subjective.

#### Field Entry

My family migrated to Gündoğan for economic reasons in the 1990s when I was seven years old. I grew up in this neighborhood and lived there until I went to Istanbul in 2002 for university education. My family and relatives still live there. As a result, I did not have much difficulty in entering the field. I found informants through my networks among family members, relatives, and friends. In addition, I went to the office of DTP (Democratic Party of Turkey), the pro-Kurdish party, in the center of the city. There I met university students who do not live in the neighborhood but go to the Center of Democracy and Culture (CDC)<sup>3</sup> in Gündoğan. I went to CDC with those students and met activist children and youth. In fact, my informants even talked about sensitive political issues without even knowing me. However, before the interview, I explained to them that I wanted to interview them for my thesis. I was asked, particularly by politicized individuals, about the benefits

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<sup>3</sup>CDC is situated in the periphery of the neighborhood. Children and youth come together there and organize various political activities.

of my thesis for the Kurdish movement. They were suspicious about my research because they thought that my thesis could be a means through which the state could gather information about them. Assuring them of my intention and convincing them that the knowledge I aimed to elicit through the interviews would not be of value to the state, I also added that my thesis would not be about the ways they organize, focusing on the grievances of the youth and children in the neighborhood. I also made it clear that I would use pseudonyms. They insisted that they do not want anyone to know anything about them. They let me interview them only after being told that I was a student, in need of their help. Therefore, the narratives that appear in this thesis are either favors by the narrators accorded a student in the process of writing a thesis or gestures of kindness due to the inappropriateness of turning down a request for an interview made through acquaintances.

This process of negotiation with my informants raises important ethical issues concerning the responsibilities of the researcher. The group that I interviewed has an antagonistic relation to the state. Constituting the most radical and mobilized segment of the Kurdish movement, youth and children have been the prominent target of the state particularly since 2006. Youth have always been pioneers in the movement as they constitute the guerilla cadre and militants. Yet, the children coming to the fore in recent years are relatively unknown, unpredictable political actors. Writing about the individuals who are currently the primary targets of the state harbors the danger of unveiling them.

On the other hand, the negotiation I cited also points to the emergence of a new form of political imagination. The Kurdish movement has long had the belief that if Turkish people listened to the stories of the Kurds, there could be a potential for reconciliation and a solution to the Kurdish problem. Therefore, the movement has searched for the possibility of interacting with Turkish people. There is an endeavor to convince the (Turkish) audience that Kurds have suffered greatly and that their struggle is legitimate. In a way, the movement speaks to an imagined other. Children and youth of the neighborhood, however, do not want to be represented in the public space that always connotes Turkishness. They do not want to be known, identified, and named by the other. For them, there is no imagined other to whom one should

speak to. Instead, the Turkish people have a material presence in their life since they are constantly discriminated against in school, in their jobs and in state institutions. I interpret this difference of children and youth in Gündoğan from the Kurdish movement *per se* to signify a politics which is based not on expressing grievances to the hegemonic, and calling upon the conscience of the sovereign; but on self-realization. That is why a thesis that presumably will address a Turkish audience and circulate in the Turkish public space has no value for the youth and children in Gündoğan. One of the children recommended me to write a series of articles to be published in the pro-Kurdish *Günlük* which is the only newspaper that the youth and children read. This implies that a thesis on the Kurdish youth and children should address a Kurdish audience. I believe this is a radical change in the politics of the Kurdish movement and a contrast with the way other actors within the movement have expressed themselves until now.

I carried out the interviews mostly in my home or on the streets; as my informants do not have their own room, their houses are always crowded and there is no place like a café in the neighborhood. This difficulty of finding a place for interviewing had advantages as well as disadvantages. In the interviews that I conducted in the streets we were not alone; friends of my informants interrupted the interviews continuously by narrating their own stories. In some of the interviews, we could not deepen the conversation. However, this difficulty enabled me to think of the interrelationship between my subjects or, inter-subjectivity within the community. I came to understand that there are no different stories but only one; “a single catastrophe” in Benjamin’s term (Löwy, 2007: 112).

In addition, the places in which we could, and we could not carry out the interviews also illustrate the spatial positioning of the male youth and children and shows that they are excluded from the home and confined to the street, which also made me aware of the existence of gendered spaces.

My endeavors to arrange interviews with hashish-using youth and children also led me to see many things about their everyday life. For example, I had to postpone many arranged interviews as they smoked hashish before coming to the interview. I rearranged interviews but again I had the same problem. It was in the third or fourth



attempt that we could do the interview. Furthermore, some of my informants started to smoke hashish during the interview. The time that I spent with them, the process of arranging interviews as well as their narratives illustrated to me that hashish using is the main practice in their life.

The issue of how I was perceived by the informants also shaped the knowledge that was elicited. It has been seven years since I left the neighborhood for Istanbul. But since my family lives there, I frequently go to the neighborhood. Therefore, some of my interviewees already knew me. For them, I was one of the rare individuals who succeeded in passing the university exam and receiving a university education. In the first years of university, people in Gündoğan would tell me that I would have a good job and that I might help them to find a better job. But after my undergraduate years finished and I continued my education in order to get a masters degree rather than having a 'good job', I was perceived as a permanent student. For them, what I do at the university is meaningless since it does not serve to finding a job. They also had difficulty understanding why I was conducting research on the neighborhood “as there were no educated people around who can give me information”. Hearing that I was looking for informants for my research, my relatives arranged people to interview without asking me. The majority of these arranged interviews went beyond the scope of my research, as they were with adults while I was exclusively looking for youth and children. Yet, I had to attend all these interviews because they were already arranged. I think this stems from how the inhabitants of the neighborhood perceive the knowledge that is produced in university. For example, my relatives and friends searched for “knowledgable” people to help me. These people were adults who have a political background or, university students. I concluded that knowledge for them refers either to political knowledge or university education.

In the neighborhood, the relationship between the parents and children is very tense, and there is almost no dialogue between them. Therefore, some parents who learned that I interviewed their children came to talk to me. They wanted to know what their children narrated and particularly what they told me about their parents.

They told me that their children do not talk to them. Some of them asked me to give advice to the children to give up hashish or to go to Reading Houses.

Before conducting fieldwork, I thought about the difficulty of listening to life stories and experiences of people. Most of the people that I interviewed were involved in the Kurdish movement and during the fieldwork the state's oppression over Kurdish organizations was intensified. Many of the members of the DTP were arrested and many were wanted by the police. In such a context, I thought that people would not want to talk to me about their life and politics. Some of my interviewees were addicted to hashish and I was wondering whether they would mention this in their narratives. However, in all my interviews, the interviewees talked to me freely without any hesitation. They narrated sensitive and dangerous political issues freely and enthusiastically. This led me to think that people here needed to talk about their experiences, problems, hopes, and anxieties. However, this does not mean that they want to express themselves to the public, or at least to the Turkish public, since they warned me many times that this research that records their testimonies and involvement in politics can serve the state by making them visible and knowable. What is important for them is the act of telling without imagining an audience; if there is an audience, it is their own public, the Kurdish audience.

## CHAPTER 4

### GENERATION TROUBLE<sup>4</sup>

*...philosophy does not concern itself with children. It leaves them to pedagogy, where they are not in very good hands. Philosophy has forgotten about children.*

Bernard Schlink, cited in Comaroff and Comaroff

#### The Category of Childhood

Childhood and youth have been perceived as transcultural and transhistorical categories (Neyzi). However, social historians and anthropologists have challenged this perception by their case studies. For example, Philippe Aries has argued that before the seventeenth century, there was no concept of childhood (Aries, Cited in Madsudyan, 2008: 3). Aries argues that the period between 1660 and 1800 signifies a transition in the structure of family: the family has become child-oriented, and the uniqueness of each child was recognized (Ibid). On the other hand, scholars like Robert Jütte and Erving Goffman who benefitted from the Foucauldian conceptualization of modern power argue that the conditions of children worsened

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<sup>4</sup> I borrowed this title from Jean and John Comaroff.

with “the institutionalization of children under inhuman disciplinary conditions of boarding schools, orphanages, and reformatories” (Ibid). Therefore, “the children were not objects of care for modern states and societies, as Aries previously argued, on the contrary they were among those to be surveilled, disciplined and inculcated” through discursive and non-discursive practices of modern power (Ibid).

The emergence of the concept of childhood coincides with the emergence of the bourgeois family. According to Kemal İnal, the modern paradigm of childhood is based on two fundamental elements: bourgeois values and science (İnal, 1999: 63). Not only childhood, but also institutions like education and family were reshaped in this era (Ibid, 72). Bourgeois society, for the reproduction of its lifestyle based on individualism, needed a specific understanding of childhood supported by science (Ibid, 63). Aries argues that the exclusion of children from the life of adults and the perception of them as unique with the introduction of modernity was legitimized by the body of knowledge produced on childhood: children were defined as ignorant and weak. That is why they should be educated and disciplined. Additionally, children were seen as essentially innocent and good; therefore, they should be protected. On the other hand, adults were characterized as rational, moderate, and elevated to the status of observer and governor; children in turn were regarded as irrational and immoderate beings in need of being observed and governed (Aries, Cited in Gürbilek, 2001: 47). Not surprisingly, the understanding that children should be protected, disciplined, and educated constructed a power relation between children and adults based on age.

Studies that emerged in the 1990s have challenged Aries’ argument by claiming that childhood was not a modern invention (Maksudyan, 4). However, Hugh Cunningham stressed that there is a continuation as well as a transformation in parental relations and perceptions of childhood. He underlined that although there was a concept of childhood before the seventeenth century, the meaning given to that category changed in different times and contexts (Ibid, 5).

Beginning with Aries, social historians have delineated how children (and the category of childhood) were perceived by elders throughout history. However, children have been “under-represented and under-theorized” in anthropology

(Hughes and Sargent, 1998: 15). According to Veena Das, “[early] anthropological descriptions of culture as either shared or contested have excluded the voice of the child” (Das, 1998: 174). However, current studies have started to focus on how the category of childhood has changed depending on time and space by investigating the ways in which children give meaning to their experiences and how they articulate themselves. In addition, these studies also challenged the concept of generation. Generally generation is defined as consisting of “age-based social cohorts” that has biological and historical connotations (Collins, 2004: 13). Yet now there is a tendency to define generations “as processes through which social identities and political projects are symbolically produced, reproduced, and transformed” (Ibid).

In fact, if we consider the fact that the hierarchy on age and exclusion is based on dichotomies, we should note that not only childhood but also youth and adulthood are constructed categories. As Jean and John Comaroff argue, the concept of generation is not a chronological category but a social, relational, and political one with deep material roots (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2004: 10). And as Scott points out, the control of the modern state regime depends upon defining the population through categories like child, youth or adult (Scott, cited in Durham, 2000: 114).

Anthropologists emphasized that youth is not a transhistorical and transcultural category. Meanings attributed to youth change in relation to time and space. According to Hobsbawm, the category of youth is “the offspring of modernity” (Hobsbawm, cited in Comaroff and Comaroff, 2). With modernity, youth was excluded from the economy and they were enrolled in a long period of education (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2). While children represent goodness and pureness, youth represents excitement, excessiveness; and more importantly the future of nations (Ibid).

Childhood and youth studies are separate disciplines/areas in the academia. Yet current anthropological studies suggest that especially in the twentieth century, there is no clear line between childhood and youth as these are not chronological but social and political constructions. When we look at representations and self-representation of youth and children as well as their experiences in everyday life, it

is very difficult to make a clear distinction between youth and children. Transnational migration, increasing numbers of youth and children especially in the metropolis, globalization, neo-liberal policies and practices, transformations of nation states, new means of communication, civil wars, low intensity war, in post-colonial societies prompt re-consideration of generational categories such as childhood, youth and adult (Comaroff and Comaroff, Durham, Neyzi).

Jean and John Comaroff argue that the conditions of global capitalism ended “modernist dream of infinite progress” and led to the questioning of the narrative that every generation will live in better conditions than its predecessors (Comaroff and Comaroff, 3). Yet “globalization provides youth with site for their self-expression, self-representation and concomitantly forms of politicization” (Ibid). Therefore, on the one hand, they are marginalized and exposed to different forms of violence like poverty and state violence. On the other hand, they form sites to resist. Comaroff and Comaroff suggest that youth (and children) embody the sharpening contradictions of the capitalist world and they use the term “alien nation” to describe youth’s (as well as children’s) construction of “counter-nation with its own illegal economies of ways and means, its own spaces of production and recreation, its own parodic patriotisms” (Ibid). Youth and children are the “mutant citizens” of this “alien nation” (Ibid, 7). They conclude that youth is a category of elusion and exploitation, a source of surplus value in post-colonial and/or global capitalism (Ibid).

Sharif Kanaana concretizes Comaroffs’ theories and argue that “the involvement of young people in the intifada caused a kind of terminological upheaval in Palestinian society” (Kanaana, cited in Collins, 2004: 38). According to him, “no one knew exactly what to call the young activists who were at the forefront of the struggle against the occupation” (Ibid). “The meanings of words traditionally used to designate particular age groups were either expanded or contracted, highlighting both the arbitrary nature of such categories” as well as “the ability of everyday speech to adjust to changing political realities” (Ibid). According to Kanaana the main problem is that the “young males” who are involved in the

intifada “do not coincide with any traditionally known class or age group with a linguistic designation of its own, either in English or in Arabic” (Ibid, 39).

The restructuring of the category of childhood within the Kurdish society

I

Özhan, one of my informants, tells me the following: The child of Özhan's cousin who is 2 years old, while looking out of the window, sees two policemen passing by. He starts shouting at them "Biji Serok Apo<sup>5</sup>" (long live Apo). Hearing him, the policemen enter the house. Inside there is only the child and his mother. The policemen ask to the mother to show the identity card of the child. The mother informs them that he does not yet have an identity card yet. The policemen take the mother's identity card and force her to come to the police station. Hearing the incident, the neighbors tell the policemen that the child is too young to know what he is saying and try to convince them to give the identity card of the mother back. After discussions lasting for hours, the policemen give back the identity card of the mother and leave the house.

II

A friend of mine, working as a teacher at a primary school in Yeni Bosna where most of the students are the victims of forced migration, complained about the violence of the students: “Every month one or two teachers are beaten by the children, some of the teachers have started going to psychologists. I don’t know why these kids are like that. It is as if they are not kids. Once, I talked to some of them and said that I was the psychopath of that school. I asked them what they thought

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<sup>5</sup> Apo is the Kurdish abbreviation for Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of PKK.

they were doing. I know this is not something that a teacher is expected to say, but I don't know how to deal with them. On the one hand, they are vagrants; on the other hand they are very political; they know about Hayat TV and EMEP. Perhaps we want the children here to be like the ones outside.'''

Kurdish children appear as objects of fear in academic and public discourses in contemporary Turkey particularly after they gained visibility in metropolises during and after the internal displacement that occurred in the context of the State of Emergency declared in Southeastern Turkey in the 1990s. Nurdan Gurbilek argues that the image of children as innocent and vulnerable was destroyed when thousands of kids migrated to metropolises for economic and political reasons (Gurbilek, 45). "The image," Gurbilek suggests, "strangely, perhaps just because of that, loses its credibility at the time of an encounter with which it signifies (45). The children who became visible in the media were largely Kurdish. In the late 1990s they were depicted as purse-snatchers, glue-sniffers, handkerchief-sellers, sexual assaulters – kids predisposed to violence. However, in the 2000s, the public has started seeing the violence of Kurdish children as an evolving political threat directed against the state and the order. It was the image of "stone throwing children" that ingrained this idea deep into the public psyche. The wound that the image of the child received in the public psyche could only be healed by the arrest of hundreds of children under a quickly passed emergency terrorism statute in spite of Turkey's being a party to the various conventions on children's rights. Meanwhile, confronted with a group of demonstrators, who are of an unusually young age when compared with the participants of demonstrations in the earlier times, representatives of the state tried in panic to make sense of, or comprehend the dynamics behind the politicization of children.

Two events in particular, have brought Kurdish children into the political agenda. The first is the 2006 demonstrations that protested the killing of 14 PKK guerillas with chemical weapons. It started in Diyarbakir and then spread to other provinces. During the demonstrations 12 people, 10 of which were children and teenagers, were killed. The most important aspect of these demonstrations was that they were also reflecting a class-based reaction and dissatisfaction with the



emergence of political elite in Kurdistan. After being attacked by the police, the children went to the most expensive neighborhood of Diyarbakir, *Office District*, and stoned posh workplaces, banks, and shops. The approach of the media and the state was harsh. The prime minister threatened the Kurds: “Our security forces will do whatever is necessary to eliminate the terrorists, no matter whether they are kids or women. Control your children” (Türker, 2006). In the media, it was suggested that the kids were deceived by people aiding and abetting the terrorist organization. In the Anti-Terror Act passed after these demonstrations, it was stated that the families, which send their children to demonstrations, were also to be punished. In the media, the children were depicted as innocent, as reflected by the headline of Radikal “Mercy the Kids” (Çocuklara Kıymayın Efendiler)<sup>6</sup>. The guilt belonged to the terrorist organization. Children were being used and abused. However in effect, it was the children who were being punished severely. The report prepared by the IHD Diyarbakir demonstrated the violence exerted upon the children<sup>7</sup>. The media kept its silence regarding the punishment of the kids.

Another important event that brought Kurdish children under public attention was the demonstrations held in 2008 after the alleged maltreatment of Abdullah Öcalan. Children appropriated the streets of both Kurdish and western metropolises and clashed with the police. During those demonstrations, hundreds of children and young people were arrested. Once again, no one could make sense of these events since politics is not considered to be a sphere in which children take part. Turkish as well as Kurdish elites started discussing how they could rehabilitate these kids with psychological help -even the police began to give children chocolates and bananas when they appeared in radical mass protests. The media once again claimed that children were brainwashed and used by terrorists.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=183102>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ihd.org.tr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=106:28-mart-2006-darbakir-olaylarina-k-celeme-raporu&catid=34:el-raporlar&Itemid=90](http://www.ihd.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106:28-mart-2006-darbakir-olaylarina-k-celeme-raporu&catid=34:el-raporlar&Itemid=90)



This picture of Kurdish children was taken as a memory of prison in 2009

It was indeed unexpected that politicization would seep into every segment of Kurdish society once the low intensity war ended in 1999. In the context of the 2000s, when the negotiations between the EU and Turkey had accelerated and new reform plans were couched in the name of democratization and minority rights and a hopeful atmosphere existed, how are we going to make sense of the radical upheaval of the Kurdish children?<sup>8</sup>

I believe this seeming contradiction is important to dwell on as it opens up questions regarding what the Kurdish question really is, what the solution to the Kurdish issue consists of or even whether there is any solution? What are the expressible and inexpressible problems felt/lived in the everyday life of the Kurds besides the problems circulating in the language of macro-politics? The radical mobilization of Kurdish children implies that the Kurdish issue is not only about the ban on the Kurdish language and culture or about the denial of Kurdish identity. Rather it is a much more complicated issue as it harbors a lack haunting the past, the present, and the future of Kurdish individuals; it points to an irreplaceable missing in

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<sup>8</sup> The establishment of Kurdish TV channel (TRT 6), the attempts to establish Kurdish courses in universities etc.

almost all households caused by the irreversibility of the destruction of a homeland, and exposure to numerous forms of violence in urban life. Irrespective of what the representatives of macro politics, irrespective of what the Movement says, the only way to cope with this kind of lack, with a consciousness formed by irreversibility seems to be to re-make the urban space every day anew by means of violence and struggle.

In the mainstream media the increase in the number of Kurdish children is regarded as one of the main problems of Turkey. It is said that if the Kurds are to continue having as many children as they do now, they would outnumber Turks in 2050. Based on that speculation, Fatih Altaylı, a columnist in a mainstream newspaper, has written in one of his articles that (Turkish) middle class people who are wiser, literate and who have the opportunity to give their children a good education should have more children (Altaylı, cited in Türker). He adds: “We decrease gradually, they increase gradually. The way to struggle with this is to have children. People like us should have more children”<sup>9</sup> (Ibid). In a different context Comaroff and Comaroff argue that such speculations provoke hate against children and turn them into “the nightmare of polite society” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 13). The same speculation that the populations of Palestinians will exceed Israelis is made in Israel. John Collins calls this situation “the Palestinian demographic time-bomb (Collins, 61). I think the reaction to the child demonstrators in Turkey as elsewhere should also be understood in this context in addition to the symbolic wound that they open in the nationalized public psyche.

The children from Gündoğan and other neighborhoods in Adana who were involved in the demonstrations were given inordinately high sentences: The Human Rights Association in Adana declared that only in 2008, 16 Kurdish children aged between 12-19 years were sentenced to 37 years 3 months in total due to making propaganda on behalf of the terrorist organization. It is reported that the green

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<sup>9</sup><http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalYazarYazisi&ArticleID=911907&Yazar=YILDIRIM%20T%C3%9CRKER&Date=08.12.2008&CategoryID=97>

cards<sup>10</sup> of the families of 170 children will be taken back. The mayor of Adana stated, addressing the children: “Children, we love you more than your mothers and fathers do.”

The minister of justice, Mehmet Ali Şahin, has announced that 1588 children have been put on trial under the terrorism statute in 2006 and 2007<sup>11</sup>. In 2008 and 2009, the number of children who were being mobilized within the Kurdish movement increased and accordingly the number of children put on trial also accelerated dramatically.

Foucault argues that modern power operates and infatuates society by constituting problematized categories. In certain moments of history, particular ways of behaving or existing are considered as problematic. These certain ways of behaving or existing became the objects of discursive and non-discursive practices. Foucault calls this process “the drama of truth”. When people believe in the truth of these categories, they accept to be the subjects of the experiences associated with such categories. Foucault exemplifies these practices by asserting how different forms of behaving such as madness, illness, and crime have been problematized and transformed into abnormal experiences. In the process of defining these categories and associating them with certain experiences discursive and non-discursive practices are utilized. Discursive practices are formed in scientific disciplines like psychology, psychiatry, criminology, which produce truth claims. Non-discursive practices refer to institutions like prison, school, asylum; which form appropriate conditions for the production and implementation of scientific “truths” (Keskin, Büyük Kaptma). In a Foucauldian perspective, we can say that what constitutes childhood is science as a discursive practice (psychiatry, medicine, law etc.) and institutions implementing non-discursive practices (school, perhaps family etc).

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<sup>10</sup> A social assistance mechanism that provides free health care services to poor citizens.

<sup>11</sup>For the details see:

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetay&ArticleID=922096&Date=17.02.2009&CategoryID=97>

According to the first article of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”<sup>12</sup>. However, the Law of Struggle against Terror (TMK) in article 9 states that in cases of terror offences, children who are over fifteen years old will be brought to *Ağır Ceza Mahkemeleri* like adults. In other words, the law of Turkey constructs a new definition of childhood and practices it in its security, court and prison systems. On the other hand, according to the 90<sup>th</sup> article of the Constitution, international conventions are superior to domestic laws. The state reshapes childhood through transgressing its own rules<sup>13</sup>. In many concrete cases the court does not even grant the rights children have under Article 9 of the TMK Statute. A lawyer reports:

Even though any kind of inspection related to children is supposed to be handled by the children’s police and judiciaries according to the laws, it was overlooked in this case. The court banned children to talk to their lawyers for 24 hours. The reports regarding their criminal liabilities were attained only by examining their mental health; their socio-economic conditions or their environment were not appraised despite the existing law. The forensic science specialist said he saw “no harm in leaving an epileptic kid under custody as long as he used his medication”<sup>14</sup>

In Turkey besides the discourse of law, the discourse of media is also crucial in shaping the definition of children and youth as well as in problematizing them. In the representations of Kurdish children and youth in mainstream media “stonethrowers” are usually called children. However, guerillas are called youth. For example, in Adana, people who are involved in demonstrations are between the ages

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cocuklaraadalet.com/bir-hukuk-sakasi-tas-atan-cocuklara-23-yilcanan-atabay-hukukcu.html>

<sup>14</sup> Yasalara göre çocuklarla ilgili işlemlerin çocuk polisi ve çocuk savcısı tarafından yapılması gerekirken bu atlandı. Mahkeme, gözaltına alınan çocukların 24 saat avukatlarıyla görüşmelerini yasakladı. Çocukların cezai sorumluluğunu belirleyen raporlar sadece akıl sağlıkları değerlendirilerek verilmiş; yasada öngörülmesine rağmen sosyo-ekonomik durumu, çevre koşulları incelenmemiş. Adli tıp doktoru, sara hastası olan bir çocuğun “ilaçlarını kullandığı takdirde gözaltında kalmasında sakınca olmadığını” söyledi.

of 11-20 yet, all of them are called children. On the other hand, there are many guerillas who are between the ages of 16-20 but these are called youth. We can say that throwing stones in the streets is attributed to childhood, but enrolling in the Kurdish army (the PKK) and wearing uniforms, and fighting in the mountains are attributed to youth.

I argue that in the case of the Kurds, the memory of violence transmitted by the displaced parents accompanied with the experience of urban life involving exclusion, discrimination, poverty and state violence, subverts the category of childhood. In a context where adult members of families have trouble integrating to the urban, Kurdish children challenge the conventional power relations within their families as well as the Kurdish Movement. Rather than being abused by politicized adults as often argued in the public, I suggest that Kurdish children are active actors who subvert even the agendas and norms of Kurdish politics itself.

To discuss the deconstruction or subversion of childhood in the case of Kurdish society I want to return to Aries. He argues that childhood is only transformed within middle class families. Working class families did not change due to two reasons. First, since a child mortality rate among poor families is higher, children are not viewed as constant beings. Second because these children start working at an early age, they enter the world of adults earlier than their counterparts. They become familiar with institutions such as the factory, military, police station, and detention centers. Nevertheless, we have to consider the fact that in the twentieth century, education and school as discursive and non-discursive practices that are crucial in the construction of the category of childhood became compulsory. Therefore, although this category was not constructed in all societies in the same way --as childhood is experienced differently depending on space and time-- it can be argued that the idea of childhood went beyond the bourgeois family in the twentieth century particularly with the formation of nation states. The transformation of Kurdish children and the construction of a Kurdish childhood followed a quite unusual trajectory. Hughes says that “in gaining their “rights” in the form of protection from family work, apprenticeship, and wage labor, modern children may have gained their childhoods but lost considerable power and status” (Hughes and Sargent, 11).

However, children who are political actors, who occupy streets and who cannot be controlled either by the state or by Kurdish organization/society, demand power. Kurdish children not only participate in forms of adult power by working but also limit the power of adults by constructing political subjectivities and forming their own political spaces.

### Self-representation of the Kurdish children

The way in which Kurdish children give meaning to their actions contrasts with representations about them within society. In the mainstream media, it is generally stated that children see their political actions as a game. However, as I will show more in detail in the following chapters, children themselves state that it is not children but (Kurdish) adults who see politics as a game.

Even when children games they take politics seriously. The most common game they play is called “Apoculuk”.

Halil<sup>15</sup>: We are playing Apoculuk in the neighborhood. As four-five cops and four or five revolutionaries, we are shouting “Bijî Serok Apo”. We are screaming Öcalan’s name. And the cops are attacking us.

H: Who wins at the end?

Halil: Who would? Of course, Apoists. We sling at the police.

Murat<sup>16</sup>: But when we do that, we are indeed attacking our own nation.

Halil: But it’s just for fun, just a joke.

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<sup>15</sup> Halil is a 13 year-old boy born in Adana. He has 12 sisters and brothers. He is the youngest child of the family. His family was displaced from Mardin at the beginning of the 1990s. He is a primary school student and he is a simit seller.

<sup>16</sup> Murat is a fourteen year-old child from Mardin. His family was displaced by the security forces at the beginning of the 1990s. He was born in Adana. He is a primary school student and he works in a tea shop in the neighborhood.

M: What if that hits someone's head? What if someone's head is fractured?

Halil: We're just hitting their knees.

M: That's even worse, he won't be able to run during the protest<sup>17</sup>.

It seems that politics filters into every aspect of life. Even the games are about the struggle between the police and the Kurds. In addition, the line between play and reality is blurred as games turn into demonstrations:

Halil: We're preparing the neighborhood already. We're now three-four cops, three-four revolutionaries, I am among the revolutionaries, I have two kids next to me, and we are shouting in this neighborhood, we are going to this neighborhood where the fascists live. All women in the neighborhood are AKP's supporters. Once we shouted... and one of them told me not to, I replied "it's none of your business, you fascist". She really pissed me off. I said to myself, that we are in a protest now, we're running, we're striking against the cops, and the cops are actually on our side. We all went to the inner neighborhoods, broke the windows of the cars of fascists' neighborhood. The woman screamed at us, we beat the woman, she fell down like boom and then we smashed the windows of her house with our slings.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Halil: Biz mahallede Apoculuk oynuyoruz. Dört beş polis, dört beş kişi devrimci, öyle mahalle arasında "Biji Serok Apo" diye bağıyoruz. Öcalan diye bağıyoruz. Polisler de bize saldırıyor.

H: Kim kazanıyor?

Halil: Kim kazanacak, Apocular. Polise kuş lastiği sıkıyoruz.

Murat: Böyle yapınca aslında kendi halkımızı vuruyoruz.

Halil: Ama öylesine ya, şaka.

M: Ha kafasına gelse. Kafası yarılrsa.

Halil: Biz dizlerine vuruyoruz.

M: O daha kötü eyleme gelince koşamaz.

<sup>18</sup> Halil: Ya biz şimdiden mahalleyi alıştırıyoruz. Biz şimdi üç dört tane polis oluyor, üç dört tane de eylemci, ben eylemciyim, yanımda da iki tane çocuk var, mahallede bağıyoruz, böyle faşistlerin mahallesine gidiyoruz. Mahalledeki kadınların hepsi de AKP'ci. Bir bağırdık... bir kişi bağıрма lan dedi, ben de sana ne lan faşist dedim. Kadın kafamı bozdu. Baktım şimdi, biz eylemdeyiz ya, şimdi biz koşuyoruz, polislerle çatıştık, polisler de işte dedim ya bizden. Biz ara mahallelere girdik, faşistlerin mahallesindeki arabaların camını kırdık. Kadın bağırdı bize, kadını dövdük, kadın güm yere, sonra evinin camlarını kırdık kuş lastiğiyle.



What is then childhood when even games turn out to be explicitly political and when adults are accused of playing when they claim to be political? I asked Murat to narrate what childhood means for him. He replied:

M: I'll be grown up by the time what I say is taken seriously.

H: Well, what differences do you have when you compare yourself with a 20 year-old in the neighborhood?

M: Like him being older or facing no problems.

H: What do you mean?

M: I mean, a little kid like me is smoking for instance, but he doesn't have any cigarettes. He has to go and steal for that reason. But the grown-ups don't have such a problem. They're having money, hence having no problems.

H: Well, then are they the kids who steal mostly?

M: Yes.

H: Have you ever done that?

M: I have.

H: What did you get?

M: We stole a bicycle, right over there.

H: What did you do with it?

M: We sold it. We made 6 million bucks. One of the tires was flat, so we stole it for cheap.

H: So, you say kids have more problems and they cannot make themselves listened to.

M: Yes, for instance we see that in the party as well. They don't take it serious when a kid says something. They do listen to it if a grown-up talks. So, I can attend meetings when I grow up, there will be a place where my words are valuable, what I want is done. Because it's really hard for kids to be listened to. And the grown-ups suppose they know better<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> M: Sözümlüm geçtiği anda o zaman büyümüş olacam.

H: Peki sen mahallede mesela 20 yaşındaki biriyle kıyasladığında aranızda nasıl farklar var?

M: Onun büyük olması, onun fazla sorunlarının olmaması gibi.

H: Nasıl yani?

For Murat, childhood is not to be listened in the world of adults and having too many burdens. I asked the same question to Halil. He said:

Halil: To live your life, we do it too. Well, we were having a tour, I've seen everyone was swimming in the pool, we also went there and swam. You know about kids; one of them does something, the others just join the game. One of them says "let's play hide and seek", we play. I think childhood is a nice thing. It's full of fun. It's better to be a child. You don't have the problems of adults, like no money for electricity, no money for water. This money goes for charges, that table you have to buy; you have countless troubles like that. But my situation is not like a total childhood, it's half and half. Half childhood, half politics. Sometimes we have fun, we go to swim, or we wander around with the kids in neighborhood. At other times, let's say there is a demonstration, we go for it with the kids of the neighborhood. Half and half.

H: What do you think about children's being part of politics?

Halil: That's very nice, we learn about everything in these ages, we learn who are sly as a fox.

H :When are you going to be "complete"?

Halil: Two years , three years

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M: Mesela çocukların sorunu daha çok olur. Kimisi gider esrar içer, sigara içer, hırsızlık yapar, ama büyükler hiç olmazsa aileden destek alıyorlar.

H: Nasıl yani?

M: Nasıl diyeyim, mesela benim gibi bir çocuk sigara içiyor ama sigarası yok. Onun için gidiyor hırsızlık yapıyor. Ama büyüğün öyle bir sorunu yok. Parası oluyor, bir sorunu olmuyor.

H: Peki daha çok çocuklar mı hırsızlık yapıyor o zaman?

M: Evet.

H: Sen yaptın mı hiç?

M: Yaptım.

H: Ne aldın?

M: Bisiklet çaldık, şurada,

H: Ne yaptın o bisikleti?

M: Sattık. Altı milyon kazandık. Patlaktı bisikletin lastiği ucuza sattık.

H: Yani diyorsun çocukların daha çok sorunu var bir de sözleri geçmiyor.

M: Evet, mesela bunu partide de görüyoruz. Bir küçük birşey deyince yok sallamıyorlar. Büyük söylese dinliyorlar hemen. Yani büyüdüğümde toplantılara katılırım, sözümün geçeceği yer, istediğimin olacağı yer. Çünkü kolay kolay geçmiyor çocukların sözü. Büyükler daha iyi bildiklerini sanıyorlar.

H: Does the childhood end by then?

Halil: The childhood ends one day, so does the youth, or so does the elderly days, and then, the life itself comes to an end.

H : Do you want your childhood to end?

Halil: Well, I do want, what's this I face? Look at that, I don't even have fifty box in my pocket<sup>20</sup>

What is interesting is that although Halil says that childhood is better than adulthood because adults have more responsibilities specifically in terms of budgeting and children have no such responsibilities, Halil himself, is working to contribute to the economy of his family. In fact, in Halil's family children are working rather than the parents. In addition, childhood as we are accustomed to see is not only a stage in lifecycle where there are no economic responsibilities but also implies carelessness towards the issues. However, Halil's narrative is all about economic problems his family must face.

The excerpts show that the children of the neighborhood are affected by the hegemonic discourses on childhood in society. They largely acknowledge that politics is not for children but they, "as young revolutionaries", enter politics

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<sup>20</sup> Halil: Hayatını yaşamak, şimdi biz geziyorduk, baktım herkes yüzüyor havuzda, biz de girdik yüzdük. Şimdi çocuğuz ya biz, şimdi bir kişi birşey yapıyor, biz de o oyuna katılıyoruz. Bir kişi diyor gel saklmabaç oynayak, oynuyoruz. Bence çocukluk güzel birşey. Çok zevkli. Çocuk olmak daha iyi. Büyük olunca başındaki dertler, yok elektrik parası, yok su parası. Yok şunun vergisi, yok eve masa alacan, başına binbir çeşit dert açılıyor. Ama benimki tam çocukluk değil, yarı yarıya. Yarı çocukluk yarı siyaset. Bazen eğleniyoruz, gidiyoruz yüzüyoruz, mahallenin çocuklarıyla geziyoruz. Bazen de eylem mi var mahallenin çocuklarıyla yola çıkıyoruz. Yarı yarıya.

H: Çocukların siyasete katılması nasıl birşey sence?

Halil: Çok güzel valla, bu yaşta öğreniyoruz neyin ne olduğunu, kimin çakal olduğunu.

H :Ne zaman tama geçeceksin.

Halil: İki sene-üç sene

H: O zaman çocukluk bitecek mi?

Halil: Çocukluk da bir gün biter, birgün de gençlik biter, bir gün de yaşlılık biter, ondan sonra da ömür biter.

H :İstiyor musun çocukluğun bitmesini?

Halil: İstiyorum ya bu ne ya. Cebime bak elli lira para yok.

nevertheless in order to “know” people, and to determine who is bad and who is good. For them, not education but politics is the route to knowledge. Moreover, for these children, childhood is having more responsibilities and problems than the adults as the conditions in which they live force them to steal. It means being silenced in the political arena dominated by the adults despite the fact that they are the ones who are on the front lines of demonstrations. Children complain that they are not listened to by the political adults in the neighborhood and that adults “assume that they know better” than the children. What adults do is to prevent children from being active in politics. Yet, despite the fact that children are silenced they still have a considerable power in the Movement. For example, in the House for Democracy and Culture, children and youth have an important effect on decision making. I conclude with an excerpt that foreshadows the implications of the changing geography of (working class) childhood in Kurdistan. The memories they inherited, the violence that targeted them, their transformed family relations and the harsh living conditions mark and constitute the children. In turn, they appropriate this and use it as a source of power. They are indeed an “alien nation” both for the state and Kurdish elites. However, their vast number promises that they might prevail, and the morality that the PKK introduced to the neighborhood in the 1990s that plays an enormous role in the imagination of youth irrespective of their differences might prevail with them. The children of Gündoğan as indeterminate and undecided as they are, are half children as Halil stated. They carry the burden of the past as elderly, work and struggle for power as adults and shape the future of the movement if by no means than demographically. A young man in the neighborhood said:

Well, let me say this, we, as the youngsters are rather different here. There is indeed a specific form of youth. Like, I attended to a meeting in one these days; a friend came and said they would like to meet the youngsters here but why the young people didn't go and meet them. The person who said that, however, is somewhat lacking a proper personality. That's why, as we generally meet nice and sincere people, as another friend said, “they'd not meet you because they haven't seen you during the demonstrations”<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Yani şunu söyleyeyim biz burada gençlik olarak daha böyle farklıyız. Gençliğin farklı bir durumu var. Mesela geçen ben toplantıya katıldım, mesela bir arkadaş

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çıktı dedi burada gençlikle biz tanışmak istiyoruz da gençlik neden bizimle tanışmak istemiyor. Onu söyleyen arkadaş yalnız şeydir biraz eksik bir kişiliği vardır. Bu yüzden biz şöyle daha böyle samimi, dürüst olanlarla tanıştığımız için yani diğer arkadaş da dedi işte gençlik seni eylemlerde görmediği için seninle tanışmamıştır.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE REPERTOIRE: INHERITED LANGUAGE, COMMON EXPERIENCES

#### Narratives of the Village

Kader is a 27 year-old young woman from Bulam, Adiyaman. Her Kurdish-Alevi family migrated to Adana in the 1990s due to the economic problems caused by lack of land to farm. She has eight sisters and brothers. After she completed primary school, her family left the village. She did not continue her education as she had to work. Since she was twelve she has been working as a cleaner. She narrates her visit to the village:

As I said, our lives in the village, Haydar... There was no solar energy, no television... We had a small television, a lousy one, it only showed TRT 1. Even its broadcasting signals used to go off and come once in a thousand. There was only TRT 1. But let me say something to you, there was then respect in the village, there was love. There were people who knew one another. But people have changed a lot. Back then... I went to the village once, to see my friends. They were very different. Same with the relatives, they were very different. I felt myself... when I went there after seven years I felt myself ...I don't know... like you go to your homeland, but you think you'll be welcomed with love and respect. Not at all. I felt myself very much like an alien there, very different. As if I don't live there, I don't live there but I was an alien there. Of course, then television had come. There was satellite, not what. The life we lived was very bad. The life we lived... there was never a washing machine, as I said, it was one in a thousand. We were living in a house built of earth. It was snowing, sometimes dripping. Water was dripping from the ceiling. My father used to climb up and throw the snow so that it wouldn't drip. Back then there was real village life. Now I don't call it village life there. You know why, now the village has become a city. There is everything, there is perfectly everything. So after that I felt a little distanced, like an alien, you see. I

couldn't find what I expected. You know, when you leave you suppose your friends to remain same as you left them. You suppose your neighbors to remain same as you left them. I expected it to be different. So it wasn't as I anticipated it to be. After I came from the village I was alienated from it. So it has been a long time, I didn't go there for a long time.

H: After that did you go again?

K: After that I went again. I mean, after that, back then, I could have gone if I wanted to, but I didn't. I didn't want it, because now you live here, there is nothing that ties you there anymore. Right, it is where you were born and grew up, but it has changed a lot, where you were born and grew up. So you keep distance.<sup>22</sup>

Moving to city is perceived as a journey to modern life. Kader gives meaning to her migration through referring to the different lives in the village and city determined predominantly by technology. However, years later when she returned

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<sup>22</sup> ...Dediğim gibi, ben köyü nasıl bekliyordum, şimdi o zamanlar köyde, Haydar bizim hayatımız ne bir güneş enerjisi, ne televizyon, küçük bir televizyon vardı, uyduruk, sadece TRT 1 çekerdi. O da yayınlar giderdi, binde bir gelirdi. TRT 1 tek vardı. Ama sana bir şey diyeyim mi köyde o zaman saygı vardı, sevgi vardı. Birbirini bilen insanlar vardı... Ama insanları çok değişti. O zamanki tabii, bir köye gittim arkadaşlarımı görmeye, çok farklılar. Akrabalar olsun, çok farklılar. Kendimi, yedi yıl sonra oraya gittiğim zaman kendimi bilmiyorum hani sanki memleketine gidiyorsun ama sanki orada sevgiyle saygıyla karşılanacağını biliyorsun. Değil. Kendimi orada çok yabancı hissettim. Çok farklı. Sanki orada yaşamıyorum, yaşamıyorum ama yabancı geldim oraya. Tabii o zamanlar televizyon gelmişti uydusu vardı, bilmem ne vardı. Bizim yaşadığımız hayat çok kötüydü. Bizim yaşadığımız hayat, bir çamaşır makinesi asla yoktu. Televizyon dediğim gibi binde bir vardı. Topraklı evde yaşıyorduk. Kar yağıyordu, bazen damlıyordu, tavandan sular damlıyordu. Babam çıkarda, karı atardı ki damlamasın. O zaman tam köy hayatı. Şimdi ben oraya köy hayatı demiyorum. Niye dersin artık köy şehir olmuş. Her şey var, dört dörtlük var yani. O yüzden ondan sonra biraz uzak, köye gittim kendimi yabancı hissettim ya, umduğumu bulamadım. Hani dersin gittiğin zaman arkadaşlarını bıraktığın gibi zannediyorsun. Komşularını bıraktığın gibi zannediyorsun. Ben daha farklı bekliyordum. O yüzden umduğum gibi geçmedi. Köyden geldim biraz soğumuşum. O yüzden aradan bayağı geçti, gitmedim bayağı.

H: Sonra bir daha gittin mi?

K: Sonra bir daha gittim. Yani ardından, o zamanlar, istesem giderdim ama istemiyordum. İstemiyordum çünkü sen artık burada yaşıyorsun, orada seni bağlayan bir şey yok artık. Tamam doğup büyüdüğün yer ama çok farklılaştı doğup büyüdüğün yer. O yüzden uzak kalıyorsun.

to the village for a few months, she witnessed that the village had changed in line with her journey. The modern way of life she experienced in the city had also been taking place in the village during her absence. Therefore, on the one hand, the imagination of having a modern life through migration was broken down with the changing image of the village. On the other hand, this change signifies the impossibility of going back home; it is the recognition that there is no home as she envisions it to be. She must face the fact that the nostalgia for the village is a myth that is no more or maybe has never been at the first place. This nostalgia for the past time turns the image of the village into a static spatial zone belonging to a static past time which is defined by the characteristics of strong bonding between people and intimate knowledge and respect for each other. In her narrative, the attribution of these characteristics ends with the recognition that she and the village no longer belong to that spatio-temporal zone as the village has become the mirror image of the city with technology etc. invading the household. Leyla Neyzi says that migration, whether it is rural to urban or transnational, cut youth off from the spaces of their childhood and accordingly affects their sense of time (Neyzi, 1999: 4). Thus, narrating this rapid change in a short time in the village, Kader speaks like an elderly person who mourns for the past.

The way youth and children remember the village is inevitably related to why and how they migrated from the village. The narrative I quoted above is a typical, generalizable narrative for most of the migrants irrespective of their ethnicity. While for the ones who migrated to Adana for economic reasons, the village refers to a lack and is characterized the irreversibility of migration, for the members of forcibly displaced families the village signifies a place of violence.

I met Fırat, a 21 year old man in the Democracy and Culture House (DCH)<sup>23</sup> established in the neighborhood. He has 12 brothers and sisters. His father had two marriages; he was one of the children from the second marriage. His family is from Diyarbakır and was subjected to displacement. The family moved to Gündoğan at

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<sup>23</sup> DCH was established by the Kurdish activists in Adana. It is situated at the border of Gündoğan and another Kurdish neighborhood. It is a place where people get together, organize activities about Kurdish issue. Children and youth of the neighborhood spend their free time there.



the beginning of the 1990s. He graduated from high school, and works with his family who sells fruits and vegetables in the bazaar, yet he spends most of his time in the DCH. Fırat was six years old when the displacement took place. He narrates the following story:

I was little, six or seven years old. I was in the village. It was a winter day. It was raining. Back then, soldiers had a big impact on us. We were very afraid. I had a big brother, he said to me, the soldier is coming. I was wearing a green-red vest. I already knew that soldiers didn't like it. I ran. I fell down and the vest got all muddy. I didn't know the reason, but I knew that it wasn't loved. For instance, we were talking with the children, saying that if you do your finger like this, soldiers don't do anything, but if you do like this, soldiers cut your finger.

Soldiers came to search; I remember very well, we were in the village. They came. Their feet were muddy. It was a winter day. They went and stepped on the carpet with that mud. The carpet got all dirty. Then, at that age, I resented. For us, it's like that; the carpet lying inside the house is like kind of honor. Nobody enters the house with shoes because of customs.

We were thinking that soldiers are evil. For instance, on our last day, the day we arrived, we were getting in the car. There was a dog, it barked. The soldier opened a big hole on that animal with a bullet. In front of our eyes. Back then we were six years old.

[When we were in the village] the soldiers were coming and taking our fathers. There was a school in our village, they were taking them there. They were cutting half of their moustaches and beating them<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Ben ufaktım, altı yedi yaşındaydım, köydeydim, kış günüydü, yağmur yağıyordu. O zaman askerlerin üzerimizde büyük bir etkisi vardı, biz çok korkuyorduk. Benim büyük abim vardı, bana dedi asker geliyor. Benim üstümde de yeşil-kırmızı bir yelek vardı, ben yani biliyordum askerler bunu sevmiyor. Ben koştum, yere düştüm, yelek de hep çamur oldu. Sebebini bilmiyordum ama sevilmediğini biliyordum. Mesela biz çocuklarla konuşuyorduk, diyorduk ki parmağını böyle yaparsan askerler bir şey yapmıyor ama böyle yaparsan diyor parmağını kesiyor askerler (iki parmağını üste koyarsan parmağını kesiyorlar ama elini açık tutarsan kesmiyorlar).

Askerler aramaya geldi, ben çok iyi hatırlıyorum, köydeydik. Geldi ayakları çamurdu, kış günüydü. O çamurla gidip halının üstüne bastı, halı hep kirlendi. O zaman o yaşta benim gerçekten çok zoruma gitti. Bizde şöyle bir şey, evin içine serilen halı bir nevi namus gibidir. Bizde hiç kimse eve ayakkabıyla giremiyor. Girmiyor, geleneklerden dolayı.

Fırat's memories about the village are marked by state violence. What he remembers are some episodes and images about state violence directed against his family members and intervention of the state to the intimate familial/domestic sphere. Therefore, the village turns out to be a place where the state implements violence. What is at stake in his narrative is how one can give meaning to the unpredictable and omnipresent violence one experiences. Yet, his endeavor to understand violence when he was a child also contributes to mythologizing it. Fear from an act that is not grounded in any explainable logic in his universe of meaning but is rather based on the color of a shirt, an item; a gesture of the hand dominates his narrative. The perpetrator of the violence is known through and embodied in the figure of the soldier. The points of its realization, however, is unknown, cannot be patterned, does not fit any context, and made sense of, thereby leading to mythologizing of the violence through making up stories as to what might provoke the perpetrators. The circulating stories among the children revolve around the need to impart a meaning to the possible ways this violence might be actualized on their bodies.

The majority of my interviewees were born in Adana; therefore they did not personally experience state violence, but grow up with its post-memory transmitted by the older generations. Murat narrates the story of his family's migration and experiences:

M: My family, honestly I don't remember. But, they came from a district of Mardin called Savur. They came here because our village there was shut down. The gendarmes shut it down. There happened... well... They raided. One of our relatives died, you see, he was martyred there. Now, before that they arrested my uncle for aid and abet. They gave him electric shocks. His lungs collapsed, then he died there. And we couldn't manage in the village. Besides, I have an aunt-in-law. One of the police had

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Biz askerlerin cani olduğunu düşünüyorduk. Mesela son günde biz geldiğimizde, arabaya biniyoruz. Bir köpek vardı, havladı, hani asker o köpekte büyük bir delik açtı mermiyle. Bizim gözümüzün önünde. O zaman biz altı yaşındaydık. [Köydeyken] askerler gelip babalarımızı alıyorlardı, bizim köyde bir okul vardı, oraya götürüyorlardı, bıyıklarının yarısını kesiyor, dövüyorlardı.

called her, done dirty things to her. He rapes her and so on. They had called her but one police, I mean, there had also been the good ones. One of them had taken her and asked her her house. And after that they [my family] had come here. Now we are here<sup>25</sup>.

As seen in his narrative, Murat did not experience the state violence in the village but he listened to the stories from his parents concerning how his family was forcibly displaced. Nevertheless he narrates these stories as if he personally witnessed/experienced the events, which signifies the formation of a post-memory. Not only the detailed information he gave and his clear and fluid way of narration but most importantly the grammar he used turns a circulated story into testimony. In Turkish there are two tenses to narrate past events. The one is with the suffix “miş” and the other “di”. “Miş” refers to an event that was not experienced by the narrator but was heard. However, “di” refers to an event that was experienced by the narrator. Murat frequently uses “di” even though he did not experience those events. But he uses “miş” only when he narrates the story of rape as it is an issue hard to speak about. The usage of “di” signifies that he internalized heard stories and turned them into his own testimony. Another significant aspect of his narrative is that he uses “we” when he says “we could not manage in the village” when actually he was not yet born. Word choice makes visible one’s political positioning particularly in the context of the Kurdish issue. Murat says “aiding and abetting the guerillas”, in official discourse “aiding and abetting the terrorists” is frequently used. In official discourse rather than “guerilla”, “terrorist” is used for the cadres of the PKK. What Murat does is to combine the state language and oppositional language by using the words “guerilla” and “aiding and abetting” in the same sentence.

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<sup>25</sup> M: Bizimkiler vallahi ben hatırlamıyorum ama onlar da Mardin’in Savur diye bir ilçesinde orada köyümüz kapandığı için geldiler buraya. Şey, jandarmalar kapattı, orada şey oldu, baskın yaptılar, bir tane bizim akrabamız öldü işte, şehit oldu orada. Şimdi ondan önce de amcamı gerillalara yardım ve yataklıktan onu yakalamışlardı, elektrik verdiler ona, ciğerleri artık iflas etti, orada öldü artık. Biz de dayanamadık. Bir de hatta benim bir yengem var, polisin biri üstüne çağırmış ona, ona pislikler yapmış, tecavüz falan ediyor. Çağırmışlar ama bir polis yani iyi olanlar da varmış, almış onu evini sormuş, işte sonra buraya gelmişler, artık buradayız.

H: But your family was here by then, right?

Ahmet: It has been about forty years. My dad used to come here for work. They would go back during the summers for our possessions, like the land and stuff. He would come here for work in winters. But later they kicked us out after telling us that we would be withdrawn from the village unless we agree to become guards and fight against the PKK. So we were told that we would leave our village. They left no villages, no cultivated lands, no trees or no mountains after we went. They burnt everything down. They told us to bear arms; I find it very absurd this condition that they oblige on us. I am serious, I mean you are the security forces, you call yourself responsible from security, you say you're the army, but how come can you threaten a villager to bear arms, are not you the security force, why don't you do it yourself? If you call yourself the army, if you think you have the power, go and find them. Go and do whatever is needed, if you can attack, kill, or catch them, go and do it. No? How come that you cannot grapple with them?

H: So, do you remember the village fires or evacuations?

A: Well, I saw the ruins, I saw the way they left it when I went there ten years ago.

H: So, when did they fire the village, I mean, were you there or here by that time?

A: After throwing everyone out. My dad tells we settle into this town the last time we came to Adana. So, they came to the village, a whole crowd of soldiers, generals and stuff, they announced the villagers that they either emptied the village on a supposed date or all of them would bear arms, and a salary. It's 300-400 million liras in today's money, could you sell yourself for 300-400? Could you really? Not. You have to be on guard duty every day as if there is nothing else to do. You cannot achieve it yourself as the army, you're in trouble after doing this and that; you then find refugee in the United States, then to Iraq, you say please come and let's do it together. They cannot do it alone, they say the army has 3 million members but they cannot deal with the 5 thousand guerillas over there. They then used the villagers, and the villagers had to leave after seeing that it was not something they would want to be part of. My dad used to tell us that there is so much to say about this state - I swear.

H: In what year did this happen?

A: It was in the nineties, ninety three, ninety four.

H: Don't you remember?

A: I don't remember. I remember it here, there was almost a similar process going on in this place<sup>26</sup>.

Ahmet is a 22 year-old man from Mardin. He has four sisters and three brothers. His mother and father died one after the other a few years ago. He finished primary school and then started to work in bazaars to sell vegetables and fruit. Two years ago, he eloped with a girl who was already engaged to another man. Yet, since

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<sup>26</sup> H: O zaman sizinkiler buradaydı ama değil mi?

A: Kırk sene oluyor. Babam çalışma amacıyla geliyormuş. Yazın gidiyorlarmış oraya geri mallarımızın üstüne, tarla marla. Kışın da buraya gelirmiş çalışma amacıyla. Ama daha sonra bizi kovdukları için ya işte ya keleşleri alacaksınız, PKK ile savaşacaksınız ya da bu köyden sürüleceksiniz. Yani göçeceksiniz buradan. Yani biz göçtükten sonra onlar ne ev bıraktı ne bağ bıraktı ne ağaç bıraktı ne dağ bıraktı. Her şeyi yaktılar. Ya silah alacaksınız, ya şimdi bu silah alın diyor ya ben çok mantıksız buluyorum. Gerçek diyorum ya sen nasıl ya güvenlik güçlerisin, ben güvenlik gücüyüm diyorsun, güvenlik gücü, orduyum diyorsun bir köylüyü tehdit ediyorsun, işte ya silah alacaksın, sen güvenlik gücü değil misin, kendin git. Madem orduyum diyon, kuvvetliyim diyon, git yakala. Git gerekeni yap, vurabiliyorsan, öldürebiliyorsan, yakalayabiliyorsan git yap. Değil mi? Sen nasıl yani sen orada çatışman ki onlarla.

H: Peki sen hatırlıyor musun köy yakmalarını ya da boşaltmalarını?

A: Yani ben enkazı gördüm, yani on sene önce ben gittiğimde o bıraktıkları hali gördüm.

H: Peki ne zaman yakmışlar köyü, siz yani o sırada orda mıydınız yoksa burada mı?

A: Hepsini kovduktan sonra işte zaten babam anlatıyor diyor biz Adana'ya geldiğimizde bu en son köye yerleşmiştik, diyor ondan sonra köye gelmişler, bayağı kalabalık bir asker, komutan falan, işte anons etmişler köylülere, işte falan tarihte buradan çıkacaksınız ya da hepinize keleş vereceğiz, aylık da vereceğiz, bugünün parasıyla 300-400 milyon para, ya sen 300-400'e kendini satabilir misin? Satılır mı insan? Yok. Senin işin gücün yok git her gün keleşle nöbet tut. Sen yenemiyon kockocaman ordusun, götün sıkışıyor gidiyorsun geliyorsun, ondan sonra Amerika'ya sığınıyorsun, ondan sonra Irak'a sığınıyorsun, işte gel beraber yapak. Tek yapamıyor, koskocaman, diyor 3 milyon benim ordum var diyor orada 5 bin gerillayla başa çıkamıyon. Sonra köylüleri kullandı, köylüler de baktı ki olmayacak bir şeydir bu, hemen çıktılar geldiler. Babam anlatıyordu ya bu devlet var ya anlata anlata bitmez. Namusuma.

H: Bu kaç yılında oluyor?

A: Bu doksan yıllarında, doksan üç, doksan dört.

H: Sen hatırlamıyorsun?

A: Hatırlamıyorum. Burada hatırlıyorum, burada da hemen hemen o benzerlikte bir süreç yaşıyordu.

everyone in their community was against this relationship, the relationship could not continue, and they were separated. Now, the girl is living with her family without any hope to get married again as she is marked by this ‘betrayal’. Ahmet is living with a married sister.

Like Murat, Ahmet also did not experience or witness the burning of his village and other violent attacks of Turkish soldiers. What is at stake in his narration is that he uses “di” and “miş” together. While “di” refers to a visible, experienced time, “miş” that is commonly used to tell fairy tales delineates a past time that is beyond individual experience, and whose knowledge is inherited. When he narrates state violence he uses “di” but when he talks about his family’s practices he uses “miş”. His varying usage of these two past tenses signifies two different temporalities pertaining to a single moment; one belongs to the state which is concrete (real) in its happening, the other belongs to the family which is more fluid, which belongs to a distant time that cannot be discerned with the same concreteness.

### Narratives of Struggle

Violence experienced in the village and urban life was transformed into anonymous experiences through circulating stories in the public and private spheres in the neighborhood. I came to realize this phenomenon during my interviews, particularly after the ones that I conducted with Eren, an eleven year-old child. I intended to make an interview with a child who is not being mobilized within the movement of children in the neighborhood to understand what kind of a universe paves the way for the politicization and mobilization of children through comparing different experiences and trajectories of childhood. I thought that he was not a part of stone-throwing-politicized children as I know him and his family personally. However he said that he attended many demonstrations organized in the neighborhood and gave detailed information about how they came together and clashed with the police.

In our neighborhood, here, there is a field, we were going there, lighting a fire, chanting slogans, then we were running away. We are organizing demonstration for our people’s freedom. Once we did it and the police came, they came after us, we threw stones,

we escaped. We went into the sideways. I mean no one forces us. We put 3-4 tires on top of one another, light it up and the police come. We throw stones to the police. When the police catch us, they hit severely. At that time, there were policemen, we chanted slogans, then the police started coming toward us. We immediately grabbed stones and threw to the police. The police were coming slowly. We escaped to the side streets. We do the demonstration for our people's freedom. I always join, I am always a Kurds, I will defend my Kurdishness. I will continue being a Kurd<sup>27</sup>.

This interview was one of the most surprising interviews conducted in the field. Right after the interview, Eren said that he lied during most of the interview in order to help me. He had apparently overheard my conversation with my relatives and gathered that I had trouble finding stonethrower informants due to the intensification of the state oppression over the Kurdish organizations during my fieldwork. Interestingly, the made-up story he narrated was very similar to those of the politicized children that I talked to. How come that he narrates these unexperienced experiences, made-up stories of state violence and resistance in such a consistent, detailed, and fluid way? Another question concerns the theoretical framework within which stories of violence have been discussed. There is a literature on the experiences of violence and trauma focusing on the unspeakability of these experiences since the telling destroys the integrity of the body, self, and language itself (Scarry). However, my informants narrated these circulating stories of violence/trauma very clearly and consistently as if they were their own which makes it clear that these stories were narrated many times.

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<sup>27</sup> E: Biz böyle mahallede tarla var bizim burada biz oraya gidiyorduk ateş yakıyorduk, slogan atıyorduk, biz kaçıyorduk. Eylemler yapıyoruz halkımızın özgürlüğü için. Bir gün yapmıştık işte tamam mı polis gelmişti, arkamızdan gelmişlerdi, biz taş attık, kaçtık. Hemen aralara girdik. Bizi kimse zorlamıyor yani. Gidiyor üç-dört tane lastiği üst üste koyuyoruz, yakıyoruz, polis geliyor. Taş atıyoruz polislere. Polisler bizi yakaladı mı çok pis dövüyor. O anda da orada polisler vardı, biz slogan attık, yavaş yavaş polisler bizi doğru gelmeye başladılar. Biz elimize hemen taş aldık işte attık polislere. Polisler yavaş yavaş geliyorlardı. Ara sokaklara kaçtık. Eylemleri halkımın özgürlüğü için yapıyoruz. Bundan sonra da her zaman katılırım, her zaman Kürdüm, Kürtlüğümü de savunacam. Kürt olamaya devam edeceğim.

Then, how are we going to think of these consistent and articulate narratives of violence and trauma given the existence of a whole literature asserting the unspeakability of experiences which destroys the integrity of the body, self, and language itself? How are we going to re-conceptualize the tripartite relation between experience, memory and trauma in the light of these narratives, the genre and texture of which disrupt the conventional approaches and the main concepts of memory studies and story-telling? In the arena of memory studies, there is a tendency to approach trauma in a psychologized and individualized perspective. Since this literature takes the individual at the center and it focuses on the unspeakability of trauma, the politics becomes “attenuated to the point of inaccessibility” (Radstone, 2008: 36). This literature ignores the potential of politics as politics itself can be considered to be an endeavor to cope with trauma. I argue that the strength of these stories cannot be understood by relating them to the relationship of memory and trauma but to the relationship between the act of telling and community. The strength of these stories comes from reiteration itself; from retelling them and hearing them over and over again. Meanwhile, among the young, the experience and narratives of violence become a collective repertoire that anyone can utilize, elaborate, and perform. Different from the unspeakability of fragmented individual, in this case, the politics, the struggle, the post memory (the interactions and transitions between generations) give the youth and children the opportunity of narration. Therefore, rather than fragmenting, the trauma itself makes the subjects. I would even go as far as arguing that in Gündoğan, it is the circulation of these stories, more than any ethnic commonality that makes up the content of Kurdishness. Kurdishness, which is often thought of as a lack, or worse as an incapacity to speak in publicly intelligible ways, becomes a nodal point for articulating injustice and violence as a result of these narratives. Instead of being non-knowledge, a disintegration of language and world, suffering becomes a source of knowing otherwise.

What led me to think about the relationality among community and narrative is that I had to conduct some interviews in crowded places. People around us were friends of my interviewee. During the interview, they interrupted the narration of the interviewee and told their own stories. First, I tried to stop these interruptions but



then I came to understand that they narrate the same stories, or one single collective story. The narrative of the interviewee became a theme and through the line of his life story everyone added their stories. For example, when the narrator told something about the burning of his village, others narrated how their villages were burnt down. When he told something about police's attack to his home in the beginning of 1990s in the neighborhood, the others narrated how their homes were attacked by the police. Also, others' testimonies reminded my interviewee of different stories and accounts. Therefore, I thought what I was listening to was a single story or different stories becoming one story through reiteration. They were talking about publicly unclaimed, collectively anonymous experiences.

Not only the violence in the village but also migration, the claustrophobic atmosphere in the neighborhood that restricts certain groups of people to particular spaces, and the difficulties of urban life build up a repertoire. This repertoire is a pre-prepared/available language allowing the subjects to narrate what is individually unspeakable. In other words, collective experiences and narrations constitute a language that can be mobilized in any attempt to make sense of the history of struggle and everyday practices in the neighborhood. For example, I asked a child to tell why his family migrated to Adana. He said he does not remember. During the interview, other children interrupted us and narrated their stories of migration. Then, the child said: "When you asked me I did not remember but my father, as far as I remember, narrated such a story" and he told a similar story.

Charles Piot says, individuals cannot be "considered apart from their ontologically prior social context- from the community of relationship into which they are born and within which they live" (Piot, 1999: 17). In his ethnographic research on an African society, he says that in that society individuals are "constantly involved in, and defined through, relations" (Ibid, 18). He adds:

If however, social relationship is presupposed, if the person is always an aspect of various relationships, we should see this person as composed of, or constituted by, relationships, rather than as situated in them. Persons here do not "have" relations; they are relations (Ibid).

Piot depicts a “fluid”, “diffused” self that is “multiple and permeable, and infused with the presences of others” (Ibid, 19). I think this conceptualization of relational self is inspiring for my analysis. The recalling of shared memories and the retelling of shared histories/experiences build up relational subjects and determine to a large extent how childhood and youth will be experienced.

There is no doubt that the reiteration of stories is inevitably related to the experiences of urban life. Displaced people were exposed to an explicit violence in the form of torture, harassment, burning of villages, killings. When they were forcibly moved to urban space, in this case to Adana, violence did not end but took different forms and it was accompanied by exclusion, discrimination, and poverty. I think the stories concerning the violence in the village forms the ground upon which the oppositional subjectivities of the children and youth can express themselves and frames how present grievances and discrimination in urban space will be represented. In other words, instead of the past being a trace in the present it is the stories of the past that bear the traces of the present. Because the present is hardly speakable without being infected by the professionalized discourses of poverty, education and rehabilitation which constitute the Kurdish subject as a space of lack, stories of the past becomes a vehicle for occupying the position of self-knowing subjects. Meanwhile, these stories become enmeshed with and give sense to the different modalities of violence including poverty, discrimination and the claustrophobic atmosphere in which they are circumscribed. These stories help give meaning to these experiences, to name 'discrimination', to come to realize the unequal lives they are exposed to in the urban world. In the urban world, violence is no more an imposition which cannot be reasoned and grasped, and therefore mythologized; it is concretely felt on the body. It is observable by everyone despite its more subtle and legal forms, because they already have a repertoire to speak of violence and suffering by means of the village stories they have accumulated.

Walter Benjamin states: “For an experienced event is finite- at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before and after it” (Benjamin, cited in Portelli, 2001: 1). The memory that children and youth inherited from family history

and the circulating narrations of displacement form a basis for all events before and after displacement. Therefore, a memory of a violent event of a past time as a marker of cruelty of the state comes to be the representative of all modes of oppression.

The experience of the violence that took place in the village, an event whose knowledge he does not have, becomes the signifier that runs like a thread establishing an understanding of the subtle, everyday violence he lives in the city space. The knowledge of the event his family witnessed that marked a violent change in their lives and that led them to migrate to the city is transmitted to him through the narratives of the family. This narrative acts as a meaning making center that establishes a link between the symbolic and economic forms of violence he confronts in the city. It becomes the source of a “poisonous knowledge” (Das, 2000) that shapes his interpretation of the past and the present as a combined moment. The temporality embedded in his narrative also signifies that what they were exposed to was not a chain of events but a single catastrophe (Löwy).

On the other hand, the circulation of stories symbolizes a form of knowledge that empowers the subjects in a collectivity where these stories are circulated. The poisonous knowledge I am talking about that is gained both through experience and the telling of stories addresses the suffering of Kurds and the cruelty of the state; yet, it also secures that the loss and victimization Kurds lived through will manifest itself not as mourning but as resentment that is productive. When I asked my informants to explain why predominantly youth and children are mobilized in the Kurdish movement, they said that since their parents were living in the village and did not know what was going on, they were suppressed. It was the young who can make sense of what happened; who “knew” what happened. What took place in various places, whether it is inherited or lived presently and acquired through different media, forms the ground for this resentment.

F: The reason why the youth struggle is that youth by nature, for instance as the technology has developed, can follow some things, can see them, can express his thoughts on them. Sometimes some things clash with their thoughts; on the basis of this consciousness, they join the demonstrations. The reason why the families don't is

that, for instance when I was caught, I lived as an escapee for about 6 months. My dad was saying ‘‘Go, surrender, state is omnipotent, how much can you escape?’’ But the youth don’t think this way. However big is the state, a struggle is made against it; for instance the same is seen when you look at the emergence of the PKK.

The life of the family has passed under the domination of the military; therefore it lives in a fright which does not exist in the youth. We grew up here, in the metropolis. Everything can be done; there is nothing that cannot be done; only if we desire it.

Internet, Roj TV, newspapers; there wasn’t Azadiya Welat (A pro-Kurdish newspaper), Roj TV in the past; no one knew what the Kurds were doing. If the unknown-perpetrator killings were given coverage in the media, that many people could not be killed. Now you hear of anything that happens in Kandil on the same day. You evaluate it; you see that injustice is done to you. You show your reaction.

They lived that fear for a period of time, but we lived it for a short period. Theirs remained as fear; ours turned into anger, fear transformed into anger against the system<sup>28</sup>.

The repertoire of knowledge does not only consist of stories of violence but also major and current political issues of the Kurds discussed in public. All of the

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<sup>28</sup> F: Gençliğin mücadele etmesinin sebebi gençlik özü itibarıyla, mesela teknoloji gelişmiş, bazı şeyler takip edebiliyor, görebiliyor, bunlar hakkında düşüncelerini belirtebiliyor. Düşüncelerine ters gelen şeyler oluyor, bu bilinçten kaynaklı gençlik şey yapıyor, eylemlere katılıyor. Ailelerin yapmamasının sebebi şeydir, ben yakalandığımda altı ay falan kaçak gezdim. Babam diyordu git teslim ol, devlet büyüktür, sen ne kadar kaçacaksın, ama gençlik böyle düşünmüyor, devlet ne kadar büyük olursa olsun, sonuçta ona karşı bir mücadele verilir, yani mesela PKK’nin ilk çıkışına baktığında da aynı şey görülür. Ailenin hayatı askeriyenin tahakkümü altında geçmiş bu yüzden içinde bir korku var gençlerde o yok. Biz burada yetiştik, metropolde. Her şey yapılabilir, yapılamayacak şey yoktur biz yeter ki isteyelim. İnternet, Roj TV, gazeteler, eskiden bir Azadiya Welat yoktu, bir Roj TV yoktu, Kürtlere ne yapıyorlar, hiç kimsenin haberi yoktu. Eskiden faili meçhuller basında yer alsaydı o kadar insan öldürülemezdi, şimdi Kandil’de olan bir şeyi aynı gün haber alıyorsun. Bunu değerlendiriyorsun, sana bir haksızlığın olduğunu görüyorsun. Buna karşı tepkini gösteriyorsun. Onlar baya bir dönem o korkuyu yaşadılar yalnız bizim bir kısa bir dönem yaşadık. Onları korku olarak kaldı bizimki öfkeye dönüştü, sisteme karşı öfkeye dönüştü korku.

informants are following the debates closely. For example, after the news of the killing of a child by the police in Hakkari, the following discussion took place:

Murat: I learnt it through internet, we got upset about it, he was one of us. He was almost at the same age with me. They hit his head. For instance, the news always say like ‘‘the terrorist organization again gave them stones.’’ On the other hand, they speak well; they said the one who did this should be discharged. Star TV again says they, the terrorists put the children forward<sup>29</sup>.

Especially in schools, these children and youth have intense discussions with teachers about the Kurdish question. The narratives that I will quote in the following section illustrate clearly how they follow the Kurdish movement through the media.

The knowledge acquired by the possibilities present in the urban space such as education, learning Turkish, having access to internet and TV enabled the emergence of subjectivities that diverge from an expected process of integration to the established order. The integration of the migrants to the order of the city is regarded as possible if given the ‘‘necessary’’ tools such as access to language (Turkish for Kurds) and institutions. However, in this context, this availability and knowledge work in reverse; learning Turkish and getting education and entry to these institutions enable these children to maneuver within that space in line with the struggle they envision.

Knowledge production does not only consist of memory of violence and various oppressions of the state, but also includes the knowledge of their past struggle against the state in the neighborhood. Therefore, I relate the way they remember the neighborhood of the 1990s. As a stigmatized space, the neighborhood has various memories for both inhabitants and outsiders (Turkish). For the Kurds it was a safe haven called ‘‘Küçük Kürdistan’’ or ‘‘Şırnak’’. In this sense, it was the

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<sup>29</sup> Murat: İnternette öğrenim, ona da üzöldük, o da bizden biriydi. On iki, on üç, işte benim yaşlarımdaydı. Kafasına vurmuşlar. Mesela haberler hep diyor işte ‘‘yine terör örgütü ellerine taş verdi’’ falan, bir yandan da güzel konuşular dediler bunu yapan görevliyi görevden alsınlar. Star’da da yine teröristler diyor, öne sürdüler çocukları diyor.

space and symbol of struggle. Yet, particularly for middle class Turks, it was an object of fear.

Mehmet is a 26 year old young man. His family is from Mardin and they were exposed to displacement in the 1990s. After he finished high school, he could not pass the university entrance exam and he is unemployed now.

H: What do you remember from the years of the 1990s?

M: 92 was very intense, there was mass support to the PKK. We can say that at that time Gündoğan was one of the safe havens of the PKK. Even the state's existence was not that much felt at that period; this was the neighborhood where the police can't enter. Now there is one station, it is a new one; about ten years old. At that time, for instance Newroz, the other special days of Kurdish movement were intensely felt, lived here. The shutters were all taken down. And I remember everything very well, all the men of the neighborhood were joining these marches. Police baricades were dense, you know sometimes they show it on TV; in Israel, the Israeli soldiers do similar acts against the Palestinians. Of course, at that time we were not able to understand, but were just looking; I mean the police panzers, soldiers etcetera. As I said, at that time here was a safe haven of the PKK. They were managing the peace here. For instance, at that time here you wouldn't see anyone smoking hashish in the middle of the street. Not possible. There was not even a chance for people to run gambling houses. The police were also not able to enter much<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> H: 90'lı yıllara dair neler hatırlıyorsun?

M: 92 süreci çok yoğundu, kitleler bütünüyle PKK'nin hareketine destek veriyordu. Diyebiliriz ki Gündoğan o dönem PKK'nin kurtarılmış bölgelerinden bir yerdi. Hatta o dönem burada devletin yoğunluğu pek fazla hissedilemiyordu ki bir dönem polislerin giremediği bir mahalleydi bura. Şu anda bir tane karakol var, karakolun mazisi çok yenidir. Bir on seneyi bulmuştur. O zaman mesela Newrozlar, Kürt hareketnin özel günleri çok yoğun hissedilir, yoğun yaşanırdı burada. Tüm kepenkler indirilirdi. Ve şeyi çok iyi hatırlıyorum, mahallenin tüm erkekleri bu yürüyüşlere katılırdı. Polis barikatları çok yoğun, hani bazen televizyonda gösterirler ya İsrail'de Filisten'e karşı İsrail askerlerinin Filistinlilere karşı ona benzer hareketler vardı. Tabi o zaman bizim aklımız ermiyor sadece bir macera gözüyle bakıyorsun, böyle panzerler polisler askerler falan. Dediğim gibi o dönem burası PKK'nin kurtarılmış bölgelerindendi. Ve burada asayışı onlar düzenliyor. Örneğin o dönemler burada sokak ortasında esrar içen kimseyi göremezdin. İmkani yoktu. Kumar oynatan yerler söz konusu bile olmazdı. Polis de pek fazla giremiyordu.

Erkan is a 27 years old young man born in Gündoğan. He belongs to a Kurdish Alevi family from Adıyaman. They migrated to Adana in the 1980s for economic reasons. After Erkan completed high school, like Mehmet, he could not pass the university entrance exam and now he works as a waiter in a restaurant.

E: When we think of the 1990s... The question of whether you go to the mosque or not did not exist. The headscarf did not exist. Do you pray... Actually there wasn't any problem whether you are an Alevi. In the 1990s no one our identity... no one was interested in our identity. No one was concerned whether you fast or not. There were no such things my brother. We were so free. Your only problem was your race. Are you Kurdish, yes I am, that's it. I mean no repressive policies that the Sunnis adopt now existed. I mean it was such a neighborhood until I finished the primary school. But now it is horrible, there is Islamism everywhere. There is everything now. It is more chaotic now you see. The only thing for us was Kurdishness, but they knew that we were Kurds, that's it. Therefore no one interfered with us. Actually they respected us. They knew that we were Alevis; at that time they respected that we were Alevis. This is, this really is a beautiful thing, but we did not understand at that time.

H: Why do you think this changed?

E: When the PKK was there, in Gündoğan no one... but no one... could take an askance look to a girl. No one could ever use drugs, ever steal; not even spend his time in coffee houses. An unbelievable... a harmonious system did exist. But now, it ended, ok. And I believe, this police, this state; they themselves passed in the drugs<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> E: 90'lı yılları düşünürsek.... Camiye gittin mi, gitmedin mi yoktu. Türban olayı yoktu. Sen namaz kılıyon mu.... sen Alevi misin diye bir problem de yoktu aslında. 90'lı yıllarda kimse bizim kimliğimizi... Alevi kimliğimizle ilgilenmiyordu. Oruç tuttun mu tutmadın mı karışmıyorlardı. Hiçbir şey yoktu abiciğim. O kadar özgürdü ki... Tek problem ırkındı yani senin. Kürt müsün, evet Kürdüm, tamam o zaman. Yani şu anki Sünnilerin yaptığı hiçbir böyle ezici politika yoktu o zaman ilkokulu bitirene kadar öyle bir mahalleydi yani. Ama şu an iğrenç bir şekilde her tarafta sofizm, işte. Her şey var şu an. Şu an daha karışık anladın mı. Biz daha saf bir yerde yaşadık. Bizim köylüler o yüzden rahattı anladın mı hani. Bizim tek şeyimiz Kürtlüktü ama Kürt olduğumuzu da biliyorlardı bu. O yüzden kimse bize karışmıyordu. Ve aslında bize saygı duyuyorlardı. Bizim Alevi olduğumuzu biliyorlardı, Alevi olduğumuza saygı duyuyorlardı o dönem. Bunun var ya, bu çok güzel bir şey, biz o an anlamadık ama.

H: Peki niye değişti sence?

The narratives above are from two different points of view, but they share memories about the power of the PKK in the neighborhood and its order as bearing a morality. For both Mehmet and Erkan, the neighborhood of the 1990s symbolizes the hegemony of the PKK or the safe haven of the Kurds. The nostalgia for the past when PKK was strong and glorious is significant in both of the narratives. Yet, while Mehmet emphasized the political solidarity of that time, Erkan underlined how in a universe under the hegemony of the PKK, categories regulating or separating the relationships among communities ceased to be of any value. As I suggested, the ones who did not experience the violent events in the village listened to the stories told by the older people. Similarly, the ones who did not experience or remember Gündoğan of the 1990s listened to the stories about the powerful time of the PKK from the older ones. The neighbourhood, in the earlier times when PKK had an intense presence and the law-making capability in terms of bringing together different segments of the Kurdish society, is portrayed as having been transformed to with the retreat of the organization from the neighbourhood.

The knowledge about the neighborhood in the 1990s that signifies the struggle of the Kurds against the oppression of the state whether it is experienced or internalized as a post-memory, shapes both the nature of the struggle today and the relationship of the youth and children to Gündoğan.

## Conclusion

I argued in this chapter that memory plays an imminent role in the construction of the political subjectivities of the youth in Gündoğan, whether this memory is

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E: PKK varken, Gündoğan'nda hiç kimse... hiç kimse ama... bir kıza yan gözle bakamazdı. Uyuşturucu asla içemezdi, hırsızlık asla yapamazdı. Zamanını kahvede bile asla geçiremezdi. İnanılmaz bir... uyum içinde bir işleyen bir sistem vardı. Ama şu an, o bitti tamam mı. Ve ben inanıyorum ki, uyuşturucuyu da, bu polis, bu devlet kendi soktu.



experienced or inherited. Dwelling in Gündoğan where various forms of oppression due to poverty and exclusion continue becomes possible for the youth by creating, using, consuming, and contributing to a collective repertoire that names violence for what it is. This repertoire is accumulated by the collective oppression that occurred in the village and was transferred to the city. This repertoire also enables the people in Gündoğan to continue the struggle today and frames the way they express their current oppression. In the narratives, while the state emerges as an irrational and immoral force, PKK is known through its order and morality which makes the former a mythical force and the latter a real, accessible, and desired authority. In such a context, the youth see themselves as the inheritors of PKK and yet, also feel that they lack the moral guidance it provided. It is the political act and the struggle that make them the inheritors of the PKK, which signifies that politics is perceived as a purifying force providing them a morality. Accordingly, struggling, continuing to struggle, remaking oneself through the available media, information, tech-saviness become for them the only way to “be,” to “dwell” and to “belong.” The political in Gündoğan is thus transformed into an everyday phenomenon whereby the performance, the expression, and the recollection “of the past” constantly orients and burdens what one should do and choose today. The political is also endowed with moral meanings because with the weakening of PKK’s presence, and the disintegration of familial authority, morality has once more become an open question that must be addressed and resolved in every action one engages in. Finally, I argue that the collective memory of oppression together with a desire for a moral order is what constitutes Kurdishness, makes it into an everyday concern, and also opens up a space for the formation of the individuality and collective.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE LANDSCAPE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

My aim in this chapter will be to pose the question of subjectivity and the political in relation to the landscape of Gündoğan neighborhood. I will show that the youth and children in Gündoğan are continuously “pushed out” to specific places. While girls are contained in the houses or in spaces considered to be non-public, boys are unwanted in the houses and are confined to public spaces. Accordingly, both genders feel claustrophobic and employ strategies to make the places where they are confined to “theirs.” By their performances the meaning of the places they are “pushed out” to change and a feeling of freedom emerges. Actually, as will be clear at the end of this chapter, for the whole neighborhood privatization of the public by performance during demonstrations --when they are pitted against the state-- is a shared and politically signified act.

In the previous chapter, I argued that a prepared, collective (public) memory is privatized by the youth and children, and that they express both the experiences of the past and the present through a common language. In this sense, the difference between collective and individual memory is highly blurred. Similarly, the spaces of the neighborhood slip between the private and the public as the public constantly becomes privatized and the private becomes publicized by the practices of youth and children. Indeed, it is performativity that determines what is public and what is private. In this chapter I will show that these performances are informed by the relationship between the state and the Kurdish community: The bodies of the Kurds are always-already accessible to the state’s intervention. The body, the home, and -in some cases- the neighborhood that are supposed to be private spaces become spaces of the state. Özhan is a 26 year old young man born in Gündoğan. His family was forcibly displaced at the end of the 1980s from Mardin. He has ten sisters and brothers. After he finished primary school, he could not continue his education for he had to work. He was arrested 13 times, most of which were due to theft. He was

put in prison for 6 years in total and he saw many cities of Turkey by being transferred in-between different detention centers. Even his first look at Mardin—his home town—was from the window of the police wagon when he was being transferred to a correction center in Elazığ. Özhan says:

I remember, not long ago, 16 years ago, these things, the satellites are just emerging, the Kurdish satellites, Roj TV, Med TV were new. Not many people had them, we did; in the neighborhood one, two people had them. We were afraid to get them, the satellites were on the roofs of the houses, they were covering them with clothes, hiding them with clothes. I mean when they come to take them, I mean the police, beyond all question, directly come, no matter it is two-three at night, attacked the house, they step on you, I mean there is nothing like conscience, they were coming and stepping on us. They were saying “the bastards of Apo, the Armenian bastards, rise.” I remember, they attacked our house at 2, 3 at night. For this satellite thing, for Med Tv, they went into the other room by stepping on us, I mean they were not able to put up with us even that much, he took my brother’s *saz* (a musical instrument), he said you are playing Kurdish songs with this, he would get the *saz* and take it away, we begged them, “this *saz* is not ours, we brought it from somewhere,” he said “you are Apo’s bastards,” he said “we found this in your house.” He said “swear to Apo so that I can know that you are not Apoist,” he was moving by stepping on us. He was telling us to open the room, we were opening the door of the room, he was saying “what is this smell, what kind of a smell is that, how bad does your house smell.” They humiliate us like this, by stepping on us. We I mean, how can I say, they do everything to you<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Ben hatırlıyorum, bundan fazla değil, yani 16 sene önce bizim bu şeyler yeni çıkıyor, Kürt antenler, Roj TV, Med TV, yeni çıkmıştı. Kimsede fazla yoktu, biz almıştık, mahallede bir iki kişide vardı. Korkudan alamıyorduk, evlerin damında olurdu uydular, bezle kapatıyorlardı, saklıyorlardı, bezle saklıyorduk. Yani gelip aldıkları zaman da polisler yani hiç sorgusuz sualsiz, gelip direkt, gece iki de olsa üç de olsa gelip [evi] basar, üstüne de basar yani hiç, vicdan diye bir şey yok, gelip üzerimize basıyorlardı. Aponun piçleri, Ermeni piçleri kalkın lan diyorlardı. Ben hatırlıyorum gece ikide üçte bizim evi bastılar. O uydu şeyi için, Med TV için, üzerimize basarak geçtiler odaya, yani o kadar tahammül edemiyorlardı ki abimin sazını aldı, sen dedi bununla Kürtçe şarkı çalıyorsun, alıp götüreceksin, biz bunlara yalvardık yani bizim değil bu saz, emanettir, bir yerden getirmişiz, siz dedi Aponun piçlerisiniz dedi, biz sizin evde bunu yakaladık dedi. Apo’ya küfredin dedi inanayım sizin Apocu olmadığınızda, üzerimize basarak gidiyordu. Odayı açın diyordu, odanın kapısını açıyorduk, diyordu bu koku ne, bu ne biçim koku, ne biçim

## Kurdishness and Privacy

Can the Kurds have a private space? What is private space for them? Privacy is often a luxury inaccessible to people living in poverty squished in small houses and crowded streets. Gündoğan is not an exception. Men and women in Gündoğan must struggle over spaces, become innovative, at times flexible and at others fierce in order to carve themselves spaces of their own. For young people who have little say in the making of geography and landscape, it is even more difficult to find privacy. Add to this fact that in an environment where all public places are ethnically (Turkish) marked, minorities like Kurds are often made to feel like they are invading other people's privacy when they are in public. On the other hand, not only individual but also familial and communal privacy is always at stake in Kurdish lives. Like in many situations all over the world where certain people continuously live under siege and under the gaze of the state, Kurdish homes are always under the gaze of the state by frequent police raids and house searches. In sum, Kurdish people in Gündoğan cannot count on the distinction and separation between the public and private that other citizens often take for granted in Turkey. I argue that it is through everyday practices and performances that the Kurds create their privacy either in the street or at home. Interestingly in this context, joining the guerilla can also be regarded as an attempt to create the private through living outside the space of the state as well as to struggle against the state.

Surely, not only the state but the societal norms make it impossible for the youth and children to have a space of their own. This is particularly true for the female youth and children. Female youth and children are controlled by confining them to the private (interior). Hence, for girls paradoxically, it is public space and the relative anonymity it gives to them that enables privacy. In this chapter, I will argue that oscillations such as these between private and public indicate how individuals/groups contest the spaces they are confined to and how they re-

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kokuyor sizin ev diyordu. Üzerimize basarak bizi böyle aşağılıyorlar. Bizi yani nasıl diyeyim sana yapmadıklarını bırakmıyorlar.

appropriate urban space. I also argue that the desire for the private among the youth and children is a highly political desire, and the act of privatizing the public by the Kurdish youth is a political act that unveils the deeply ethnic and adult nature of the public.

### Gendered Spaces

Spatial confinements based on gender play an imminent role in the constitution and deconstitution of social relations among groups within the neighborhood. While the interior is women's place, the exterior belongs to boys and men. Young women in the neighborhood generally work in bourgeois houses as cleaners or go to religious Reading Houses. Also a few young women are involved in the Kurdish movement as political actors. I will argue that only through the privatization of public space can young women inhabit these sites where they create public links. On the other hand, young men and children who are confined to the exterior carve out their private spaces in the public through politics, hashish, and gangs. It is in the encounter with the state at school and in demonstrations that group differences in Gündoğan become blurred and once again politics emerges as that which marks them as Kurdish and as residents of Gündoğan. At the moment of police attacks the whole neighborhood becomes a private labyrinth whose map is legible only to those who live there.

### The Interior

Young women are responsible for the domestic work of the house. Cleaning the house, cooking, caring for their sisters and brothers are their main duties. Accordingly, they are expected to stay home most of the time. Nevertheless, even if their domestic tasks would allow them their movement is still strictly limited due to reasons of honor and modesty. The rules of confinement for girls might show variation depending on the religious sect the families belong to. Since Alevi families are relatively more flexible towards women, Alevi girls can go out of the home for

work and education. Yet, after they come back from school or work, they again live within the borders of home:

K: They do during the day. But they never allow it in the evenings. Sometimes they let me go to my aunt's, but never to the market, street<sup>33</sup>.

Alevi women are usually employed as cleaners in bourgeois homes. Almost all Alevi people in Gündoğan are from the district of Adıyaman, so they have close relations with one another and construct a sub-community within the neighborhood which they can easily mobilize when finding jobs for girls. Alevi families think that it will be better if their daughters work as cleaners because being in a “private space”, they will be controlled by the family which they work for and protected from the risks believed to be embedded in the public space. In this sense, work places are privatized by the strategies of families.

K: What was in their mind was that housework is better, in other jobs, girls do bad things, they were sending to housework as it is more convenient. They were afraid. If acquaintances take you there, they come and tell your family that they are taking the responsibility. That definitely such things will not happen, mean whether she sleeps there or not, nothing will happen<sup>34</sup>.

Most of the Sunni women do not work or receive education. Nevertheless, in recent years, a limited number of Sunni families started to send their daughters to school and work. Sunni women generally work in gardens to collect fruit or vegetables sold in the bazaar by the male members of their family. Some work in the textile sector. Interestingly, since Sunni girls are covered and since the headscarf is supposed to protect girls from the outside dangers waiting for them, they can also at

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<sup>33</sup> K: Gündüz verirler. Akşamları asla izin vermezler. Bazen teyzemlere gitmeme izin verirler ama çarşıya, sokağa asla izin vermezler.

<sup>34</sup> K: Hani bizimkilerin aklında ne vardı, ev işi daha iyi, böyle başka işlerde kızları kötü yola şey yaparlar, ederler, daha sağlam diye ev işine gönderirlerdi. Korkarlardı. Tanıdık, hele bir de tanıdık götürünce geliyor ailene diyor ki şöyle böyle, kesinlikle, ben sorumluluk alıyorum. Kesinlikle böyle bir şey olmaz yani ister yatılı da kalsa, şey de olsa bir şey olmaz.

times work in workshops alongside men. The story of Kader highlights this pattern of labor division:

Think of it, you come from the village, you have never seen the city life and you are in the house of people you don't know. And you do their work. I resented it a lot. We felt like strangers, we were going through difficulties, we were small. We went into the work life without experiencing childhood, but we had to<sup>35</sup>.

While headscarf is perceived as creating a private space for the bodies of Sunni girls, bourgeois families that are unknown by both parents and girls are considered to be a private space for Alevi girls. In both cases, either though the presence of the headscarf or a bourgeois family public spaces become privatized. Yet, it should be noted that this is the perception of parents. The following is expressed by the girls, which implies that this perception is internalized by the girls themselves:

K: Now housework is our second life. Our second home is there. If you were to ask why, we work there from morning till evening. We come home to sleep. Really. You start to have a life there as well. However it is like with your family, you have the same there<sup>36</sup>.

Work is not the only possibility for girls to spend time outside the house. In the neighborhood, there are many reading houses established by radical Islamic organizations like Hizbullah, Furkan, and Nakşibendi. Particularly, Sunni girls go to these houses to get *Medrese* (religious) education. Although there are a few houses in which boys are educated, it is mosques that are mostly used for the education of boys. There is an intense religious education in these houses. The girls cover their

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<sup>35</sup> Düşünsene köyden geliyorsun, şehir hayatını hiç görmemişsin bir de tanımadığın etmediğin insanların evindesin. Ve onların işini yapıyorsun. Çok zoruma gidiyordu. Çok yabancılik çektik. Zorlanıyorduk, yaşımız da küçüktü. Biz çocukluğumuzu yaşamadan iş hayatına girdik yani ama mecburdük.

<sup>36</sup> K: Artık bizim ev işi ikinci hayatımız. İkinci evimiz de orası. Niye dersin sabahtan akşama kadar biz orada yaşıyoruz. Akşam yatmadan yatmaya eve geliyoruz artık. Gerçekten. Orada da bir hayatın oluyor. İyisiyle, kötüsüyle, ailenle nasılsa orada da öyle oluyor. Öyle.

whole bodies except their face or mostly eyes with a chador. They are not allowed to be in a public space where there are men and not allowed to watch TV.

Ayşe is a 15 years old girl born in the Gündoğan neighborhood. Her mother is from Adıyaman and her father is from Diyarbakır. After finishing primary school in 2008, she did not continue her education. Her father was sentenced to 10 years for theft. She has three sisters; one of them was disabled and died this year. She narrates how she met with the organization in the following manner:

A: It was like a miracle. I was attending the conversations. First you take *tövbe*<sup>37</sup>. Once you fulfill the five principles of a sect then you are in. I mean like boarding schools, for instance, you go to school, it is something like that. *Elhamdulillah* (thank God) we get education here.

H: When do you go there in the morning?

A: If I could, I would go there even at night<sup>38</sup>.

These reading houses emerged after the PKK guerillas left the neighborhood and after the party ceased to be an uncontested hegemonic power. According to the people within the Kurdish movement, these radical Islamic organizations, --like hashish traffic and gangs-- entered the neighborhood with the support of the state to depoliticize the Kurdish youth and children. If we consider the history of Hizbullah and its function in the state's war against the PKK<sup>39</sup>, this argument makes sense. It should also be noted that Hizbullah still exists and gains power in the neighborhood. Further, a few months ago there was a clash between the DTP supporters and

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<sup>37</sup> Tövbe means to declare one's devotion to the organization.

<sup>38</sup> A: Bir mucize gibiydi. Ben sohbeta gidiyordum. İlk başta tövbe alıyorsun. Bir tarikatin beş adabını yaptıktan sonra sen zaten bu tarikattasın. Yani nasıl yatılı okullar oluyor, mesela okula gidiyorsun, bu da öyle bir şey. Biz de elhamdulillah ilim okuyoruz.

H: Sabah kaçta gidiyorsun oraya?

A: Elimden gelse gece de çıkar oraya giderim.

<sup>39</sup> Hizbulah, the radical Islamist organization was empowered and used by the state to struggle against the PKK in the 1990s. Hizbullah is responsible for the many unidentified murders particularly in the Kurdish region. However, it is believed that when Hizbullah became uncontrollable, the state initiated an operation against Hizbullah.



Hizbullah's office Muztazafder. Yet, I should add that state interventions in the form of hashish economy, gangs, and radical Islamism gradually turned against the state itself. All the people I interviewed who are part of these formations adhere to the struggle and have a politicized Kurdish identity.

In the life history of Ayşe that I quote below, we can detect the ways in which social and economic relations within Islamic communities come to be a medium for the youth and children to bear the difficulties of living in a marginal place like Gündoğan.

H: You said that your mother does not show affection to you. How does your mother treat you?

A: My mom all the time swears, I swear. She hasn't smiled at me even a single day, she hasn't smiled at me, she hasn't said "my daughter" even a single day. I swear it is as if my dad is in prison from the day I was born. My head is blurring. It is as if I have never seen my dad. As if what I tell is a dream. It sounds like a dream to me. My dad is in for two years, but I feel like he is in since I was born. I feel like that. My dad and mom were fighting every day. My mom speaks too much, she speaks extremely much. She didn't let my dad eat properly. Once, my dad got angry, he lifted the dinner table, everything broke into pieces.

H: Who is Zubeyde Abla, the responsible person there?

A: She is not responsible, she is my sister, our sister. There is no teacher there, sheyh his highness has forbidden that. He said "don't say teacher to one another, no one is superior to anyone else."

H: Do you call her 'sister'?

A: I say sister, sometimes I call them by their names. They are all older than me and they act in a very warm way to me. They act in a very warm way, all are very good, very talkative. I swear I love them very much.

H: Do you miss your dad?

A: I don't that much

H: Why not?

A: Because I don't really want to love someone that much. I don't want to love anyone that much. I mean I don't want myself to get used to them. Because of course one day we will split. It feels difficult when one separates. I got so attached to my sister, I have never thought one day she will die, she will leave us; I got so attached, now I am so sad. Now I say "if only I hadn't got so attached." Now I also run away from my grandmother. I don't go to them that often, I inculcate myself not to get used to it. In the past we always used to go somewhere with my grandma, together. I used to sleep in-between my grandma and grandpa. In-between them. I was so attached to them. Let me tell something, I am neither attached to my mom nor my dad, my grandma nor grandpa. I am not attached to anyone.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> H: Bana annem sevgi göstermiyor dedin. Sana nasıl davranıyor annen?

A: Annem durmadan küfür ediyor, sana yemin ederim. Bir gün yüzüme gülmemiş ya, bir gün yüzüme gülmemiş, bir gün dememiş kızım. Yederim sanki doğduğumdan beri sanki babam cezaevinde. Kafam bulanık. Sanki hiç babamı görmemişim. Sanki benim anlattığım bir rüya. Rüya gibi geliyor bana. Babam iki senedir içeride ben zannediyorum ben doğduğumdan beri babam içeride. Öyle geliyor bana. Benim babam annemle her gün kavga ediyorlardı. Annem çok koşuyordu ya, çok konuşuyordu, acayip şekilde çok konuşuyordu. Babamı bırakmıyordu babam doğru düzgün yemek yesin. Babam bir gün sinirlendi, sofrayı kaldırdı, her şey paramparça oldu.

H: Zübeyde Abla kim oranın sorumlusu mu?

A: Zübeyde sorumlusu değil, benim ablam, bizim ablamız. Orada hoca moca yok, şeyh hazretleri yasaklamış. Demiş birbirinize hoca demeyin, kimse kimseden üstün değil.

H: Abla mı diyorsunuz?

A: Ben abla diyorum, bazen isimleriyle hitap ediyorum. Hepsi benden büyük ve bana çok yakın davranıyorlar. Çok yakın davranıyorlar, çok iyiler. Çok muhabbetliler. Vallahi onları çok seviyorum.

H: Özlüyor musun babanı?

A: Aşırı derecede özlemiyorum.

H: Niye?

A: Çünkü gerçekten kimseyi çok çok sevmek istemiyorum. Kimseyi çok çok sevmek istemiyorum. Ya nasıl çok fazla yani ben kendimi alıştırmak istemiyorum onlara. Çünkü elbet bir gün ayrılacağız. Zor gelir insan ayrıldığı zaman. Ben Çilem'e o kadar bağlandım, düşünmedim bir gün onun öleceğini, onun yanımızdan gideceğini, düşünmedim, ne kadar bağlandım, ne kadar üzülüyorum. Şimdi diyorum keşke bağlanmasaydım. Ben şimdi nenem gilden de kaçıyorum. Onlara fazla gitmiyorum, diyorum alışmayayım. Eskiden ben nenemle hep yan yana, onun bir yerlere hep beraber giderdik. Nenemle dedemin ortasında yatardım. İkisinin ortasında. O kadar ki düşkündüm. Vallahi ben bir şey diyeyim, ne anneme düşkünüm, ne babama düşkünüm, ne neneme ne de dedeme düşkünüm. Hiç kimseye düşkün değilim.

To deal with different forms of exclusion youth and children have various strategies. For example, entering Islamic communities is one of them. Ayşe lives in a context where she does not see any hope for the future. As she herself expresses, she lives in a violent and claustrophobic universe produced by dispossession. Islamic communities promise her a safe life. The materiality of the world no longer forms a source of desire for her within the spiritual perception she learned in the community. She does not need money for fashionable clothes as the black burka is the only dress she wears now. She does not need money for going out since she sees the public space as inappropriate for women. She does not need to go to school or work since she believes she is destined to marry a disciple of her sheyh. The material things that she does not have and will never have, lost their value in her new life. In the midst of poverty and violence permeating the household and neighborhood, such a perception of the world not only refills her life with meaning but also becomes a strategy to deal with the difficulties she faces in her everyday life. Instead of her father who is in prison, the Seyh of the organization who is perceived as the embodiment of the prophet emerges as a symbolic father, and his morality guides her. And she considers the women in the Reading House as her sisters. In this sense, the Reading House which is a public space is depicted as her home where she can form intimate relations.

### The Exterior

Whereas the house is where women belong, young men in the neighborhood belong outside the home. During the day, women and girls do housework and they want the boys out of the way so that they do not interrupt their routine as well as their meetings with their friends and neighbors in the household. In fact, children themselves do not want to enter the home because mothers and sisters clean the house until the evening and hence there is nothing to do at home for them. It is in the evening that boys enter the home in order to have dinner. Nevertheless, even the short time that they spend at home is accompanied by disputes among family members mostly about economic problems. These disputes often turn violent, and accordingly, the young refer to their home as claustrophobic and boring. Since the

members of the family do not have their private room, the only way to escape is to go outside. The parents also want their children to go outside because fights end only when the boys go outside. Being excluded from the home, boys do not have any space other than the streets.

Although streets are uniformly owned by men, how men utilize them differ according to the group one belongs to. For example hashish-using youth and children use a huge empty place which normally is a bazaar. Hashish users broke the lamps there in order to be invisible at night. Since this place is known as a place of hashish users, girls do not pass there at night. Yet they also use hashish during the day. Therefore, while they can be invisible through the darkness of the night and avoiding people who walk around the bazaar, during the day they become visible.

Ali is a 22 year old young man born in Gündoğan. His family is Kurdish Alevite and is from Adıyaman. He has two brothers and one sister. He had two marriages and has a 5 year-old daughter. He sells bread in bazaars. He has been smoking hashish for 8 years.

When we smoke it, our brain gets drowsy, we are relaxed, the world appears to us in a different manner, we forget our problems and our chagrin, we see the world through rose-colored glasses, everything appears as a mere illusion, you get drowsy, that is how I look at people, you directly start saying things that come into your mind. You know people have different minds, when I look at people, sometimes it does not make any sense, and neither I nor other people make any sense. I am musing about life and death; I am meditating into different worlds. Hashish makes you dream, makes you melancholic, I mean it gives you any sort of feeling. Hashish makes you talk, we smoke it for talking, and the stuff makes you talk.

You don't care about anything; you smile anytime when people say you something. For instance, when I am sad, when I have an argument with someone at home, I am rolling a cigarette and smoking it, then I come back and do not care even if I hear hundreds of complaints at home, because I am in a different world then. I didn't use to be like this but I am so now. Sometimes I go to my workplace in the morning, and have a discussion with the boss, and I am talking in a polite manner if I

smoke, even in the middle of this war of nerves, you don't hear all those curses of the boss.

We sit down, talk, he says something and then you say more, you start it at 8 o'clock in the morning and then see that it suddenly became 1 or 2 o'clock after midnight. You don't even feel it, because you just talk in there. Sometimes the hashish makes you so drowsy that you don't even understand what is going on. You are somewhere else. If you had ever smoked, you would have understood what we are talking about. We are talking about our girlfriends, our problems; look I am just 20 years old and married two times already. I haven't seen anything worthy in this life; it doesn't give any pleasure to me. He says something and then you go on with something else. We all tell about our problems<sup>41</sup>.

As can be observed, the usage of hashish is very central in his life and narrative. Though he is confined to the neighborhood as a residential area and work

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<sup>41</sup> İçtiğimizde beynimiz uyuşuyor, sakinleşiyoruz, dünya bize daha değişik geliyor, derdini, kederini bir yana atıyon, hayat sana toz pembe geliyor, her şey sana yalan geliyor, beynin uyuşuyor, insanlara böyle bakıyorum, ben kendi kafamdaki şeyi söylüyorum, şimdi her insanın kafası değişiktir. Ben böyle insanlara bakıyorum, bakıyorum bir anlam çıkaramıyorum, ne insanlardan, ne kendimden bir anlam çıkaramıyorum, yani doğup, büyüyüp, ölüyoruz misali, böyle düşüncelere giriyorum, dalar, giderim, başka hayallere giderim. Daldırır, düşündürür, hüzünlendirir esrar, yani ne bileyim her şeyi yapıyor. Esrarın içimi muhabbettir. Muhabbettir, muhabbet için içiyoruz, ot sohbeti sevdendir, uyuşturucu madde sohbet ettirir.

Takmıyon hiçbirşeyi, sana ne diyorlarsa gülüyorsun, moralin bozuk ama takmıyon. Mesela benim moralim bozuk oluyor, evde tartışıyorum, gidiyorum kendime yapıyorum mesela içiyorum, ondan sonra geliyorum, bana aynı kelimelerin yüz katını da söyleseler hiç umrumda olmuyor çünkü o an başka dünyadayım. Öyle değilim ama öyle olmuşum. Gün geliyor sabah dükkana gidiyoruz, yani ister istemez dükkana sahibiyle tartışma oluyor, ne oluyor, orada işte o sinir içinde, benim içmem gerekirse harmanım geliyor ama o uyuşturucu içtiğimizde sakin bir kafayla konuşuyorum, çok sakin yani ne kadar küfür etse bile.

Oturuyoruz, muhabbet, o bir şey anlatır, o anlatırken aklına birşey gelir, sen anlatırsın, saat sekizde oturmussun bir bakarsın gece bir-iki olmuş. Farkında değilsin çünkü muhabbet var. Gün geliyor bakarsın esrar kafası adamı tam mayıştırtıyor, bir arkadaşı ortamda bir kelime anlatıyorsa onu dinleyecek halde bile değil. Başka bir yere gidiyor. Sen içmiş olsan bizim ne demek istediğimizi daha iyi anlardın. Manitadan anlatırız, sorunları anlatırız, bak yaşımız yirmi iki iki tane evlilik geçirmişiz. Bir şey görmedik şu hayatta, bir zevk alamıyorum hayattan. O birşey anlatır, o biri başka birşey. Herkes derdini açar.

place, hashish adds multiple dimensions to the place and provides him with the mental space of relief from his everyday anguish at home and at work. When he is high, the material world which appears as hardly bearable in his narrative, loses its significance. Inhabiting the uninhabitable that is saturated with hopelessness and anxiety becomes possible through disrupting that reality with hashish.

The roofs of the neighborhood are very crucial in the everyday life of people specifically of young men. On the one hand, roofs are dream-spaces since in the 1990s they were used by PKK guerillas. Now, although in the demonstrations the roofs are still used by demonstrators to escape from the police, they primarily became a space in which youth and children consume hashish and alcohol. Since the neighborhood consists of one or two-floor houses, roofs of the houses, like streets, are visible places. Nevertheless, roofs and streets are used as private spaces by youth and children. Once again, the performativity of youth and children determines what is private and what is public. They transform the space through their performances. For example, here a user explains how the street as a public space is used by the hashish smokers as a private space.

Ahmet: Actually you will not smoke hashish on the street, because people come and say “look at this.” They look at us in a different way. But while sitting, you don’t recognize the passers by, you are high, not aware, you don’t see anyone, you don’t know what they think of you. But they see you<sup>42</sup>.

Streets are also a space of politics for politicized children and youth. In important days for the Kurdish movement like Newroz, the day that Öcalan was arrested, the birthday of Öcalan, the day the PKK was formed, the day that the PKK made its first attack against the Turkish state etc., big demonstrations are organized. In addition, depending on the agenda of the movement or on the attacks of Turkish state, spontaneous demonstrations are organized that usually end with clashes.

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<sup>42</sup> Ahmet: Aslında yolda esrar içmeyeceksin çünkü millet geliyor bak hele şuna diyor. Bize farklı gözle bakıyorlar. Ama sen otururken gelen geçeni tanımıyorsun, kafan iyi, farkında değilsin, kimseyi görmüyorsun, hakkında ne düşünceler kuruyor bilmiyorsun. Ama onlar seni görüyor.

Streets are uniformly occupied by the politicized youth and children during these incidents.

Halil talks about the demonstrations in the neighborhood in the following way:

Halil: When I first joined, they made a demonstration, I was curious, I set off. I saw them lighting a fire. My brother said “go home.” I said “I am not going.” I joined them, then I saw the police coming, we threw stones, a stone, that big, one very big stone, I mean a small one but it was like as if it was big, hit my back. I didn’t give in, we clashed with the police. I guess we went near my aunt’s house, I entered my aunt’s house. I hid there. The police left, no the police didn’t leave, I entered the house, the police got in the way, I mean I went inside and the police went up to the roof of the house as the house I entered had four floors; they couldn’t find me, and I went in. Then the second demonstration I joined, maybe it’s the third. At that one, we, only the children, made a demonstration. There were many kids, almost 300 kids.

H: You made a demonstration against what?

Halil: On February 15th, for the day that Öcalan was caught. No one made a demonstration here, perhaps they would; as a few people did, we set off, we saw a demonstration and joined in, rapid forces arrived, we clashed around the Pınar pastryshop. Then I saw that all the children are running away, I looked behind me there was no one. I threw 3-4 stones, I bombarded the police with the stones I have in my hand. Then I ran away. At the fourth demonstration, we were many people, there might be some coming from other neighborhoods. We were attacking the police like that. We didn’t escape there like that. At the end, the police, the rapid forces made a blockade. We were again clashing, at the end the friends said to disperse. Then we dispersed. They also say that they are giving lots of money to children and put them forward. These are all lies; who are they to tell such lies. We, by our own will, want to get organized<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> S: İlk katılığında eylem yapmışlardı, ben de merak ettim, çıktım yola. Baktım ateş yakıyorlar. Ben de abim dedi git eve. Ben dedim gitmiyorum, içlerine girdim, baktım polisler geldi, taş attık, belime şu kadar bir tane büsbüyük yani ufaktı ama sanki büsbüyük bir taş geldi. Yine de yılmadım, yine de çatıştık polislerle. Herhalde yengem gilin evinin oraya girdik, oradan da yengem gilin evine girdim. Orada saklandım. Polisler gitti, yok polisler gitmedi, ben eve girdim, polisler araya girdi, ben içeriye girdim ya onlar da, o girdiğim evin, dört katlı ya, damlarına falan çıktılar beni bulamadılar, ben de içeri girdim. Ondan sonra ikinci katıldığım eylem

While the politicization of young men and children (male) occurs in the streets and during struggle, the politicization of girls occurs within the boundaries of the household. Therefore, this process is more subtle and difficult to understand. One thing is clear; the arrest of girls poses a big problem for families and as such they have to avoid struggle on the street. For example, Fırat said that after his female cousin was arrested, her grandfather said: “kızın cezaevinde ne işi var”. However, when a girl joins the guerilla and lives in the mountains, this is not regarded as a dishonor for the family. Thus, for girls, the only way to be political is becoming a guerilla. I think this indicates that there is an implicit contract between girls and parents. Since girls are not allowed to go out of the home and being in prison is not acceptable for girls, the only way for girls to participate in the fight against the state becomes enrolling in the guerilla. I think here there is an analogy between allowing girls to work as cleaners only and allowing girls to join the guerilla as the only legitimate political activity. It seems that just like the bourgeois house, the PKK is seen as a private space where girls can be trusted. State and prison, on the other hand, are viewed as strangers whom the girls cannot be entrusted.

Fırat says:

...actually the girls don't join that much, they also support the PKK but don't join, I don't know why. My sisters don't attend the

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iki-üç oluyor herhalde. Burada sade, sırf çocuklar böyle eylem yapmıştık. Bir sürü çocuk vardı, üç yüze yakın çocuk vardı.

H: Neye karşı yapmıştınız?

S: Biz 15 Şubat, Öcalan'ın yakalandığı güne karşı. Kimse burada eylem yapmadı, herhalde yapacaklardı birkaç kişi eylem yapınca biz yola çıktık, baktık eylem, biz de katıldık içine, neydi, çevik kuvvet geldi, biz şu Pınar pastanesi, onun arasında çatıştık. Ondan sonra baktım çocukların hepsi kaçıyor, arkama baktım kimse yok. Ben de üç-dört tane taş attım, elimdeki taşları polise yağdırdım. Ondan sonra kaçtım. Dördüncü eylemde biz çok kişiydik böyle diğer mahallelerden gelenler de vardı herhalde. Polislerin üstüne böyle hücum yapıyorduk. Orada hiç kaçmadık böyle. En sonunda polisler, çevik kuvvet, böyle ablukaya aldı etrafı. Biz yine de çatışıyorduk, en sonunda hevaler dedi dağılım dedi. Ondan sonra biz de dağıldık. Bir de böyle diyorlar çocuklara çok böyle para verip o çocukları öne sürüyorlarmış. Onların hepsi de yalan ya onlar kim ki böyle yalan atabilir. Biz kendi isteğimizle örgütleşmeyi istiyoruz.



demonstrations, they only come to *Newroz*. But there is something like that: there are girls known to be sympathizing with the party, but they don't join our activities. Then we hear that the girl has become a guerilla. The girls directly join the guerilla<sup>44</sup>.

Finally, I should say that in addition to streets, there are workplaces in which male youth and children spend time. The majority of children and youth are working to provide sustenance for their families. They predominantly prefer to work in the neighborhood. The main reason for this preference is that they are exposed to discrimination and humiliation outside the neighborhood where Turkish people compose the majority. It becomes clear in the following quotation that workplaces for them are private places where kids hang out with friends that are Kurdified by music.

Erhan<sup>45</sup>: It is better for me to work here, because generally there are Kurdish people here, I mean you listen to music comfortably, for instance when there are Turks, you can't listen to music. Here, there are generally Kurds, always Kurdish, you can listen whatever you want<sup>46</sup>.

## State Spaces

For the children and youth I interviewed, the school is also a highly contested space. Since the majority of participants in demonstrations are school children, "anti-

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<sup>44</sup> ...aslında kızlar pek katılmıyorlar, onlar da PKK'yi savunuyorlar ama katılmıyorlar bilmiyorum neden. Benim kız kardeşlerim katılmıyorlar eylemlere, sadece newroza geliyorlar. Ama şimdi şöyle bir şey var: kızlar var mesela biliyoruz partiye sempatileri var ama katılmıyorlar bizim etkinliklerimize ama bir duyuyoruz ki kız gerilla olmuş. Kızlar hep direkt gerillaya katılıyorlar.

<sup>45</sup> Erhan is a 17 years old young man from Diyarbakır. His family migrated to Adana due to the state violence in the village when he was 5. Erhan was put in prison two times, first when he was 8 and the second when he was 12 due to his political activities. Now, he is still a student in primary school and works in a barber in the neighborhood.

<sup>46</sup> Erhan: Burada çalışmak benim için daha iyi çünkü burada genelde Kürt halkı olduğu için yani rahat rahat müzik dinliyorsun, mesela Türkler oldu mu müzik dinleyemiyorsun. Kürtçe yani burada genelde Kürt, her zaman Kürt, istediğin şarkıyı dinleyebiliyorsun.

terrorist” films and documentaries are frequently shown in classrooms. Additionally, teachers actively try to convince children not to attend demonstrations. Therefore, children say that in every class they end up discussing the Kurdish issue with teachers.

Murat: We sometimes fight with them about politics, for instance we have a reform teacher, they never want to fight with us about politics. They know the reality but hide it. For instance we say for instance “our youth go in the prison although they are not guilty,” they say like “keep quiet,” they say “you don’t know the reality”; then I said is “is it such a big thing, I am also into politics for the past three years.” Then the teacher kept silent....The teacher says there is democracy”; I said “what democracy”; he said “explain why there is no democracy”. I said “for instance Ahmet Turk talked in Kurdish in the assembly, why was it forbidden?” He says “it is the assembly; the official language in Turkey is Turkish.” I asked why the prime minister then speaks; he said it is for the opening of a tv channel. I said “then why are they speaking in English, French; they are not forbidden but Kurdish is.” Then the teacher kept quiet. The teacher was about to come to our side. There is one other teacher; we ask him whether he is Kurdish; he says yes, but it is as if Turkish blood flows in him; he says “I feel like a Turk.” For instance we said “they don’t let Kurdish be spoken,” we were in Turkish class, I started the discussion. I asked the teacher “why did they stop the broadcast when Ahmet Turk spoke in Kurdish”; they said “it is the assembly, Turkish is meant to be spoken there,” I said “Obama spoke in English, they speak in various languages.” He said “shut up”; I said “why did they exile Ahmet Kaya?” I said “they exiled him because he said he will release an album in Kurdish, you are suppressing the Kurds my teacher.” He says to shut up every time, otherwise he comes and hits us. *Ede bese* (“enough is enough” in Kurdish).

Halil: We speak in Kurdish with our friends in class; the teachers say “why you are speaking in Kurdish.” We say “if we are Kurds, we speak in Kurdish. If you are Turk, you speak in Turkish. You say it yourself, there is democracy in Turkey, if there is democracy, don’t we have the right to speak.”

M: He says there is democracy in this country, I said there is no story like that; when we talk in Kurdish in the assembly, they take us in, but what happens when Erdogan and others talk. When I said like that the teacher kept quiet, he couldn’t say

anything. When he says something to me now, I keep quiet, I say we leave you to yourself teacher, talk to yourself, I know what I should know.... It was written "Hurray PKK" in my notebook, a teacher saw it. There was also B.F., a member of city council, in Seyhan, he is my uncle, I had his cards with me, when the teacher saw it, he took me to the principle, hit me, called my family. He warned me not to do that again, they said there was also some writings in his notebook. I had also written "Hurray Apo", he said OK he was your uncle, what about this, is he your relative? I said yes teacher, he is like my uncle. Our leader.

Kuto<sup>47</sup>: For example we always chant slogans in the classroom, we also do that outside but there are cameras. A hundred people, we are Kurds like that, we always gather with a hundred others, we shout. We cannot gather as there are cameras outside, but in the classroom, we bang on the desks "we are not terrorists, we are pro-PKK".

H: Don't you have any normal teacher.

Kuto: No, all of them are evil.

H: There is a teacher, said to be very good; but I haven't seen, but they say he is very good.

K: For instance, some time ago, the teacher's jacket was stolen, they called us, the most evil of the school is us, we have 2-3 more friends, we are all in the same class, they called us, he said if you don't bring my jacket back, I will throw you out of school. There is one girl, pro-DTP; I guess the whole family is pro-DTP, she held the teacher's bag, the teacher hit the girl, the girl then hit the teacher. I saw the teacher crying, we started the slogan, "we are not thieves, we are students." When he was going through the door, I kicked him, he fell on the ground, he didn't see us, everyone got away. I am shouting next to him, I mean I say I am Apoist; he threatens me, saying he will throw me out of school, but he can't do anything<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Kuto is a 16 years old young man from Batman. His family was exposed to displacement in the beginning of 1990s. Now, he works in a barbershop in the neighborhood.

<sup>48</sup> Murat: Onlarla siyaset kavgalarına girdiğimiz oluyor mesela İnkılap hocamız var, hiç bizimle siyaset kavgasına girmek istemiyor. Gerçekleri biliyor ama saklıyor, Mesela biz diyoruz mesela gençlerimiz bu kadar suçsuz yere cezaevine giriyor, susun falan diyor, diyor siz bilmiyorsunuz gerçekleri. Bizim bir sosyal hocamız var. Bana dedi ben yirmi iki yıldır tarihin içindeyim, ben de dedim çok mu büyük bir şey ben de üç yıldır siyasetin içindeyim. Hoca sustu kaldı orada... Demokrasi var diyor hocam ne demokrasisi diyorum, dedi nasıl yok söyle. Dedim Ahmet Türk

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mesela mecliste Kürtçe konuştu neden yasaklandı. Dedi ki o meclis, Türkiye'nin anadili Türkçe. Dedim neden başbakan konuşuyor dedi o bir kanal açılışı için. Dedim peki niye İngilizce konuşuyorlar, Fransızca konuşuyorlar yasak değil de Kürtçe yasak. Hoca artık sustu. Hoca neredeyse bizim tarafa geçiyordu. Bir hoca var, ona siz Kürt müsünüz diyoruz evet diyor ama sanki Türk kanı akıyor, Türk gibi hissediyorum kendimi diyor. Mesela dedik ya Kürtçe konuşmaya izin vermiyorlar, Türkçe dersindeydik, ben o konuyu açtım. Hocaya dedim niye Ahmet Türk Kürtçe konuştu hemen yayını kestiler, bana dedi ki orası meclis dedi orada Türkçe konuşulur, ben dedim Obama da İngilizce konuştu, her dili konuşuyorlar. Sus dedi, ben dedim peki niye Ahmet Kaya'yı sürgün ettiler? Ben dedim Kürtçe şarkı çıkaracam dediği için sürgün ettiler adamı, işte Kürtleri ezirsiniz hocam dedim. Her şey de sus diyor, susmayınca da geliyor vuruyor. Artık Ede bese.

Halil: Böyle biz sınıfta Kürtçe konuşuyoruz arkadaşlarımızla, hocalar da diyor neden Kürtçe konuşuyorsunuz. Diyoruz biz Kürt isek Kürtçe konuşuruz. Siz de Türk iseniz Türkçe konuşursunuz. Siz kendi ağzınızla diyorsunuz Türkiye'de demokrasi var, demokrasi varsa konuşma hakkımız yok mu.

Murat: Diyor şimdi demokrasi vardır bu ülkede, dedim yok bu hikaye, biz mecliste Kürtçe konuşurken alıyorlar da Erdoğan, başkaları konuşunca ne oluyor. Ama öyle dedikten sonra artık sustu hoca bir şey diyemiyor. Artık bana bir şey deyince de ben susuyorum, biz sizi kendinize bıraktık hocam dedim. Siz kendi kendinize konuşun dedim ben bildiğimi biliyorum dedim.

M: Bir ara benim defterimde "Yaşasın PKK" falan yazıyordu, onu bir hoca yakaladı. Bir de B.F vardı, il meclis üyesiydi, Seyhan'da, dayım oluyor, onun kartları vardı yanımda, hoca görünce götürdü müdürün yanına, dövdü, ailemi çağırdı. İşte bir daha olmasın, defterinde de yazı vardı dediler. Bir de "Yaşasın Apo" yazmıştım dedi tamam o senin dayın bu senin akrabam mı? He dedim hocam amcam gibidir. Önderimiz... diyor şimdi demokrasi vardır bu ülkede, dedim yok bu hikaye, biz mecliste Kürtçe konuşurken alıyorlar da Erdoğan, başkaları konuşunca ne oluyor. Diyor Türkiye'nin anadilidir, Türkçe ondan çıkarılabilir buraya kadar Ama öyle dedikten sonra artık sustu hoca bir şey diyemiyor. Artık bana bir şey deyince de ben susuyorum, biz sizi kendinize bıraktık hocam dedim. Siz kendi kendinize konuşun dedim ben bildiğimi biliyorum dedim.

K: Biz mesela hep sınıfta slogan atıyoruz böyle, dışarıda da atarız da kameralar var. Yüz kişi, hep böyle Kürdüz ya hep yüz kişi toplanıyoruz, böyle bağırıyoruz. Kameralar var diye dışarıda bağırıyoruz ama sınıfta sıralara vuruyoruz, "terörist değiliz, PKK'liyiz".

H: Sizin hiç düzgün bir öğretmeniniz yok mu?

K: Yok, bizim hepsi pis.

H: Bir öğretmen varmış çok iyiymiş ama ben görmedim ama diyorlar çok iyi.

K: Mesela geçen gün bir hocanın ceketi çalındı bizi çağırdı, okulun zaten en pisleri biziz, iki-üç tane daha arkadaşımız var, hep aynı sınıfta düşmüşüz, bizi çağırdı, dedi eğer ceketimi getirmezsene okuldan attıracam dedi. Bir tane DTP'li kız var, o da herhalde DTP'li ailece, hocanın çantasını tuttu, hoca kızı dövdü, kız da hocayı dövdü. Baktım hoca ağlıyor, biz de slogan attık, "hırsız değiliz öğrenciyiz".

All these narratives above show that school has become a place where children and teachers struggle over the power to define reality and at times such struggles turn violent. Their presence in the school, the discussions they initiate with the teachers and the way they manifest their political motivations subvert not only the spatial organization of the school as a state institution, but also the fundamental principles on which the existence of the school itself depends. Among the children I interviewed, there was only one child who wanted to remain at school. The reason he did not want to drop out of school like his counterparts was that he wanted to be a lawyer which, for him, was a career to be pursued in order to meet the legal needs of the Kurdish movement—which is defending the arrested people within the movement. The other children, however, do not continue their education after finishing the mandatory primary school. Thus, these children, either totally reject being incorporated in the education system or aim to use the career that state education might bring to them for the needs of the movement by taking part in the system, yet with the aim of subverting the *telos* of the order. As a public institution, school should actually be “a home” and provide belonging irrespective of ethnicity. Nevertheless, the excerpts above show that school is constructed as a Turkish space and Kurdish children are continuously marked as different and problematic. On the other hand, while the school seems to aim at creating a rupture in the neighborhood culture, it is re-appropriated with the practices of students and becomes an extension of the neighborhood. In other words, once again the performances of kids both verbal and physical, makes a home out of the school by hijacking the lectures and by transforming them into forums on the Kurdish issue.

### The Neighborhood

As I mentioned before, children and youth do not desire to be represented in the public that connotes Turkishness and the state. During the fieldwork, they warned

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Kapıdan çıkarken tekme attım bir tane yere düştü, görmedi bizi, herkes dağıldı. Ben onun yanında bağıryorum yani ben Apocuyum diyorum, bana diyor seni okuldan attırırım diyor, hiçbir şey de yapamıyor.

me that my thesis could serve the state by making them visible and knowable. Yet, they narrated their stories to me. I thought that the act of telling was important for them without necessarily imagining an audience. One of the children recommended me to write a series of articles for pro-Kurdish *Günlük*, the only newspaper that children and youth of the neighborhood read. Therefore, if there is an audience that they imagine, it is the Kurdish audience.

Their negation of the Turkish public is also related to the material presence of Turks in their lives after forced migration. The neighborhood is situated in the periphery of the city. However, surrounding neighborhoods are mostly populated by Turks. Kurdish youth and children face discrimination and exclusion in the urban space. Accordingly, youth and children do not believe in the existence of Turks who could be convinced by the arguments of Kurds. Nevertheless, this belief goes against the grain of the politics of the Kurdish movement. The purpose of the politics that is conducted in the neighborhood is not to make visible the rights and sufferings of the Kurds in the public sphere. Rather, I argue that it serves the inhabitants to inhabit and remake urban space. In this sense, the neighborhood becomes a private space of belonging for the displaced Kurds.

Until now, I tried to depict the lives of the youth and children through the distinctive ways in which they use space. However, this picture is disrupted during demonstrations in the neighborhood as separate groups cooperate. As a consequence, spatial confinements are broken down. During demonstrations, Gündoğan functions as a whole/unique body. The demonstrations start in streets but all doors of houses are open for the demonstrators. If police attacks the demonstrators, they can enter any house and hide. They can move from one house to another through jumping over the roofs and escape from the place of the demonstration. Anyone who escapes from the police can enter others' houses without necessarily knowing them. During the demonstration, the distinction between public/street and private/home is blurred. Accordingly, while the neighborhood becomes a private space, its outside becomes public space. On the other hand, the divisions among groups are also broken down as the majority of youth and children in the neighborhood including hashish-users participate in the demonstrations. Demonstrations and the attack by the police

produce Kurdishness as a politicized identity and mark all youth and children. This homogenization has the consequence of setting them against the state. After all children are addressed at school as Kurds who create troubles. Most of the families in the neighborhood came here because they were displaced by the army. As such, the everyday experience of the children in the school and their inherited memories reinforce the real and imagined boundaries between the state and the neighborhood to the extent that the residents of Gündoğan regard everything about the state with suspicion and oppose its presence as well as all of its deeds. Gündoğan becomes a home a private space by pitting it continuously (symbolically and physically) against the state.

Özhan says:

The state deliberately left us poor. They passed over the drugs. Anyway, we went to a friend's place. There is a brothel next door. We know it but we don't go there. Our friend had hashish and he invited us in to smoke. We were sitting inside; there was a table and chairs. We sat down. Anyways, I had the leaf in my hand, and my friend was combing out the tobacco. Then the police came in, I closed my hand, and hid it, "Open your palm" he told, he saw it in my hand, I opened it, he asked me from where I had bought that. I told him that I had come to visit my friend and came in and sat down, and saw it under the table while waiting for my friend, and you came in the moment I took that into my hand. Afterwards, the brother of my friend just came in and talked to the police and then they released us. They just overlooked it. It is fine that they didn't put us into jail but it would not be bad if they had prevented us from doing so. They just past over. One would expect them to admonish at least but he didn't tell anything<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Devlet hep bilerek yoksullaştırdı bizi. Uyuşturucuya göz yumdu. Neyse bir arkadaşın yanına gittik. Bitişğinde randevu evi var, bizim haberimiz var yalnız bizim orayla işimiz yok. Arkadaşta esrar vardı gelin yapın içeride dedi. Biz de içeride oturuyorduk, bir masa vardı, sandalyeler vardı, oturduk. Neyse yaprak benim elimdeydi, tütün kağıdı, arkadaş da parçalıyordu esrarı ayıklıyordu. Derken polis içeri girdi. Ben avucumu kapattım, sakladım. Aç elini dedi, gördü elimde, açtım, bu ne dedi sen nerden getirdin dedi. Dedim efendim dedim arkadaşın yanına geldik misafir olarak, biz içeri girdik, onu bekliyorduk, oturacaktık, sohbet etmek için. Masanın altında gördüm elime aldım, o sırada siz içeri girdiniz. Neyse arkadaşın abisi geldi, neyse konuştu polislerle, ahlak masasıydı, neyse bizi bıraktılar. Yani göz yumdular. İyi ki de almadılar bizi ama yani engel olsalardı bir

In another occasion a friend of Ahmet said that he heard that torture during arrests has diminished. Ahmet's reply shows how his identity formation depends on the existence of a clear line between the Kurds and the state:

Don't regards Turkey as a good country, please, if you want to do a favor don't call Turkey a good country. Turkey is the corrupt one, is the crooked one. They have suppressed Kurds for such a long time<sup>50</sup>.

As I have explained in the previous chapter, despite the fact that most of the children did not experience state oppression directly-except in demonstrations, their positioning towards the state is constituted by the memories they have inherited from previous generations. The following excerpt demonstrates how this memory operates:

Ö: I have been sympathetic toward the Kurdish movement since my childhood. As we are from the generation of PKK, we have been deeply influenced by that. But in fact, half of us supported the state and the other half stood for the PKK. On one side PKK held from our arms and dragging us toward the heaven, on the other side, the state held the other arm and dragged us toward the hell. We are so in between, and most of the people have been thoroughly experiencing that<sup>51</sup>.

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şekilde güzel olur. Göz yumuyorlar. İnsan en azından bir nasihat verir. Bir nasihat bile vermedi bana hiçbir şey söylemedi.

<sup>50</sup> Ya Türkiye'ye iyi deme, vallahi, bir iyilik yapmak istiyorsan Türkiye'ye iyi deme. Türkiye yok mu namussuzun tekidir. Namussuzun tekidir. Yani yok mu Kürtleri çok ezdiler.

<sup>51</sup> Ö: Kürt hareketine ilgi duymam çocukluğumuzdan beri var üstümüzde. PKK neslinden olduğumuz için, PKK neslinden geldiğimiz için etkilendik ondan. Ama yarı yarıya, yarı devlet sisteminden olduk, yarısı da PKK'den etkilendik. Bir kolumuzdan devlet sistemi tutmuş, bizi cehenneme doğru itekliyor. Diğer kolumuzdan PKK tutmuş, bizi cennete doğru sürüklüyor. Hani ikisinin arasında kalmışız. Bu yaşımıza kadar öyle geldik ki herkes de bunu yaşıyor yani.



Finally, the interview I conducted with a university student at Çukurova University<sup>52</sup>, who works within DTP supports my assertion that struggle, resistance and the encounter with the state blur the distinctions among different groups:

Most of the youth in here smoke hashish but they are loyal to the party and to the leadership. Their lifestyles might be corrupted but their heart remained the same. Last time some young people were smoking hashish in this corner of the street and I went near them. And I asked them, and I asked them what they were thinking when they were smoking. And he told “I am in the mountains, with my arm in the hand, I am a guerilla and watching around.”<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to demonstrate the spatial order of the neighborhood. While the interior as a private space belongs to young women, the exterior as a public space belongs to young men. I argued that young women create public links in Reading Houses and bourgeois homes. Their parents allow them to enter these because they perceive them to be private. These public spaces give them an autonomy they cannot have in their homes where their sexuality and behavior are strictly controlled. Here, they gain a public identity which they have no access to under normal circumstances and can at times even act politically. On the other hand, young men and children create their private spaces in the public through politics, hashish and gangs.

I have also argued that Gündoğan has become a home for displaced people. I have shown that the urban space is a space that is continuously appropriated and re-

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<sup>52</sup> There a few number of female activist in the neighborhood but they are mostly university students at Çukurova University. Female inhabitants of the neighborhood are invisible in the politics in the public. And there are few number of female children who participate in the demonstrations in the neighborhood. I made an interview with one of them.

<sup>53</sup> Burada gençlerin çoğu esrar içiyor ama onlar da partiye ve önderliğe bağlılar. Bakma sen, onların üslubu ve yaşam tarzları yozlaşmış ama kalpleri aynı kalmış. Mesela geçenlerde gençler şu köşede esrar içiyordu yanlarına gittim, biraz konuştuk. Onlara dedim ki kafan iyi olduğunda ne düşünüyorsun? O da dedi ki “dağdayım, elimde keleşim, gerillayım, etrafı seyrediyorum”.

appropriated by struggle and sociability. I claim that the strategy of re-making the urban space paves the way for a turning point in the politics of the Kurdish movement. The generation of the 1990s referred to Kurdistan as a homeland. The discourse concerning the formation of an independent Kurdistan mobilized people to struggle. The aim of politicized people in western urban spaces was to return to the homeland. Further, joining the guerilla was a shared dream of the youth. Since the guerilla that fought the Turkish state was located in the mountains of the Kurdish region, the politicized youth had a desire to return to “Kurdistan”. Accordingly, they narrated the village that they came from in a nostalgic way and as the homeland. However, the majority of people that I interviewed were born in Adana and many of them have never been in the Kurdish region. When I asked them whether they want to go to the village they expressed ambiguous feelings:

K: Well, it is a village you know, and don't expect that to be that beautiful, but there is snow in the winter and that must be beautiful. That could be fun but it is hot in the summer you know and there is not much to do<sup>54</sup>.

It is interesting to note that in the quote above the village is naturalized and rendered uninteresting and unattractive whereas when they speak of Gündoğan they refer to it almost exclusively in a politicized language. Another informant stressed the irreversibility of displacement and hence once again excluded the village from his contemporary geography:

A: There are too many old people there. To be honest, I can't go and live there. I can't go and settle into the countryside; I can't live in a village. Imagine, you take this glass in your hand, you throw it to the wall, you go out and then come back in and you see it is all broken. Could it be the same? No. The soldiers have ravaged all our places. The state is a dishonest man, write that too! It is definitely dishonest. We could have had gardens, trees, a truly green nature, now it is all rocks and stones. They emptied our village, and banished everyone there<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> K: Köydür yani o kadar da güzel değil ama kışın kar var ya onlar güzel olur. İşte eğlenmek ama yazın da çok sıcak olur bir de bir şey yok.

<sup>55</sup> A: Öyle yaşlı maşlı var. Ben bizzat gidip orada yaşamam. Açık söyleyeyim. Ben gidip köye gidip yerleşmem, o köyde yaşamam. Yani şimdi bu bardağı alıyon,

Here is the response of another informant to the same question:

Ö: I have all my life here in Adana, it is here that I knew my people, I just can't leave them. I can't leave my party, my friends<sup>56</sup>.

In the previous chapter as well as this one I have argued that for people in Gündoğan Kurdishness is associated with resistance. It does not refer to a specific land. If Kurdishness is resistance, Kurdistan is where loss due to displacement resides. Therefore, while stories about the village signify defeat of the Kurds, stories about Gündoğan refer to the struggle of the Kurds and their safe haven. On the other hand, this safe haven is created by the privatization of neighborhood. Through struggle, violence, and self-confinement the neighborhood is alienated from the outside. I think, at the moment of demonstration when group differences become blurred and the neighborhood turns to be a unique body, the neighborhood becomes Kurdistan.

Nevertheless, while the hegemonic discourse of the Kurdish movement is to democratize Turkey and to establish a multicultural state, Kurdish children still support struggling for a nation state called Kurdistan. Although they use the terminologies of the hegemonic discourse within the movement; like Kurdish identity, culture, when I asked them what they mean by Kurdish identity, they said that in their ID card "Republic of Kurdistan" should be written. They emphasized that they want an independent nation state, and that they do not want to live with Turkish people. It is important to note that their imagination challenges/goes beyond the discourse of the PKK even though they use the same terminology because their

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duvara vuruyon, çıkıyon ya geliyon tekrar o bardağa bakıyon hep kırık dökük. Eski hali olur mu? Olmaz. Bir de askerler her yeri yakıp yıktı bizim orayı. Bu devlet var ya namussuz ya. Bunu da kaydet. Vallahi namussuzdur. Şimdi var ya bizim bağlar olurdu, ağaçlar olurdu, yepyemiş bir doğa olurdu, şimdi hep kaya, taş. Bizim köyü boşalttılar, herkesi sürdüler.

<sup>56</sup> Ö: Burada [Adana] kalmayı, nasıl yani burada her şeyimi kurmuşum, yani halkımı tanımışım, burada insanlarımı, toplu olduğum insanları bırakamam yani. Parti olaylarını, arkadaşlarımı, o yüzden bırakamam.

identity depends on the struggle to exclude the Turkish state from their life-world. On the other hand, I must also add that the word “Kurdistan” does not refer to the Kurdish region anymore, rather it became simultaneously an empty signifier filled and given content by performance, and a dream space always a bit far away.

## CHAPTER 7

### TRANSGRESSION AND VIOLENT FREEDOM

*Violence never declares either its own existence or its right to exist; it simply exists.*

*Freedom is nothing if it is not the freedom to live at the edge of limits where all comprehension breaks down.*

Bataille

Violence is a constitutive element of social relations within the neighborhood of Gündoğan. As everything, including body, is given meaning by violent incisions, violence becomes a way of life. The language of violence is thus one of the few languages available to youth and children. Most of their narratives start and end with stories of violence, so violence comes to be the main theme in the narratives. Violence also constitutes the structure of narratives: it determines what should be narrated and what is needless to narrate.

In my interviews, one of my first questions concerned where the interviewees are from and the reason of their migration. The village from which their families were exiled is remembered as a place where the state implemented violence; indeed, when they narrated their migration, their stories exclusively concentrated on state violence and how they were forced to evacuate their villages under the control of the military:

Berivan<sup>57</sup>: There are not many things that I remember; I just remember when they had hit my mum and dad inside. They left no stone unturned in the house; they brought every single cassette and books they found. They have burnt all the things they discovered. Well, he had some albums, some photos from the mountain, they burned them all. Awful things happened. There were civilians at that time and they were really cruel. You couldn't guess when they would come in. They were booting and slapping the doors. I still have in mind the moment they beat my

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<sup>57</sup> Berivan is 13 years old. Her family is from Mardin. They migrated to Adana due to the state violence when she was 9. She works in a barbershop.

mum. They beat my dad and they picked my mum from the hairs. I felt so offended. They dragged my sister outside of the house. I do remember that, they were put into prison for one night. There all my sisters and my brothers have been tortured<sup>58</sup>.

Kuto: They bombed the village of my grandpa. They sent there missiles. We went there two years ago and all these happened some four years ago. My grandpa died last year, the soldiers had laid mines to kill the guerillas, then there was a civil minibus passing from there and my grandpa and one of our relatives was inside, four people were killed in there. My uncle was killed thirty years ago, they cast him down deep into a well, they have attacked my grandpa's village because they received and concealed the soldiers fighting in the mountain, my uncle was then playing around a well and they just pushed him roughly and he hitched into the barriers and fell into the well<sup>59</sup>.

It is not only village narratives that are saturated with violence. Narratives about urban space are also characterized by violence experienced in the police station, school, street, and home. Nevertheless, the narration of violence in the past (village) is prominently different from the narration of violence in the present. Children tell of the burning of villages, torturing of people, lost properties and lands in a clear, consistent, fluent way, even if they did not experience them and use a

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<sup>58</sup> Berivan: Çok bir şey hatırlamıyorum ama sadece annemle babamı dövdüklerini hatırlıyorum evin içinde. Evin her yerini didik didik aradılar, buldukları kitapları, kasetleri, her şeyi götürdüler. Buldukları o kitapların hepsini göz önünde yaktılar. Şey, mesela bizim resimlerimiz vardı, albümümüz, resimleri, dağdan gelen resimlerin hepsini yaktılar. Çok kötü şeyler oldu. Siviller vardı ve o zamankiler çok vahşiydi. Eve girişleri hiç belli değildi. Tekme tokat, kapıları kırıyorlardı. Ve annemleri dövdükleri an bile şu an aklıma geliyor. Annemin saçını yoldular, babamı dövdüler. Çok zoruma gitti. Ablamı dışarıya kadar böyle sürüklediler. Ben hatırlıyorum. Bir akşam cezaevinde kaldılar. Orada çok işkence gördü ablalarım, abilerim.

<sup>59</sup> Kuto: Babamlar işte oradan istemiyorlarmış oradan hatta dedemgilin köyünü bombalamışlar, füze atmışlar. İki sene önce biz şeye gittik, o olay da üç-dört sene önce oldu. İki sene önce biz dedemgilin köyüne gittiğimizde annemle ben ev yapıyorlardı onlar, ev hep harebeydi, çadırın içinde yaşıyorlardı. İşte dedem de geçen şeyde öldü, bir sene falan oldu, şeyde, askerler mayın döşemişler, şey gerillaları vurmak için, işte oradan yolcu minibüsü geçerken de dedem de içindeydi, hatta bir tane akrabamız vardı, o işte dört kişi öldü orada. Şimdi dedemin, nenem de yaşlı zaten, yedi-sekiz kişi yaşıyorlar tek evde, kimse bakmıyor.

language of victimization. In these stories, they, the Kurds, are the objects of violence; the state is the perpetrator of violence. As I have explained in a previous chapter, the reason why these stories are repeatedly narrated and in the same way is that on the one hand, these stories of violence serve as a legitimating basis for their struggle against the state; on the other hand, although what they experience in urban life is not radically different from the experiences in the village, present grievances are less expressible. For the oppressions in the past, they have collectively prepared, inherited stories, and hence have a reliable repertoire. However, they have no repertoire, neither a prepared language nor narrative that would articulate present grievances. They need to fashion anew their own language and narrative for their current situation. Therefore, the present is narrated in a fragmented and inconsistent way or cannot be narrated altogether. Furthermore, they position themselves as both objects and subjects of violence in their narratives. Rather than a language of total victimization, they use a language of resistance against injustice. Yet, these injustices do not refer to the present but the past. In other words, they claim that their struggle is against the injustices in the past experienced by older family members or in general the Kurds.

Narratives I collected clearly show that in the stigmatized neighborhood of Gündoğan, political violence has vast visibility in the forms of arrests, custody, and torture:

B: They constantly attack houses during the demonstrations... They were seriously humiliating people. They were insulting us with obscene words. We were like desolate and destitute people, I mean other than DTP, we were almost unowned, forlorn.... The civilians took us from the school, we left with shackles in our hands, this is what was asked in the interrogation: Who will save you, the party? This was the only question asked. They asked if we were going to the party, they even didn't let us talk, there is nothing one could say, they beat us a bit of course. We are kind of used to their beating of us.

H: Have you ever been jailed?

A: Yes, I've been inside the jail, but it was not for something serious. I was not really jailed in fact. In fact there are eight-nine hurts in my body; I squabbled for many reasons in the past in fact. I have been held in probation for eight days in the security office, and I wish I had been jailed for eight months but not held in the security office for eight days.

H: Why?

A: Well, one saddens there, frays psychologically because of these investigations, I remember once in the security office one policeman was taking my fingerprint, and I had before had an argument with this police guy, understand? I was so tired, I hadn't slept for such a long time, and I leaned my hand to the wall and then the guy told me to lick the wall, to clean the wall with my tongue, can you imagine? I swear that it was what he had told me, I was so tired and put my hand into the wall and it left a small spot on that<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> B: Eylemlerde sürekli evlere baskın yapıyorlar... Çok kötü aşağılıyorlardı. Kullandıkları kelimeler, küfürler, ağza alınmayacak küfürler ediyorlardı bize resmen. Sanki orada kimsesiz yani sahipsiz gibi bir şeydik. Hani arkamızda DTP partisinin olmadığını düşünsek tabi, sahipsiz gibi bir şeydik... Siviller, bizi okuldan aldılar, elimizde kelepçeler falan gittik, sorgumuzda sorulan şu: seni kim kurtaracakmış, parti mi? Sorulan soru bu sadece söylediler. Sen partiye mi gidiyorsun dediler, zaten bir şey demeye, yani evet bile diyemiyorsun, cevap hakkı vermediler bize, izin vermediler, biraz da dövdüler tabi. Alıştık artık dövmelerine vallahi ya gerçekten.

H: Sen hiç cezaevine girdin mi?

Ahmet: Şimdi şöyle girdim yani devamlı kaldığım yok, girmedim. Zaten hep benim vücudumda dokuz tane yara vardır, ayıptır söylemesi, yani çeşitli nedenlerle kavga etmişiz. yani sekiz gün emniyette kaldım bir ara yemin ediyorum yani yemin ederim 8 ay cezaevinde kalsaydım, 8 gün emniyette kalmasaydım.

H: Niye?

A: Ya insan üzülüyor orada, yıpranıyor, sorgudur şudur budur, hatırlıyorum yani emniyette ben parmak izimi alıyordu tamam mı daha önce de o memurla tartışmıştım ekibin içinden, ben de öyle parmak izimi alıyordu, ben de çok yorgundum, zaten yatmıyordum, moralim de bozuktu, ben de elimi duvara dayadım bana dedi o duvarı yalayacan dedi. O duvarı dilinle temizleyecen, böyle bir şey duydun mu ya? Yemin ediyorum bana öyle dedi o dedi parmak izi alıyordu, ben de dalmıştım, yorgundum, böyle elimi duvara dayadım, duvar da biraz leke oldu. Parmak izim çıktı.



A considerable number of youth and children in the neighborhood are being mobilized within the Kurdish movement to organize various forms of demonstrations. Since unlike in the 1990s, it is youth and children rather than the older people who undertake the struggle of the Kurds in the neighborhood, the police particularly focus on youth and children. They are exposed to routine police violence. As seen in the narratives, among the youth there is a feeling of being disowned in the interactions with state institutions like school and police station. Yet, they have their own institution, DTP. As opposed to state institutions, DTP is perceived as one that provides a sense of belonging and protection. While others threaten Kurdish children and youth with denouncing them to the police, these children and youth reply with threats to inform them to the DTP. Also, such routine violence has apparently built up an antagonism between the Kurds and the state as detainment and imprisonment have become the main experiences of the youth and children in the neighborhood. Since most of their public experience in other words, since their encounter with “others” outside of their neighbors are so much shaped by violence, it is no wonder that it was mostly stories of violence they deemed worth telling me as the researcher.

Erhan: For example, one day I didn't attend to the demonstration but was taken with the activists. The police, without asking anything, attacked me.

H: How old were you then?

E: I was eight. They took me in without asking anything even when I was eight, and I was in custody for two days. You see, I was kept at surveillance despite I was eight. I bitterly resented that and when I was twelve, I was once more in custody for four months. I was under arrest for four months.

H: Do you remember these days when you were first taken under arrest for two days?

E: To stay under arrest for two days, how can I say, is like time being at standstill knowingly or unknowingly, makes one feel offended. these two days hurt me deeply. To be under arrest for two days, even if it was half an hour, is enough to be resentful if you have no guilt.

H: Were you in on the demonstrations after these two days?

E: I keep participating the demonstrations, so to speak I attended all of them as I felt offended.

H: Well, what happened when you were twelve years old?

E: I was called to a hearing, went to trial, we had a lawyer, an lawyer, he talked they put me in jail in the absence of any proof. You see, I was taken in the court, and they protracted the case purposively, they protracted it for one day because I am a Kurd, they asked already If I was a Kurd, I replied Yes, I mean I wouldn't deny myself.

H: You say, you stayed there for four months, how did that time lapse?

E: You see, time doesn't pass, we couldn't defend our rights totally and we became furious. We were really furious against them; they were keeping me detained here, I wasn't supposed to be in jail at that age, there is no such law, can you think that there is no evidence and you can't vote till you are eighteen, if unable to vote then unable to think, if unable to think then they don't have the right to put someone in jail. If I can't vote they don't have the right to put me in jail, if they put me in jail then I should be able to vote. , I mean I must have the chance to vote then. I should be able to vote., I am able to understand everything but not voting. When I first get out [of jail], the time's passing quickly, to be able to wander around, to be in is different but being outside, wandering around easily is different.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Erhan: Örneğin bir gün ben eyleme katılmamıştım ama yakalandım, öyle soru sormadan hemen üstüme saldırdılar.

H: Kaç yaşındaydın o zaman?

E: Sekiz yaşındaydım. Sekiz yaşındayken bile hiç soru sormadan aldılar, iki gün nezarete kaldım. Ondan sonra sekiz yaşında olmama rağmen nezarete attılar. Zoruma gitti, ondan sonra dört ay da on iki yaşındayken kaldım. Dört ay hapiste kaldım.

H: O iki gün nezarete kaldığın zaman, o günleri hatırlıyor musun?

E: İki gün nezarete kalmam ne bileyim zamanın geçmemesi, bilip bilmeden, insanın zoruna gitmesi, o derece. Çok zoruma gitti yani iki gün, iki gün yani yarım saat olsa bile haklıysan tutuklamaları, o zoruma gitti işte.

H: Peki ondan sonra katıldın mı eylemlere, on iki günden sonra?

E: Bırakmadım katıldım yine, yani benim zoruma gittiği için hepsine de katıldım.

H: Peki on iki yaşında girmiştin, o zaman nasıl bir şey oldu?

In 2009, more than 200 hundred youngsters and children were taken into custody. Some were arrested under the terrorism statute due to their participation in demonstrations. Particularly, after it was claimed that Abdullah Öcalan was exposed to violence in prison, youngsters and children initiated a protest. During this process, children became the target of the police. Many children who were identified by police cameras were imprisoned. Nevertheless, police violence is not limited to such events, in the everyday life of the neighborhood; the police routinely harass the inhabitants. Furthermore, police carries out regular operations in homes. Indeed, the majority of the youth and children I have talked to have been taken into custody and/or put in prison at least once in their life time due to criminal charges such as theft and fights as well as political activities. For example one of my interviewee was put in prison 13 times and most of them were due to theft.

The school also comes to be a place of violence for children and youth in Gündoğan. All interviewees who go to school narrate how they were beaten by teachers due to their political orientation. In addition, due to the slogans that children write on their books, political discussions they have with their teachers in the class room and the discussions or fights that take place among Kurdish and Turkish children, they can be taken into custody or, even imprisoned.

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E: O zaman duruşma falan yaptık, mahkemeye çıktık, avukatımız vardı, bir avukat, avukat konuştu, yani delil olmadan beni hapse attılar. İşte mahkemeye sürdüler, mahkemeye bilerek uzattılar, bir gün uzattılar, maksat ki Kürdüm ya, ya sordular zaten Kürt müsün, Kürdün dedim yani kendimi şey yapmam.

H: Peki dört ay kalmıştın değil mi orada, o nasıl geçti?

E: Zaman geçmiyor yani, hakkımızı tam savunamıyorduk, daha çok hırslanıyorduk, daha çok hırslanıyorduk, onlara karşı beni burada tutmaları, benim o yaşında hapse bile atılmamam lazım, öyle bir yasa yok, yani düşünebiliyor musun zaten delil yok bir de on sekiz yaşına kadar oy kullanamıyorsun, kullanamıyorsa demek ki akli almıyor, aklım almıyorsa beni de hapse atmanıza hakkınız yok. Oy kullanmıyorsam beni hapse atmalarına hakları yok, hapse atıyorlarsa o zaman ben de oy kullanayım. Yani o zaman ben de oy kullanayım. O zaman ben de oy kullanayım ki ben aklım alıyor hapsi ama ben aklım almıyor oy kullanmayı. [Hapisten] ilk çıktığımda zamanın hemen geçmesi, yok ne bileyim istediğin yeri gezebilmesi, içeride kalması ayrı ama dışarıda rahat rahat gezmesi ayrı.

However, violence in urban life, in addition to explicit political violence, has various facets such as discrimination, exclusion, humiliation, and poverty. This is why perhaps many of them confine themselves to the neighborhood to escape from the gaze of the others who identify them with criminality and terror. The school and police station are the places of rupture and fissure in a neighborhood where they seem to have developed a sense of safety and belonging. During the day and night, civil and official policemen walk particularly through the main street of the neighborhood and randomly stop children and youth to ask for their ID card.

H: Is there a police repression here in the district?

Erhan: The police can ask your identity card without any reason, they can ask you whether you are a political offender, they as if you were in jail, if we were deceived, they want us to approve that we think we were deceived. "They are paying you for doing what you did" they say, however those are all lies, that they are making up reasons that we are paid or we are given something. A child can stand trial and declare "I did it for the money" but in fact it is not true, it is an effect of police suppression. All is suppression, the police makes up "I have also caught one of your friends", I know that well, they are flying a kite, "I caught a friend of yours and he gave us your name." I say then "Bring my friend and we speak face to face. Let him here, if you had already caught him<sup>62</sup>."

Furthermore, violence does not take place only in the police station, the school, street nor are the perpetrators of violence only representatives of the state. Violence is diffused in every aspect of life in the neighborhood. It is also a constitutive aspect of familial relations reconstituted by the effects of forced migration.

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<sup>62</sup> H: Peki burada polisin baskısı var mı, mahallede?

Erhan: Polisler ne bileyim durduk yerde kimlik sorma, mesela sana siyasetten yattın mı diye soruyor, bilemen ne yatın mı, çocukları kandırıyorlar, sizi kandırıyorlar değil mi diyorlar. Size para veriyorlar yapmanız için değil mi diyorlar hâlbuki hepsi yalan ki yani bahane uyduruyorlar, para veriyorlar bilmem ne veriyorlar. Diyor ki mesela mahkemeye çıkıyor çocuk ben para için yaptım diyor halbuki yalan polis baskısı. Hepsi de baskı bir uydurma mesela diyor ki senin diyor arkadaşımı da yakaladım, çok iyi biliyorum bunu, hemen zarf atıyorlar, senin arkadaşımı yakaladım, senin ismini verdi diyor, ben diyorum arkadaşımı getirin öyle konuşalım diyorum, gelsin diyorum eğer yakaladıysanız.

While children of displaced families were born in a universe in which displacement accompanied different modes of oppression specific to urban life, parents as displaced individuals experience a sense of second defeat as they have trouble integrating themselves to urban life. During fieldwork, I observed that in most displaced families, fathers do not work; children and youth provide the sustenance and become the primary economic actors in the household. The reason for fathers' unemployment is that although in the socio-economic structure of the village they had the highest status, when they came to the urban space, they became unqualified workers. Their job opportunities are extremely limited as well. They can solely work in bazaars and sell vegetables and fruit, as street hawkers, or in the construction sector. Most of the displaced men do not work in these jobs because they think that these jobs are beneath them. However, children have more possibilities since they can work as apprentices in barber, furniture, and tailor shop. It should be noted that although almost all these children work, only some of them really help substantially their families. As far as I observed, the ones who are politicized and are mobilized within the Kurdish movement work and help their families. However, hashish-users do not help their families even if they work since they spend most of their money to buy hashish, as the excerpt below shows:

Ali: I take twenty five million daily wage, I give six and a half to the cigarette, ten to the grass and ten million is left. I mostly fritter the remaining, if not, I hand it out to my family<sup>63</sup>.

Some of them also occasionally sell hashish in the neighborhood. They sell the hashish that they buy from bigger sellers and take an amount of hashish for themselves as commission; so they receive hashish rather than money in exchange for their working; which is another reason why they do not contribute to the family budget.

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<sup>63</sup> Ali: Yirmi beş milyon yevmiye alıyorum, altı buçuk sigaraya veriyorum, onunu esrara veriyorum, on milyon kalıyor elimde, onu da çarçur ediyorum, aileme arada veriyorum.

The youth and children in Gündoğan speak Turkish better than their parents do since grew up in the urban space and received eight years mandatory education. They are crucial for their families' lives as all business with the bureaucracy--like receiving aid distributed by the municipalities and governorship-- are done by children. Some parents do not speak Turkish at all; their children take them to the hospital. This role contributes to the power they have in the family. Furthermore, politicized youth and children see their parents as being suppressed and silenced by the state. Because children have access to the internet and other media tools, they share the interpretation of the Kurdish groups on how the state oppresses the Kurds. Unlike their parents, they say, this knowledge of oppression leads to a sense of anger and grudge against the state. Meanwhile, fathers who have lost their status and power start implementing more violence against their children in order to restate a position of authority. Most children I interviewed narrated how they are beaten by their parents, particularly fathers:

M: When my father punches me, he punches me jumping on the armchair, he jumps and punches. He is fleshy and bulky. He punches me in my pit of the stomach and asked if it was causing pain. When I say yes, he was punching me more. He asked where was at utmost pain and after I showed him, he struck me there<sup>64</sup>.

In return, hashish use and gang member children and youth also use violence against family members, especially their sisters and brothers. During fieldwork, I witnessed many fights within families. Parents are afraid of their hashish using children to the extent that they implicitly acknowledge their children' hashish use because they become more relaxed after they smoke their share of the day:

A: Noone has told me why I was smoking hashish. For instance, when I arrive at home every evening, my eyes tell it. My brothers understand it after all, they know when I am high and when I head home sober. They can tell it as they are my brothers. As soon as my head is high, I get tipsy, I mean, cheerful. I can

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<sup>64</sup> M: Benim babam bir vurdu mu, koltukta zıplıyordu vuruyordu, zıplıyordu vuruyordu. Kılolu bir de kalıplı. Midemin boşluğuna vuruyordu, ağrıyor mu diyordu, ben ağrıyor deyince daha çok vuruyordu. Diyordu neren ağrıyor neren, diyorum buram sonra lap lap vuruyor.

fold another child in my arms and embrace him, like and play with him. I can joke around with him. For instance,. I do unexpected things to my sisters. I hug them and kiss. That is to say, we just make jokes. Then my sisters say “you smoked hashish if you behave this way. Otherwise you dislike us.” They tell me this. Let me tell you something, they are not against smoking hashish, why they aren’t, actually they are against in this way, of course they don’t want me to smoke hashish. That I go to home everyday in good time, that I behave as they would like me to. But they already know that this is impossible. And therefore they don’t object . Very coolheaded, if I smoke I calm down and I become large-minded. My aggression disappears<sup>65</sup>.

In fact, I would even argue that children intentionally perform a psychopath identity by using hashish and by fighting to become untouchable by their elders. In this way, families give up trying to change them:

A: Especially in morning noone can poke his nose into my business. I mean, my sister, my aunt, my sisters love me very much. Rather than my brothers, my brother’s wives get cross with me, and say “whatever Ahmet does, don’t speakhim in response.” See, they deal with me this way. That is the hashish way<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup>A: Kimse bana dememiş neden esrar içiyon. Misal her akşam eve gittiğimde gözlerim biraz belli ediyor. Abilerim artık anlıyor, biliyorlar ne zaman kafam güzel, ne zaman ayık gittiğimi eve biliyorlar. Çözmüşler beni, abilerimdir. Kafam güzel oldu mu aynen güzel yani neşeli oluyorum nasıl neşeli bir çocuğu alıp öpüp koklayabilirim, sevebilirim yani oynayabilirim. Şakalaşabilirim. Yani ablalarım misal hiç beklemediği hareketleri yapıyorum onlara. Sarılıyorum onlara mesela öpüyorum. Yani şakalaşıyoruz. Ablalarım diyor ha gene içmişsin sen böyle yapıyorsun. Yoksa bizi sevmesin sen. Söylüyorlar bunu. Aslında birşey diyeyim mi, benimkiler hiç karşı değil, niye karşı değil, yani şöyle karşılar, tabi ki içmememi istiyorlar. Yani her gün eve erken saatlerde gideyim, onların istediği gibi olmamı istiyorlar tabi. Ama öyle bir şey olamayacağını da biliyorlar. Bu yüzden de karşı çıkmıyorlar. Çok sakin, ben içtim mi kafam rahat olur yani geniş görüşlü olurum. Asabiliğim geçer yani öyle.

<sup>66</sup> A: Sabah hele kimse bana karışamaz. Yani ablam, yengem, benim ablalarım beni çok seviyor. Abilerimden çok, bir de yengelerim hep kızarlar, derler Ahmet ne yaparsa yapsın kesinlikle ona karşılık vermeyin diyorlar. İşte onlar da bu şekilde benimle idare ediyor. İşte bu esrar ayağı var.

In these ways, violence becomes the main determinant of their experience, a tool in all domains of their lives and hence the main structure of their narratives. Interestingly, they themselves are aware of this fact and have rational explanations for why they themselves become the perpetrators of violence. Below is an excerpt from an interview I conducted where a child explains why violence is a means for him to escape from more violence induced by figures of authority such as the police or school teachers:

H: Do you get afraid, people are getting arrested etc...

Erhan: What will the police do, if you don't show your reaction and overestimate them, they will put pressure on you. If you show your reaction they won't do anything to you. When you stand reactless the police beat you up, they beat your door down, but if you show your reaction they understand that you are daunt, they can't do anything. If you are not afraid, they can't do anything. I mean, you should show your reaction. If they swear at you, you should answer back. But when you have a fright, they push your button. They do more. The police also get puzzled, puzzled how children of this age can vociferate attack us. How can I say, they get dazzled how these children can jump down at the police's throat, they get dazzled. They think if these children are doing this at this age, what they can do in the future. After all, they are at most afraid of the children. The police, when I first set foot in, the police hit one of our relatives in front of the school, and we cut up rough with the cops, this is why we have no fear. I mean, they hit one of us, they draw baton to one of us, we take his baton and beat him with that. It happened many times, we even hit one cop from head, and ended up in court for that reason.

Murat: The teacher fears Erhan (at that point, Erhan walks in), No Erhan, I have no problem with you said the teacher.

E: You know what, I beat up that teacher. We are in the classroom, now she moves around the child next to me, she just hangs about to find a reason to beat him. She came and went many times and as this child acted in a hostile manner, she instantly advanced upon to beat him. Just as she proceeded to hit him, I slapped her and the class started to laugh. Till that year she can't touch me<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Erhan: Polis ne yapacak, tepkini koymazsan, onları gözünde büyütürsen, onlar senin üstüne çökemeye başlar. Tepkini koydun mu onlar sana bir şey yapamaz. Tepkisini göstermedin mi polis dövüyor, gelip kapına dövüyor, tepkini gösterdin mi



Beating teachers in the school is conceived to be the only way to avoid beatings by the teacher. To attack the police (and not being afraid of them) is the only way to escape from police violence. In fact, they learn these strategies from their everyday experiences. For example, they learned from their experiences that if they fall down when beaten by the police they would be beaten more. The reason for their entering gangs is also closely related to this strategy. They think that no one can dare to tease them because of the power of the gang. They say that even the police cannot interfere with the organized and armed members of the gangs and even children who escape from the police after a demonstration enter the streets where members of gangs live.

Violence is also a constitutive element of friendship in the neighborhood. People usually hang out in groups. Fights are a constant element of relationships between groups and, anyone has to fight for his friends in the group. He can be injured, killed or put in prison for the sake of his friends. In the neighborhood I met a number of people who had been put in prison due to a fight for friends. This kind of support also allows the youth to intervene in their friends' lives. In this friendship that is constituted by violence, the distance among individuals and the line between privacy and public are largely blurred.

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biliyor ki korkmuyor, bir şey yapamaz. Korkmuyorsan bir şey yapamaz. Tepkisini gösteriyor yani. O küfür etti mi sen de ardından küfür edecen yani. Ama sen korktuğun zaman senin daha çok üstüne geliyorlar. Daha çok şey yapıyorlar. Şaşıyorlar polisler de, şaşıyorlar, bu yaşta nasıl bize bağırıp çağırıyorlar. Ne bileyim yani nasıl bizim üstümüze üstümüze gelebiliyorlar yani şaşıyorlar polisler. Şaşırmalar da oluyor korkular da oluyor. Yani bu yaşta bize bunu yapıyorsa gelecekte ne yapacak acaba. Zaten en çok çocuklardan korkuyorlar. Polisin, benim ilk girdiğimde, okulun önünde zaten bizim akrabasının birine polis vurdu, polislerle bile kavga ettik, onlardan korkumuz yok yani. Yani birimize vuruyor, copu alıp birimize vuruyor, copunu alıp onu dövüyoruz. Birçok kez oldu yani, polisin kafasını bile yarıdık, ondan mahkemelik olduk yani.

Murat: Hoca Erhan'den korkuyor (o sırada Erhan içeri giriyor), Yok Erhan, benim seninle alıp vermediğim bir şey yok dedi hoca.

E: Ben o hocayı var ya, bana öyle diyen hocayı dövdüm. Sınıfın içindeyiz, şimdi yanımdaki çocuğun yanında geziyor, geziyor, onu dövecek ya bahane arıyor. Gelip gitti, gelip gitti, bu bir hareket yaptı, hemen üzerine yürüdü, onu dövecekti, tam vuracak ben bir şaplak vurdum, baktım sınıf gülüyor. O seneden beri bana bir şey yapamıyor.

Until now I have argued that relations with state institutions, with family members and friends are constituted by violence. Neither is the relationship of the young and children to their bodies is exempt from violence. For example, it is a common practice to write on one's body with a matchstick. Many youth and children have self-made tattoos of words like "anger", "grudge", "revenge", and "hatred" on their arms and depictions of weapons on their legs. Also their legs are full of razor traces. Özhan explains:

These were bad times, the children were really suppressed, the state was effortless to aid them. These children had no money and bewildered, they were going for theft. I also had sticky fingers, and the police was taking us to the police station even when we didn't committed a theft, we stayed there for days and they electrified us. They bastinadoed us or hanged us upon the ceiling. We were cutting ourselves to be rescued of this. Either with razor blade or glass.

H: Why?

Ö: See, we hid blade in the in the custody and when we cut ourselves they didn't torture us. I mean, they were refraining from doing that or something, they weren't butting in on us not to foot the bill. They were letting us alone<sup>68</sup>.

Bülent is a 22 year-old young man from Adıyaman in the neighborhood who cut his legs with a razor before going to military service for he thought that the traces of razors would mark him as a psychopath, and no one would dare to attack him.

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<sup>68</sup> Nasıl bir dönemdi, gençler o zaman nasıl yani garibanlardı, devlet onlara hiç yardım yapmıyordu. Paraları yoktu, bu yüzden şaşırıyorlardı, gidip hırsızlık yapıyorlardı. Ki ben de yapıyordum, ondan sonra hırsızlık yapmadığımız zaman da polis alıp bizi götürüyordu emniyete, günlerce orada kalıyorduk, bizi cevrana veriyorlardı. Bizi falakaya yatırıyorlardı, tavana asıyorlardı bizi. Biz bundan kurtulmak için kendimizi kesiyorduk. Jiletle ya da camla.

H: Neden?

Ö: İşte nezarete jilet katıyorduk, saklıyorduk, kendimizi kestiğimiz zaman bize işkence yapmıyorlardı. Yani çekiniyorlar mıydı artık sorumluluk altına girmemek için mi bize karışmıyorlardı, bizi hemen bırakıyorlardı.

In both of these cases, implementing violence to one's own body is perceived as a strategy for avoiding potential violence that could be implemented by others. In a context where the interventions of the state to the Kurdish movement materialize on the bodies of youth and children, bodies come to be a site of struggle and the right to exercise violence becomes that over which all parties fight.

Another example of self-induced violence is exemplified in Ayşe's story. Ayşe wanted to attend a camp organized by the religious reading house of which she was part. This camp would allow her to become a teacher in the reading house. However, her family did not permit her to attend that camp. Ayşe's mother told me that after they told Ayşe that she was not allowed to go to the camp, she started beating herself and crying. Shocked by the sight of Ayşe destroying her own body, the mother allowed her to go to the camp. As this example shows, inducing violence on one's own body is not only a strategy for preventing state violence but also a weapon to be used against the family. Here, putting one's own body on the line immediately limits the authority of the parents whose goal is not to destroy but to produce productive, docile bodies operable and proudly exhibited in public.

Hashish can also become a means of self-destruction. On the one hand, hashish enables youth and children to challenge the constraints around them by enabling them to carve a private space created by simply "ignoring" others. When they are high, they isolate themselves from the outside world as well as its oppressive rules. On the other hand, smoking hashish damages their bodies permanently. Ali says:

We smoke hashish everyday. It causes difficulty in breathing and defatigation. Your bones thin out, you get thinner. My age is twenty two but a man aged thirty five can run faster than me. More and more, our texture is weakening. Our faces are cracking up, our eyes, we are going into a decline, our facial appearance is changing, our color, our skin is changing. Some days, we start from the morning, smoke ten or fifteen, or even some of us smoke thirty<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Her gün içeriz. Nefes darlığı, halsizlik veriyor. Kemiklerin eriyor, zayıflıyorsun. Yaşım yirmi iki ama otuz beş yaşındaki adam benden daha iyi koşar. Gitgide bünyemiz ufalıyor. Suratımız çöküyor, gözlerimiz, morarıyoruz, surat şeklimiz de

As Ali narrates, in the bodies of hashish users, a change is clearly noticeable. On the one hand, since they smoke hashish many times during a day, they bear the effects of hashish all the time. It is noticeable from their glance and gestures. In addition, their bodies are also physically shaped by drug use. From the shape of their face, to their abnormal weight loss, it is easy to detect who is a hashish addict. In fact, I could understand it by looking at them only once.

Judith Butler states: “body implies mortality, vulnerability and agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well” (Butler, 2005: 26). She adds that we struggle for the right over our own bodies, yet the bodies that we struggle for are not only our own as they have also a public dimension: the body is constituted as a social phenomenon in the public space (Ibid). This signifies that bodies bear the traces of social life where diverse struggles and conflicts are embedded. The bodies of youth and children in the neighborhood are communicative; they are the transmitters on which the violent history of the Kurds, the struggle of the PKK in the urban space and the ‘future’ dreams of the Kurdish struggle are inscribed. This phenomenon also explains the hatred and the fear that society feels against the Kurdish children irrespective of the fact that the category of childhood has been identified with innocence. Not only are these bodies already always “written on” and hence not innocent, circulating in the urban space they are a source of the demographic fear of Turkish society: they are the embodiments of a growing Kurdish population, of the power of re-production and of the Kurdish “demographic time-bomb” (Collins, 61). No wonder that the bodies of Kurdish youth and children in the neighborhood constitute a site of struggle. The state tries to intervene and control these bodies which are perceived as objects of fear. On the other hand, those youth and children claim their rights over their own bodies.

Georges Bataille distinguishes two forms of economy: general and restricted. General economy involves loss and is organized through the principle of loss. The

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değişiyor, rengimiz, tenimiz değişiyor. Gün geliyor, sabahtan başlıyoruz, on tane, on beş tane içiyoruz, yok değil, otuz tane de içen var.

primary object in general economy is the expenditure of wealth, rather than production which is the object of restricted economy (Noys, 200: 104). Restricted economy (that is the market economy in modern capitalism) is organized through accumulation as the bourgeois. According to Bataille, gift giving, which was intrinsic to all the economies before capitalism, has vanished in the modern world. Adorno also makes a similar argument: “We are forgetting how to give presents” (Ibid, 109). Further, according to Bataille, patterns of expenditure, the forms in which excess energy is expended, determines any society rather than relations of production as Marxist thinking dictates. In other words, society is made-up depending on the way in which it deals with surplus energy, with the “accursed share”. For Bataille, the accursed share is the excess energy that cannot be controlled and completely absorbed within any existing system: ‘Like an unbroken animal that cannot be trained, it is this energy that destroys us; it is we who pay the price of the inevitable explosion’ (Bataille, cited in Noys, 103).

Bataille also argues that there are two modes of consumption in society. One is productive consumption that serves the reproduction of the order; it is “the consumption necessary to survival rather than life” or the consumption that is “directed towards production”. On the other hand, the other mode of consumption is “unproductive expenditure which is determined by the principle of loss and which is an end in itself (Noys, 107). Bataille adds that “...global conflicts are symptoms of the failure of capitalist economies to deal with the excess of the accursed share, except catastrophically” (Ibid, 119). Bataille makes a political reading of expenditure in bourgeois society. He says that the working class that is excluded from the economic wealth can claim power only by “humiliating the bourgeoisie through the appropriation of its wealth and its immediate expenditure” (Ibid, 106). “Unlike the bourgeoisie where wealth is now displayed behind closed doors, in accordance with depressing and boring conventions” (Bataille, cited in Noys, 106) “the proletariat can restore the generosity and nobility which have disappeared from modern life” (Noys, 106). It follows; “one does not build communism, communism is an experience of violent consumption” (Amadeo Bordiga, cited in Noys, 106). Gift giving when politically read is a means of resisting different forms of poverty in

everyday life (Noys, 110). For Bataille, the political reading of expenditure signifies “a violent demand for revolution”, “a necessary critique of capitalism and a contribution to the future possibilities of communism” (Ibid, 110). For example, during the riot “real desires begin to be expressed in festival, in playful self-assertion, in the potlatch of destruction”.

Bataille also argues that the struggle over sovereignty is the struggle over how to consume the excess energy/ “the accursed share” that is useless but must be consumed. What is the accursed share in the society I have been describing? And who fights over its form of consumption? I would argue that the production of the order in capitalism everywhere is directly related to the control of the demography of society. In Turkey add to this fact that the organization of the nation is also related to the demographic control of the majority and minority. Kurds have always been blamed for giving birth to too many children. In other words, they are accused for producing more than that can be productively consumed. Hence, excess human bodies. The children and youth of Gündoğan constitute a surplus that neither state nor the society can productively consume. They are perceived as an excess because they have no potential to reproduce either the state or the family.

According to Agamben, the sovereign emerges in a state of exception in which all norms are suspended through violence. The sovereign is not a source of freedom according to him, on the contrary, being within and outside the law at the same time it is that which oppresses, which kills without the experience of loss (Agamben, 1998). Georges Bataille on the other hand, analyzes how oppressed people become free through performing sovereignty. While he also puts violence at the center of his conceptualization, for him, sovereignty is the moment of emancipation for the oppressed. He says: “Violence certainly is an undeniable feature of sovereignty and the freedom that it promises” (Ibid, 66). Violence “breaks down the integrity of the body or of things” and so it breaks the limits. He adds: “This tendency of violence to be connected to opening, the relation of violence to violation, makes it essential to any thought of freedom”.

It (violence) also challenges the confinement of violence within ‘safe’ limits, because those limits are themselves acts of violence and those limits are open to violence. In this way Bataille reveals the excessive nature of any act of violence, because all violence

involves violence to boundaries, membranes and integrity. Violence is at once excessive as it steps outside those bounds, and it also exists within even the most innocuous activities. Any act that crosses a limit as the word crosses our lips involves violence (Ibid, 63).

Violence is a moment that the oppressed faces power and risks death and as such transgresses the norms of the sovereign. An individual becomes sovereign when he comes to the point where he says that “there is nothing to lose”, when he sacrifices himself. His energy is wasted; he achieves a sovereignty of inner experience (French, 2007: 115). If individuals dare to sacrifice that what enslaves them including their own body, they can be free. “Sacrifice does not waste power in order to replace it. Instead, sacrifice conjures a subversive sovereign existence, a life beyond utility and reification” (Goldhammer, 2007: 23). When oppressed people transgress the norms, reject the relations of productions in which they are produced and reproduced, destruct the mechanisms in which they are consumed and spend their own bodies that are the last thing they have by implementing violence to their own bodies, they emancipate themselves. Yet, the moment of eternal liberation and the moment of eternal defeat come together as violence that transgresses the limits is also a kind of self-destruction. Therefore, “expenditure is lived and tragic experience” (Ibid, 24). As we experience freedom at the limit, we need to transgress the limit. “Freedom is nothing if it is not the freedom to live at the edge of limits where all comprehension breaks down” (Noys, 10). “To live at this edge, where all comprehension breaks down, is to live with sovereignty as an impossible experience that combines violence with freedom” (Ibid). Transgression of limitations emerges through lived experience. “Lived experience is now the experience of an excess which no system can control and which must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically” (Ibid, 13).

In Gündoğan, the state manifests its sovereignty by transgressing all norms and by trying to control the accursed bodies of children by implementing violence, arresting and torturing. On the other hand, the children and youth of Gündoğan continuously perform the state of “having nothing left to do” that precedes what Bataille calls violent freedom. While the sovereign tries to decide how to consume

the surplus who are the children, the children transform their bodies into both objects and subjects of violence and take the control in their hands by deciding how to consume their own bodies. They consume their bodies through transforming them into objects on which hate and anger against the order is written, they harm themselves, they cut themselves; so that their bodies come to be the embodiment of anger and hate against the state and the order without being subsumed to its reproduction. By doing so, they transgress the norms of power in the performance of consuming. I also argue that in a context where the bodies of Kurds, particularly youth and children, constitute a site of struggle and are accessible to the interventions of the state, violence enables youth and children to reconstruct their private: In order to avoid interventions of the state, children and youth implement violence to their own bodies and so they make their bodies untouchable.

I argue that this is exactly why these children and youth are perceived as a problem and came to the current political agenda of Turkey. They take their freedom and fate in their hand but in different ways, by being addicted, by intentionally marking themselves as a psychopath, by beating themselves etc. For Bataille, as mentioned above, the moment of sovereignty is the moment of freedom. By transgressing norms they occupy a sovereign position and reach violent freedom. For Ayşe, implementing violence to her own body in order to escape from the claustrophobic interior of the home and simultaneously transgressing the rules of family and society is the moment of sovereignty and freedom. For Özhan, the moment of theft and cutting himself breaks the domination of the state over his body gives him a moment of sovereignty and of freedom. For Ali, using hashish in the public space under the gaze of adults and not hearing and seeing them and destroying his own body is the moment of sovereignty and freedom. However, there is a dilemma here: on the one hand, those youth and children reach the moment of freedom through their acts of transgression. But, on the other hand, freedom comes with defeat: in the case of Ali and Özhan, a possible death, imprisonment, and in the case of Ayşe, another confinement (reading house) follow. In addition, these are



individually undertaken strategies of youth and children of Gündoğan. Interpreting Bataille, Noys says:

What seemed most irrational to many commentators on the events was the self-destructive nature of what happened as people destroyed their own communities rather than strike out at the affluent areas around them. Here, however, could be read another sign of the potlatch, where in the act of self-destruction a challenge is thrown down for the dominant powers to respond to. Of course, the challenge was not picked up, at least not directly, and the poor were left to face the further militarization of policing, the flight of employment and services, and their own destructive impulses were turned inwards to self-destruction (gangs and drug) (Noys, 110).

Therefore, Noys adds:

Thinking and reading to the limit is dangerous – it puts thought at risk with a freedom that cannot be subject to control. This is a disturbing thought where freedom is not simply something we possess as a positive value but where it violently exceeds and dispossesses us. For freedom to be freedom it cannot be the property of an individual or community, but this threatens us with a violation that we cannot control in advance (Ibid, 134).

What Bataille emphasizes is that violence generates its own violence: while lived experience emerged within violence exceeds the norms of power and renders power meaningless, the same violence dispossesses the oppressed in the form of self-destruction. How are we to think of an envisagement of emancipation which would transgresses the norms and boundaries of power not through self destructive acts but by making an alternative communality in the specific context I am studying?

Considering the context of the neighborhood and keeping in mind the boundaries of my research, I think there is no easy answer to this question. The politicized youth and children are exposed to extreme forms of violence in the prison, police station and on the street. Until now, 41 children in Adana have been

sentenced to prison for 143 years in total. In other words, even if they do not implement violence to their own bodies; they are exposed to extreme state violence.

Nevertheless I would still claim that the politics of children and youth within the Kurdish movement promise an alternative community and politics. What makes Berivan different from the others is the potential to think of a communal imagination. As Bataille suggests, it is better to spend the excess energy “willingly and gloriously than unwillingly and catastrophically” (Ibid, 114). The activists of the Kurdish movement endeavor to intervene to the forms of expenditure experienced in the neighborhood. For example, on the walls of the houses, the statements of “hırsızlığa son” “uyuşturucuya son” are written which I would read as an attempt to put the practice of expenditure into a form: rather than being an individually undertaken strategy, it should have a communal form and be directed against the state and its representatives by making political claims.



Berivan transgresses the norms of gender, age, family, society and the state by attending Newroz<sup>70</sup>, making (alternative) political claims, occupying the street, and clashing with the police. In other words, Berivan and other activists of the Kurdish movement transgress the norms by remaking the urban space, constructing an alternative language of politics, using violence, and deconstructing the category of childhood (and destructing the hegemony of adults)

When Berivan and other activists of the Kurdish movement acknowledge the accursed share in a political way and try to decide what to do with the surplus as a community, an alternative imagination can emerge.

Erhan: I mean, we will always be reactive to the it [state]. Even if it will not come true, even if we fail, even if we won't gain anything we will always be reacting.

Fırat: I mean, I didn't feel different when I was seen, for instance, the first reaction is to ask "why are you taking us captives?" And they respond, "come with us to the police unit." We went as well, I mean, it wasn't quite a problem, we went to the court, and got arrested. I mean, when you are in this fight you see this kind of stuff ordinary. For instance, you start seeing death as a mundane thing, they killed a fifteen year old boy next to us. Then you consider arrest as a regular thing, you see the prison as well, I mean, you get used to these. I mean, there is also another thing, to experience this, for example, to feel the cruelty of the state pushes us to do otherwise. I mean, it infuriates us, it makes us revengeful to them. This triggers us to commit ourselves to the struggle. Just like this. I mean, we don't screw our courage in such a moment, yes it is a loss but this loss brings along gains. For instance, after killings more people enter to guerilla warfare. How should I know, they put you in prison, I witnessed ones in the prison, my friend told me they gave a six year penalty and they gave it to a friend with no guilt. "You know," this friend said, "at the first day I will get out the prison, after my home, I will join the guerilla. I must call them to account."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Kurdish national festival

<sup>71</sup> Erhan: Yani ona [devlete] tepkimiz her zaman olacak yani. Olmazsa bile, başaramazsak bile, bir şey kazanamazsak bile her zaman tepkimiz olacak yani.

Fırat: Yani çok farklı şeyler hissetmedim yani, görününce şey mesela ilk tepki neden alıyorsunuz, işte onlar da emniyete gelin diyor. Biz de gittik yani çok sorun değildi, gittik mahkemeye çıktık, tutuklama verdiler. Yani biz bu mücadele içinde olduğun zaman bazı

The radical positioning of the youth and children against the state, their struggle fed by anger and despair instead of a liberal hope, their rejection of any rational bargaining with the order can evoke an alternative social imagination. Other children perform individual transgressions and these transgressions only bring about momentary freedom followed by defeat, self-destruction and, in some cases, another confinement. However, what the activists of the Kurdish movement do is endeavor to construct an alternative social decision mechanism and sociality. Yet, there is again dilemma here: those people struggle for an eternal freedom but within the structurally unequal distribution of power, children and youth are exposed to extreme forms of state violence by being murdered, tortured, and put in prison.

Furthermore, for the politicized youth and children the main reason for their social oppression is the state and its institutions. Yet, in the process of the struggle against the state, they also transgress the norms of family and the Kurdish movement itself. They do not reject the politics of the movement but transform it by inclusion. What the Kurdish movement, The DTP, has to forget in order to make reel politics -- a politics of reconciliation and forgiveness and bargain with the state is remembered by the youth and children continuously in everyday life. The history and language they have inherited operate as a reminder and marker of state violence. Past stories of suffering Kurds make visible the different modes of oppression. Everyday interactions with the representatives of the state (the police, the teacher etc.), and the recognition of the complicity of ordinary Turks in the catastrophe that they were

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şeyleri artık doğal görüyorsun. Mesela bir ölümleri doğal görüyorsun çünkü yani bizim yanımızda 15 yaşındaki çocuğu öldürdüler. Ondan sonra tutuklamaları doğal görüyorsun, cezaevini doğal görüyorsun yani artık bunları bir yerden sonra aşılıyorsun yani alışılıyorsun. Yani bir de şöyle birşey var, bunların yaşanması mesela devletin birebir bu zulmü yapması bizi daha farklı yollara itiyor. Yani daha çok öfkelenendiriyor, onlara karşı mesela daha çok kin duymamıza sebep oluyor. Mücadaleye daha fazla bağlı olmamıza sebep oluyor. Yani bunlar böyledir. Yani bunlardan mesela biz eksi yön çıkarmıyoruz, evet bir kayıptır ama o kaybın birçık kazanımı oluyor. Mesela onun üzerinden gerillaya katılımlar yaşanıyor. Ne bileyim cezaevine atıyor, ben cezaevinde tanık oluyordum, arkadaş diyordu 6 yıl vermiş, bir arkadaşına hiç bir suçu yok. Yani diyordu ben ilk çıktığım gün ben yani evimden sonra ben gidip gerillaya katılacam. Ben bunun hesabını sormak zorundayım.

exposed to are recounted among friends. All these haunt the children and the youth despite the fact or exactly because of the fact that DTP urges them to forget for the sake of reconciliation. What is at stake is that the difference in the understanding of politics predominantly depends on generation in the current context of the Kurdish movement. This implies that the trajectory of the movement will be drawn particularly by the striving for hegemony among different generations. Yet, it should be noted that the politics of youth and children exist in a ground that is spatially and temporally indeterminate as neither the state nor the Kurdish movement understands why these children behave the way they do. On the one hand, this politics operates by annihilating the norms, boundaries and societal and legal laws. On the other hand, it is a semi-autonomous way of organization; it does not reject the representative figures and organizations of the Kurdish movement but constructs alternative practices and discourses. Even if they use some slogans of the movement, they mean by these other things than what the movement intends. For example, as I have stated earlier, Halil said that they are fighting for Kurdish identity. I asked him what he means by Kurdish identity. He replied that the Republic of Kurdistan should be written on their ID card, they should have their own state and territory.

I think that the political subjectivities of youth and children signify the debut of an alternative politics that has the potential of transforming the Kurdish movement, its demands and ways of conducting politics. Furthermore, it should be noted that the stories of children and youth enable us to think of alternative conceptualizations of freedom and struggle informed by transgression and sovereignty and not by reconciliation and the language of victimization.

I would like to conclude this chapter with my discussion with politicized children about current political activities in the neighborhood and the ceasefire PKK declared on June 1. Halil said that PKK extended the period of ceasefire again and he disappointedly added: “Hani ateşkes bir Haziran’da bitecekti.” Since the PKK declared a ceasefire, they did not organize any violent demonstrations. Why does the process of ceasefire make Halil and other children unhappy? I think the answer to this question hints at the effects of violence in children’s lives and the limits of the

political project of the Kurdish movement. Violence has a potential for those children and youth of reconstructing themselves by transgression of all norms and patterns. Through violence, they realize themselves. In the context of the post-1990s where everything is ambiguous what is waiting them? If explicit violence ends, what kind of a life will they have? Will they have a childhood? I think the violent experiences in the past that are a constant source of a “poisonous knowledge” (Das) haunt them. This knowledge sweeps into language and shapes their narratives. The feeling of loss, an irreversible loss, marks their lives as everyone in the neighborhood lost their relatives, friends and family members during the displacement in the village and harsh conflicts in the neighborhood. Almost everyone has relatives who were put in prison for years. Violence changed the life of Kurds irreversibly: it destroyed familial relations, fragmented families, turned Kurdishness into an underclass category by constituting it as a source of cheap labor in urban life. How does a process of reconciliation compensate for this irreversible loss?

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this thesis, I analyzed the politics of Kurdish youth and children in Gündoğan neighborhood. The reason why I chose to study youth and children living in urban space is closely related to the current context of the Kurdish movement and the changing structure of Kurdish society particularly with the forced migration. Youth has always been at the forefront of the Kurdish movement. Yet, in the 2000s, children came to the scene of politics as actors and started to affect the Kurdish movement. In this thesis, I argued that children of the displaced families subvert the category of childhood and accordingly challenge power relations based on age within the family. There are two main reasons for this shift in generational relations. First, children of the displaced families are born in a universe in which stories of state violence experienced by the older members of families in the village are repeatedly narrated. In this way, children inherit the experiences of their parents. They add the history of their parents to their own histories and hence their history extends beyond their own experiences. Because of that articulated history, children's practices and discourses cannot be distinguished from adults. Yet, what children experience in urban space is not radically different from the experiences in the village as state violence continues in urban space; it even accelerates with exclusion, discrimination, and poverty. Second, in a context where the adult members of families have trouble integrating to urban life as displaced individuals, Kurdish children provide the sustenance as economic actors in the household and they are crucial for their families' lives as all bureaucratic matters are handled by them as they know Turkish and receive an education. The mobilization of children within the Kurdish movement is fed by their increasing power within the household,

but this mobilization/politicization itself empowers children within the household and Kurdish society. I argue that Kurdish children occupy a political subject position that has the potential to challenge/transform the very discourses, practices, and agenda of the Kurdish movement itself.

On the other hand, the Kurdish movement has turned into an urban-based-opposition after the displacement of millions of Kurds. Thus, in this thesis, I analyzed two main dynamics of the Kurdish movement: (1) the practices of youth and children, the most radicalized and mobilized segments of the Kurdish society, (2) urban space, the new site of the struggle of Kurds. These two dynamics are crucial to rethink the Kurdish issue and the trajectory of the Kurdish movement particularly in the present context where it is thought that the Kurdish issue is about to be solved.

The majority of my informants did not experience forced migration but they inherited the stories of violence narrated by the older members of their families. Through the reiteration of stories, they turn the stories they heard into testimonies. Therefore, I argued that memory plays an imminent role in the formation of subjectivities of youth and children. The act of reiteration of stories formed a collective repertoire that is the ground upon which the oppositional subjectivities express themselves and frames the representation of present grievances. Further, collective (public) memory is privatized by the youth and children, and they express both the experiences of the past and the present through a common language. In this sense, the difference between collective and individual memory is significantly blurred. I also argued that the act of reiteration itself makes up the content of Kurdishness in urban space. However, in addition to state violence experienced in the village and urban space, by giving reference to the hegemonic era of PKK and interventions of the state that took place after 1995, in the narratives, while the state embodied with image of soldier and police in the lives of Kurds appear as an immoral, mythical force, the PKK appears as a real, accessible force and desired authority. Youth and children of the neighborhood consider themselves as the inheritors and transmitters of the morality of PKK. In this sense, the politics conducted in the street seems to be a purifying force bearing the morality of PKK.



In the second chapter, I explored the spatial order of Gündoğan. I suggested that the spaces of the neighborhood constantly slip between the public and the private: In the landscape of Gündoğan the public becomes privatized and the private becomes publicized continuously. It is the performativity of youth and children, their everyday spatial practices that determines what is public and what is private. These performances are inevitably linked to the tension between the Kurdish community and the Turkish state: The bodies of Kurds are always-already accessible to the interventions of the state. Therefore, the body, the home, perhaps the neighborhood that are considered to be private spaces become state spaces. I also argued that youth and children of the neighborhood are constantly “pushed out” to specific places: while girls are confined to the houses or in home-like spaces, which are considered to be non-public, boys who are unwanted in houses are confined to the street that is perceived as public space. Surely, both male and female youth and children feel claustrophobic and develop strategies to remake the places they are confined to “theirs.” Yet, the performances of youth and children change the meaning of the places to which they are “pushed out” and a feeling of freedom emerges. Actually, for the whole neighborhood, the privatization of the public, particularly during the demonstrations and clashes with the police, is a shared and politically signified act. Accordingly, I argued that children and youth have a sense of belonging to the neighborhood. Unlike the first generation of migrant youth and children, these new generations born in the city space recognize the irreversibility of migration and consider Gündoğan as their home. As the safe haven of the Kurds in the 1990s and as the present space of struggle for youth and children, Gündoğan becomes home. This phenomenon shows that appropriation of urban space is inevitably linked to the struggle and violence. The case of Gündoğan also signifies a turning point in the politics of the Kurdish movement in the sense that the Kurdish issue and the struggle of the Kurds has gone beyond the territory of “Kurdistan” and spread to the western metropolises. Furthermore, I argue that rather than referring to the Kurdish region, the word Kurdistan became simultaneously an empty signifier filled and given content by performance, and a dream space always a little bit far away.

In the last chapter, I analyzed the meaning of violence in the formation of political subjects and freedom. I argued that relations with state institutions, family

members, and friends are constituted by violence. I also argued that violence is one of the few languages available to the youth and children: violence is the main theme in the all narratives and it determines what should be narrated and what is needless to narrate. In the conceptualization of freedom and violence, I was inspired by Bataille. Bataille says that violence and freedom are at the center of the struggle for emancipation. I argued that violence is the only way for the youth and children to transgress the norms of the sovereign. Yet, Bataille states that there is a thin line between freedom and defeat as violence transgressing the norms of sovereign is a self-destructive practice. I argued that hashish-using children and youth, gang members, and the ones who are enrolled in radical Islamic organizations perform transgression individually. These acts of transgression bearing moment of freedom, brings about defeat and self-destruction. Yet, the practices of the ones who are mobilized within the Kurdish movement pave the way for an alternative community and politics. I also argued that in a context where the bodies of Kurds, particularly youth and children, constitute a site of struggle and are accessible to the interventions of the state, the torture, violence enables youth and children to remake their private: In order to avoid interventions of the state, children and youth implement violence to their own bodies and accordingly they make their bodies untouchable.

As opposed to today's optimist view on the possible solutions for the Kurdish issue, I, during my fieldwork and the process of writing this thesis, grasped the difficulty of solving, even understanding the Kurdish issue. The irreversible loss that the Kurdish society experienced in the last two decades haunts children and youth. Neither reconciliation nor the demands of representatives of the Kurds circulating in the public can compensate for this irreversible loss. Yet, children and youth do not use a language of victimhood. They appear as actors in the political scene of contemporary Turkey to claim their rights over their lives. In a universe without non-violent spaces and relations, violence becomes the only way for youth and children to dwell in urban space, to form their selves, to bear unbearable life. Yet, if freedom is transgressing the norms of the sovereign by envisaging self-sacrifice, we can learn many things from their perceptions and practices of freedom, solidarity, and life. Lastly, I would argue that the politics of children and youth, which rejects

any rational bargaining with the order and which is fed by anger and despair rather than a liberal hope, has potential to transform the Kurdish movement and evoke an alternative social imagination. This politics also opens up a space to reconsider what is the political in contemporary Turkey.

I asked Murat:

What does it mean to be a Kurd?

He replied:

Not giving them their rights<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> H: Kürt olmak ne demek sence?  
M: Haklarını vermemek.

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