CATASTROPHIC FUTURES, ANXIOUS PRESENTS: LIFESTYLE ACTIVISM AND HOPE IN THE PERMACULTURE MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

by

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IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis presents a critical exploration of the permaculture movement in Turkey from various interlocking angles. An ecological landscape design system that functions with the ethical values of caring for people and for Earth as well as sharing the surplus, permaculture was introduced in Australia in the 1970s, and became a worldwide movement which refrains from using a political language despite its ultimate desire to establish a "global alternative nation" that consists of ecological and self-sufficient communities. Through ethnographic fieldwork with permaculture groups, I explore the reflections of this movement and its post-ideological language in the post-coup neoliberal context in Turkey. I first describe the process of becoming a permaculturist through the narratives of my interlocutors who are mostly educated, middle and upper-middle class urbanites. Exploring how their consumer habitus shifts to an ecological habitus, I argue that this transformation is already enabled by the privileged positions occupied by permaculturists in society. I then evaluate the lifestyle strategies that they employ to enact change in the world, and I claim that the conception of social change in permaculture replicates Bourdieu's theory of practice. I then examine the post-political nature of permaculture and discuss its transformative potential. Finally, I turn to the catastrophic scenarios that circulate among permaculturists about the future of the Earth, and argue that permaculturists produce two forms of hope, anxious hope and catastrophic hope, the interaction of which places hope both in the present and the future.

ÖZET

FELAKET DOLU GELECEKLER, ENDİŞELİ BUGÜNLER: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ PERMAKÜLTÜR HAREKETİNDE YAŞAM TARZI AKTİVİZMİ VE UMUT

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Anahtar Sözcükler: *Permakültür, habitus, yaşam tarzı aktivizmi, post-politika, umut*

Bu tez, Türkiye'deki permakültür hareketine dair eleştirel bir değerlendirmeyi birbiriyle bağlantılı çeşitli açılardan yaklaşarak sunmaktadır. Hem insanları, hem de dünyayı gözetmeyi ve üretim fazlasını paylaşmayı öngören etik değerler çerçevesinde faaliyet gösteren ekolojik bir tasarım sistemi olan permakültür, 1970'lerde Avusturalya'da geliştirildiğinden beri dünya çapında bir harekete dönüşmüştür. Ekolojik ve kendine yeterli topluluklardan meydana gelen "küresel bir alternatif ulus" inşa etmeyi nihai amaç edinmesine rağmen, hareket politik bir dil kullanmaktan kaçınmaktadır. Bu tezde, permakültür gruplarıyla gerçekleştirdiğim etnografik saha çalışması aracılığıyla, Türkiye'deki darbe sonrası neoliberal bağlamda bu hareketin ve kullandığı post-ideolojik dilin yansımalarını inceliyorum. Çoğu eğitimli, orta ve üst orta sınıf mensubu şehirliler olan görüşmecilerimin anlatıları üzerinden, permakültürcü olma sürecini irdeliyorum. Orta sınıf habituslarının nasıl ekolojik bir habitusa dönüştüğünü araştırarak bu dönüşümün zaten permakültürcülerin içinde bulunduğu ayrıcalıklı pozisyonlar sayesinde gerçekleştiğini öne sürüyorum. Daha sonra, permakültürcülerin dünyaya değişim getirmek üzere uyguladıkları yaşam tarzı stratejilerini değerlendiriyor, permakültürün öne sürdüğü toplumsal dönüşüm algısının Bourdieu'nün çerçevelendirdiği pratik kuramını içerdiğini iddia ediyorum. Ayrıca permakültürün post-politik niteliğini inceleyip dönüştürücü potansiyelini tartışıyorum. Son olarak, dünyanın geleceği hakkında dolaşan felaket senaryolarını irdeleyerek permakültürcülerin endişeli umut ve felaket umudu olarak iki farklı tür umut beslediğini, bu ikisi arasındaki etkileşimin umudu hem şimdiki zaman hem de gelecek zamanda konumlandırdığını öne sürüyorum.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BÜKOOP: Boğaziçi University Consumption Cooperative

CSA: Community-Supported Agriculture

HES: Hydroelectric Power Plant

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

ÖDP: Freedom and Solidarity Party

PDC: Permaculture Design Course

PRI: Permaculture Research Institute

TKP: Turkish Communist Party

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On the night of May 27th, 2013, bulldozers set out to demolish the trees in Gezi, a public park in Taksim, one of the most important and cosmopolitan parts of Istanbul, Turkey. The construction of a mall in the place of the park had been planned for months, yet opposed by prominent civil society organizations. That night, the initial destruction generated a public that grew exponentially in the next few days to prevent the loss of the park and that created what came to be known as the Gezi Protests or the Gezi Resistance. As a plethora of protests sparked all over the country against the current Justice and Development Party government, and its neoliberal, misogynist, homophobic and ecologically destructive policies, protestors came to "occupy" the park on June 1st and initiated an experiment of communal living, solidarity, and spontaneous self-governance for two weeks.

If the Gezi Protests were at all unanticipated, the small *bostan* (vegetable garden) that the protestors built in the park during the occupation proved even more unexpected. The surprising effect of the *bostan* arose from not only its persistent presence in a site otherwise doomed for destruction—a presence that remained more symbolic than practical—but also its implication of the close relationship between claims on urban green spaces and the possibility of sustainable and communal food production in the city. Indeed, *Gezi bostanı* triggered a movement of emerging *bostan*s all over Istanbul. During the Gezi "occupation," a *bostan* emerged in the neighborhood of Cihangir, not very far from the Gezi Park itself. When the police attacked Gezi to end the "occupation" and shut the park to the public, the protestors started to gather in public parks in their neighborhoods, and some of the neighborhood assemblies initiated communal vegetable gardens. *Gezi bostanı* also drew attention to the ongoing struggles to maintain the existing places of food production within the confines of the city. The

inhabitants of Kuzguncuk, a neighborhood in the Üsküdar district in Istanbul, had for instance been involved a legal struggle to maintain their historical *bostan*, in the place of which a school was planned. The gardens of Yedikule, one of last remnants of urban commercial agriculture in an otherwise all-consuming city, were also on the verge of appropriation and destruction for purposes of capitalist construction. As the spaces of food production in Kuzguncuk and Yedikule received attention from the public, many organized to oppose their destruction.

Contrary to common assumptions, urban gardening in Istanbul dates back to the Byzantine and Ottoman periods (Sopov 2013). Thanks to the Gezi uprising and its modest yet powerful *bostan*, the possibility of regenerating urban and communal gardening was publicly discussed for the first time in the history of modern Istanbul, although the discussion was by and large limited to certain circles. Even though in some publications *Gezi bostanı* was particularly attributed to Tarlataban, a collective urban farming group associated with Boğaziçi University (Atılgan 2013), the group that built the original vegetable garden in Gezi consisted of a diverse group of people, some of which were involved with the permaculture movement in Turkey, a recently growing network of people working towards ecological and sustainable food production and larger anti-systemic change.

Permaculture is an ethical landscape design mechanism introduced in the 1970s by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in Australia in order to provide an alternative integrated system of livelihood that cares not solely for humans, but for all beings. In the words of Mollison:

> Permaculture (permanent agriculture) is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. Without permanent agriculture there is no possibility of a stable social order. (Mollison 2002, ix).

Developed as a reaction to the destructive effects of the hegemonic global economic order and industrialized agriculture which have been destroying the soil and local/indigenous knowledge(s), and threatening independent food systems, permaculture is based on three basic principles: “care of the Earth, care of people, and setting limits to population and consumption” (Mollison 2002, 2). Over time, the last principle came to be articulated as the distribution and return of the surplus.

Since Mollison first outlined the principles of permaculture, many practitioners joined the network to create a global movement that spread to various countries worldwide. In their review of the scant literature on permaculture, Ferguson and Lovell characterize permaculture as "an alternative agroecology movement," and describe how the design system relates to the movement and the ethical principles: "Permaculture is (1) an international and regional movement that disseminates and practices (2) a design system and (3) a best practice framework. The design system and best practice framework are contextualized by (4) the worldview that is carried by the movement" (2014, 255). The decentralized structure of the movement makes it grow in both formal and informal networks. Not exempt from this process, Turkey has been experiencing the spread of permaculture, even if at a modest scale, both in urban and rural areas during the last decade. Turkey's first encounter with permaculture happened in 1990, when permaculture instructor Max Lindegger gave a Permaculture Design Course (PDC) in Hocamköy, a rural ecological initiative in central Anatolia. Hocamköy did not live to last, and permaculture remained rather dormant until the year of 2009 when several people simultaneously set out to organize workshops and courses on the topic, training others to become permaculturists.

This thesis presents a critical exploration of the permaculture movement in Turkey from various interlocking angles. Through ethnographic fieldwork with permaculture groups in Turkey, I explore the reflections of this closet movement and its post-ideological language in the post-coup neoliberal context in Turkey. I first describe the process of becoming a permaculturist through the narratives of my interlocutors who are mostly educated, middle and upper-middle class urbanites. Exploring how their middle-class consumer habitus shifts to an ecological, or what I specify as a permaculturist habitus, I argue that this transformation is already enabled by the privileged positions occupied by permaculturists in society. I then evaluate the lifestyle strategies employed by permaculturists to enact change in the world. Moving beyond approaches that either uncritically appraise or unquestionably bash lifestyle activism, I claim that the conception of social change in permaculture heavily replicates Bourdieu's theory of practice. I then examine the post-political nature of permaculture and discuss its transformative potential. Finally, I turn to the catastrophic scenarios that circulate among permaculturists about the future of the Earth, and reconciling utopian politics and apocalypticism, I argue that permaculturists produce two forms of hope, anxious

hope and catastrophic hope, the interaction of which places hope both in the present and the future.

1.1. Permaculture Worldwide: The Why and The How

Permaculture originates from the counterculture movements of the 1960s and 70s (Lockyer and Veteto 2013). According to co-originator David Holmgren, "permaculture was one of environmental alternatives which emerged from the first great wave of modern environmental awareness, following the Club of Rome report in 1972 and the oil shocks of 1973 and 1975" (2002, xvii). The movement maintained close relations with the movements of bioregionalism and ecovillages (Lockyer and Veteto 2013) as several ecovillages adopted the principles of permaculture. In 2004, permaculture designer Rob Hopkins initiated the Transition Town Movement in the United Kingdom and founded the Transition Network in 2006 in order to encourage communities to become self-sufficient to buffer the effects of peak oil and climate change; this movement also employs the principles of permaculture in their physical and social designs.

Born in 1928 in a small fishing village in Tasmania, Australia, Bill Mollison, the "father" of permaculture, worked various professions in his lifetime, including as baker, wilder researcher, fisherman, environmental psychologist, and biologist. In 1954, he worked as wildlife manager and conducted fieldwork and long-term observations of various plants and animals. In 1974, he developed the concept of permaculture with his student David Holmgren and devoted his life to further improving and spreading the design system after leaving the university once and for all in 1978. He then started to give permaculture courses all over the world. Mollison and Holmgren together devised an education system by which to spread permaculture and developed the curriculum of the Permaculture Design Course (PDC). They also established the Permaculture Research Institute in Australia, the formal institution of permaculture. Practitioners estimate that there are between 100,000 to 150,000 PDC graduates worldwide (Tortorello 2011). While some PDC teachers are affiliated with the official Permaculture Research Institutes that are informally tied to the their counterparts in

Australia, some others work independently. The number of PDC graduates and permaculture practitioners are therefore difficult to record.

Permaculture is an all-encompassing system design mechanism that deals not only with sustainable food production, but also self-sustaining shelters, self-sufficient communities, and resilient economies. A holy book for permaculturists, Bill Mollison's *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual* sets the ethical, social, and ecological groundwork for all things related to permaculture, from landscape design to methods for organizing community and building resiliency. In the very first pages, Bill Mollison sets the tone of the book as a call to action. He writes,

> The world can no longer sustain the damage caused by modern agriculture, monocultural forestry, and thoughtless settlement design, and in the near future we will see the end of wasted energy, or the end of civilization as we know it, due to human-caused pollution and climate change. (Mollison 2002, i)

The book, however, does not present a detailed analysis of the environmental ills faced by the Earth. Instead, Mollison suggests permaculture as an ethical practice, combines modern and indigenous knowledge and wisdom, and suggests an "outline for a theory of practice," highlighting how social change would occur through individual and collective actions. He emphasizes the need to take action in the present to recover what is lost, and suggests permaculture practice as the way out. It outlines the key approaches towards designing sustainable landscapes with low external input. The three ethical principles put forth in permaculture (care of Earth, care of people, fair share or distribution of surplus) are complemented by twelve design principles:

1. Observe and Interact
2. Catch and Store Energy
3. Obtain a Yield
4. Apply Self-regulation and Accept Feedback
5. Use and Value Renewable Resources and Services
6. Produce No Waste
7. Design From Patterns to Details
8. Integrate Rather Than Segregate
9. Use Small and Slow Solutions
10. Use and Value Diversity
11. Use Edges and Value the Marginal
12. Creatively Use and Respond (Holmgren 2002, viii)

The idea of imitating natural processes runs deep in permaculture design. Observing ecosystems, interacting with them, evaluating any feedback, and then acting out in accordance with natural processes is key. Practitioners who will design a landscape are usually recommended to observe the area for a year, and then come up with their design

plan. Yet this recommendation is rarely followed, as it would take a lot of time and other resources to engage in such detailed observation. Mollison acknowledges, "Nothing we can observe is regular, partly because we ourselves are imperfect observers" (2002, 71). What he proposes is then a general understanding of natural patterns as flexible ground rules to follow. While these basic guidelines would pertain to any physical design of space, permaculture also involves the organization of communities. This is what some people call social permaculture, or social design. Even though Veteto and Lockyer define permaculture as "an ecotopian methodology" (2013, 11), the worldview that is propagated through permaculture accompanies the design system. Permaculture then provides "a conceptual framework for the evaluation and adoption of practices, rather than a bundle of techniques" (Ferguson and Lovell 2014, 264).

Mollison's famous aphorism "Though the problems of the world are increasingly complex, the solutions remain embarrassingly simple," often rephrased as "The problem is the solution" point to the belief that "the solutions to environmental and social crises [are] both simple and known" (Ferguson and Lovell 2014, 266). The last chapter of the book, named Strategies for an Alternative Nation" (or as in the table of contents, "The Strategies of An Alternative *Global* Nation"), also known as "Chapter 14" among permaculturists, outlines the blueprint for building a global permaculture network which, while existing within the capitalist economy, would strive to remain independent from it as much as possible while establishing food sovereignty and self-sufficiency in all other kinds of production. Mollison suggests a plethora of strategies to devise alternative systems of invisible structures—"the intangible elements necessary for the healthy functioning of a system" (Brock n.d.)—from bioregional organization and local consumption, to the creation of local currencies and alternative banks. In the chapter, Mollison suggests an alternative definition of "nation" as "a people subscribing to a common ethic" (2002, 508; emphasis removed), thus implicitly suggesting the erasure of national borders and nation-states through the establishment of self-sufficient communities. Yet one need not necessarily start an ecovillage to practice permaculture. The design system can be applied in diverse settings; for instance, a family can grow food in their balcony or garden using permaculture principles and reduce their dependence on outside consumption. This flexibility allows practitioners to start small and do whatever they can with the resources available at their disposal.

In his *Manual*, Mollison places special emphasis on personal responsibility for Earth repair. He writes, "Although this book is about design, it is also about values and ethics, and above all about a sense of personal responsibility" (2002, 1). He suggests a move away from traditional forms of engaging in politics towards the reclamation of individual and communal responsibility for self-empowerment and change. He writes,

> The tragic reality is that very few sustainable systems are designed or applied by those who hold power, and the reason for this is obvious and simple: to let people arrange their own food, energy, and shelter is to lose economic and political control over them. We should cease to look to power structures, hierarchical systems, or governments to help us, and devise ways to help ourselves. (2002, 506)

Mollison suggests a move away from the politics of protest and traditional forms of organizing to instead take the future of the Earth repair in one's own hands. He envisions permaculture practice to appeal to a wide range of people regardless of their religious beliefs and political affiliations, as long as they subscribe to the ethical principles of care. He preaches cooperation and creativity.

1.2. Research Motivations and Theoretical Background

I had known about permaculture since International Honors Program Rethinking Globalization, the traveling study abroad program in which I participated during my junior year in college. Having been exposed to permaculture initiatives and other alternative farming methods in different countries during this trip, I immediately sought out permaculture groups once I returned to Turkey after graduation in 2011. Being rather shy at first, I started to follow the activities of these groups on online platforms, such as permaculture websites and Facebook groups. In the summer of 2012, I participated in a one-week community-building workshop in Bayramiç Yeniköy, an ecological compound which literally means "new village" and which has been a pioneer in ecological initiatives, including permaculture. Thanks to this workshop, I made friends who are either permaculturists themselves or who are loosely connected to the permaculture network through alternative economy and sharing networks with which permaculturists remain in close contact.

My academic interest in the permaculture movement in Turkey arose from the observations I started to make during these encounters. Initially, what fascinated me about permaculture was its nonconventional engagement with the political, its proposal for "a non-political politics of change" (Neal 2013, 65). In his book, Mollison places permaculture outside the political field by making a distinction between personal and local actions which can have effects in the long-run—where permaculture belongs—and larger political systems which "seek to impose a policy control over as wide an area of influence as possible, are power-centred," "whether they are self-described as communist, socialist, capitalist, or democratic" (2002, 509). He describes a new vision by rejecting the current definitions of the political:

> The world needs a new, non-polarised, and non-contentious politic; one not made possible by those in situations that promote left-right, black-white, capitalist-communist, believer-infidel thinking. Such systems are, like it or not, promoting antagonism and destroying cooperation and interdependence. Confrontational thinking, operating through political or power systems, has destroyed cultural, intellectual, and material resources that could have been used, in a life-centred ethic, for earth repair. (508)

In a way, then, Mollison rejects politics in the conventional sense of the term, but refrains from asserting that permaculture posits an alternative to classical politics. In other words, instead of suggesting a new definition of the political, he completely rejects it. When I took the introduction to permaculture course in the summer of 2013 as I was contemplating a thesis topic, our instructor rearticulated and emphasized this rejection. "We don't talk about politics or religion here," he stressed several times. While I later realized that not everyone in the permaculture movement completely rejects the political, I became interested in exploring how this closeted movement striving to be post-ideological finds its niche in the specific context of Turkey. The country experienced several military interventions over the last fifty years; the 1980 coup d'état most severely interrupted political opposition and prepared the ground for a neoliberal economy, developments which have often been associated with a subsequent depoliticization in youth. As this discourse of "apolitical youth" was largely challenged by the recent Gezi uprising, I was even further interested in exploring its effects in permies' self-perception in Turkey. I especially wondered the varying definitions given to the political in the post-Gezi context and the specific reasons behind the denial of the political or its embracement.

As an inevitable aspect of the iterative-inductive approach of the ethnographic method (O'Reilly 2005), over time the question of the political lent itself to other considerations that came to the fore in my interviews and my observations of the permaculture community. While I still discuss the political nature of permaculture through the concept of post-politics in Chapter 4, and less explicitly throughout the thesis, other issues came to occupy a central place in my investigation, namely, the formation of what I specify as a permaculturist habitus, the meanings attached to lifestyle activism, and the sustainment of hope despite apocalyptic scenarios. All of these points of discussion are in fact in one form or another closely tied to the question of the political, for they encourage contemplation on what it means to act out in the world for change in an increasingly neoliberal era where, as famously put by Fredric Jameson (2003, 73), "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism."

Even though different strands of environmentalism and ecological movements have been widely scrutinized in social sciences (see, among others, Taylor 1995; Peet and Watts 1996; Rootes 1999 and 2013; Fischer 2000; Wall 2002; Nixon 2011), perhaps less popularly so in anthropology (Milton 1993; Little 1999; Townsend 2000; Haenn and Wilk 2006; Dove and Carpenter 2008), there is a general neglect in anthropology and indeed all of social sciences regarding proactive ecological and environmental initiatives such as permaculture. Except for the voluntary simplicity movement which has received attention earlier than others (Maniates 2002b), scholars only recently started to bring attention to such initiatives, by for example looking at the Slow City movement (Pink 2008), the Slow Food movement (Andrews 2008), the Transition Town movement (Neal 2013), and the ecovillage movement (Dawson 2006; Burke and Arjona 2013). Although mentioned in passing, permaculture can remain marginal in studies, for instance, of state-sponsored urban gardening in Cuba (Gold 2014). In their review of the existing literature on permaculture, Ferguson and Lovell (2014) argue that permaculture's invisibility in academic literature is discordant with the high level of interest that it receives worldwide.

An edited volume named *Environment Anthropology Engaging Ecotopia: Bioregionalism, Permaculture, and Ecovillages* provides the first theoretical framework on permaculture by studying it in conjunction with its sibling counterparts: bioregionalism and ecovillages (Lockyer and Veteto 2013). In their introduction, anthropologists Joshua Lockyer and James Veteto describe these three movements as

ecotopian (ecologically utopian) movements that posit "imaginative responses and viable alternatives" (1) to the current socioeconomic and environmental injustices, and, although rather implicitly, oppose them to the politics of protest, which they seem to find ineffective and seek to "move beyond" (6). In their co-authored chapter on permaculture (Veteto and Lockyer 2013, 95) they quote permaculture designer Chuck Marsh who in an article to *Permaculture Activist* describes the Earthhaven ecovillage, an intentional community that employs permaculture principles in Asheville, North Carolina. Marsh (2002) writes,

> These are radical acts. Should these and other permaculture-based strategies take hold in the larger society, corporate control might someday yield to an empowered, responsible, ecologically literate citizenry. We can hope it will be in time to pull humanity back from the brink of disaster brought on by our own folly.

Surely, permaculture suggests "an alternative paradigm of development" (Veteto and Lockyer 2013, 96) which challenges many assumptions about human-nature relationships and which proposes local solutions to global problems. These proposals do have the potential to posit change in the world. Yet for permaculture to have an impact that exceeds the local, as Marsh implicitly suggests, the larger society needs to adopt permacultural principles. If there is an ambiguity to the politics of permaculture and if the road to global social and political change is not that clear cut, then Lockyer and Veteto's analysis falls short of critically assessing the limits of permaculture's potential. Especially in need of closer analytical scrutiny is the model of social change proposed by permaculture, a model that "emphasizes individual personal responsibility and voluntary action [with] a relative lack of interest in influencing policy or large institutions" (Ferguson and Lovell 2014, 266). None of the articles in the edited collection analyze permaculture from a social movements perspective whereby they could have discussed permaculture in relation to other political movements (apart from bioregionalism and ecovillages), or respond to its critics.

In her study of permaculture initiatives in Melbourne, Tania Lewis (2015) brings the required twist to analyses of "everyday green practices of transformation" by discussing how daily practice carries the potential to influence larger social practices through Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory. However, her treatment of lifestyle politics does not respond to ardent critics of lifestyle activism who argue that changes to individual lifestyles have no potential to influence political transformation. In the

Chapter 3, I discuss the potentialities and the pitfalls of permaculture as lifestyle activism.

1.3. The Context in Turkey

In Turkey, environmentalism has been studied mainly in conjunction with the green political movements (Çoban 2001), the relationship between environmental protection and economic development (Adaman and Arsel 2005), environmental non-governmental organizations (Paker et al. 2013), water politics (Erensü 2013) and various environmental struggles against gold-mining (Çoban 2004; Özen 2009), the appropriation of urban space (Voulvouli 2009), and the construction of power plants (Arsel et al. 2015). As Arsel (2012) argues, environmental studies as a discipline has remained weak in Turkey, mainly because of the existence of strong disciplinary boundaries and the lack of geography and anthropology departments in universities in the country, two disciplines which have immensely contributed to the development of environmental studies elsewhere. A quick look at this literature demonstrates the lack of anthropological perspectives in the aforementioned studies.

The permaculture movement in Turkey is often criticized for not addressing the structural problems related to food production (Keyder & Yenal 2013). Following the global trend in deagrarianization, the agricultural field in Turkey has been re-structured through the liquidation and privatization of state institutions as urged by the interests of transnational capital. As neoliberal policies penetrated rural livelihoods, market forces increasingly defined all steps of the food production, from the acquisition of single-use seeds and fertilizers to the determination of final prices. While many small-scale farmers quit farming and turned to wage labour, those who adapted through savings or contract farming continue the occupation under precarious conditions. On the one hand, then, some peasants organize under the Farmer Unions' Confederation of Turkey to lobby for better social and economic rights, while, on the other, an increasing number of people in cities question the prospect of conventional agriculture itself on the grounds of health hazards and ecological destruction. It is true that the growing desire to consume ecologically grown food in the city was quickly incorporated into capitalism through the burgeoning of an organic market that only appeals to the economically privileged.

Coming mostly from educated middle and upper-middle classes themselves, permaculturists are often perceived in this second group who are working to endorse the

workings of the neoliberal market. Yet permaculture encompasses an imagination of the inversion of the capitalist transnational food system, and despite its small size and relatively limited societal influence, permaculturists' desire to achieve food sovereignty through local initiatives cannot be overlooked due to the growing appeal of permaculture. Any critique against permaculture shall first and foremost rely on an acute observation and analysis of the motivations and aspirations of those who turn to this movement as a way of acting out in the world. Such an evaluation would not only enable us to analytically distinguish the anti-systemic purpose of permaculture, but may also serve to identify the shortcomings of this form of engagement in a more nuanced way and thus posit a constructive critique, rather than a dismissive one.

1.4. Significance

There are several reasons why permaculture is worth studying. First, permaculture offers a grand theory, in the words of a practitioner, "an ecological theory of everything," (quoted in Tortorello 2011), and therefore requires scrutiny in and of itself as a foundation of an ecological way of living. Second, the loose organizing structure of permaculture enables a diversity of approaches and allows for a wide range of participation. Ecovillages, urban gardens, and personal initiatives such as growing herbs and raising chicken in the balcony, can all adopt permaculture principles and can be seen as equally creating alternative systems. What binds these diverse types of practice is their commitment to permaculture ethics, which is, care for people, care for earth, and redistribution of the surplus. This wide understanding of social change through an ethical and highly individualized practice would certainly speak to scholarly discussions on social movements and resistance. The turn in anthropology to study the relationship between power and resistance was first met with enthusiasm following James Scott's (1985) *Weapons of the Weak*, yet later criticized for creating "a theoretical hegemony" in the discipline whereby every daily act counts as resistance (Brown 1996, 729). What then happens when anthropological subjects themselves claim to be "changing the world" through daily acts of lifestyle changes and consumer choices?

Hardt and Negri's conceptualization of "the network struggle of the multitude" provides some insight, for aiming to claim sovereignty over food production by

rejecting hegemonic agriculture methods, permaculture "takes place on the biopolitical terrain;" "no longer is taking power of the sovereign state structure the goal" but "producing new subjectivities and new expansive forms of life within the organization itself" (2004, 83). Permaculture networks carry the democratic, horizontal, and creative aspects of the multitude, and some practitioners, mostly instructors, are specifically committed to spreading the movement all around. In this type of organizing, however, personal change has priority. According to Mollison, "First, we must learn to grow, build, and manage natural systems for human and earth needs, and *then* teach others to do so. In this way, we can build a global, interdependent, and cooperative body of people involved in ethical land and resource use" (2002, 506; emphasis added). However, the loose definition of the multitude renders the theory inadequate to address the different levels of potential that social movements, including permaculture, carry. The change envisioned by permaculture bears resemblance to the anarchist principle of direct action (Graeber 2009), yet some permies may even feel an aversion to the word "anarchist," while some equated permaculture with anarchism during my interviews. How then can we conceptualize the movement of permaculture, which seems to be apolitical, political, *and* post-political all at once?

Third, the coming-together of design, movement, and worldview creates an interesting mix by which permaculture is interpreted and practiced differentially in different settings. As a growing worldwide phenomenon, permaculture spread to almost every continent on Earth, and is used for variegated purposes. For instance, permaculture serves farmers in rural Malawi to work towards food security (Conrad 2014). It is thus significant to ask how this growing worldwide phenomenon is interpreted in different contexts.

If studying permaculture worldwide is thus important, my specific focus on Turkey derives first and foremost from the practical reason of access. Yet Turkey also becomes an important venue to research the local manifestations of a global, post-ideological movement related to food sovereignty because of its historical context of escalating neoliberalism after the 1980 military coup and the related re-structuring of the agriculture field. What promise, for instance, does permaculture hold as a nascent movement in a country where agriculture is highly privatized and industrialized? Does it remain a middle-class movement that does not concern itself with the plight of farmers or does it carry a larger potential for anti-systemic change?

While this thesis does not necessarily provide answer to all of these questions, it presents a first step to seek insightful responses and a modest attempt to understand permaculture and permaculturists in Turkey. As we are now living in the Anthropocene, an era in which the agency of humans have been shaping geologic events (Chakrabarty 2009), it is commonly acknowledged that we face irreversible ecological destruction. As a system, movement, and worldview that claims to have answers and solutions to the food insecurity and environmental hazards increasingly experienced in the Anthropocene, permaculture has, if not the total means, the potential to respond to the emergent needs of the Earth. It is therefore an imperative to scrutinize the alternative presents and futures it promises, not solely for anthropological and theoretical purposes, but also for ethical and political ends.

1.5. Methodological Considerations

Between January and December 2014, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul in various permaculture settings. This included in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 18 permaculturists from different backgrounds and with a diversity of practices (member of small ecovillage, urban permies, etc.). Unfortunately, I lost the recording to one interview, which I am thus not able to include. All but one of my interlocutors had gone through the 72-hour certified training called the Permaculture Design Course (PDC) and the one who did not had been exposed to permaculture in various courses and workshops and deliberately avoided the PDC for she disliked the system of certification. One of my interlocutors was critical of permaculture itself and despite having gone the training would not consider herself a permaculturist.

The interviews were complemented by participant observation in permaculture-related events and other exchanges in friendship circles. I took two Introduction to Permaculture courses, one as pre-fieldwork, therefore not included in this thesis except for a couple of observations. I also attended various workshops and seminars organized by the Istanbul Permaculture Collective, some of which required a participation fee, albeit at times charged flexibly within an understanding of gift economy whereby participants contributed the amount they wished. In these events, not only was I able to interact with permaculturists and deepen my relationships, but I also got to observe

those who were getting acquainted with permaculture, in other words, those previously were outsiders to the permaculture community. Since nowadays the Internet provides a significant venue for exchange, I joined email lists and befriended many of my interlocutors on Facebook. I was thus able to follow email conversations and Facebook discussions in which many permaculturists participated, especially due to long distances for those who lived in the countryside outside Istanbul. Because I had earlier connections to my field, I had a relatively easy access to my interlocutors and was once able to arrange an interview for the next day through SMS at midnight, an occurrence that would have been unlikely in other fields.

One of my most frequently visited field sites was Halka Sanat (Halka Art Project), an art initiative and a café which provides venue for permaculture-related events. Many of the workshops and talks organized by the Istanbul Permaculture Collective take place in this collective space situated in Moda, an upper middle-class neighborhood of Istanbul. One day, on a Sunday afternoon, when I took the tram from the Kadıköy wharf to go to Halka Sanat in Moda, as I had already several times done, my friend with whom I was on the phone reacted discerningly when I told him I was on my way to Moda to do fieldwork. "What an elite field you have!" he exclaimed. "People go to slums to do fieldwork, you go to Moda." His observation pointed to the rather privileged spaces permaculturists inhabit in Istanbul. With a few exceptions, most permaculturists come from middle or upper class backgrounds and have university degrees from prestigious universities.

The educational capital that they hold was apparent during my fieldwork, for my exchanges with permaculturists were filled with literary, anthropological and philosophical references uttered by my interlocutors. These included Mead, Foucault, Deleuze, Bookchin, and Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. Of course, not everyone referred to academic or literary works, but when I explained to them my research topic as the relationship of permaculture to politics, almost all of them shared their opinion on the topic. Several of them expressed an additional interest in the final product of my research, and Eda asked me twice on Facebook chat whether I had finished my thesis. I reassured them that I would share the final product with them. With Toprak, a permaculturist who has had an academic training, I exchanged several emails both before and after our interview to discuss the political nature of permaculture and the catastrophic scenarios imagined by prominent permaculturists. My research questions and motivations were highly shaped by this process of co-production of knowledge,

which makes my interlocutors also "epistemic partners" "who are not merely informing our research but who participate in shaping its theoretical agendas and its methodological exigencies" (Holmes and Marcus 2008b) rather than informants from which the anthropologist would simply gather ethnographic data and interpret in some distant room.

It is not only through their educational capital that permaculturists become epistemic partners, but also through their possession of expertise in a field of knowledge. Because they undergo a 72-hour design course which train them into the theoretical and practical founding principles of permaculture, they are experts, or in the words of anthropologist Dominic Boyer, "actor[s] who [have] developed skills in, semiotic-epistemic competence for, and attentional concern with, some sphere of practical activity" (2008a, 39). Even though permaculture is not a profession like those in law, science, engineering, medicine etc., all of which are considered to be fields of experts in anthropological methods, some practitioners pursue permaculture as a chosen profession by leaving the profession for which they were educated. In fact, it is expected that the way one makes a living also abides by permaculture ethics.

The expertise of practitioners, their constant interpretations of their own activities and of their place in the world as subjects, made this research process para-ethnographic. Para-ethnography, as defined by Holmes and Marcus (2008b, 86), refers to a newly-emerging ethnographic process by which anthropologists and their already-reflexive subjects together engage in experimentation over knowledge production and the ethnographer is then able "to integrate fully our subjects' analytical acumen and insights to define the issues at stake in our projects as well as the means by which we explore them." Permaculture is a self-reflexive practice, and practitioners themselves comment on some of the questions I initially asked for this thesis, like in the "Is Permaculture Political?" video talk on Youtube (PermanentCultureNow 2012) or the discussions happening currently within the permaculture community on the predictions about the future. Throughout this research, I remained attentive to these "para-ethnographic sensibilities" (Holmes and Marcus 2008a, 89), that are likely to emerge in an anthropology with experts. Even though the final authority of this thesis rests with me—for I have not had the time to seek permaculturists' opinions on my final analyses—any future publication from this thesis will be conceived in a mutually interpretative way.

Over the course of my research, I sought out opportunities to take the 72-hour Permaculture Design Course (PDC), yet was unable to do so due to time and money constraints. This training usually involves a two-week stay in one of the rural initiatives related to permaculture, or a 6-weekend course in Istanbul. Usually prices range from 800 Turkish Liras to 1600, including food and accommodation. In the fall of 2014, Steve Read, one of the world famous permaculture teachers gave a PDC in Istanbul for 10 consecutive days within the parameters of the gift economy. Participants shared among themselves Read's travel expenses and only paid 300 Turkish liras. Because this PDC was monetarily suitable, I contemplated taking it, yet soon realized that I would have to miss too many assistantship days at Sabancı University, as the training consisted of both weekends and weekdays. When I shared my final decision with my permaculturist friend, she objected, "But you *have to* take it!" Her reaction pointed to her belief that I shall take the PDC if I am writing on permaculture. As I will explain in the next chapter, because it provides the theoretical and ethical foundation of permaculture, PDC is often perceived a rite of passage which turns one into a permaculturist, even though this perception is contested by some. I am, however, writing this thesis without the official permaculture training, which makes me no expert on the content of permaculture.

Even though I did not take the PDC, I did spend a good amount of time with people who devoted their lives to permaculture, and I oftentimes found myself speaking highly of permaculture to people who were unacquainted with it, highlighting the practical solutions it offers to the food insecurity problems facing our world today. In his ethnography of Triqui undocumented migrant laborers in the United States, anthropologist Seth Holmes notes how "most ethnographies give the impression of an unchanged and often uninvolved anthropologist" (2013, 38) and shares the ways in which he himself changed throughout his research both personally and physically. Confirming Holmes's insightful observation, I can say I became a quasi-permaculturist. Yet my positionality towards the movement always oscillated between keen sympathy and sharp criticism. While keeping my interest in exploring the intersection of social, economic, and ecological justice at a more practical level, I strived to keep my reflexive anthropologist hat on and frequently asked myself why permaculture appealed to me as a way of acting out in the world instead of conventional forms of organizing for political change. Chances are I would have been interested in permaculture outside the parameters of this thesis, and would have taken the Permaculture Design Course at

some point in my life. I concluded the answer lies in my own background. Similarly to some permaculturists I had exchanges with, I grew up in a family that avoided political involvement both because it believed in its futility and because it preferred the security of non-engagement. I was always discouraged from joining overtly political organizations or attending public protests. With such disposition, it shall be no surprise that permaculture appealed me, as it does to many other people with similar backgrounds in Turkey, as a way of acting out in the world. I will discuss the specific dispositions expressed by my interlocutors in the next chapter.

While my research benefited from easy access to the field and the close relationships I was able to build with permaculturists, doing fieldwork with permies who live in rural areas and who put in daily bodily labor to grow their own food would have surely further enriched my analysis. Holmes argues for an embodied anthropology in the context of migration studies, in which "the ethnographer's body could be considered an intimate form of sensuous scholarship" (Holmes 2013, 34). Unfortunately, my own bodily limitations prevented me from seeking knowledge from an embodied form of engagement. In the summer of 2014, several permaculture communities summoned volunteers to help with their ecological homebuilding activities. Even though I keenly wanted to respond to these calls, volunteering to do bodily labor would have required me to frequently kneel down, an activity I have not been able to do comfortably for a year due to a chronic knee problem. My fieldwork then was limited because my body did not allow me to do the type of fieldwork that permaculture often requires.

While my field engagement with permaculture was limited to the exterior of the field of food cultivation, throughout this thesis I retain the motivation for an engaged anthropology, or in the words of Lockyer and Veteto (2013, 24), "an ecotopian anthropology that engages with movements for environmental justice and sustainability and applies its knowledge, methods, and forms of critical analysis toward ultimate goals and values we share with those groups." I have to confess, however, that this engagement may not at first glance radically contribute to permaculture, as was questioned by a permaculturist friend with whom I shared my research plans at the initial stages of this thesis. Even though she agreed to serve as a gatekeeper, she did not necessarily find my research questions worthy of exploration. In an email exchange, she wrote, "I constantly ask what any research would contribute to the things we do, to nature, and to people's daily lives. I guess it's too pragmatic of an approach."

This thesis may not serve permaculture in a practical sense, but I contend it has the potential to make a critical contribution. After all, I have gathered information from 18 permaculturists, as an outsider observed their interactions with other outsiders, and listened to various critics. Permaculture as a design system values observation over anything else; practitioners are often advised to observe the ecology around a piece of land for a year before scheming its design. With its method of ethnography, the discipline of anthropology very similarly cherishes observation for knowledge production. Based on my long-term observations of the permaculture community in Turkey, the critique I present in this thesis, I hope, will serve as "a way of caring for and even renewing the object in question" (Brown 2005, x; also see Portwood-Stacer 2013). If the self-reflexivity of expert epistemic partners informs this research through para-ethnography, the reflexivity of the anthropologist may in turn inform permaculture, as is also revealed in Boyer's comment:

> We should not underestimate the extent to which experts' (or others') reflexive awareness of their ways of knowing and forms of life could helpfully co-inform our own research process, just as the research intervention may offer our partners a much-needed excuse for self-reflection, feedback, and experimental reconfigurations of their own. (Boyer 2015, 103)

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPING THE PERMACULTURIST HABITUS AND SENSE OF POLITICS

"For example, these two director type seats that you see, you see them right? We took them from the garbage last month, like real garbage, and they were in a gross condition," says Buket as she points to me the two chairs two meters away. She then goes on to explain how her husband and she spent 30 Turkish Liras in total to paint the abraded wood, to change the fabric surrounding the seat, and all in all refurbished garbage quality material into nice-looking chairs. Our conversation takes place in her backyard, in an upper middle-class district on the European side of Istanbul. Her two-storey home is a private house in a block of attached but independent houses, overlooking a large garden. There lies a road ahead of us, but the trees are so large and frequent that I cannot see it. As I appreciate the forest-like scenery in front of me, I could easily forget that I am in the city.

Private houses are rare and expensive in Istanbul and usually connote an affluent lifestyle. However, what lies behind the doors of Buket's house is rather different than the usual upper-middle class life typical in Istanbul. Before I even ask her about her consumption habits, Buket talks about all these things that she has recycled from garbage or she has acquired from friends and acquaintances and repurposed for her own use. As we tour her garden and collect a couple of blackberries to eat, she shows me some of the things she does in her garden. The beds are ready for the cultivation of this year's produce. The big tank collects rainwater. The small table and chairs that she repurposed will become a ceramics studio for her two kids, 2 and 4 years old at the time of our interview. A room overlooking her garden, she explains, serves as her yoga space, a greenhouse in winter months, and a classroom for permaculture workshops. This multipurpose use of space would be much appreciated according to permaculture principles.

Buket and her family rented this house several years ago in an effort to live a simpler life in greenery and are little by little building the necessary infrastructure. "Our family is a transition family," Buket says referring to the Transition Town movement, whereby whole towns decide to become self-sufficient as a response to the dangers posed by peak oil and climate change. During our conversation, she emphasized several times that she construed her garden to be a model for other people to follow. Buket buys some of her food through Boğaziçi University Consumption Cooperative (BÜKOOP), a cooperative that connects organic producers to consumers. She has been involved in Tarlataban, a collective urban agriculture group that came together recently to make a vegetable garden in Boğaziçi University. Buket graduated from Boğaziçi University and later went abroad to work on dance and theater. Her husband works in the medical field.

While Buket and her family possess economic and educational capital, they strive on a daily basis towards a simpler, more ecologically friendly lifestyle. Buket described this aspiration in the following words: "I tell my husband every day that we're not poor enough, I mean, we get poorer every day, but we create ourselves the sources we create. [Me: you mean as a family?] As a family, I mean, we can get much poorer every day." [1] The "poverty" of Buket's family is a choice, not a necessity, and surely already enabled by the educational, cultural, and economic capital that they possess. Yet their aspiration for a less affluent lifestyle appears as an anomaly to the consumer habitus commonly associated with middle and upper-middle classes in Turkey.

In this chapter, I explore how this middle-class consumer habitus shifts to a more ecological one. After giving a brief historical background on the development and current state of permaculture in Turkey, I explore the process of becoming a permaculturist, which involves developing what I specify as the permaculturist habitus. While permaculturists' middle-class, consumer habitus switches to this new bodily disposition, I argue, this transformation is not only enabled by the socially and economically privileged positions occupied by permaculturists in society, but it also often involves their carrying specific middle-class values, beliefs, and inclinations to their new, more ecologically-oriented positions.

[1] While pointing to a sincere aspiration, Buket's attitude also involves the danger of a possibly imperceptive romanticization of poverty. According to communication scholar Laura Portwood-Stacer (2013, 139) who wrote on the lifestyle changes actively sought by anarchists in the United States, when poverty is intentionally sought, one's already contained privileges make one less vulnerable to poverty compared to the less privileged. She writes, "Having this privilege is not unethical in itself, but if it blinds one to the systemic injustices that disadvantage others who don't have one's privileges, then one's personal downward mobility will be difficult to connect to broader social struggles" (139). As I will discuss later in the next chapter, Buket does not seem blind to the structural inequalities and does not perceive herself much independent from these broader struggles, even though she may not actively participate in them.

I discuss the involvement with permaculture through the concept of an "ecological habitus," a term coined by Mick Smith (2001) and further developed by sociologist Randolphe Haluza-DeLay (2008) to refer to the "practical environmental sense" (Smith 2001, 204) that people develop in environmental social movements. Permaculturists, too, develop specific dispositions as actors because of their presence in a specific social field, one which is occupied by ecologically-oriented groups in general, and the permaculture community in particular. Like Haluza-DeLay, I use both habitus and field in the Bourdiesque sense of the term, and follow sociologist Nick Crossley's (2002) proposition to bring in Bourdieu's theory of practice into analyses of social movements.

Bourdieu defines habitus "a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciation and actions" (Bourdieu 1977, 95). One's habitus is defined by the field, which is "a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 16), and in turn constantly interacts with it through practice. Even though Bourdieu defines habitus as embodied and durable, his theory of practice leaves room for change (Holmes 2013); one's habitus can transform when one finds oneself in a new field, a new social world, yet this change is always bound by structural constraints (Bourdieu 1990, 130; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 19). According to Haluza-DeLay (2008, 208), "Habitus is generative of practice, so creative change can occur as the ever-shifting conditions of the field enable different interactions."

In my analysis, I further specify the ecological habitus held by permaculturists as a permaculturist habitus. Even though "ecological habitus" as a concept may encompass the habitus of all those who strive to live ecologically sound lifestyles, a permaculturist habitus always involves specific dispositions regarding the political aspirations of permaculture practice, in order words, an openly articulated desire towards larger change. It also specifies how permaculturists bring to their new dispositions residues from their middle-class habitus, more particularly, their socioeconomic privilege and a dislike towards conventionally organized politics.

While using the concept of habitus, I am well aware that applying Bourdieu's framework occasionally runs the risk of engaging in a circular logic where one starts out to designate features of the middle classes and ends up proving middle classness. Without resorting to a reductionist approach to class, I attempt to seek out a distinctiveness to the permaculture community in Turkey in terms of the social, cultural,

economic, and symbolic capital that movement participants have often access to prior to their becoming a permaculturist and in the aftermath (Bourdieu 1986). To do so, I share the predominant patterns of distinct practices that I discern in the process by which one becomes a permaculturist. The patterns I lay out here do not come out from a macro statistical analysis similar to the one carried out by Bourdieu, but from a micro qualitative approach that evaluates the narratives and practices permaculturists involved in this research. Of course, there are PDC graduates who do not subscribe to the practices outlined in this chapter and who go through a diverging path. However, they remain a minority. While the relative absence of permaculturists from economically, socially, and ethnically underprivileged backgrounds pinpoint to the appeal of permaculture to privileged middle and upper-middle classes in Turkey, in no way do I attempt to suggest that permaculture inherently constitutes a middle class venture. Its particular manifestation in Turkey right now is what I seek to analyze in this chapter. Before I evaluate the process of becoming a permaculturist through the narratives of my interlocutors, I turn to a more detailed description of permaculture in Turkey.

2.1. Permaculture in Turkey

As I specified in Chapter 1, the spread of permaculture in Turkey corresponds to the year 2009 when several people simultaneously started to raise awareness about the design system and to train permaculturists. Around the same time, Mustafa Bakır, currently one of the most famous permaculture instructors in Turkey, returned to the country after having taken several permaculture trainings abroad. In 2004, a group of friends who had been living communally in the Kuzguncuk neighborhood of Istanbul, among which was Mustafa Bakır, had established an intentional community in Marmariç, an abandoned village near İzmir, and in 2005 formed a non-governmental organization called Marmariç Ecological Life Assocation (Marmariç Permaculture, n.d.). After Bakır's return, they together decided to implement permaculture in their compound and in 2009 started a project supported by the GEF Small Grants Program under the auspices of the United Nations Development Program (Marmariç Ekolojik Yaşam Derneği 2011). In 2011, the permaculturists at Marmariç established the

Permaculture Research Institute of Turkey, an establishment officially related to the permaculture institutes established by Bill Mollison.

In 2010, Bill Mollison and Geoff Lawton together gave a PDC in which around 100 people participated, the most crowded graduating class of any PDC in Turkey. Since that date, 374 people in total took a PDC organized by the Permaculture Institute of Turkey. In 2011, the first Permaculture Network Convergence with the participation of 120 people in Bayramiç gathered people committed to permaculture. The first Mediterranean Regional Permaculture Convergence also took place in Turkey in 2012. Other PDCs were also organized by either personal or organizational initiatives; it is therefore difficult to predict the total number of PDC graduates. As the number of permaculture practitoners increased with time, some went on to become instructors; therefore, the total numbers of courses and workshops offered in Turkey have been increasing almost exponentially for the past two years. In March 2015, a free PDC organized in Bursa by instructor Taner Aksel had around 200 participants registered. This was the first time a PDC was offered free of charge, thanks to the support of Osmangazi Municipality in the city of Bursa.

Similarly to Marmariç, the collective Yeniköy initiative in the Bayramiç district of Çanakkale, runs permaculture experiments. Taner Aksel's Belentepe Permaculture Farm is another initiative, this time in Bursa, that applies permaculture principles to the landscape and that organizes courses and workshops. Recently, two young practitioners initiated a permaculture farm in Kızıltepe, again in the district of Bayramiç, and have been designing the landscape and building their house according to permaculture principles. None of these initiatives are practicing permaculture for their own sake, but constantly engage other people in their experiments by summoning volunteers, and organizing on their compounds permaculture-related courses and workshops, from ecological architecture to ecological living. These educational activities are usually charged a fee. As a space established to enhance the arts, culture, ecology, and science, the Gümüşlük Academy in Bodrum, Muğla, also hosts Permaculture Design Courses. Another organization closely associated with permaculture is Yeryüzü Derneği [Earth Association], which has organized several PDCs in the past few years and has initiated several urban gardens (Bahçeci 2012). A group of members from the association have recently started an ecovillage initiative in Pamukova, Sakarya, 3-4 hours away from Istanbul, and built an ecologically designed house; they are planning to organize permaculture-related workshops and courses in the future.

While much is going on in the countryside to spread permaculture, those who do not at least right away switch to a rural lifestyle organize in cities. In Istanbul, Permablitz served as a gathering hub for permaculturists and those who were interested in learning about the design system between 2012 and 2013. Based on a counterpart model in Australia, Permablitz involved a day in which people gathered together to design someone's garden, usually one of the participants who have volunteered earlier for other gardens. These gatherings were a way for recent PDC graduates to employ their knowledge to practice by designing the gardens, and for volunteers to get engaged with permaculture. They also served as a recruitment ground for future permaculturists, as many volunteers later went on to take the PDC. To my knowledge, however, there are no more Permablitz gatherings. Another urban initiative is the Istanbul Permaculture Collective established in 2013 by two permaculturists who met at these Permablitz gatherings. They organize courses and workshops, usually given by instructors who are experts in areas ranging from beekeeping to soap making, from practical home permaculture to compost, from ecological healthy cooking to cheese-making.

The permaculture community in Turkey is quite diverse. While almost all of my interlocutors hold university degrees, one of them did not. Again, while most of them hail from urban backgrounds, two came from a peasant family. Yet these exceptions do not prevent me from generalizing that permaculture in Turkey is a movement of educated, middle and upper-middle classes. Some are married, some with kids; some are single. But usually those who are most actively involved with the movement are working-age adults who already possess educational and economic capital. If they are not, then they are very likely to rely on their parents' capital to engage in permaculture. For instance, one of my interlocutors, Asu, who had not long ago graduated from university and who, at the time of our interview, had recently transitioned to a rural lifestyle with her husband, openly said she received financial support from her family at all the stages of her journey. Her parents paid the fees for the Permaculture Design Course, provided for her trip abroad for a permaculture internship, and shared the capital necessary for a move to the countryside to buy land, design it, and settle on it.

The shared pre-permaculture habitus did not only involve a shared access to economic capital, but also to cultural and educational capital. For instance, talking about her entry story, the same interlocutor said the following about the Permaculture Design Course she took from Mustafa Bakır in Marmariç:

> Before [the Course], I was someone who had never been in a tent alone in those camp thingies. I mean, I was someone who had not touched the soil nor seen rural lands besides visits to my grandma, someone with lots of allergies, umm fears and all. But I went there and Mustafa Fatih Bakır's attitude, manner of speaking, I don't know, maybe the fact that we shared similar roots and came from a similar place, the way he explained the topic, you know, really had a grasp on me.

Asu openly reveals here that she felt a shared background with her permaculture instructor, a feeling which, besides other motivations, made her finally devote her life to permaculture and spread the design system.

Asu's statement also reveals a subtle change in her habitus: from an urban-raised woman who felt aversion to bugs and who had never slept in a tent to someone who is currently living in the countryside. This transformation from a middle-class, consumer habitus to an ecological one involves not only Asu's intellectual capacity, but also her bodily inclinations and comfort level. In the next section, I explore the process of becoming a permaculturist in Turkey, in other words, the details of how such transformation takes place.

2.2. The Process of Becoming a Permaculturist

> After attending an Introduction to Permaculture Course and starting to work at Permablitz, I began to learn about soil and seeds, and I'm, like, a city person so I had never dealt with soil or worked at a farm or anything like that before. When I got the hang of that stuff, certain things slowly started to make sense in my head. Then I found out about Zumbara [an alternative exchange system where time is used as currency instead of money], umm Zumbara came into my life, the people there came into my life, and they each became sources of inspiration, really. Just then I realized that it was possible to make a change. 'Cause when there isn't any awakening, you sort of remain in that company [where you work], you know, in that system, I mean, of course I still don't criticize companies, it's okay to work at a company, but I think in order to create some cracks in the system, people should take a step, I mean, so should I. So you can ask me, "Aren't you a part of the system?" Yeah, I'm still a part of the wheel, but at least I'm making an effort to try and loosen up some of its screws, that sort of thing. At the same time, umm when this self-contradiction thing, when the question of self-contradiction was still a preoccupation for me, with the issues at the company and all, umm I said okay I'm done with work life. (…) I mean, this system gets you to such a point that you feel man I gotta do everything, I gotta go on that vacation, gotta save and get the better one, even the better one, 'cause the system always makes you seek the better

> thing, there's always a competition, really, a competition among people, where you work on vacation, at home, I mean, everything is in some sort of competition. And then people seek psychotherapy, it's real, I mean that's a real thing, you know, I have a friend who works round the clock and she sees 2 psychotherapists. (…) I mean, the system is in such shape that it makes you work a lot and it pays a lot. Those people go on vacations, feel happy and get right back to work, but it's all an illusion. What's the point of it all, if I miss out on life; what more can I do under these circumstances? For a while, I didn't work at all. I was just at home. You know, I thought I'll just do some research, read umm, reflect on this. (…) And umm after a while, you begin to wake up, I mean, that's how I got into all this [work life], because of my family, because they wanted me to, and many people feel they have to put up with it as prisoners. (…) Then when I quit my job, I had a lot of time to think on my own at home and I realized that I had the chance to change things. I was discussing this with my husband too**;** we said we wanted to quit all this. It wasn't that we would move to a village and grow tomatoes or anything like that, but that there's this other world, another world is possible, and we don't want to waste it working. (…) And then I decided to get a Permaculture Design Certificate, I mean, I thought this whole permaculture system umm passes on traditional information and teaches how to build an urban garden quickly in a concise manner. I checked [City Repairs], it tells you how to transform the city very easily and quickly and I thought this might work. People really did it, there's proof and we can do it too. After working with Permablitz and getting some results from the urban gardens, I realized this works, and then I decided to get the design certificate and went to Marmariç. But as I said, the 14-day workshop is seriously intense; it's a little difficult for someone with no design background to understand permaculture design.

There is a lot to unpack in Cansu's narrative on how she came to turn to permaculture as a way of acting out in the world. A married woman in her early 30s, Cansu turned a longtime hobby of hers into a profession and now teaches it to kids at a private school. She has been involved in organizing permaculture-related workshops in Istanbul and also works as a permaculture instructor. Similarly to Asu's aversion to bugs, Cansu's pre-permaculture habitus did not involve a connection to soil, even though she had been involved with outdoor activities. While a majority of my interlocutors had been connected to nature through outdoor sports or farm visits in their childhood, for a minority living close to plants and bugs was a novelty. In this section, I take Cansu's narrative as the starting point to explore the original motivations that push people to turn to permaculture, the rite of passage quality of the Permaculture Design Course, the knowledge acquisition process, and the appeal of permaculture to my interlocutors as a way of acting out in the world.

2.2.1. In Search of A Way Out

A diversity of motivations led my interlocutors towards permaculture and they all met with permaculture at different stages of their lives. Toprak, for instance, had already transitioned to a rural lifestyle and permaculture gave him a specific method to employ in his garden for food production so that he could serve as a model for others to follow. Some had been working in corporate settings; some had already left their jobs and were on the look out for alternative routes. Cansu was working when she was first introduced to permaculture, and she followed the advice of her instructor Mustafa Bakır who advised the participants of the Introduction Course not to contradict themselves. Cansu left her job afterwards to be in ethical consistency with her values. As revealed in her narrative, her escape from the corporate world coincides with her search for a more meaningful life and her final union with permaculture.

Dissatisfaction with their original work appeared as a common theme during my conversations with permaculturists. In her narrative Cansu summarizes several of the problems most permies also felt. Societal and parental pressure pushed them to partake and succeed in corporate life, yet they experienced fierce competition and mobbing. Not only did their work feel meaningless, forced, and psychologically destructive, but they also over time realized that they were "serving" a system in which they did not want to participate, namely, the capitalist market. Burak, Asu's husband, said he started to question his job in the advertisement world when he read Naomi Klein's *No Logo*. He went through an "awakening," and immediately quit his job. He then started to do research on sustainability and encountered permaculture. Fırat, too, started questioning his job in the construction business when he randomly came across the Turkish version of Mark Boyle's *The Moneyless Man: A Year of Freeconomic Living* in the bookstore, in which the author narrates his year of living without using money. After what he also names as "awakening," Fırat started to change his life little by little.

Leaving their original job and becoming a permaculturist were then first and foremost a personal form of emancipation for several of my interlocutors, from the status of a "prisoner" in the corporate world to a freer person. With her emphasis on the possibility of another world in her sentence "There is another world. Another world is possible and we don't want to waste it working," Cansu applies the political "Another world is possible" slogan to her own life. Yet she is not solely referring to her own life

in this passage, but a larger, societal transformation. As it will become clear in the next chapter, Cansu's narrative also points to the close relationship she discerns between personal transformation and what she perceives as larger social change. As several of my interlocutors left their jobs and devoted their lives to permaculture, they redefined their relationship with labor by seeking more meaningful work. This could be a job which paid them less money but which provided at least some sort of satisfaction, or a self-initiated work, or a job as permaculture designer and consultant, while also serving to show others that another life is possible.

For some others, health concerns for their children led them towards researching ecological ways of food production. Nevra, now a 45 year old woman, had to feed her baby with formula after giving birth several years ago, because her daughter rejected breastfeeding. It was through this experience that she learned about BPA in nursing bottles, and genetically modified organisms. Interested in finding more about how to feed her baby in her words "in the right way," she somehow got introduced to Fikir Sahibi Damaklar (Palates With An Opinion), one of the local affiliates of the Slow Food movement, and started to follow their online discussions. A couple of permaculturists on the email list referred her to the permaculture email group, after which she started to follow the permaculture discussions as well and became involved in Permablitz. Similarly to Nevra, Buket also listed a concern about how to provide "clean food" for her kids in her reasons to turn to permaculture. Yet for both Nevra and Buket, their involvement with permaculture is in no way limited to a form of personal preoccupation with health, but a larger critique of the capitalist food and health systems.

2.2.2. Permaculture Design Course as Rite of Passage

As revealed in her narrative, Cansu's relationship with permaculture started with Permablitz and when she was convinced of the efficacy of permaculture, she decided to take the Permaculture Design Course (PDC), the 72-hour official training that covers a set curriculum summarizing the gist of *A Designer's Manual*. As Cansu points out, the to-be-permaculturists are inundated with novel information during this intense course. Usually, PDCs take place outside the city in an ecological initiative like Marmariç and last between 10-14 days, allowing the participants to experience communal and ecological living situations, both of which important aspects of permaculture. At times,

however, classes are offered in Istanbul, and the training is spread to 7 weekends. When a student graduates from the PDC, she receives a Permaculture Design Certificate, which certifies her expertise and gives her the legal license to use the term permaculture in her designs.

Several of my interlocutors described the PDC as an empowering experience. Buket even used the word "empowering" in English when she failed to find an equivalent in Turkish. She said, "PDC says, 'You don't have to be too knowledgeable to start,'" pointing to the appeal of the emphasis on small-step solutions offered by permaculture. For Yasemin, the PDC was a stepping-stone in her search for a way out. After leaving her advertising job where she worked as graphic designer, she lingered in inaction for 5 years and dreamed of one day having a lot of money and moving to the countryside. The Course shook her up and retrieved her from her depressed mode. Yasemin described its specific effect in the following words:

> They made us understand something really well there, umm, I mean, that activism or resisting and fighting against something doesn't work when you just talk about it from where you sit. It's not that sort of thing, you know. You gotta go out and do it. If it works, it works. Otherwise, you just try something else and it's a constant trial and error process, but you gotta be, umm, constantly evolving, you know, you can't give up. In that way, [the PDC] was great, I mean, philosophically everything fell into place.

In those 5 years, Yasemin had been reading and researching much as she was looking for an alternative way of life. For her, permaculture was an "umbrella" which brought together all the things she was looking for, and the PDC "took everything [she] had read about so far and packaged them and tied them with a bowtie. It showed how all those disconnected information was tied to each other." Similarly to Yasemin, Melis described the PDC as "unifying" (*birleştirici*). She had completed a Bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and after taking the PDC, she realized how fragmented all her knowledge of the field was. She thus found the Course to be bringing together the disconnected parts of the same knowledge that she had acquired at university.

À la van Gennep, I read the Permaculture Design Course as a rite of passage that marks the border between two significant stages in a person's life. Usually, a rite of passage involves three specific phases, which are separation, transition, and incorporation (van Gennep 1960, 11). The person is first separated from society and its conventions, to then undergo a transition phase, a liminal stage which often involves a particular training. The individual then reenters the original community and is re-

incorporated into society. Taking place mostly in ecological initiatives in the countryside, the PDC, too, first separates the person from larger society. The to-be-permaculturist then receives a thorough education that trains her to think permaculturally and that ultimately prepares her for re-entry. The incorporation phase, however, is slightly different. As the permaculturist returns back home, it is not with the intention to re-adjust to the conventional norms of her society, but to act in the world in order to change them. The PDC as a rite of passage, then, is not defined by age or status, but connotes a transition in a permaculturist's life from a passive to an active state whereby she is trained to act permaculturally.

Like Bill Mollison's *A Designer's Manual* which at its very first page presents a call to action, both of the two "Introduction to Permaculture" workshops in which I participated started with a list of why action is needed: environmental degradation, drought, food shortage, climate change etc. It was only after such a list that the technical details of design were shared with the participants. Very similarly, in the PDC course outline of famous permaculture instructors Geoff and Nadia Lawton, the section named "Evidence that we need to act" precedes "Introduction to permaculture" (Lawton and Lawton, n.d.). Like Lawtons who in a 14-day of Design Course devote two days of instruction for the "Chapter 14" of the *Manual*, the instructors of the workshops in which I took part placed special emphasis on the same section of the permaculturists' "Bible." The PDC, too, ends with a detailed description of "invisible structures," which are physically intangible, yet also in need of conscious design, such as economics and law. The students then leave the Course with a passion to work towards spreading permaculture and engaging in social and ecological initiatives that would serve to create "a better world."

A graduate of the PDC receives a certificate which allows her to use the term "permaculture" in her designs, because the term is actually legally licensed. Many permaculturists would explain the need for certification as a prevention of the cooptation of permaculture for capitalist purposes that do not follow the three ethical principles. This system of certification, however, is not uncontested. While most permaculturists would defend the need for certification and patenting in order to prevent people from using the name of permaculture for purposes what would oppose its ethical principles, i.e. capitalist purposes, Nisan opposes any form of certification even if it is for protective purposes. She has participated in weeklong permaculture workshops and possesses adequate knowledge of permaculture to practice it, yet she said she would

never take or organize a course which provides certification. She explains the reasons in the following words:

> I don't believe in the certificate 'cause I think what we call a certificate is the product of what we call [in English] "the old paradigm," it's of that mentality umm I don't believe in schools or diplomas or the whole process of receiving institutional qualification. I think a person's process of learning and sharing what she's learned should be more organic, more natural, umm more a part of life. And what we call a permaculture certificate is the result of a 72-hour permaculture training, I mean, it's not plausible for you or someone to just attend a 72-hour workshop and become a permaculture design expert. It's not even possible. So I don't care at all about the certificate, that piece of paper has no value in my eyes, I mean it doesn't tell me anything about its holder. What matters to me is how much this person practices permaculture and has internalized what she's learned, and the way to find that out is not through pieces of paper, but umm through interpersonal relations. I believe we should evaluate such things by getting to know each other so I never organised any events with certification, and I won't ever. I don't provide certificates for any of the work I carry out and I refuse to do so.

Another commonly discussed issue is the price of the PDC. The price may differ between 800 and 1600 Turkish Liras depending on the location and instructor. Many permaculturists stress the fact that scholarships are available and that some people have access to the PDC for free, yet criticisms against the monetization of this course abound.

2.2.3. The Learning Process

In his discussion of the ecological habitus, Randolph Haluze-DeLay (2008, 211) discusses social movements "as sites of learning." He argues that learning can happen either in formally organized educational programs or informally through experience. One's permacultural training, too, combines both types of learning. The learning process for permaculturists almost always at one point involves the PDC, but it never only starts or ends there if one decides to commit to permaculture. While telling me about their permaculture journey, several of my interlocutors, like Cansu, narrated that they spent a good amount of time doing research on ecologically related topics, either before or after the PDC. This self-initiated learning process usually involved watching documentaries or videos on YouTube, reading books, and browsing websites on permaculture, current ecological destruction, agricultural monopolies etc. Several of my

interlocutors were also permaculture instructors, a position which would require them to train themselves in their subjects of instruction.

Formally, courses and workshops other than the PDC also constitute a significant part of one's learning process, or "training." After the PDC, a permaculturist can do an "internship" in a farm to learn further the details of permaculture practice. Zaytuna Farms, famous instructor Geoff Lawton's farm in Australia, is one of the favorite locations for such training. In around three and a half months, permaculturists engage in the practice of different aspects of permaculture, including taking care of animals, growing food forests, and community-building. The internship costs around 6,000 Australian Dollars. According to former intern and practitioner Fraser Bliss (2013), it was an all-encompassing experience. In a blog post, he wrote,

> Very soon we realised that in this permaculture internship we are not just learning how to be farmers. This is a way of life. You can't separate how food is grown from human existence. It is deeply intertwined with life itself. No, the more we learn about permaculture the more we realise that you must explore all areas of life to be truly sustainable: food systems, plants and animal systems, energy systems, people systems, ecological systems and not forgetting legal, financial and political systems. It's a lot to learn. One should not try to be a specialist in everything, but rather a generalist that has a solid understanding of each discipline and integrates them together.

In our conversation, Asu, too, narrated how her permaculture instructor in her internship abroad had a chat with her, and reassured her that she was competent enough to start her own farm. Her doubts about her future transformed into confidence, and she bought land together with her husband and her parents soon after she came back to Turkey.

Despite its appeal, time and monetary constraints make an internship abroad inaccessible to many. In addition, due to the bodily labor required for such training and the low comfort levels of the accommodation options (interns live in tents for several months), not everyone can participate in an internship. If an internship abroad is not an option, the Permaculture Institute of Turkey (PRI Turkey) in Marmariç also offers the opportunity to dig deeper in the practical aspects of permaculture. If the practitioner is not so keen on getting hands on with soil, or if she is not yet contemplating moving to the countryside, then there is a plethora of courses that she can participate in to advance her knowledge of the specific of permaculture-related activities, such as rainwater harvesting and detailed compost methods. A permaculturist can also take the Teacher Training Course offered by PRI Turkey. This certification allows one to be affiliated

with the Institute as a teacher. Otherwise, every experienced practitioner who has a PDC is technically allowed to teach a course.

The system of advanced training allows one to build a permaculture "CV." In the Worldwide Permaculture Network website, managed by the Permaculture Research Institute of Australia, each practitioner can have a profile with a detailed description of her activities and can list the PRI-affiliated courses she took. She can also list the climate zones in which she has experience. This profile system only encompasses the formal trainings one has gone through, almost replicating the formality of the mainstream educational system that Nisan would criticize.

While courses present a formal setting in which to enhance learning, a permaculturist learns first and foremost through practice and experimentation. Some of my interlocutors shared with me the processes of trial and error they experienced at the beginning when they tried to do compost. The compost that is most suited to urban life is done through earthworms that digest food remains and turn them into organic material. Buket, however, did not at first want to buy these Californian earthworms because she felt they would be like "undocumented migrant workers." Instead, she tried the compost without them and "obtained the ugliest smell on Earth." Very similarly, at her first trial Nevra put the barrel of compost in the balcony in the spring, but the worms did not enjoy the change of weather and in her words "committed suicide."

2.2.4. The Appeal of Permaculture

As she reveals in the quote at the beginning of this section, Cansu took part in Permablitz activities and observed the results of her labor in people's gardens. In her narrative, she refers to the City Repair Project, an initiative that commits to transform the city through urban gardening and community building. After doing research on the Project, she realized it was possible to similar things in Istanbul, and decided to become a permaculturist. Like Cansu, several of my interlocutors emphasized that they wanted to commit to something the results of which are concrete and achievable in short-term. Nisan's entry story, too, illustrates this expectation. When she was working at a friend's farm and retreat place in Canada, Nisan and other volunteers were given the task of designing and initiating a garden. Nisan had heard about permaculture for the first time in her life, but followed the others in using its principles in the garden. She narrated,

> There were 3 or 4 other volunteers and we together decided to build a small garden close to where we live. It was a rough and rocky floor and the soil wasn't rich and healthy. We applied permaculture design to first umm, and we first built raised garden beds. You know, normally you would just dig the ground and get some air in there and put some seeds to make a garden. It wouldn't be possible to do so here so we built raised garden beds by using permaculture. (…) We laid down some cardboard, we put manure, we put kitchen leftovers like compost. (…) We built something in layers, then we put the seeds in. Then I took a look at the garden and we had thrown the seeds into this thing that looked *like a pile of garbage*. I mean, when I say garbage I mean we threw the seeds into a pile of garbage consisting of natural biological materials. So I thought, "If anything comes out of this garden, I will believe in permaculture," and I promised myself that I'd do all that I could to spread permaculture. Then in like one or one and a half months, we started to reap our produce. It's like this tiny garden, but cucumbers, green beans, tomatoes, and stuff grew in it. I was really umm, it was a really sweet surprise for me. I mean creating this beautiful bountiful garden out of nothing and getting delicious produce took my breath away. So I said, "OK, something's up with this permaculture thing," you know.

When garbage on an unproductive soil turned into edible material, the surprise it provoked turned Nisan's skepticism into life-long commitment to permaculture. Nisan's narrative also points to a transformation in her perception; what would normally count as garbage, in this case flattened boxes and food waste, was rendered not only usable, but also useful for the production of sustainable food for consumption.

What is considered as "concrete" result by permaculturists can range from homegrown tomatoes to what is called a food forest among permaculture circles, an edible forest garden consisting of diverse species. The size or range of the result does not seem to matter. As I explained earlier, the philosophy of permaculture allows flexibility to each practitioner, and this flexibility appeals to many because it enables them to "act" here and now within the conditions that are available to them. In fact, when I started my research, I naively thought that permaculture was primarily about growing food. In the early stages of my fieldwork, Fırat, former engineer and now 28-year-old itinerant practitioner, pointed out my misconception and said it was rather about system design. In need of further explanation, I then asked him how it could be implemented in a café. He said,

> How could it be practiced in a café? Umm you know, the ethical values like valuing humans, valuing the Earth… What could be done with it? Vegetarian

> menus could be included.[2] In the city, you know there are these things where consumers support the small producer through participatory guarantee systems and stuff. We could plant herbs like sage and basil; they bear flowers so you could just snip them and use them. It's not that difficult to do it, actually if you just placed them over here they would grow. I saw it at a café in Çanakkale. They had planted lettuce in a pot and it looked great. It might work, I mean, a lot of things might work. It's up to our imagination.

The flexible nature of permaculture practice allows for simplicity too. As permies strive to live permaculturally, they naturally gravitate towards first and foremost changing their lifestyles, including their daily habits of consumption. I devote the next chapter to exploring lifestyle strategies used by permaculturists.

Even when permaculture consists of individualized actions—whether that be growing herbs in one's balcony in Istanbul or building a sustainable garden in one's home in the countryside, the actions are executed with the wish to serve as an example to others. Remember from the beginning of this chapter Buket's aspiration to create a model in her house in Istanbul. Similarly, Toprak, who had already transitioned to a rural lifestyle before he had known about permaculture, narrates that the PDC made him realize how he wanted to build an example to others to follow. He said,

> You know, some people move to rural areas to do everything by themselves. They simply abide by the principle of standing on their own feet by being self-sufficient. I mean there are a lot of people doing so, moving to rural areas and all. After that Course, I realized that my concern was not about self-sufficiency, but that it had always been about offering people something, you know, a solution that could work. It was, it had always been that, and it was confirmed once more. So after the Course, permaculture came into my life in the following way, I mean, with the goal of putting a working example forward. You know, you could just do things as you wish just as much as would benefit you and meet your demand. That might be primary for you. I work more on producing an example. (…) You know, I work with that in mind while doing anything at home or in the garden, you know, at some point I'll show people, "Look you could do it this way." I'll be able to say, "You could do it that way too."

Toprak's narrative point to his desire to serve as a model of alternative ways of living, to point to the possibility of doing things differently than the hegemonic norms, to remind Cansu's emphasis, to show that "another world is possible."

Another appealing aspect of permaculture is its holistic, inclusionary, in other words, post-ideological nature. It does not matter to a permaculturist whether others'

[2] Fırat's particular emphasis on vegetarianism here probably derives from his being a vegetarian himself. Otherwise, permaculture as a system does not promote vegetarianism. To the contrary, the use of animals in design systems and their subsequent consumption by humans constitute the norm in design principles.

political opinions differs from hers. In the words of Ayşen, a 28-year-old practitioner who has been working on educational projects related to permaculture:

> You say, "I exist with you, I live here with you." [Permaculture] doesn't ignore the one next to you, the plant growing next to you, neither your neighbor next door nor the governor, and again the little flowers growing at your doorstep. It's very important in this regard, I mean, it offers a completely holistic perspective; no other political system, political perspective offers it unfortunately.

Here Ayşen points to the recognition of the "other" and its existence, be it normally unwanted weeds or an oppressively authoritative prime minister. According to Asu and Burak, permaculturists all come together on a common ground:

> Asu: Our common denominator is permaculture.
>
> Burak: It's permaculture. I mean, talking about politics and religion and all doesn't really help with the design. It doesn't help the designer either. (…) In designing what we call invisible structures, you can't go with the existing methods anyways. You choose to take advantage of what already exists. How could it help us out and how can we use it effectively? We don't spend our time on abstract stuff that we can't practically use and that would only serve us for chitchat.
>
> Asu: There are people with very different backgrounds and beliefs in the community. From Muslims to stern atheists, you know, from Buddhists to anything and everything. But that never becomes part of the conversation. Permaculture provides a strict framework and we have a lot to do. Everybody has a lot to do.

The action ground that permaculture creates, then, takes precedence over any political, religious, and ideological differences. I will discuss this post-ideological stance in more detail in Chapter 3. For now, suffice it to say that this approach is appealing to many who get involved with the permaculture movement.

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So far in this section, following Cansu's initial narrative, I tried to take the reader through the journey of becoming a permaculturist in Turkey. As I mentioned earlier, people's motivations for turning to permaculture and their ultimate expectations from their engagement are diverse, yet I pointed to some common themes that emerged during my fieldwork. As I discussed earlier, too, this process of transformation from a consumer in a corporate job to a permaculture practitioner involves a radical shift in habitus. When my interlocutors encountered permaculture and completed the rite of passage that is the Permaculture Design Course, they entered a new social field.

Gradually, as they went through the learning process and interacted with other permaculturists, their perceptions and habits changed. More specific than an ecological habitus, they acquired what I choose to call a permaculturist habitus.

All of this process, however, almost always depended on their initial social, cultural, political, and economic privileges in society. In other words, what enabled their switch from a middle-class habitus to a more ecological one were their privileged positions in society in the first place. They not only depended on economic capital for courses and workshops, but also a social and cultural capital which provided them easy access to information and networks. None of my interlocutors expressed difficulties that they faced because of an ethnic identity that differed from the dominant "Turkish" ethnicity. While, on the one hand, becoming a permaculturist involves the cultivation of a new way of being and acting out in the world, therefore a new habitus, permies also bring values, beliefs, and habits from their privileged positions. In the final section of this chapter, I explore how certain dispositions towards politics, mainly a disengagement from organized forms of (leftist) politics, are such residues from their middle-class habitus.

2.3. Senses of Politics

I first met Nevra in one of the permaculture-related events in Halka Sanat. When Cansu, another permaculturist, introduced us to each other, she highly recommended that I interview Nevra too, and quickly told her about my research topic. "She's researching the relationship of permaculture to politics," she said. "Oh but I have nothing to do with politics," Nevra exclaimed. As I tried to arrange a date and time with her, she repeatedly uttered similar sentences, insinuating that she may not be the right person for me to speak with, if I at all wanted to learn about permaculture's relations to politics. I somehow managed to convince Nevra that there was more to my research than that, and we in fact started our conversation right there, and later continued the interview over Skype.

When I started my fieldwork, I expected most permaculturists to share Nevra's aversion to politics, but that was not the case. Contrary to my expectations, only Melis gave a reaction similar to Nevra's, claiming that permaculture has nothing to do with

politics. When I pushed her on the political nature of permaculture, she did ultimately acknowledge that permaculture practice would serve political ends. All my other interlocutors perceived their engagement with permaculture as inherently political without my insistence. If they mostly agreed that there is a political component to permaculture, and if they positioned themselves against the transnational neoliberal market, then comes to mind a simple and perhaps rather naïve question: Why had my interlocutors not gravitated towards traditional forms of organizing for social and political change, but to permaculture?

The answer to this question, I argue, lies in the specific dispositions held by permaculturists prior to their encounter with permaculture, that is, their habitus as educated, middle-class consumers. This habitus mostly involved a disinterest in politics, or in the case of Nevra, an aversion to it. Family background must have played a significant part in determining this habitus. For instance, when I asked Nisan whether she had been in political organizations in high school or university, this was her reply:

> Never, never, never! Actually at the time I didn't have any ecological awareness about anything. Or you know, I didn't have much awareness about social or political matters, I can't say that I did. After the university, my eyes began to open a little bit more, I actually began to learn things, I'd like to think that I began to learn for real after school was over. You know, at university I was just interested in learning languages and I enjoyed discovering new cultures. [Provides detailed information about learning Italian and Spanish, and about her AISEC internship] I wasn't actually an introvert, but I existed in smaller groups in my own bubble. We could say I come from an apolitical middle class family, you know, one that prioritizes safety. Their top priority is to build a good life securing themselves, avoiding risks, you know, a family with that kind of philosophy. So I was raised to be quite apolitical and remained that way for a long time. I can't claim to be political now either quite honestly, but you know, we were just saying umm, I was thinking last year when I went to Tamera's [ecovillage in Portugal] summer school and they say that everything is political, everything is sacred. They have this interesting philosophy. I sort of believe in that. I mean I believe every choice we make in life umm you know, from the choices you make in your food to how you travel umm how much you consume, everything is political. Every choice is a political statement, a stance, and a form of participation. I'm not involved in political movements, but I think the choices I make are political.

Nisan's "apolitical" family turned her into an "apolitical" person. Of course, her disposition towards political organizing might have changed, had she at one point or another entered a different social field. For example, she may have been introduced to organized students through her university friends, but as she herself describes it, she

lived in a "bubble." Similarly to Nisan, Nevra seems to have inherited a certain set of dispositions from her family, especially her father, who worked as a journalist and who, therefore, followed the political events closely. However, Nevra explained, he remained equidistant to all political opinions. According to Nevra, he used to say, "I'm close to everyone regardless of their political opinions. I'm first and foremost a human being. As long as one is a human, no matter what one's opinion is, I would like to be friends with them," and Nevra openly acknowledges that she has been following his path.

Nevra inherited her father's all-inclusive attitude, an approach also embraced by the philosophy of permaculture. This specific quality appeals to Nisan too, especially when compared to what she referred to as the dichotomizing attitude of leftist politics. When I asked Nisan about her stance towards the left, she said,

> I don't feel close to any political thought that bases itself on a duality, even if it's a leftist one. I mean, even though my own values and certain principles I hold are closer to the values and principles of leftist thought, I don't feel closer to the left than to the right. The right and the left are part of what we call the old paradigm where the duality, uum the polarity is intense and where we are forced to take an either/or stance. So even if I may appear to be closer to one of the poles, I don't want to be part of it. I don't define myself either as leftist or rightist. I don't define myself as a leftist.

People's initial dispositions towards politics, then, not only lingered in their engagement with permaculture, but were also one of the mains reasons for which they got involved with the movement in the first place. While the "apolitical" habitus is prevalent within the permaculture community, my fieldwork also revealed, contrary to my expectations, that some permies had come from "political" families and had been either involved with or exposed to traditional forms of politics.

When she was younger, Cansu had been a member of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP), but left the organization during a time of intense internal conflict. She then became a member of the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP). Her parents, too, had been actively involved as revolutionaries in the 1980 coup, and his father continued his political involvement after that date as well. According to Cansu, the ÖDP was a party interested in ecological problems and her contemplation on ecology started there, yet she ultimately gave up on organized politics. In her words,

> There was sort of some stuff in my head [about ecology], but only later I decided that the political system in Turkey couldn't possibly offer any solution. So I decided not to join any NGOs or any other political thingies any more. (…) I wasn't able to join anything until I got involved in permaculture. I now believe that the solution lies in this sort of collective, you know,

> complete transformation of the system so I am now involved with permaculture.

When traditional forms of politics did not anymore promise a systemic transformation for Cansu, she gave up on organized politics. When she came across permaculture, she found it more holistic and more concrete.

Even though she had never subscribed to a party, Sevtap, too, came from a politically engaged background. Like Cansu's family, her family had also been politically active in labor unions, and expected her to attend a left-leaning university in Ankara, and she did. Sevtap attended her first protest as a senior in high school together with her parents. When I asked her whether she had been involved in any organization during her university years, Sevtap said,

> I took an active part in it, but you know, I was active in this sort of stuff at a hobby level 'cause all these political groups and everything seemed sort of, how should I say? (Silence) You know I felt as if people weren't sincere. For instance, there was this thing, if you went to a meeting or to the office of an association for the first time [at the university], people would treat you kindly. You know, they would ask you, "What's your name?" or "What do you study?" and all. Then when I took a step back, I would see that they acted that way to get me to join them.

Sevtap's narrative, too, points to a certain kind of disappointment with leftist organizations, this time more about the relationships that develop there. Even though she attended many protests, she never became officially affiliated with any organization. Upon graduating as an urban planner and finishing up as Master's degree in local governance, she worked at the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architect, a left-leaning professional organization, and she attended protests and prepared press releases as part of her job. Around that time, she started to translate voluntarily for Buğday Assocation for Ecological Living. Later, she moved to a small town in the Aegean region of Turkey with her husband and her interest in ecological issues grew. That was when she learned about permaculture and took the PDC. She also got involved in a local non-governmental organization (NGO) and proved very active in the environmental struggles going on in her region. She was among the founder members of the Green Party, but never renew her membership because she does not feel the party represents her. At the time of our interview, Sevtap was transitioning to live in a village and she openly acknowledged that physical distance would prevent her from engaging in organized forms of politics.

Even though they came from families who had been politically active in the past, both Cansu and Sevtap referred to their parents' protective attitudes and their slight opposition to their daughter's political involvement. While Sevtap's father expected her to remain involved to some extent, he also often warned her saying, "They would recruit you and use you." Sevtap was exposed to political organizations both in her family and in her friend circles in university, yet in her narrative she acknowledged, "There was this, uum, this caution, something that comes from the family." Although slightly different from Nisan's and Nevra's dispositions, Cansu and Sevtap, too, subscribe to a middle-class habitus, this time, valuing political involvement only to the extent that it does not jeopardize one's safety. The feeling of safety propagated by middle-class families, then, do not necessarily depend whether they were "political" or not, but pertain to a larger middle-class habitus which was later carried over to my interlocutors' engagement with permaculture.

While many permaculturists express a dislike towards conventional forms of organized politics, there are some others who continue to highlight their belief in its necessity. One such person, perhaps not very surprisingly, comes from a slightly different background. A 52 year-old woman, Eda grew up in the countryside until she was 14. Later inspired by Murray Bookchin's writings, she got politicized in her youth as a social ecologist. After studying engineering at university, she left for abroad where she actively participated in struggles related to indigenous rights, nuclear energy, and mining. She also worked on gender and is one of the few permaculturists who bring up issues related to gender inequalities. Overall, I find Eda to be more concerned than many others with problems that do not hold primacy for permaculturists. Even though she received a university education and lived overseas, her family background and her experiences of being part of struggles in Turkey and abroad seem to put her in a different field of action, with an habitus that more radically differs from others' dispositions. Eda's following comments illustrate her original stance:

> Yes, it's necessary to create a model to show your stance, but capitalism makes such impositions on you that, I mean, if there's no freedom of speech for us, you gotta come out and say, "Why did you take this down?" or "Hey! Why don't we have this?" or you know, if there's any kind of violence, you gotta say "Stop the violence against women, against minorities." *We still gotta get on the streets*. Umm… I mean I feel that we should get rid of the word struggle, there's always this idea of opposition in struggle. It's of course more important to create an alternative society but instead of struggle I used this other word for a while, I still have a dilemma about it, resistance instead of struggle, you know, resistance for our rights, or against losing our rights. For

> example, in developed countries there are movements to conserve but also to reclaim the green spaces and public spaces we've lost. This requires fighting; we've lost them… I want to see more green spaces in cities, more edible landscapes, this is a sort of struggle actually. We've got to fight again… what is done for women's rights, for the rights of invisible minorities is not a kind of resistance… there isn't any kind of existing freedoms, we're trying to create a new realm of freedom, so struggle becomes part of our lives whether we want it or not.

Even though she expresses a dislike towards the word "struggle," finding it, although implicitly, dichotomizing like many other permaculturists would, she repeatedly uses it throughout her narrative. Unlike many permaculturists, Eda openly acknowledges the ongoing need for the politics of protest.

In bringing Eda into the discussion, in no way am I attempting to suggest an urban/rural dichotomy which would cheaply correspond to apolitical/political. Other urbanites with political families also express the need for more organized forms of politics. While I possess little information about the financial status of Eda's family, Eda, too, seems to have benefited from access to educational, social, and cultural capital in her lifetime like many of my other interlocutors. My objective, then, is to do justice, to the extent that I can, to the diverse dispositions occupied by permaculturists towards political organizing and towards life in general. While doing so, however, I also aim to point out that right now permaculture as a movement predominantly remains limited to middle and upper-middle urbanites in Turkey, an observation which does not necessarily diminish its value or its transformative potential as I will later discuss in Chapter 4 and in the Conclusion. No matter how different their dispositions towards politics are, almost all permaculturists share one belief: the necessity of personal transformation for societal transformation, that is, the act of changing one's lifestyle and environmentally destructive consumption habits. It is the concept of lifestyle activism to which I turn next.

CHAPTER 3

"EVERY BEEP SOUND IN THE SUPERMARKET IS A VOTE!" ANTI-CONSUMPTION AND LIFESTYLE ACTIVISM IN PERMACULTURE

> It is hypocrisy to pretend to save forests, yet to buy daily newspapers and packaged food; to preserve native plants, yet rely on agrochemical production for food; and to adopt a diet which calls for broadscale food production.
> (Mollison 2002, 9)

> The "ecologist" with large lawns, or no food garden, is as hypocritical as the "environmentalist" drinking from an aluminum beer can and buying newspapers to read of destructive exploits. Both occupations exploit wilderness and people.
> (Mollison 2002, 57)

I started the previous chapter with an ethnographic vignette from Buket and described how together with her family she strives for a simpler—or to put it in her words a "poorer"—life in the city, an occurrence quite uncommon for someone from her socio-economic background. In this chapter, too, I open the discussion with the following narrative by Buket, also shared during that same conversation in her garden in Istanbul. She said,

> In access to food, you know it comes to Istanbul from all these markets in trucks and then it goes to local markets, then you go purchase it there. Actually what I problematize is not the act of buying, but you know, there's a relationship between you and that seasonal worker whether you see her or not. What I'm asking is: what are you gonna do with that relationship? For example, alright, let's grow our own tomatoes, oh how cute and all, but it's not what it's all about. (…) Now this is a big problem and a multi-layered one. I'm only at one end of this chain, I mean, come on, you're not at the end of it, there's this continuous cycle. But there's this thought that creates a binary opposition between the rural and the urban. You've got to accept that this relationship exists. Then no one will play innocent. The incident in Soma happened after all, right? At the end, you know, it's not just these unnecessary shopping malls, but also all the cars, all these streets, the consumption of all this energy, I mean, everyone's got their hands dirty. That's the logic. But is it easy to wash your hands clean? Nope, it's not, I mean it's not easy at all. (…)

> But have you made significant progress in your relationship with political issues even after you've built this system? No, you haven't, you've got to accept that too. I mean, am I making myself clear? I mean, this is kind of how I see things.

Buket's consumption choices, that is, her active effort to reduce her consumption or fulfill her needs from either her own garden, BÜKOOP (the consumer cooperative) or organic markets, essentially stem from what she discerns as a problematic relationship between herself and seasonal agricultural workers, who work under conditions of intense exploitation in Turkey. Buket recognizes a problem of inequality between these workers and herself. In order to decrease her own participation in these oppressive power structures, she perceives a change in her consumption habits as a possible solution. In her narrative, she refers to the mining disaster which took the lives of 301 workers in the Soma district of Manisa in May 2015, due to the neglect of the operator mining company and the lack of adequate government supervision. She assigns responsibility both to herself and to other people for the disaster, implying that people's high levels of electricity use makes the business of mining a necessity in the first place. While positing her lifestyle changes as one possible solution, she also ultimately recognizes that her efforts may not amount to much. In other words, she acknowledges that not much changes politically through her actions.

Even though Buket recognizes her problematic connection to workers, her way of conceptualizing change differs highly from leftist forms of organizing for social and political transformation. As, following Bourdieu, I explained in the previous chapter, even though permaculturists' habitus changed from a middle-class consumer habitus to a more ecological one, this new permaculturist habitus intensely carries values and beliefs from their original dispositions towards conventional forms of political organizing. As a result, Buket's way of acting out in the world is to act from her own social field, from where she stands as a person with a certain habitus defined by this field. While there exist within the permaculture community different takes towards anti-consumption and lifestyle activism, the shared understanding involves a belief that personal transformation would ultimately lead to societal change. If, then, dispositions, attitudes, and habits of consumption change, they argue, then larger structural change would occur.

In this chapter, I evaluate the lifestyle and anti-consumption strategies employed by permaculturists, especially those based in the city. After describing the lifestyle

changes permies engage in, I review the theoretical discussion on lifestyle activism and argue for a more nuanced critique that does not either uncritically appraise or unquestionably attack lifestylism. I then demonstrate how the conception of social change promoted by permaculture and permaculturists works in accordance with Bourdieu's theory of practice, whereby habitus appears as the "hinge between agency and structure" (Crossley 2002, 177).

3.1. Lifestyle as Space of Action

At the time of my fieldwork, several of my interlocutors had already transitioned to a rural lifestyle, which to a great extent requires radical changes in one's comfort level and consumption habits. Almost all of countryside-based permies grow their own food, procure their needs from other local and possibly ecological producers, and engage in permaculture experiments in their land to serve as models to others. Some live with other people, also experimenting with communal living situations, while some others experience rural life with their significant others or by themselves, all the while keeping in close contact with other back-to-landers in their area.

For those permaculturally trained urbanites, however, moving to a village may not be an option right away for reasons including lack of economic capital and lack of community with whom to start a permaculture initiative. If one has a garden, like Buket, then one can always design it according to permaculture principles, and start to grow one's own good. If not, one does not necessarily need a backyard to engage in permaculture. Melis, for instance, a 36 year-old practitioner formerly trained as a landscape architect, grows vegetables in her balcony and as we sat there to talk, she told me that because she had to move to another apartment soon, she will carry all the plants on her lap, pointing to their precious nature for her.

If growing tomatoes and peppers in one's balcony is not that convenient, then there are always simpler plants such as herbs like basil, mint, and parsley, which can be easily grown in small pots in the kitchen. As Cansu put it during a presentation she gave in an environmental gathering,

> We're in the city, we consume, but what's important is to change our options a little bit more, I mean, even if you can't do anything, start little by little or start to grow things, your tomato, your pepper, I don't know, your parsley, if

> you grow only parsley, then you won't be buying *that* from the supermarket, *at the least*.

Cansu's reasoning echoes permaculture's emphasis on starting small within the possible range available to a person. A permaculturist can also always pet earthworms that will turn her leftover food into compost. These little red worms (*eisenia fetida*) reproduce quickly and are so popular in the permaculture community that during get-togethers permies jokingly race as to who has the most number of worms and the healthiest. Permies are very keen on sharing these worms with the beginners, as I was asked by several whether I would be willing to take some of these worms to start a compost in my own apartment.

If one is not ready to take care of a pet to reduce one's production of garbage, then there is a myriad of other ways in which permies who live in Istanbul can *do something*, as echoed in the words of Cansu as well. They can produce themselves some of stuff that they would otherwise buy from the market, such as bread, yogurt, and kefir. On a more collective level, they can participate in exchange and barter networks such as Zumbara, a time bank where people exchange services on the basis of time instead of money, and Eşya Kütüphanesi (Library of Stuff), a platform where participants borrow and lend their goods, including electronics, clothes, and musical instruments. A permaculturist in Istanbul can always acquire her clothes from the barter markets frequently organized by Zumbara or Yeryüzü Association. Or she can buy her produce from organic markets or directly from the producer through cooperatives like BÜKOOP.

As I explored in the previous chapter, permaculturists also train themselves in courses and workshops to acquire the skills necessary for design methods that would have effects beyond their immediate consumption patterns. They learn, for example, about urban beekeeping, the collection of rainwater, and the establishment of gray water systems to recycle water. Conversations about the latter two especially circulated on online platforms in the summer of 2014 when the reservoirs that feed Istanbul experienced long-term water shortage followed by showers which caused flood in the city. To my knowledge, there are yet no collective initiatives that engage in rainwater collection or beekeeping in the city.

While permaculturists religiously promote these anti-consumption and alternative consumption strategies, in no way are these restricted to the permaculture community. Lifestyle and consumption changes appeal to a wider range of people who are involved

in circles like Zumbara, Eşya Kütüphanesi, and gift economy experiments, an economic model based on gift exchange. Like many permaculturists, more and more people change their lifestyles first and foremost by leaving their white-collar jobs to seek more meaningful work, and share their experiences in the Facebook group called "İstifamı Verdim" (I quit my job), a platform which also serves as a support network for those who are seeking inspiration and encouragement. Indeed, Zumbara and Eşya Kütüphanesi started in 2010 and 2013 respectively and grew with the initiatives of four women who came from such backgrounds. They attempt at creating solidarity economies within a neoliberal economy, and reinstituting human relationships into what would otherwise be monetary exchanges.

In 2013, Uyanma Saati (Wake-Up Hour), an anonymously prepared website, published videos that explain the economic and political problems caused by the current system. The videos are in order named "Be Reasonable, Listen to Your Heart," "Reasonable Reasons to Listen to Your Heart," "This Boring Economy!," "Corporations and the Gambling of the Stock Market," "The Death of Biodiversity." These videos not only invited people to "wake-up" and leave their 9-5 jobs to seek more meaningful work, but also aimed at raising awareness about how the capitalist market worked and at pushing people towards alternative economies. The website offers occupation alternatives depending on one's skills, and permaculture is suggested as a "useful" job to "those who think they may like to work with soil" (Uyanma Saati, n.d.). Around the time of Gezi events, Uyanma Saati also started to circulate a bunch of visuals on social media platforms, suggesting that lifestyle changes would bring about "liberation." The visuals encouraged people to become self-reliant by using bicycles, by doing their own sewing, by sharing what they have with other people, by growing vegetable gardens, and by using and supporting open source software.

While some initiatives like Uyanma Saati encourage people to rethink how they make a living and change their lifestyle to a less spending one, some others work on forging links between producers and consumers, and push consumers to purchase from producers who grow organic food (but not necessarily with a certification). Yeryüzü Association, for instance, runs a community-supported agriculture (CSA) scheme, albeit differently then its counterpart model in the United States. Usually, an agricultural farm would decide to commit to ecological or organic farming and find local families to financially support her endeavors. The families, in turn, are entitled to take their share of the produce that grows on the farm regardless of how much the farm produces that

year. In Turkey, however, Yeryüzü Association employs a different model based on trust by simply connecting ecological producers, much of which is *not* necessarily certified organic, to consumers in the city.

The Slow Food movement, too, emphasizes the importance of consumption patterns in bringing about larger change. Their chapter in Turkey started in 2010 an organized consumer campaign against the sale of bluefish under 24 centimeters. If caught and sold under this width, the fish cannot produce and is therefore under the threat of extinction in Istanbul's waters. The campaign coincided with another campaign by Greenpeace Mediterranean that drew attention to the catch of small fish in general. Slow Food activists encouraged consumers to refrain from buying bluefish shorter than 24 centimeters and thus created an influential lobby for policy change and petitioned to the authorities. While the campaign proved effective in bringing civil society actors together and pushing for change, the new regulation increased the catch length from 14 centimeters to only 19, still not adequate to allow for the fish to reproduce. Even so, together with the Greenpeace campaign, Slow Food pointed to the impact consumer requests can possess on supply and production. This action perspective is epitomized in the word "prosumer," a combination of "producer" and "consumer," coined by futurist author Alvin Toffler in 1980 and coopted by the Slow Food movement (Toffler 1980). Its counterpart in Turkish is "türetici," a combination of "tüketici" and "üretici." Even though "prosumer" is not a term commonly used by permaculturists, the idea behind the word itself is often articulated when permaculturists link their consumption practices to their possible effects on the production of market goods, energy, and so forth.

Despite the wider appeal of alternative consumption and lifestyle strategies, my analysis here only pertains to the visions held by permaculturists, and specifically those whom I interviewed or interacted with during my fieldwork. In the next section, I turn to the recent discussions on what came to be called "lifestyle activism."

3.2. Lifestyle Activism: Praises and Contestations

According sociologist Mike Featherstone (1987, 55), lifestyle connotes "individuality, self-expression, and stylistic self-consciousness." Accordingly, "one's body, clothes, speech, leisure pastimes, eating and drinking preferences, home, car,

choice of holidays, etc., are to be regarded as indicators of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the owner/consumer." This "reflexive project of the self," as described by sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991, 5) is intricately tied to one's consumption choice and everyday habits. While, on the one hand, individuals and groups autonomously choose their lifestyles, therefore consumption habits (Giddens 1991, see also Binkley 2007b), on the other hand, lifestyles take place and are also largely determined by the social structures which people inhabit (Bourdieu 1984).

Scholars in various fields, including sociology, environmental studies, and marketing, have conducted research on the relationship between alternative consumption practices related to lifestyle choices and their political repercussions by looking at what they term as, with slight nuances, green consumption (Czarnezki 2011), political consumerism (Micheletti 2003, Micheletti and Stolle 2008), and commodity activism (Banet-Weiser and Mukherjee 2012). These analyses mostly focus on the United States or countries in Europe where alternative consumption and green living practices have been spreading since the 1970s (Maniates 2002a) as a response to increasing awareness regarding environmental problems.

Rarely are practices of lifestyle that pay heed to a particular theme considered as social movements, pointing to the hegemony in social sciences to focus on contentious politics, including collective political action and protest events, instead of conceptualizing lifestyle movements as cultural contestations to hegemonic societal norms (Haenfler et al. 2012). Some scholars almost uncritically acclaim the lifestyle practices that are administered, highlighting their unquestioned potential in bringing about cultural, social, and political change (see, for instance, Czarnezki 2011). Some others, however, harshly criticize individual acts of green consumption for laying responsibility on individuals and ignoring the structurally produced and enhanced economic and political causes of environmental problems (Maniates 2002a, Maniates 2012, Schutz 2009a, Schutz 2009b). For instance, environmental studies scholar Michael Maniates comments on the almost ubiquitous and rarely challenged claim in the United States that individual actions such as planting a tree, recycling, and biking will save environmental destruction. He argues, "A privatization and individualization of responsibility for environmental problems shifts blame from state elites and powerful producer groups to more amorphous culprits like ''human nature'' or 'all of us'" (Maniates 2002a, 57). Individualized solutions, he claims, retract from institutional thinking, and as solution for "confronting consumption," he "calls for individuals to

understand themselves as citizens in a participatory democracy first, working together to change broader policy and larger social institutions, and as consumers second" (45-47).

In an article in the Guardian, world-renowned philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2014), too, points to the contemporary individualization of responsibility with regard to environmental problems and the cooptation of dissent by neoliberal ideology. He writes,

> The very ecological protest against the ruthless capitalist exploitation of natural resources is already caught in the commodification of experiences. (…) ecology itself is branded as a new lifestyle. What we are effectively buying when we are buying "organic food" etc. is already a certain cultural experience, the experience of a "healthy ecological lifestyle". (…) There is something deceptively reassuring in our readiness to assume guilt for the threats to our environment: we like to be guilty since, if we are guilty, it all depends on us. We pull the strings of the catastrophe, so we can also save ourselves simply by changing our lives."

While these criticisms unquestionably raise valid points, few studies take on an ethnographic lens and focus on the motivations of people who deliberately engage in alternative consumption patterns. Communication scholar Laura Portwood-Stacer's (2013) study of anarchists in the United States is one of the few ethnographic studies on lifestyle activism and lifestyle politics, and attempts to understand the meanings and practices associated with lifestyle by scrutinizing consumption patterns, personal style, and practices of sexual non-conformity. Through her close encounter with anarchist groups, Portwood-Stacer offers a nuanced analysis that goes beyond the either/or divide. Discussing the kinds of meanings associated with lifestyle changes and emphasizing that anarchists combine lifestyle with other political strategies, instead of giving up on the latter, she argues that "the strategic deployment of lifestyle tactics pursued by radical activists is not the same as the astrategic preoccupation with the self encouraged by neoliberal ideology" (6). Giving a detailed account of the different lifestyle strategies that US anarchists employ, Portwood-Stacer distinguishes between the different motivations and effects of lifestyle tactics. While some strategies serve for "personal gratification," some others confirm one's "moral rectitude." While some are used towards "activist intervention," some become "identificatory performance," and some others work to enhance "social communication." All in all, Portwood-Stacer shows that lifestyle tactics are not always necessarily about inducing change, but they may in some instances serve to that end, and they always serve one or several of these other purposes.

Like Portwood-Stacer, I bring an ethnographic sensibility to the lifestyle strategies employed by permaculturists in Turkey with the aim of fulfilling, as put by sociologists Ross Haenfler, Brett Johnson, and Ellis Jones, "a scholarly blind spot concealing the intersections of private action and movement participation, personal change and social change, and personal identity and collective identity" (Haenfler et al. 2012, 2). In doing so, against the grain of attitudes that either uncritically appraise or generically bash lifestyle activism, I follow scholars Sarah Banet-Weiser and Roopali Mukherjee (2012, 13) who argue for an examination of specificities, as "contemporary modes of commodity activism resist easy generalisation, each deserving careful study and exploration."

In my analysis, I use the concept "lifestyle activism" to denote, following Portwood-Stacer, "the deployment of lifestyle for activist purposes" (2013, 5). In the interviews I conducted, I specifically inquired whether my interlocutors would consider themselves as activists. They usually asked me what I meant by the term, and I told them this was exactly the point of my question, and in turn asked them what they understood from the term "activist." Responses varied. While some of them found themselves and permaculture of activist nature, some others equated the word with Greenpeace activists who engage in radical protests, and refrained from identifying their own actions as activist. These differences of perception confirm the observation that "what counts as activism is a discursive construction" (Portwood-Stacer 2013, 5). Due to these varying identifications, I am aware that by employing the concept of lifestyle activism to describe permies' actions, I give precedence to the etic point of view. In addition to observing that some permaculturists identify as activists, my primary reason for doing so derives from my interlocutors' openly articulated desire, through these actions, to enact a change that extends beyond their immediate surroundings.

Portwood-Stacer reminds us that anarchist and social ecologist philosopher Murray Bookchin's early writings promoted changes in lifestyle as part of meaningful political action. He wrote,

> (..) the revolutionary movement is profoundly concerned with lifestyle. It must try to live the revolution in all its totality, not only participate in it. It must be deeply concerned with the way the revolutionist lives, his relations with the surrounding environment, and his degree of self-emancipation. (Bookchin 1979; quoted in Portwood-Stacer 2013, 2)

Yet with the cooptation of ethical lifestyles into neoliberal discourse, Bookchin (1990, also see Bookchin 1995) later dismissed lifestyle politics as a political strategy. He said,

> It is inaccurate and unfair to coerce people into believing that they are *personally* responsible for present-day ecological disasters because they consume too much or proliferate too readily. This privatization of the environmental crisis, like the New Age cults that focus on personal problems rather than on social dislocations, has reduced many environmental movements to utter ineffectiveness and threatens to diminish their credibility with the public. If ‘‘simple living’’ and militant recycling are the main solutions to the environmental crisis, the crisis will certainly continue and intensify. (Bookchin 1989, 22; also cited in Maniates 2002a, 52)

According to Maniates, several factors contributed to the mass individualization of responsibility to free the world from environmental ills, including the rising conservatism in the United States in the 1980s and then-president Ronald Reagan's "doctrine of personal responsibility, corporate initiative, and limited government" (2002, 53). While these political and economic developments are partially responsible for the spread of individualized solutions, Maniates also blames the appropriate technology movements of the 1970s, for they redirected responsibility from governments to individuals, while also convincing governments and corporations to invest in technological advances to "save the world." According to media and communication scholar Tania Lewis, a "growing cynicism regarding political will in relation to environmental issues at a state and federal level" is also a possible reason for which people turn to green practices (2015, 2).

Permaculture, too, originated in late 1970s with a philosophy of action that places special emphasis on individualized actions, yet without necessarily divorcing them from collective ones. Its entry to Turkey and its appeal to members of the educated, middle and upper-middle classes are surely influenced with the political and economic developments in the recent history of the country. The minimization of dissent to a radicalized minority since the military coup in 1980 due to the relative unavailability of political participation through state violence and fear, and the following neoliberal policies also meant that the individual started to being seen as the primary unit of action. As I explained in the previous chapter and will further explore in the next one, many permaculturists are either not familiar with or somehow disappointed with other forms of political action.

It shall thus be no surprise that lifestyle changes and anti-consumption strategies appeal to permaculturists as a way of acting out in the world. The recognition of this context, however, does not forthright mean that lifestyle strategies are simply a cooptation of dissent, and therefore permaculturists directly serve neoliberal ideology.

Such an approach would not only refuse to acknowledge the subjectivities of permaculturists who religiously strive to live ethically to influences others, but would also ignore the specific interruptions they manage to make into neoliberal discourses. I therefore aim to present a more nuanced critique of lifestyle activism.

Critiques of lifestyle activism often do not make an analytical distinction between the greening of consumption and a significant reduction in consumption. In other words, they criticize the turn of consumers to green or fair trade products, as Maniates (2002a, 58) puts it, "feeling bad and guilty about far-off and megaenvironmental destruction, and then traveling down to the corner store to find a 'green' product whose purchase will somehow empower somebody, somewhere, to do good." All permaculturists, however, are well aware of the dangers of green capitalism and constantly criticize it. Instead of buying into these marketing strategies which do more harm than good, they significantly reduce their consumption and seek out alternative consumption routes, for example, by buying their soaps and creams from Kır Çocukları (Prairie Kids), a collective that creates its own ecological, hand-made products. While many permaculturists who live in the city would also mostly buy organic, they acknowledge that organic agriculture bears its own problems. As a design system that values diversity, permaculture positions itself against all types of monocultural agriculture, whether organic or not.

Criticisms of lifestyle activism also work to create binaries between the personal and the collective, the individual and the institutional, and constantly articulate these dichotomous categories in opposition to each other. As I will later show, permaculturists, however, strive to forge links between the two, by for instance organizing collective events and appealing to municipalities for local change. Unlike what Maniates claims, many permies do refer to their roles as citizens, both at national and global levels. There is also a constant recognition that the success of lifestyle activism overall depends on the collective, that is, on other people's actions. If everyone engages in these types of ecologically aware actions, then the world might change, they constantly repeat. While the assumption that everyone may engage in these actions sounds at first naïve, this statement also recognizes its own failure. On the one hand, then, there is a strong desire to change the world through one's own actions, while, on the other, many permies recognize the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of doing so.

In fact, their conception of social change highly replicates Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. In the words of Tania Lewis (2015, 3), "practice theory understands

the social as being embedded in and produced through fields of embodied practices tied to shared (though contingent) norms and conventions." In the previous chapter, I explored the process of becoming a permaculturist in Turkey by looking at the change in people's habitus. I described how my interlocutors' pre-permaculturist habitus shifted to a more ecological one when they entered a new social field. Such transformation, permaculturists would argue, carries the potential to bring about larger social change if the range of this new "ecological field" extends to more people. Since habitus generates practice, any change in habitus has the potential to transform the larger field, and ultimately the larger structures.

Tania Lewis, too, studies green living initiatives in Melbourne from a practice theory perspective that acknowledges the potential of embodied practices to turn into praxis and transform structures. She points to the tension in Permablitz activities "between on the one hand *transforming* daily living and, on the other, embedding new sets of practices within systems, norms, routines and forms of habitus" (2014, 8). She further writes,

> For new green lifestyles to *work* in the world – that is to become regular, ordinary practices – they also need to move from praxis back into the realm of habitus. Strategies that structure and enable certain kinds of routines and embodied practices, for example, are central to producing a productive working permaculture garden. (8)

In a similar vein, I discuss the lifestyle and anti-consumption strategies of permaculturists from a practice perspective. What matters in my analysis in this chapter, however, is not whether or not permaculturists' actions will at all have an effect in the world as part of a larger social change, but the ways in which permaculturists envision, desire, and embody that effect. Randolph Haluza-DeLay emphasizes that ecological habitus is grounded in place; if eco-friendly lifestyle practices are already recognized in a location, he argues, then ecological habitus generates environmentally sound practice "without trying" (Haluza-DeLay 2008, 207). For permaculturists, especially for those who live in cities, there seems to be some conscious "trying" at first, as they strive to live in conjunction with the ethical principles of permaculture in a society that does not necessarily, at least not yet, recognize them. However, with time these practices are generated "without trying."

In the following sections, I first turn to how permaculturists redefine, and in fact extend, notions of national and global citizenship through lifestyle activism. I then observe that lifestyle strategies are first and foremost a matter of ethical consistency for

permaculturists and that they suggest an embodied practice against what they see as oppressive political and economic power structures. Next, I critique the emphasis on choice in permaculturist discourses on lifestyle changes and anti-consumption by highlighting that these strategies are not accessible to all. I then show how lifestyle choices are not conceptualized as solely individual ventures, but are imagined to depend on collective efforts. This contingency, I argue, is exactly what makes permaculturists unsure about the effects of their actions, yet which comes back to being ethical. In the final section, I provide examples of the more collective ways in which permaculturists work towards transforming the city.

3.3. Reinterpreting Citizenship

In a presentation she gave at an environmental gathering, Cansu said the following:

> We can transform things through the decisions we make 'cause in this world you gotta remember that every time you hear this "beep beep" sound at the grocery store, I mean, every item you purchase means that somewhere else in the world something else is disappearing. 'Cause right know I'm in Turkey, I'm in Kadıköy, I'm just Cansu, and when I purchase a bar of soap with palm oil—'cause palm oil is currently included in everything and I mean, everything—and for that they're completely destroying polyculture and forestry, just to plant more palm trees. And currently as just Cansu in Kadıköy, I help shape the future of forestry at the other end of the world with this choice that I make. This is how one should think, I mean, if we think not at the scale of Kadıköy, Istanbul or Turkey, but at a more alternative global scale, if we make our choices accordingly, then real transformation will occur through the decisions we make.

In her narrative, Cansu draws a direct connection between her choice of buying soap and the destruction of rainforests for the cultivation of palm oil. She is aware of the ways in which corporations are destroying the environment and manipulating customers. She would therefore not buy into marketing strategies that advertise an industrially produced good as green.

Here the market example Cansu gives refers to a quote by permaculture instructor Mustafa Bakır, a sentence which can be rephrased as "Every beep sound is a vote!" I heard this narrative over and over again during my fieldwork, as many of my interlocutors referenced Bakır when they explained to me that in fact we vote while we

shop. In other words, every beep sound that the machine makes when reading a price tag is equal to one vote. This widely circulating narrative reminds the claims put forth by Michael Maniates whom I cited earlier and who argues individuals should be citizens first and consumers second. Permaculturists surely connect citizenship to their consumption habits and perceive the supermarket as a political space where they cast their vote.

This idea of voting through non-consumption reproduces the neoliberal idea of democratic citizenship which grants the individual the right to vote, therefore supposedly have a say in the larger system by placing her as the unit of political action. Yet my conservation with Melis revealed a nuance. Among my interlocutors, Melis was one of the two people who claimed that permaculture was not political. When she uttered the importance of consumer choice through the same metaphor of placing one's vote at the cashier, I challenged her rejection of politics and asked once more whether permaculture is not political if she says we vote through our consumption. This was her response:

> I mean, of course it's political, but what we mean with the political is not for instance the parties in Turkey. I mean this is what I explain in class [permaculture classes]: you're actually voting with all the consumption you make, but you're not voting for a party. Your vote is actually related to the global capitalist order and it's something beyond political parties; it's related to these big corporations and unfortunately politics in the entire world is actually this kind of chessboard.

Here Melis reveals that voting here does not refer to a parliamentary or a municipal vote, but a vote that one gives to the transnational market. She expands the idea of citizenship to the global market and claims an active say in its regulation through her consumption choices. Anti-consumption, then, is for the individual to have a say, however small, in the larger mechanisms of capitalism, a way to reclaim her agency as both a national and global citizen faced with the power of capital.

3.4. A Matter of Ethics and Consistency

Many permaculturists constantly engage in what Sam Binkley calls self-problematization, that is, "a holding up of some aspect of one's daily conduct as the object of serious ethical scrutiny and concern, at the center of which is a discourse with

other on the appropriate shape of such behavior for the purposes of an ethical goal of one sort or another" (Binkley 2007a, 131; see also Portwood-Stacer 2013, 26). Permies constantly reflect on the question of ethics, legitimizing their choices on a case-by-case basis, therefore following an ethics of virtue. Once they become aware of their participation in forms of oppression, they see ethical anti-consumption as the first option towards change. Mollison's two quotes in the epigram of this chapter reflect this line of thinking: if one claims to be an ecologist or an environmentalist, then one has to first and foremost refrain from destructive forms of consumption and tend one's own garden. For many permaculturists, lifestyle changes are not only ways to retract oneself from an oppressive system in order to reduce one's participation in its perpetuation, but they are also the embodiment of that recognition of oppression and violence.

Several permies said that they find direct links between the destruction of the environment in Turkey, specifically the invasive construction hydroelectric dams (HES) all over the country, and people's consumption practices. Melis, for instance, said, "Now people are against the HES, yes we don't want the HES, we don't want the HES, we don't want the HES. But bro, if you watch a soccer game and go to the kitchen during halftime and turn on your kettle, then where's that electricity gonna come from? Of course, we don't want the HES, I agree." According to this thinking, if one opposes the HES, which are built to meet the energy demand nationally, then one shall also be questioning one's own electricity use. Similarly, Fırat framed the recognition of one's indirect participation in destruction as "confrontation." He said,

> I think there might come a time when every person will need to face this fact 'cause there are these people who attend the protests at Ida Mountains against feldspad mines in the village of Kurşunlu. And this umm, if I got it right, it's this thing used at the ceramics factory, I mean it's used at a ceramics factory nearby or it's exported and all, but at the end of the day a lot of people are not aware of it and probably consume it anyways, [pointing to the candle on the table in the café] it's like this candle. I mean, while you're dealing with hydropower plants, you'll have to try to consume less energy, you'll plug off the TV instead of keeping it plugged in all the time and everything. You'll have to face all these things, I mean, it's like you gotta do both. We fight against the hydropower plants, but why are we against it? What will happen if they are taken out of use or if they continue to exist? We have to develop a different action plan with a certain kind of awareness about all these things.

In his narrative, Fırat refers to the ongoing struggle against the spread of different types of mining activities in the Ida Mountains in Çanakkale. He not only links personal actions to the larger struggle against ecological destruction—be it mining or the

construction of hydroelectric dams, but also emphasizes that collective struggles should be complemented by personal actions against the need that make humans require destruction in the first place. If one *really* opposes these developmental plans that ruin the environment, then one has to *ethically* live up to that promise.

Once one knows the destructive effects of corporations, it becomes almost an imperative to avoid their products. Cansu explained this form of action which succeeds recognition as "narrow selfishness, wide selfishness" (*dar bencillik, geniş bencillik*). In her own words,

> In narrow selfishness, when you don't know something, you just don't know it. We can't really be mad at someone for not knowing things, but in wide selfishness, you have now stepped into something. Something woke you up, so you can't turn your back to it and leave. Any kind of wide selfishness is out of the question now, if you know this man imposes these advertisements on you or you know the TV sucks you into this system. You now gotta do something about it, you can't turn your back to it. So it's a nice perspective in that sense.

While permaculturists place the individual in relation to the larger structure in these narratives, I discern two problems in placing *this much* responsibility on individuals and their consumption patterns. First, industries, especially heavy ones, consume much more energy than individuals. The energy that will be produced by hydroelectric dams will for the most part serve industrial complexes. One's own energy consumption, then, may not be as much responsible for creating the national energy "need." Second, Cansu's narrative seems to equate one's responsibility with free choice without necessarily acknowledging that this choice may not be accessible to everyone. I next turn to the limits of choice.

3.5. The Limits of Choice

In her presentation, Cansu also said, "This is how you start to look at it, I mean, when this consciousness comes, this is how you start to look at it. Normally you are an ordinary consumer, you know, it takes you some time to see why that product was specifically placed there in that particular way." For her, once one "awakens" to recognize mediatic manipulation, then one can start to move away from destructive consumption patterns: "There is no garbage in nature. We may not produce any garbage at all, and it's in *our* hands to do that. But you know, this is a decision and a choice. I

mean, we could be living by working more and by producing more garbage in shopping malls, or we could transform our own home and ourselves and live without producing garbage."

Cansu's emphasis on decisions and choice downplays the structural forces at play, especially regarding class. As Portwood-Stacer argues, "Much as the underlying political ideology of neoliberalism assumes that all subjects have equal access to the law and the market, and the advocacy of individualist tactics implies, erroneously, that everyone has equal access to these methods of resistance" (137). Let me, however, remind the reader that Cansu uttered these words during a public presentation in order to convince the audience of the necessity of ethical action. Even so, perhaps mainly because most permaculturists come from middle and upper middle classes, the predominant assumption among permaculture circles is that everyone would have equal access to individual anti-consumption or alternative consumption methods. The self-problematization that permies engage in, then, does not necessarily encompass the issues of class, an inadequacy that pertains to the permaculture movement in Turkey in general as I will discuss in the conclusion of this thesis.

The limits of choice do not solely pertain to people who come from less privileged backgrounds, but also to current permaculturists themselves. Many permies, in fact including Cansu, acknowledge their own limits in changing their consumption habits, and perceive the ethical principles of permaculture quite flexibly. Yasemin, for instance, raised several difficulties regarding changing one's lifestyle. She acknowledged that she often buys groceries from Migros, a supermarket chain, instead of purchasing them from street markets where she would have to pay cash, something she could not do when she did not have any jobs at hand as a freelance designer. If economic constraints pose one limit, another is the unwillingness to give up on desire:

> For instance, after Gezi people started to boycott Starbucks 'cause it didn't let them [the protestors] in the shop during the protests. There was a time when I loved coffee and quite snobbishly drank only particular types of coffee purchased from Starbucks. (…) So then after Gezi, people stopped drinking Starbucks 'cause they didn't let people in. Why? I mean, it had always been evil. Before Gezi, it was still exploiting people at some part of the world. The label "fair trade" doesn't really mean anything. So after that for a while, I promised myself, you know, to take something out of my life after Gezi, so I tried not to get Starbucks coffee anymore. I went to Eminönü and purchased coffee from Kurukahveci Ihsan Efendi [a national coffee chain]. I roasted it and made all kinds of effort to have some good coffee, but it didn't taste the same. That damn coffee! I had a cup's worth of pleasure everyday and what was the point of faking it with something weird that pretended to be

> Starbucks? I thought, what difference does it make? This other coffee comes from elsewhere as well, from some irrelevant part of the world. I'm just fooling myself when I get the coffee from there, instead of Starbucks. I mean there are lots of different arguments. You could say, "I won't let big franchises get my money." Cool, then don't get any Starbucks. You could also say, "I won't drink something that was produced by exploiting someone else somewhere else in the world." That's also cool, that's great, but then life really becomes… then for example, don't use your mobile phone or don't drink this tea or eat this candy. I shouldn't use this purse, like there's no end to it. As [permaculture instructor] Mustafa says at the workshop, the ethics debate is endless in permaculture, 'cause who's gonna decide what you actually need or not? And there's no way we can decide for someone else so everyone has to face his or her own conscience in this.

In this passage, Yasemin shares her ethical conundrum by taking into consideration several points at once: whether she is ready to give up on what she frames as her sole pleasurable activity—drinking a certain type of coffee, one that belongs to the transnational Starbucks; whether purchasing another type of coffee, this time from a historical local chain, would reduce her participation in the exploitation of coffee workers—the answer is no; and whether her total abandonment of this pleasure would *really* change anything at all. She solves the conundrum by first suggesting a total rejection of consumption, and then by recognizing the impossibility of remaining outside capitalist relations of production and consumption. Ultimately, she claims, changing one's consumption habits all comes down to being a matter of personal conscience.

During our conversation, Yasemin also suggested the futility of a total personal rejection of consumption also because it did not make much sense as long as others did not change their habits. She said,

> I don't use any bleach, right, but my neighbor does. I mean the drainpipe from my house meets hers and the bleach gets mixed into the sewage. So instead of getting lost in such details umm, working on bigger things that I feel might have a greater impact makes more sense to me. For instance, getting people to exchange their stuff in Etiler seems more significant than bothering with organic cleaning products at home.

This passage shows that Yasemin values over personal anti-consumption other types of action, which she thinks may have larger effects in the world. Influencing the residents of Etiler, an upper class neighborhood in Istanbul, by organizing a barter market deserves more energy and effort. I will refer back to Yasemin's collective efforts at organizing others both at the end of this chapter and in the next chapter. For now, I turn

to the acknowledgement of the limits of personal anti-consumption in permaculturist circles.

3.6. "It will happen if everyone wants it to happen!"

In *A Designer's Manual*, Bill Mollison (2002, 57) writes,

> What is proposed herein is that we have no right, nor any ethical justification, for clearing land or using wilderness while we tread over lawns, create erosion, and use land inefficiently. Our responsibility is *to put our house in order*. Should we do so, there will never be any need to destroy wilderness.

The "we" in this powerful quote from Mollison seems to encompass all humanity, which reveals the assumption that everyone will follow Mollison's advice and as a result, "there will never be any need to destroy wilderness." While permaculturists do not always share such blind idealism, their desire to influence a large group of people persists. On the one hand, then, there is a strong aspiration to have many people follow the individual lifestyle and anti-consumption strategies and through that enact change in the global market, while, on the other, rests a recognition that this may never be possible. In other words, unlike critics of lifestyle activism suggest, many permaculturists do not disengage from consumption and feel comfortable that their choices ultimately matter. While their choices ease their conscience, they are very well aware that their actions depend on the collective, and they constantly qualify this tension.

In other words, even though permaculture locates the individual as the primary source of action, the collective level never loses its significance. Cansu, for instance, is all too aware of the importance of people's support in any type of action. While she was telling me the importance of self-transformation, she said, "We have to transform ourselves as individuals so that communities can transform. I can't do anything on my own. (...) [referring to a joint project] if people hadn't helped us, we wouldn't have come thus far. It all happened thanks to people's support." Here she seems to blur the lines between the individual and the collective. In her study of anarchist lifestyle politics, Portwood-Stacer, too, draws attention to the fact that most of lifestyle tactics,

such as free bike repair shops, rely on collective efforts: "Although lifestyle and consumer politics are often thought of as a individualistic in nature, many of the examples described above point to the importance of community for political anti-consumption" (2013, 36).

In the quote with which I started this chapter, Buket was narrating how she questioned her connection to seasonal agricultural workers, and therefore argued for equitable and ecological consumption, while at the same acknowledging that her actions do not necessarily amount to viable political results. In a similar vein, Nevra openly recognized the possibility of failure. In our discussion about the politicalness of permaculture, as one of the two permies who do not find permaculture to be political, she said the following when I asked her whether she did not try to "change the system" through her practice of permaculture:

> Nevra: I mean I have no claim to dominate nations or the universe, neither do I make any effort to change all these either. Politicians make such efforts and possess the power to rule everything; they have some instinctual need to feel that power maybe. (…) I try to see myself as a part of the natural system, I say, I'm not trying to stand against it. I say, if I stand against it, I'll become Don Quijote, and fight the windmills, wasting all my energy and consuming myself in the process. And I don't have the power to fight against politicians. What am I able to do on my own? How can I start this thing myself? Am I able to exist within the same ecosystem with the people around me? I'm happier when I'm in the company of people with whom share the same ecosystem. I mean, that's the starting point of my concern. I don't aim to change the universe with it. I do want the universe to change with this, yes, I wish for it, but I don't say that *I* will do it.
>
> Bürge: Is this something that could happen on its own?
>
> Nevra: *If all people wanted this it could*. Or umm, wherever you go in the world, it will find you, however you live. Like what happened in Alakır. [The people in Alakır] left the city and went there to live a peaceful life. Then suddenly they found themselves in the middle of this hydropower plant construction. The same thing is happening to me now. I live in the most peaceful region of Istanbul; I came out here to provide my child a glimpse into nature. But the urban transformation project is right in my face right now. I mean, the politicians, yes, they mess with you, they change the law, yes, they mess with you, and no matter where you escape, you gotta go through this But to what extent could I fight against this? *To what extent could I change this?* These are all questions in my head. If I were to file a lawsuit against the entire apartment complex, how could I afford a lawyer? I mean this is all beyond my power to fight against. *I'm only responsible for changing myself*.

There is a sense of both empowerment and disempowerment in Nevra's words. She is particularly referring to the urban renewal project that her building complex decided to

partake in as part of a larger urban policy promoted by the current government. Even though she opposes the destruction of her apartment building and the construction of a newer, more luxurious-looking building, she does not see herself powerful enough to react against it. She perceives her struggle to be an individual struggle, and finds herself defeated from the start. Faced with such disappointment, her individual actions of anti-consumption and alternative consumption give her a space in which she can act out in the world. In other words, she claims her agency on herself. Like Buket, she does not see her actions to have a final impact, that is, she is aware that larger change will depend on the coming together of many people; her actions would only constitute a small part of whatever will bring about that change. Far from subscribing to a blind idealism, then, permaculturists often acknowledge the possibility of ultimate failure, a recognition I will discuss in further detail in relation to hope and hopelessness in the Chapter 5. For now, I turn to permaculturists' "more collective" strategies to transform the city.

3.7. Strategies to Transform the City

It is often assumed that permaculturists ultimately advocate a return to a lifestyle that somehow involves residence in the countryside. However, the practice of permaculture in urban areas is deemed as equally important, as cities consume the highest energy while also producing the most waste. Yasemin articulated the vision of transforming the city into more sustainable spaces in the following way:

> In 5 to 10 years, what you call a rural zone will turn into a city, a town or something like that. Anyways, it will slowly turn into concrete, so we need to change our conceptions about the city, I mean, our ideas about what constitutes a city. I mean, cities can be beautiful, you know, a place where you harvest the runoff from roofs, where you have green spaces, I don't know, where you grow your own food in balconies and terraces, a place where you can find beehives. I mean, it all depends on how it's constructed. We could have beautiful cities, but the urbanization process advances so fast that we have to act quickly. Maybe some people should act as pioneers 'cause if we only do it one person at a time, how many people could we reach? I mean, we have to attack from all directions, like if someone's dealing with this one thing, the others must fight the municipality and yet some others should deal

> with changing the political stuff. We'll see what works by trial and error (laughs).

Yasemin's vision involves creating a sustainable city through various forms of actions that involve different levels of personal and collective initiatives.

She has actually been involved in one such initiative, Permablitz, a type of work gathering that was initiated in Melbourne, Australia, in 2006, and that was replicated in Istanbul in 2012 and 2013. Before the gathering, one or two permaculturists who have undergone the Permaculture Design Course would design a garden, preferably one that belongs to someone who has volunteered in Permablitz gatherings before. On the day of Permablitz, designers, hosts, and a group of volunteers would meet to turn the design into a reality, and work in the garden all day. As one of the initiators of this initiative, Yasemin explained that the main problem at the beginning was to find a garden to design according to permaculture principles, mainly because people's understanding of landscape in Turkey consisted of turf, pines, and roses, not edible plants. Melis, who is originally trained in landscape architecture, also referred to the same phrase "çim çam gül," while describing the same mentality.

According to Yasemin, Permablitz served several purposes. First, it was a way for recent PDC graduates to put their knowledge into action and gain experience, and instead of having one designer per garden, they formed groups to enhance a collaborative process of learning and teaching. Second, it worked as a community building activity and served the purposes of social permaculture by connecting strangers to each other in urban space around the common aim of creating sustainable gardens. Third, since many people who were interested in learning about sustainable ways of living, Permablitz became a recruitment ground for future permies, as many volunteers later went on to take the PDC. Fourth, and perhaps most important of all for Yasemin, Permablitz proved that it was possible to do permaculture in the city.

Permablitz can be seen a self-contained initiative which only appeals to a privileged few who either have a private garden, quite a luxury in Istanbul, or free time to spare for volunteering. Yet without me asking, Yasemin explicitly answered the criticisms that she had received from people who were telling her to do Permablitz in economically underprivileged neighborhoods.

> When they say this, they don't realize that going to a poor neighborhood to do a Permablitz would mean hierarchically looking down on them. I mean, it would be like saying, "You don't know, but I do. Let me show you how!" But you know, we have already opened Permablitz to the public, and if anybody

> says, “I’ve got a garden, come do your thing here,” we go there regardless of its location as long as there are people who are able to go there and spare time for it. So there wasn’t even, you know, we’d never think if someone was wealthy or not.

Here Yasemin’s wish to work in a non-hierarchical way seems to prevent her from engaging in initiatives in economically underprivileged neighborhoods. That is, because permaculturists do not come from such neighborhoods, any attempt to go to one would replicate a colonialist intervention. Yet around the time of our meeting, upon a call for open house, Yasemin had visited a recently forming urban garden in Küçük Armutlu, a low-income and political neighborhood in Istanbul. Surprisingly, the person who was supposed to teach compost methods did not show up, and Yasemin took her place. She gave a couple of people her number, and regretted that she did not take theirs, as she was waiting for them to call. She expressed a strong desire to remain involved in the initiative during our conversation.

Urban permies also have been trying to appeal to municipalities for local policy changes. In the words of Yasemin,

> I think that the spaces where we can have the biggest impact belong to the municipalities, I mean, big parks, big spaces, or think about rainwater storage. I mean, OK, a few people can try to harvest and store rainwater in their apartment buildings, but that would be difficult. But if we try to transform the municipality, the municipality would transform the buildings, and you know, the parks that belong to the municipality and with the help of the municipality some neighorhoods can transform into something different and this would have an impact in a much larger area. But this would only happen if citizens demand for it, really, this has to be something from bottom to top, so what I’m aiming now is municipalities. This is what I came to realize in the past couple of years.

Despite this hopeful introduction to municipality politics, Yasemin seems to have had a rather disappointing experience with municipalities, as she complained that she was mostly expected to create permaculture gardens as a volunteer without receiving any income in return. This expectation did not coincide with her desire make a living from permaculture design and her avoidance of exploitation. Permaculturists’ culturally, economically, and politically privileged positions in society not only enable their involvement with permaculture in the first place, but also allow them to define the terms of their engagement. Ultimately, Yasemin rejects the idea of working with municipalities unless these terms change.

Another permaculturist who has been active in working with municipalities is Ayşen, a 28-year-old woman who has originally been trained as an English teacher, but who never worked as such. Ayşen prepared a project that would establish permaculture gardens in schools and the municipality of a formerly squatter neighborhood accepted to implement it in several of its schools all across its district. For 4 months in 2012, Ayşen had a chance to work with around 800 students in two schools and taught them about permaculture in practice by designing a sustainable food garden. In order to make the project sustainable, she also trained the teachers so that they could take on the project in the future. She had devised the project so that the schools would become sustainable in their consumption by producing the food in their garden, instead of relying on outside sources, and she dreamed about one day instituting this scheme as part of school curricula. However, she later realized that the municipality was interested in her project primarily for the purpose of winning a competition, tightened its purse soon after the project started, and rejected providing the necessary materials for the sustenance of the garden. While the project left Ayşen rather disappointed, it also made her see the soft spots of her proposal. For the future, if municipalities or schools are willing to implement her project, she plans to train primarily the teachers instead of the students, and serve as a consultant, in order to ensure the continuity of the permaculture classes and the garden.

The mayor of the municipality Ayşen worked with was from the Justice and Development Party, a conservative party which formed the government then. With this knowledge, one cannot help but ask whether ideological differences at all posed a problem for Ayşen and for the teachers and students she worked with. To answer this question, I turn in the next chapter to the post-ideological, and post-political nature of permaculture.

CHAPTER 4

"WE FIND OUR WAY IN THE SAME WAY WATER DOES!"[3]
POST-POLITICS AND SEARCH FOR A POST-IDEOLOGICAL SPACE

I finished the last chapter by asking whether Ayşen had run into any problems while she was working with a municipality that subscribed to a party whose politics she would not approve, specifically the conservative Justice and Development Party. Not surprisingly, I was curious about the same question during our conversation and inquired about it. This was her response:

> Ayşen: When I first went to the (...) municipality and sat at their table… umm… I mean, you know, I met with the vice president. I said, "This an anarchist project, do you accept this?" This was what I first said when we met the teachers at the schools, especially the teachers and the administrations of the school in which we would build the gardens, because I thought later on many problems could come out, so first they needed to understand that this project is really of anarchist nature. It disrupts the existing order and introduces a restructuring in the system. (...) It changes the usual perception of the whole system. I'm open about this. I'm speaking bluntly, you know.
>
> Bürge: How were the reactions when you said that?
>
> Ayşen: They just laugh.

She then went on to explain the one unpleasant incident she experienced as she was working with the students. According to her narrative, she first conducted a discussion session on permaculture with an all-boys class in an Islamic divinity high school (İmam Hatip) and found the students very open-minded and progressive. "I realized how many misconceptions I had against them when I first went there," she said, pointing to her biased position. Then she welcomed an all-girls class. In her words,

> Of course, my reference was the all-male class, so I was comfortable and I thought, "What an enlightened school this is!" There were some curious

[3] The equivalent of this quote in Turkish is "Su yolunu nasıl buluyorsa biz de öyle buluyoruz."

> men, you know. Then I had another class, this time all girls, around 20-25 of them. I think it was their philosophy lesson, they came with their philosophy teacher, and we started to talk about the perception of the system, then about permaculture, nature, ethics, ecology, and we were in sitting in a circle, I do my classes in circles. Umm, the circle is going around and we're constantly conversing. I'm asking them to think about what their ideals are, what they wanna be, what their perception of the system means to them so on and so forth. (...) Then we started talking about changing the system. I mean, if you think about it, we are currently [in the class] engaging in an action that is set to transform the system completely. We also talked about the political nature of this action, talked about politics, religion etc. And I told them, "If you think about it, this is exactly an anarchist order. Nature itself has anarchism in it. To change the existing order, to develop it further, we need to approach the issue critically, with an anarchist perspective." So we talked about all this.

After the class, one of the female students rejected going to Ayşen's classes and complained about her to the director of the school, claiming that she is an anarchist because she talked about anarchism in class. Then one of the school officials kindly scolded Ayşen. In her words, "'Miss,' he said, 'now, these are little girls, they're still children. How could you talk about things like that, Miss?' he said." Infuriated by the official's comment—for she thought of the students as adults, not children and wanted to push them to think critically—Ayşen decided to not to work with that school anymore. As a result of this incident, she narrates, the municipality ended the project, yet without formally informing her.

Ayşen's desire to spread this "anarchist project," and to do so quite openly, in an environment that associates itself with the politically and religiously conservative and neoliberal Justice and Development Party, points to her sincere belief that it is possible to find a space beyond political, religious, and economic ideologies. This post-ideological desire is the topic of this chapter, for it determines what kind of change is not only envisioned, but also actively pursued in permaculture and by permaculturists. I discuss permaculturists' relationship with this desire through the concept of post-politics, a term that has recently been used to describe the way in which the environment has been politicized. Surely, the range of discussion on what constitutes politics, the political, and their "post" nature is much wider than this thesis would allow me to elaborate. For that reason, I present in this chapter a modest attempt to evaluate whether permaculture can be considered post-political, and I ultimately argue that while it holds most of the characteristics commonly associated with post-politics, it presents

something slightly different and carries a transformative potential that would lack in an exclusively post-political project. First, I turn to the discussions on post-politics.

4.1. The Post-political Under Scrutiny

The literature on post-politics comes out as a critique of sociologists Ulrich Beck's (1997) and Anthony Giddens's (1991) notions of sub-politics and life-politics respectively. Commenting on the reflexive nature of modernity in a world increasingly marked with globalization, individualization, and managerial and technocratic governance of risk, these theorists argue for a "third-way" politics "beyond left and right" (Beck 1997, 142). This new form of politics, thus the title of Beck's book "the Reinvention of Politics," heavily relies on the distribution of environmental risk across society, and a turn to individual lifestyle tactics. Accordingly, the actors of this new politics are "closely aligned to contested policy domains" (McKehnie and Welsh 2002, 289).

Geographers Stijn Oosterlynck and Erik Swyngedouw, however, find the new actors described by Beck as "not properly political," for "they do not emerge from the contradictions and constituted exclusions that characterize capitalist socioecological configurations, but are a matter of individual choice" (2010, 1582). In defining post-politics, Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw heavily draw from the works of Jacques Rancière (2006) and Chantal Mouffe (2005) who have observed that present-day politics is increasingly marked by negotiation and consensus building among various otherwise opposing actors such as the state, the market, and the citizens, instead of a collectivity-based politics, especially class politics. Mouffe therefore argues that "there is no consensus without exclusion, no we without a they" (2005: 73). Accordingly, "a proper (democratic) political space is one that recognises the constitutive split of the people, antagonistic positionalities and the articulation of incommensurable demands" (1580). The post-political, then, is that which disavows antagonisms in search for consensus.

Through a case study of the policy debates regarding the noise of night flights at the Brussels Airport in 2004, Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw argue that the post-political is ultimately doomed to failure. The government at the time, a coalition of the left, the

right, and the greens, and led by a proponent of free market policies, had in 1999 at their inauguration claimed that their alliance would put an end to antagonistic politics and that "the interests of market actors, environmental concerns, and social objectives would no longer be considered antithetical" (1578). However, when DHL, the worldwide operating logistics company announced that it would expand the number of its night flights in the Brussels Airport, a controversy unsurprisingly broke. Even though the government strived to balance the interests of the company, local residents and environmental groups equally, the controversy only ended when DHL switched its hub to another city in Europe. Appealing equally to environmental interests, the requests of social actors, and the profitable strategies of the market, in other words, the post-political desire, proved a dream, if not a foolish delusion. Commenting on the failure of the post-political project, Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw write, "we argue in this paper that this failure is a consequence of the negation of dissensus and antagonism as the constitutive dimension of the political and of the reluctance to ground particular ecological demands in a wider political-economic process" (1578).

Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw note that the post-political approach is a characteristic of environmental politics in general, and argue that the politicization of the environment subsequently led to its depolitization with "the disappearance of the democratic agonistic struggle over the content and direction of socio-ecological life" (Swyngedouw 2010, 225). In his article on the discourses on climate change, Swyngedouw draws from Žižek (2006: 553) to argue that this post-political ideal is tied to a populist imagination, and as such produces *the* "'people' as the universal political subject" by highlighting "the need for common humanity-wide action, mutual collaboration and cooperation" (Swyngedouw 2013, 223).

4.2. Permaculture and Post-Politics

In her study of the Transition Town movement in the United Kingdom, sociologist Sarah Neal (2013) engages in a discussion similar to what I aim to raise in this chapter. The Transition Town Movement consists of towns and cities responding to the threats posed by peak oil and climate change with communities striving to become self-sufficient, and it explicitly uses the philosophy of permaculture in designing spaces

and communities. Describing the movement as presenting "itself as offering a non-political politics of change" (65), very much like permaculture, Neal points to its post-political nature.

Like the Transition Town participants that Neal describes in her analysis, many of the permaculturists in Turkey express a discontent with other forms of organizing and political action. They are especially looking for a politics that would encompass all and highlight the "humanness" of every human being, therefore making the subject of action "all humanity." This goes hand-in-hand with a search for a non-dualistic, non-antagonistic space that "[minimizes] adversarial division and dissent" (65). Like Transition Town participants, permaculturists envision "this notion of politics as a 'journey' or a 'see what happens' experiment (…) without letting itself become a hostage to any particular political fortune" (65), and adopt what Neal calls "strategic flexibility," that is, a willingness to work with various actors as opportunities arise, including the local government.

According to Neal, "The breadth creates spaces for transformative possibilities in values and social and spatial practices. However, this bespoke politics or post-political politics also means that what Transition culture is and what it can do in the face of structural inequalities of power is at best uncertain" (65). Neal does not consider the movement "post-political" to diminish its transformative potential, unlike critics of post-politics would do. Similarly to Neal, in this chapter, I explore the permaculturists' vision of the kind of politics they desire, and argue that the permaculture movement in Turkey bears many characteristics of the post-political. However, positioning themselves against the transnational neoliberal market, permaculturists hope to radically change it, even though they may collaborate with market actors solely for strategic purposes. In addition, permaculture carries a transformative potential that an exclusively post-political project would normally lack.

In the next section, I start by first looking at the openly articulated discontent with current forms of organizing for political change. I then turn to the qualities that make permaculture post-political: all humanity as the subject of politics, a non-dualistic and non-antagonistic approach, and a flexible understanding of change. After re-evaluating the post-political nature of permaculture, I then turn to describe the potentialities that permaculture bears.

4.3. Politics and Its Discontents

In the first chapter, I have shown in detail how those who engage in permaculture come from middle and upper-middle classes, and how while their consumer habitus transforms to an ecological habitus, they bring in their engagement their dispositions towards politics. These dispositions mostly involve not only an aversion to organized political action caused by unfamiliarity, at least in their current forms, but also a discontent for current forms of politics, especially for those who have in the past had exposure to organized politics. In fact, during my fieldwork, several of my interlocutors pointed out that Bill Mollison turned to devising the system of permaculture when he realized that the politics of protest that he was engaged in as an activist in the 1960s proved futile.[4] In this section, I provide further examples of how current forms of organizing do not appeal to current permaculturists and why.

Both Bill Mollison's and David Holmgren's writings express a sense of discontent with current political movements, and, as a result, call their readers to "concrete" responses. For instance, while introducing permaculture in his book, Holmgren writes, "It is about what we want to do and can do, rather than what we oppose and want others to change" (xv). Let's take a look at Burak's narrative on what drew him to permaculture:

> If you ask me, what fascinated me about all this, I mean, if Bill Mollison were a politician, I wouldn't have met up with him, because I happened to have met people with political attitudes and I usually didn't like it. [Mollison is] a person who doesn't do small talk, but actual business. This is where I meet with him. For example, he takes away from those who possess a lot and gives to those who are in need. He acts so naively at a very essential level that this is what impressed me the most. If he had described his ideas with a political attitude, my biases, my judgments, my intentionality would not meet up with him. I mean, it is at such a naïve space that I meet with him. The man made it a life philosophy out of the phrase [uttered partly in English] "Don't talk, do it baby." He doesn't talk, he does it. That's where I meet with him. And this is politics, that he is doing things.

Mollison was able to "catch" Burak both because he was not a politician and because he has been doing "good deeds." Like Burak, several of my interlocutors emphasized the importance of "doing versus talking." In other words, there was widespread emphasis

[4] I tried to check the validity of this statement, but unfortunately I was not able to get a hold of his autobiography (Mollison 1997), and his biographies that are available on online websites do not particularly refer to his pre-permaculture activist character.

on concrete solutions that are applicable in real life, as opposed to simply engaging in criticism or protest. For instance, Melis said, "If we wanna change something, pardon me but we're gonna get of our asses and start doing things!"

Another interlocutor who openly compared permaculture with other political projects was Fatih, a young permaculturist currently active in Yeryüzü Association and its ecological initiative. Fatih narrated that he had communist friends while studying in university and was open to ideas of political mobilization, but he never felt passionate enough to join any organization. His specific interest was in the philosophy of anarchism, but his attempts to partake in Anarchist Ideas Club (Anarşist Fikirler Klubü) proved in vain. He explained, "People were so uum closed. I mean, they had already formed a circle of friends and they were just hanging out with each other. They didn't really care about the newcomers. I went there, I sat with them, talked to them, but it was already obvious," and he continued, "These are environments where everybody gets acquainted with each other after a while; *they don't really have the enthusiasm to do anything anyway*, and everybody thinks alike." While anarchism appealed to Fatih, he was disappointed to find out everyone sat around all day. Reminding Burak's emphasis on the importance of "doing versus talking," Fatih quickly grew fond of its hands-on nature when he encountered with permaculture. He said, "This was what I was looking for, 'cause in permaculture there is this thing, you do everything, I mean, you build your own life, you design it in a way." He had a special interest in the do-it-your-own aspect of permaculture.

Similarly, Buket assigned more value to the more concrete projects she was engaged in. During our conservation, when she was explaining to me that it is very important to oppose projects of ecological destruction, such as the third bridge which is currently being built on the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul, I asked her whether she takes part in those struggles. This was her reply:

> I do, I do, because after all that's the purpose of the cooperative [referring to BÜKOOP, the consumer cooperative], that's why it was established. But I want to put my labor into this: for instance, last year I worked actively for nine months and in a period of a year came up with a children's book. It's very toilsome to do something real. It is easy to talk. Am I making myself clear? So my concern is to execute things that may constitute examples, instead of talking. But for instance BÜKOOP is a cooperative, it has an organizational structure. It is related to the farmers' movement, to Tarlataban and to the whole urban movement, and it does not need to request a bigger position. Am I making myself clear? If you stand where you're supposed to stand, then what else is possible? Who can stand where? Or someone who is

> in the Green Party or in the Ecology Collective doesn't stand there more than I do; she stands where she stands, with people around her. If we are 50 people here, she is with 50 people over there. You don't need to be everywhere. You need to work where you are located, in your own environment, and you need to protect that area, that position, this is what I think. (...) I wouldn't wanna do something at the level of party politics at this moment because umm for me it would be a loss of energy. There is nothing I could get from a party or that I can contribute to it. But now I am now working on a website for this place [referring to her own garden]. I think it is foolish to call politics anything but this, because this is politics, because politics does not go beyond this. I mean it is about who you reach out to, but it is not easy to articulate this opinion.

Buket's narrative confirms once again that permaculturists criticize "empty talk," and want to channel their time, energy, and resources to what they deem as concrete and practical projects. Buket's final revelation, "politics does not go beyond this," reveals that she finds her own deeds adequately political and does not recognize a need for further engagement.

During my fieldwork, as I inquired with my interlocutors whether they found permaculture political, most of them responded in the positive. Then I asked them why they thought it was disseminated as an "apolitical" or even "anti-political" project. Some suggested that such an approach allowed permaculture to attract more people who would otherwise not join the movement. Yet I argue that permaculture's proposal of a "non-political politics of change" (Neal 2013, 65) is not simply a strategic move to gain the trust and companionship of followers who feel an aversion to politics in general, and even though it may promote values similar to permaculture, leftist politics in particular, but also points a sincere belief in the possibility of going beyond the current definitions of the political that is characterized by adversity and antagonism.

4.4. Organizing Around "Common Human Values"

One of the most commonly articulated values of permaculture is diversity, as "use and value diversity" resides in the twelve auxiliary principles that accompany the three main ethical principles (Holmgren 2002, viii; see also the Introduction of this thesis). This applies both to the design of landscapes, for instance by welcoming otherwise unwanted species like weed, and to social design. Permaculture welcomes all,

regardless of religious, political, or ethnic background. In other words, anyone can become a permaculturist, but on one condition: she has to agree to practice its ethical principles.

Building on the knowledge that nourishment is a universal need, therefore a common material concern for all humans, many permaculturists believe it would be possible for people from different ideologies to cooperate around issues of food production, food security, and food access. For instance, as I was conversing with Yasemin, I asked her whether she found permaculture political, and her response points to how she conceptualizes nourishment as a unifying object:

> (Laughing) This is a funny question 'cause I met some people from Tarlataban, it was around 2000 I think, and they thought (exaggerating the tone of her voice) I was doing something very political, they congratulated me, and I was like, "No no no no! I am not political at all! Don't get me involved in that stuff. I am not doing anything, I mean, just growing and collecting tomatoes. There's nothing political about it." I told them things like that 'cause when something is politicized it starts to put the cat among the pigeons, I mean, someone for sure starts objecting to it, but is it political? Yes, it is very political. But on the other hand, we are eating food, a very humane thing, you know, perhaps it is political because it is a very humane thing. So actually, it should not even be politicized 'cause everyone needs to eat, everyone needs to plant, collect and eat that tomato. So it's both political and not political. So, on the one hand, I for sure don't see it as being political, it's very humane in my opinion; on the other hand, because we live in this century, it becomes political.

In this narrative, in addition to sharing her aversion to the antagonistic nature of politics, she conflates the political with what is human. What is human shall not be political, she suggests, because it is simply human.

Like other post-political projects, permaculture does not identify a political subject like the women or the workers. Trying to make sense of this all-inclusive "human" subject, I asked some of my interlocutors about the situation of the Kurds in Turkey. For instance, when I asked Toprak whether anyone who wants to *eliminate* the Kurds would turn out as a permaculturist, he said, "It would be very difficult 'cause it's against the principles." The ethical principles are then what determine subjecthood in the first place. In the words of Bill Mollison:

> It has become evident that unity in people comes from a common adherence to a set of ethical principles, each of us perhaps going our own way, at our own pace, and within the limits of our resources, yet all leading to the same goals, which in our own case is that of a living, complex, and sustainable earth. Those who agree on such ethics, philosophies, and goals form a global nation. (2002, 3)

For permaculturists to form a "global nation," then, what is required a common sense of ethics and ultimate goal, "that of a living, complex, and sustainable earth." Differently put, the subject of permaculture practice is not defined by her ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, nor political orientation, but her desire to contribute to this ultimate goal.

I asked the same question about Kurds to Yasemin, but this time articulated it differently to inquire whether anyone who hates the Kurds could be a permaculturist. She said,

> I would say yes, but I doubt it. Actually all is relevant to how evolved we are as human beings, I mean, for example, things such as permaculture (...), that is, if you begin working on it genuinely, I mean beyond political views, economic views, beyond right and left, in one way or another, if you are truly, honestly involved, *at one point you arrive at your most humane part*: that everyone needs to breathe, to eat, to live. And at that point there aren't really any hierarchical structures and stuff like that, like horizontal structures, that kinda theoretical stuff, you know, no. When you're able to reach your most humane point, when these people look into each others' eyes, then I think those ideas disappear, I mean, your only concern becomes to plant that tomato. So that's why, in any case, they can all come together in theory.

While Yasemin expresses her suspicion that an anti-Kurdish sentiment could ever exist in a permaculturist, she enables such potential on the condition that the person would move beyond "the right, the left, and financial opinions" towards a common humanity. This political subject that encompasses anyone and everyone regardless of ideological stance is tied to permaculture's proposal for a non-dualist, non-antagonistic politics.

4.5. Beyond Dualisms and Antagonisms

In *A Designer's Manual*, Bill Mollison writes,

> A basic question that can be asked in two ways is:
> "What can I get from this land, or person?" or
> "What does this person, or land, have to give if I cooperate with them?"
> Of these two approaches, the former leads to war and waste, the latter to peace and plenty. (2002, 3)

In this statement, and all throughout permaculture practice, Mollison preaches cooperation, rather than adversity, and does so in a strategic move to design the most efficient systems. Antagonism is discouraged; instead, a practitioner should search for

ways to incorporate into her design otherwise seemingly adversarial elements. The same goes for communities. This all-inclusive approach calls for a post-ideological stance which goes beyond dualisms and antagonisms. To remind a quote I shared in the introduction:

> The world needs a new, non-polarised, and non-contentious politic; one not made possible by those in situations that promote left-right, black-white, capitalist-communist, believer-infidel thinking. Such systems are, like it or not, promoting antagonism and destroying cooperation and interdependence. Confrontational thinking, operating through political or power systems, has destroyed cultural, intellectual, and material resources that could have been used, in a life-centred ethic, for earth repair. (Mollison 2002, 508)

Most of my conversations with permaculturists about this post-ideological stance occurred around the discussion of Gezi protests. Let us for instance look at Toprak's narrative:

> Okay, well you are saying something, shouting, and making a big fuss just to say that you don't want something, and here we return to the beginning, which is to express what you want to do. Well, you don't want the 3rd bridge, OK, but *what do you want then*? [We need] something that explains this and [we need create] some examples. And you gotta know that what you want won't happen right away, of course, and generally I'm talking about a mind like this, an attitude like this, a process, you know, when I say I wanna convince the police, I mean, the police has a child too, the police eats too, the police is not happy with his work either, etc. Of course, I don't mean those who subscribe to *cemaat*.[5] I'm talking about something more general, about the policemen out there in general. You know, I mean, the police constantly becomes the object of swearing and shouting, and they get carried away. We shouldn't strengthen the already existing duality and conflict. Instead, I'm talking about doing whatever is possible, orally or visually or with some particular concrete examples, to establish a language that can directly touch their lives, that can affect their families, children, and their daily lives.

Toprak's statement first and foremost evokes the emphasis on "concrete solutions," as he criticizes the Gezi protestors for not suggesting an alternative. He then goes on to narrate how he conceptualizes the police in the protests. Unlike other protestors who would either express their hatred against not only the Police Department as an institution, but also to policemen as individuals, or ridicule and belittle them in their slogans such as "Policemen, be honorable and sell bagels," Toprak sees them as people with families and a concern to feed their children. Instead of perceiving the policemen as the violent "other," he desires to find a common language that would somehow include their emancipation.

[5] Here Toprak is referring to the policemen who are part of the community led by Fethullah Gülen, a preacher of Islam whose teachings created a worldwide movement of followers.

4.6. Allowing for Flexibility

The value of diversity promoted in permaculture also applies to the techniques that may be used in practice. Most of the permaculturist actions I have described so far in this thesis point to the large range of what are constituted as "meaningful" actions. From individual lifestyle changes and anti-consumption strategies, to more collective Permablitz gatherings, from the construction of collective ecovillage initiatives to educational projects in primary schools and high schools through local municipalities, permaculture allows a wide and diverse range of approaches. During our conversation, Ayşen told me that she at one point took her project to the Turkey branch of a famous multinational corporation producing consumer goods, for the company was organizing sustainability projects. While her proposal was rejected, Ayşen's efforts point to her belief that, in the words of Cansu, "it is possible to change the system from the inside." That is, Ayşen's wish to implement her project through the company would not aim to enhance the supposedly sustainable vision of the corporation. Instead, by using the financial support and other resources of the company, Ayşen would have been able to instill the idea of permaculture and anti-systemic change in the minds of children.

This flexibility applies not only to the techniques used in permaculture, but also the understanding of social change. In the same way that permaculturists explain social events through natural processes, Yasemin explained how she sees the coming together and separation of individuals and groups subscribing to different ideologies, in the follow-up of the conversation on the Kurds:

> For instance, it may not work out if someone hangs on to a belief very firmly, or when this belief intrudes with another's space in some way or another. Then it may not work out. In fact, I have a particular view on this. In permaculture, there are topics such as food forests and succession, perhaps you'll remember. In each climate some tree lives, some others don't. There are species of trees that get along with each other, and those who don't. Or there are trees that expire and leave their space to other trees, and there are pioneer species etc. In succession, everything comes in a certain order. Other trees pop up instead of that one [that died], and perhaps after decades you realize oh, the character of the forest has changed, because other types of trees have taken over. I perceive communities in the same way. I mean, not every person has to stand side by side, they may not be able to do so. Perhaps that community isn't right for her, she doesn't have to be there, or a facilitator species need to come into the picture for those two people to get along with each other, or it may be that those ideas will adjust to the climate later on. Yeah, this is how it seems to me when I compare the

> situation to the one in nature. I mean, there is no reality in me and everyone being hand in hand all the time. This is not gonna happen, neither in the world, nor in permaculture. It's not all lavender and roses. The world or permaculture are not all lavender and roses.

Here Yasemin compares human communities to forests and acknowledges that just like forests evolve naturally—for better or for worse, communities will also change over time, to sometimes accommodate adversarial species through "mediator" species, and in other times to evolve to something totally different. If it fails, it fails, Yasemin acknowledges. While there is a desire in permaculture to welcome differences, there is also a recognition of potential failures to do so. The "human" subject proposed by permaculture is not independent from the course of events that go on around her, in other words, from the "natural" course of things over which she has little control.

My conservation with Melis also revealed a similar conceptualization of change in its "natural" course. At the end of our interview, after I thanked her for her time, she contemplated for a brief moment on all the progress that permaculture made in the past few years. She said,

> Wow, how did we come to this point in 4 years? I was chatting with Yasemin the other day and we said we have been talking about this 2 years ago, we were saying "What will happen to us? Nobody knows about permaculture [does crying sound]." So I told her, look how far we have come and all. Instead of whining, I'm initiating a permaculture club [in her alma mater high school]. Yasemin is teaching people about urban permaculture and so forth. This is incredible, we said, I mean, really. Interesting, I mean, life is very interesting, and *we find our way in the same way water does*.

Here she is referring to a student permaculture club she was initiating at her own alma mater, a private high school in Istanbul. As my interview made her reflect on both her own participation in permaculture, and the development of permaculture in Turkey since its initial entry to the country, she compared herself and other permaculturists to water, pointing to the natural flow of their engagement.

4.7. Beyond Post-politics?

The "human" subject proposed by permaculture, the search for a post-ideological space beyond dualisms and antagonisms as well as the flexible nature of the structure of

the movement, the strategies used, and the conception of the social change envisioned, all point to the post-political nature of permaculture. Yet while permaculture would consider the interests of several, diverging actors, permaculturists constantly stress the importance of the three ethical principles: care for Earth, care for people, and fair share / distribution of surplus. According to practitioner and instructor Toprak, these principles are what protect permaculture from cooptation by capitalism:

> The method itself is not significant, I mean, green roofs by themselves do not put forward the method itself. How is that green roof used? With which concerns and for what purpose? These are critical distinctions. That's why we always try to emphasize that we don't teach method. We try to teach something about a way of thinking, a strategy, a way of building context, an ethics.

In other words, a green roof or a green balcony instituted by Ağaoğlu Construction, one of the biggest and most ecologically destructive companies in the construction business in Turkey, would certainly not considered ethical according to permaculture standards.

Permaculturists envision a transformation of the capitalist system. They position themselves against interests of the state and the neoliberal market, yet without singling out the individuals who make up these systems. In no way do they perceive the bourgeoisie or the police as the "enemy," as something to be destroyed. Rather, as earlier articulated by Toprak, they wish to incorporate their transformation into the larger change they envision. Bill Mollison expresses such conceptualization in the following way:

> We need to set about, in an orderly, sensible, and cooperative way, a system of replacing power-centered politics and political hierarchies with a far more flexible, practical, and information-centered system responsive to research and feedback, and with long-term goals of stability. And we need to do this in an ethical, non-threatening way, so that the transition to a cooperative (versus conflicting) global society is creative (not destructive). (2002, 508)

One way to actualize this vision is to create systems that would remain independent as much as possible from market and state mechanisms. Fırat's words regarding the policemen in Gezi exemplifies this conceptualization of change. While emphasizing the futility of confronting the police, he pointed to the ultimate aim of permaculture:

> However the system is, however we imagine it to be different, that's the kind of system you create in fact. You try to create a more holistic system and to keep it alive. Because the other thing is like throwing a stone in a well, let's say, to deal with policemen, because in fact they are not your interlocutors, I mean, if there weren't any policemen, I mean, you cannot get rid of the policemen by killing them. Only when you start to spend your life in a way

> that does not need the police, and only when this spreads out like a virus, and nobody steals and nobody commits a crime, I mean, 'cause we won't need all these in a place where everybody shares everything, slowly the police won't be needed anymore. This is the only way we can change it. (…) I mean, how to say, because when you accept it [the police] as an interlocutor and when you take it for real and start to fight against it, you strengthen it. Am I making myself clear?

Fırat's description of creating alternative systems in which there would be no need for the police reminds much the anarchist concept of prefiguration whereby people "[prefigure] an alternative" through what is called direct action, instead of "[appealing] to governments to modify their behavior" (Graeber 2002, 62). I wonder how Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw would evaluate anarchist politics, which overtly makes "political" claims by identifying the state as an adversary, while equally relying on consensus decision making in its organizational structure (Portwood-Stacer 2013), and a prefigurative vision in which people live as if they are already free (Graeber 2002).

Overall, while permaculture carries most of the characteristics that Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw associate with post-politics, it would be incorrect to categorize the movement as purely post-political, for despite its all-inclusive language, permaculture does instill a desire to bring out a radical change in the world. Yet while doing so, it proposes post-political strategies. While the success of these strategies is yet to be proven, permaculture bears a transformative potential that may momentarily reveal itself in "more political" contingencies.

4.8. Potentialities

In the Introduction to Permaculture class that I took, the instructor Toprak emphasized the importance of establishing neighborhood gardens not primarily because these gardens would necessarily be able to satisfy the grocery needs of its gardeners, but because they would be places where neighborhood residents would form a community despite their differences. The formation of such community, he claimed, would serve larger purposes:

> The people we live with side by side, everyone has similar concerns, I think. However, a bunch of symbols or identities make us seem us apart, you know, party elections, you know, choices about beliefs, and ideological choices, it's as if we live in different worlds. When we work together, this

> creates a space where we can easily see how much we are alike, how much we suffer from similar concerns and so on. Neighborhood gardens are more precious to me as spaces where we can discover commonalities as we work together. (…) They are very significant setups in terms of gathering people together and pushing them to act together. They are so important that more than food production, they have the potential for bringing people together and when they come together and realize how similar their concerns are, these people can act together, they can especially position together regarding decisions on their own neighborhoods. If need be, they can pressure the municipality, or if need be, they can pressure authorities higher than that. Gardens have the potential to do this and we see examples in various municipalities and countries. The relations that start at neighborhood gardens slowly become a part of the decision mechanisms in that area. People say, "We live here. We want to have a role in any decision about this place."

While Toprak's vision may seem rather idealized—since there are no such examples of successful neighborhood organizations in Turkey as related to permaculture, Erhan, a permaculturist in his 50s living in an ecological initiative in the countryside, narrated how the interaction between the initiative and the peasants nearby formed the basis for a larger movement against mining in the region.

> All the negative conditions which we think do not affect us today can influence us tomorrow. That's why we have to be ready for them, Bürge. And we have to share with people what we are aware of, we have to organize, we have to join social organizations. OK, we could be engaging in nice practices in our own land, rainwater collection systems, permaculturally-appropriate greenhouses, poultry systems, what have you. In our practical life we should be doing all of these in food production, but we have to share these. With whom? With all the people. But you can't go to the people and only tell them about permaculture. You gotta think about how to work together with people, how to build cooperatives, how to utilize milk, how to fight against mining companies, how to make bread together. (…) None of us [in the movement] are farmers from birth, most of us were educated in the city. All the people involved in permaculture are somehow people who graduated from university, lived in the city for a long time and who practically don't have any connection to soil nor to animals. It is not that easy to bring something new and to try to practice it with local people on the ground. (…) For the last four years, we were organizing permaculture workshops and engaging in practice, organizing ecological architecture gatherings and seed festivals, creating food communities, and you know, doing spiritual work like yoga, we never did anything independently from the villages next to ours. When needed, they opposed us, when needed they said, "These people go naked, they don't cover their heads and legs," but a majority of them acted with us, cooked with us, made tomato sauce with us, produced cheese with us. We produced wheat, we produced bread, and we learned from them how to do certain things and they learned how to work with us, and when the mining company came to the region, the director of their public relations conducted research about us and said ,"These permaculturists will cause trouble." (…) 'Cause our spirit in all those

> permaculture applications and workshops also involved social activities with the villagers. It involved projecting that transformation, I mean, an individual's personal transformation, ecological transformation and social transformation into the transformation in the village. As a reflection of this, a very significant environmental struggle was organized in the region. (…) Of course, this is not a result of solely our labor, but of many people. Even so, we took a significant part in it.

As he states at the beginning of this narrative, Erhan is particularly against the idea of having a self-contained initiative and perhaps rather implicitly presents a critique to the larger permaculture community, among which some people are less inclined to communicate with those who are not necessarily interested in permaculture. Clearly, Erhan's conception of permaculture and what it serves is much larger than what many other permaculturists envision. Organizing the larger communities within one's region appears as one of his priorities. Yet his narrative also points to the possibility of coming together despite ideological differences. The "urbanites" who "go around naked," and the more conservative peasants can come together against environmentally destructive corporate and state interests, as they did against mining in Erhan's region.

In fact, the Gezi protests themselves brought together people from very different walks of life, religions, ethnicities, and political affiliations and opinions. People existed in the same space despite their differences in background and ideology. Flags of Kurdistan and Turkey, and photos of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey's uncritically appraised founder, and Abdullah Öcalan, the controversial leader of the Kurdish movement, appeared side by side. While Gezi did not ultimately lead to a concrete political project, it generated an unprecedentedly diverse public and gave a short glimpse of the possibility for cohabitation.[6]

I started this thesis with a glance at the vegetable garden built in the Gezi Park during the "occupation," and the subsequent interest that neighborhood gardens received all over Istanbul. There are only a few groups that engage in community gardens and sustainable food production in the city, and whether they are permaculturists or not, these seemingly not-so-political groups made a statement in Gezi by linking the significance of claiming a public park and claiming sovereignty over food production. Their knowledge of cultivation proved useful during the more "political" event of Gezi.

[6] I owe my ideas in this sentence to Kerem Uşşaklı.

The existing networks and experience of which permaculturists are part also served to organize people both during the occupation of the park and in its aftermath. For example, Yasemin said, "People kept saying, 'Don't go to malls.' Buket and I thought, 'Ok, you keep telling them not to go to the malls,' all the time something based on not doing, alright, but what are they gonna do? That's what we need to tell them 'cause they don't know any alternatives," and went on to describe the barter markets that they organized as part of the neighborhoods forums of which they took part. Again, Asu recounted the following about Gezi:

> A friend of ours runs a café in Cihangir, so we met up there. Alright, here we go, we rioted, very nice, but what's next? And how will we, us permaculturists, put to use that what is to come? So we created a group called "Şimdilik Gezi For Now." You know, we started a Facebook page, talked about printing some visuals and sticking them around. Alright, we rebelled against power, but power is in bigger things so we wrote some slogans on the visuals, like "Don't give your seeds to Monsanto" or "Produce Locally, Consume Locally" and they were visually satisfying as well. A friend of ours is in advertising, he does web design so he prepared nice stickers to hang around. We thought all the people in this inflammation, in this awakening should encounter something of sorts, because no matter how political people are, not matter how active, they omit issues like these. I mean they go to protests, what have you, to May 1st protests, bang bang, they fight with the police, but then as they come home, they buy pasta from Migros [a supermarket chain], and we need to tell people about this holistic approach. So we penned some articles of cooperativism and shared it with visuals. We were constantly in touch and permaculture spread to the parks, we talked to the people in the parks. Alright, we should boycott, but the product we buy from street markets is in fact the same product, so how can we organize as consumers? This is what Gezi has been like for us.

These examples suggest that permaculture organizing both in the countryside and in the city around lifestyle and consumption can become possible resources in times of otherwise unexpected political events. If permaculture does not right away change social practice, it prepares a basis for future engagements when opportunities arise. It carries the potential to transform into politically effective action under the right circumstances. This contingency, however, also means that permaculture may never materialize into larger change, a condition which is openly recognized by many permaculturists, and which I explore in the next chapter in relation to hope and hopelessness.

CHAPTER 5

"*IF* SOMETHING IS GONNA SAVE THE WORLD, IT WILL BE THE PERMACULTURISTS!" APOCALYPTICISM AND HOPE IN PERMACULTURE

"I have a hopeful side and a pessimistic side. But if I were to draw the worst picture… we're fucked up." These are the words of Ayşen, the same woman who, despite her disappointment at the project I described in the last two chapters, continues to strive to spread permaculture through educational initiatives. She considers herself a committed activist. While her description of what she does as a permaculturist in this sentence points to her desire to create a world that is alternative to the current one, her depiction of the future is one that shatters the more accepted rendering of a revolutionary affect, which, according to Sara Ahmed (2010, 172), and perhaps in a twist on Gramsci's classic "pessimism of the intellect optimism of the will," involves pessimism about the present but optimism about the future.

Echoing Ayşen's ambivalence towards the future, the quote in the title of this chapter too points to the tension between the belief in permaculture's efficacy to "save the world" and the acknowledgement of the possibility that this engagement may not produce the desired result. The "If" highlights a hypothetical condition for permaculture's success, pointing to the indeterminacy of the future and the uncertainty engrained in this engagement. Yet what the starting quote does not capture is the predictions of the conditions that may make engagement futile: catastrophic scenarios about the future. Like Ayşen and Sevtap, the utterer of the quote in the title, many permaculturists hold on to ideals of social, political, and economic change, all the while keeping a vivid imagination regarding scenarios of possible catastrophic futures. Permaculture as a design system and ethical way of being-in-the-world heavily relies on the circulation of apocalyptic scenarios, yet these dark visions of the future do not necessarily lead to nonchalance, complacency, or despair.

In this chapter, against the grain of critics from various fields who have outlined the dangers of "the apocalyptic imagination" (Lasch 1984), I argue that utopian politics and apocalypticism are ultimately not that incompatible. While giving permaculturists a certain anxiety about the future, apocalyptic scenarios serve not only to push them to act in the present, but also make them envision a world in which there is possibility for salvation through permaculture. Despite a certain amount of pessimism and despite apocalyptic possibilities, permaculturists are hopeful. Yet the hopes they produce, nourish and sustain take different forms.

Taking my cue from the recent call to reevaluate the place of hope—or hopelessness for that matter—in both progressive politics and critical theory (Brown 1999; Rorty 1999; Harvey 2000; Hage 2003; Zournazi 2003; Amin and Thrift 2005; Anderson 2006), I explore in this chapter the types of hope produced and maintained by permaculturists. Anthropologists have only recently started to pay attention to hope "as a category of social and psychological analysis" (Crapanzano 2003, 3; Miyazaki 2004 and 2006, Zigon 2009) and discussed in length the agency and temporality associated with hope. While Hirozaku Miyazaki (2004) oriented the discussion of agency towards a discussion of hope as method, the theoretical conversations on the temporality of hope take on an either/or attitude whereby hope is posited to belong either to the present (Zigon 2009) or to the future (Bloch 1986, Miyazaki 2004). My aim in this chapter is also to complicate these recent anthropological and philosophical discussions on hope, a category of analysis which, to the little extent that it is considered as such, has paradoxically come to be perceived as encompassing almost anything and everything. Building on these current conversations, I discuss hope's relationship to temporality and to anticipated catastrophes. Aiming to give the category of hope more analytical acuity, I describe the distinctions between two kinds of hope that I discern as coming out of my fieldwork with permaculture groups in Turkey and my analysis of written and online permaculture-related materials that circulate worldwide: anxious hope and catastrophic hope. Paying attention to different kinds of hope, or "the multiplicity of hopes and hopings" as geographers Ben Anderson and Jill Fenton put it, (2008, 79), liberates the discussion of hope from a dichotomous stance towards a presentist or futurist orientation. Instead, I argue, hope lies in the constant intermingling of the present and the future.

While my arguments derive from my ethnography and are thus specific to Turkey, my conclusions have a certain applicability to permaculturists worldwide who seem to

share a similar attitude towards the present and the future through their engagement. Throughout my analysis, I follow anthropologists Vincent Crapanzano (2003) and Jarrett Zigon (2009) to describe hope not as a feeling or an emotion, but "an attitude or existential stance." While I review the ways in which hope has been described in anthropological and philosophical literature, I refrain from attempting to articulate an alternative definition which would encompass all the different ways of hopings, and the various results that these hopes produce. Instead of generalizing about what hope is and what it entails, I describe the specific ways in which two different forms of hopes manifest themselves as related to permaculture. My two main arguments also encompass my main ongoing concern with the political, or the post-political for that matter, because my analysis in this chapter presents permaculturists' self-commentary on the potentiality and failure of permaculture as a "political" project. I start out first by exploring hope's relationship to despair, its presumed antagonist.

5.1. Apocalypticism and Permaculture: On the Verge of Despair?

Critics from various disciplines have long been sharing their discontent with apocalypticism. Geographer Cindi Katz, for example, finds it totalizing, therefore politically-disabling, or when it does induce political action, she argues, it resorts to individual acts of consumption. She writes, ''contemporary problems are so serious that rendering them apocalyptic obscures their political ecology, their sources, their political, economic and social dimensions (1995, 278)." In the field of psychology, psychotherapist Paul Hoggett (2011) borrows the term "apocalyptic imagination" from historian Christopher Lasch (1984) to describe the contemporary kinds of disaster-mongering that pertains to climate change and harshly criticizes the predicaments such imagination brings: survivalism and complacency. One of the examples he refers to is the Dark Mountain Project, a group of people in the UK who have retreated from environmental activism on the grounds that there is nothing one can do anymore to prevent the consequences of climate change and peak oil. Working on the premise that it is now too late to act, the members of the project say they have no hope left: in their words, "false hope is worse than no hope at all" (Kingsnorth n.d.; see also Gray 2009; Smith 2014).

Another line of criticism by Hoggett pertains to the recent writings of James Lovelock, the originator of the Gaia hypothesis, which conceives of the Earth as a self-

regulating system. Lovelock's predictions of the future in his latest book rely heavily on a lifeboat ethics whereby a few privileged are thought to survive the catastrophe (2009). The view of the world through Gaia has been influential for the ecology movement worldwide, and Lovelock's production of despair may be, as Hoggett suggests, alarming.

These rightful criticisms against positions of survivalism and complacency stem from the general belief that and "catastrophism is a politics of despair" (Hoggett 273). Hoggett writes, "Politically this despair is manifest simultaneously in an exaggeration of the forces against us and an underestimation of the resources we have to face them" (271), and "Survivalism is a demoralised state of mind in which questions of value have been progressively destroyed; its radicalism can so quickly take on the authoritarian cloak of lifeboat ethics. But without passion a politics of climate change is disarmed" (273).

This observation, however, remains in contradiction with the hope that permaculturists cultivate *despite* the catastrophic scenarios they produce and the survivalist attitude they subscribe to. While keeping their apocalyptic imagination alive, permaculturists do not renounce ways of action which may, if at all successful, either prevent catastrophe or soften its effects. Nor does permaculturists' envisioning of catastrophe necessarily entail lifeboat scenarios whereby a few privileged are destined to survive. Permaculture instructor Taner Aksel's (2011) book named *Kritik Eşik* (The Critical Threshold), for instance, outlines the dangers of climate change as a way to call people into action. In other words, against the grain of complacent attitudes exemplified by the Dark Mountain Project, permaculturists produce forms of anticipation that are able to sustain at the same time *both* thoughtful action *and* an alarming view of the future.

Permaculturists are aware that the circulation of feelings of despair and helplessness may, if not on purpose promoted by, serve neoliberal market mechanisms. The following are the words of Toprak, a permaculture instructor, in the introduction to permaculture workshop:

> Solutions to gigantic problems can be very simple. Climate change is currently talked about in such a way that it seems we're facing an enormous danger and individuals can't do anything, we can't know our arse from our elbow. As if climates are gonna change horrendously and we feel helpless and only big-scale solutions can change everything. We are pushed to feel that, as if there isn't much we can do, only very big decisions, I mean, we can only reverse the process only with projects based on high technology

> supported by central authority and central government. People are made to feel helpless. However, carbon sequestering very quickly, I don't have time to get into the details right now, it is possible to reverse climate change and the process of carbondioxide emissions with various methods of carbon sequestration, very easy methods. There are various methods of carbon sequestration, forestration is one of them, and there are several techniques. Problems are big, but they are not insurmountable.

Toprak's awareness of the purposeful circulation of despair and his passion towards finding and implementing solutions that do not depend on larger state- or capital-sponsored engineering projects appear both as a response to and an inversion of hegemonic discourses that circulate about climate change (Anderson 2010, Hulme 2008).[7] Like Toprak, many permaculturists are able to find grains of hope within what seems to be situations of despair. Before outlining the two types of hope I discern in permaculture, let me first discuss the anthropological literature on hope.

5.2. Anthropological Approaches to Hope

The scant and relatively recent discussions on hope in anthropology take Ernst Bloch's conceptualization of hope as theoretical foundation. In his seminal book *The Principle of Hope*, the Marxist philosopher distinguishes between true and false hope. False hope refers to daydreams, or "dreams of a better life" (Bloch 2-3). While daydreams consist of petty, everyday, and personal hopes, true hope is revolutionary and utopian. It involves waking up from the delusional daydream to activate one's energy towards the revolution. However, the bourgeois prevent the flourishing of true hope by clinging to their dreams of a better life. Bloch conceptualizes the true, revolutionary hope in terms of the notion of the "not-yet," that which is yet to come. In the words of anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano (15), Bloch and "lays emphasis on the category of the not-yet on a forward-looking temporality. He argues that we all live in the future because we strive. Past things come only later. A 'genuine present' is almost

[7] As I discussed in the previous chapter in relation to post-politics, geographer Eric Swyngedouw, another harsh critic of apocalypticism in relation to environmental catastrophes, may not find permaculturists' action as properly political, therefore may disagree with my use of the term "thoughtful action" despite permaculturists' rejection of hegemonic discourses which strengthen the belief in technocratic governance as the solution to approaching environmental disasters. For now, I persist in upholding this notion of thoughtful action despite being aware of this potential criticism.

never there." Bloch conceptualizes the true, revolutionary hope in terms of the notion of the "not-yet," that which is yet to come, placing hope in a forward-looking temporality.

His reorientation of hope from the present to the future has been much attractive as a point of discussion to anthropologists who are dealing with hope. For examples, in his book called *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge*, Hirozaku Miyazaki defines hope as a method to maintain the prospective momentum of the present. Through his ethnography of the Suvavou in Fiji, he asks why, despite decades of disappointment, the Suvavou continue their struggle to receive a fair compensation for the original appropriation of their land by the British. He argues that these people "have striven to reconcile indeterminacy as a condition for the possibility of hope with their effort to render self-knowledge determinate once and for all" (71). While philosophers have long debated the question of agency in hope and mostly categorized hope as passive, for Miyazaki, "the problem of how to maintain a prospective orientation displaces the question of who or what is the ultimate source of hope" (86). In religious sermons and gift-giving rituals, Miyazaki observes, the Suvavou constantly grant their own agency to another being—whether other humans or God—only to subsequently reclaim it. Miyazaki connects this repetitive abeyance and reclamation of agency to the repetitive quality of hope, and writes, "(…) the fulfillment of their hope as the capacity repeatedly to place their own agency in abeyance" (106). In other words, the abeyance of agency and its constant reclamation is what produces and preserves hope, which is a method to maintain the prospective momentum of the present. This momentum of the present is intricately tied to knowledge production, about both the self and the world. In their search for truth and for a fair compensation, the Souvavou try to render self-knowledge determinate once and for all, yet in their search they keep up their hope despite the indeterminacy. In fact, hope itself is their negotiation of indeterminacy, their reconciliation of the tension between an indeterminate future/knowledge and their constant search for truth. Miyazaki (2006, 149) claims, "hope lies in the reorientation of knowledge."

Anthropologist Jarrett Zigon criticizes Bloch and Miyazaki for their treatment of hope in a merely futurist orientation. Based on his ethnography among the Muscovites, he conceptualizes hope as both as "temporal structure of the background attitude that allows one to keep going or persevere through one's life," and "the temporal orientation of conscious and intentional action in moments of what [he calls] moral breakdown" (258). In other words, in normal times, hope is what keeps one going, and in times of

moral and social distress, "when social and moral life is reflectively and consciously called into question and posed as a problem," (258), hope is what allows one to persevere and return to a sane life through intentional and ethical action.

While Zigon reinserts the present into the discussions on the temporal orientation of hope, his emphasis on the inevitable and ubiquitous nature of hope is nothing more than applying to hope the most basic anthropological insight of attending to the everyday. As such, Zigon does not take into consideration how hope might at all relate to the future. In addition, Zigon almost explicitly rejects the types of hopes that may come out revolutionary ideals. He writes, "As the unreflective temporal structure, the background attitude, of being-in-the-world, hope is revealed as that striving-toward the not-yet-but-expected of the promised socio-historic-cultural ideal. These promised ideals should not be confused with utopias, as Bloch and others might have it" (267). Thus, Zigon fails to acknowledge the utopian ideals that many people all over the world continue to hold dear at a daily level, and the types of hope that sustain social and political movements. Even though Miyazaki's treatment of hope as a method proves much more theoretically sophisticated than Zigon's return to the everyday, Miyazaki, too, refrains from paying attention to the hopes that involve some sort of alternative vision of the future, a vision which entails actively working towards social and political change.

The main common problem with Miyazaki and Zigon's analyses is their lack of differentiation between different types of hopes; in their conceptualization, hope appears as an all-encompassing category without any attention to particularity. Miyazaki even equates the hope of the Souvavou with the hope nourished by the president of Fiji (2004), and the hope sustained by businessmen in Japan (2006). I, on the other hand, have no intention to generalize hope to the society at large, but to discuss hope in relation to the permaculturists in Turkey. Not only do I aim to specify a distinctive hope that is nourished by a distinctive group of people, but I also delineate two types of hope that may be distinguished from each other: anxious hope and catastrophic hope. Far from being mutually exclusive, I argue, these two types of hope coexist in the same space and people, yet are articulated at different moments. The interplay between anxious hope and catastrophic hope reworks the temporality that has been assigned to hope as either presentist or futurist. I argue that hope is both about the present and the future.

5.3. On Thin Ice: Anxious Hope

Several permaculturists I interviewed expressed their hopes by referring to some of the present ecological initiatives that go on both all over the world and in Turkey. Among the hope-inducing examples they cited were the use of permaculture and urban gardening in Cuba, the crisis-induced growing interest in self-sufficiency initiatives in Greece, the communal movements in Latin America, the Occupy movement in the US, and the burgeoning of occupied spaces, urban gardens and neighborhood assemblies after the Gezi Protests in Turkey. Permies stressed the significance of these initiatives despite the seemingly omnipresent power of neoliberalism. To describe how he sees these worldwide reactions against the hegemony of transnational capital, Ahmet, one of the members of a rural ecological initiative, said, "What I'm talking about is literally showing itself like weed that grows out of concrete." Toprak used the metaphor of mushrooms in several of our exchanges to characterize these alternative movements: "they spread like mushrooms." In a short email exchange, he even complemented this comment with the following phrase and added his theoretical reference: "Long live the rhizome! (Deleuze)."

In addition to these "hopeful" developments, permaculturists draw from recent research about solutions to climate change and express their belief that it is *not* too late to act. Regenerative farming methods, which would also encompass permaculture, are posited solutions to not only lessen, but also to reverse the effects of climate change due to their potential for intensive carbon sequestration (see Kopald 2014 and Eisenstein 2015). That is, if we all of a sudden switched from conventional agriculture to regenerative farming methods, people argue, then the soil would be able to sequester the excess carbon in the air. If you will remember, Toprak's earlier narrative about the intentional circulation of despair by the system was followed by a referral to carbon sequestration as a potential solution to climate change.

On the one hand, then, there is a strong belief that small actions matter, that they make a difference despite the hegemony of the economic and political system. On the other hand, there is wide acknowledgement that these actions may not necessarily produce the results permaculturists so actively seek. Permaculturists stress the importance of doing the right thing here and now without necessarily worrying about the results. In Sevtap's words,

> There is such a feature to personal actions, a little bit of "what if it holds/succeeds" attitude, a little bit of, as I always say, I mean, do the thing you know is right. I mean, its effect is not that important. I think it's more logical to behave according to what you believe is right, I mean according to the process, not the result, not according to whether you can change the world or not, or whether you save something or not.

Sevtap's attitude is evocative of a folk fable that narrates Nasreddin's attempts to turn a lake into yogurt. Seeing his efforts to ferment the lake with starter yeast, passersby point to the impossibility of making yogurt out of the lake. Unconvinced with their attempts to dissuade, Nasreddin replies, "I know it's impossible, but what if it succeeds?" Similarly to the famous fable character, Sevtap does what she does with the hope that it may succeed. Yet while highlighting the possibility that her daily actions can serve a larger purpose, she does not depend on that probability. Instead, she is aware that her actions may amount to no larger good in the end. Her attitude combines "what if it succeeds" with "do whatever you find right without worrying about the end results." The hope so openly expressed comes with a grain of anxiety.

In Sevtap's subsequent narratives, there are both a precaution that would deter the coming catastrophe once and for all, and a preparedness that would lessen its effects, were the catastrophe to happen (Anderson 2010). She said,

> In the end, we are trying to create a chance for ourselves, but it is not possible to foresee whether we will be able to take that chance. You know, you would take a life jacket with you, but it's not sure whether it will save you or not. You wear a seat belt, but if the car runs over, the belt may amount to no use, but you put it on anyway. This is how I see permaculture. If we have a chance, that's it. But after all this time, it doesn't seem right to me to say that permaculture will certainly save the world, generally, you know, this is what Suzuki says too, *if something is gonna save the world, it will be the permaculturists*. But how many of us are there, what can we achieve, at the end permaculture requires both human energy and resources for the things we wanna do. This is not something that will happen by itself unless the human energy and the resources are geared towards the goal. But there are miracles too.

She continued her narrative saying,

> I mean, I can't really say I'm very optimistic. I wish I could be more optimistic, but I mean if the predicted results of climate change materialize, then it's not possible to say much about what will happen 50 years from now. I mean, scientists now say we're very late for a turnaround. Yet we can't really predict anything; people talk about some feedback loops and predict they're gonna get worse with time, but we can have stuff worse than predicted too. I don't really, I mean, as I said, instead of doing the things that I do for their results in the future, I live the way I want to live and I think I

> ought to live right now. For that reason, I don't really have a prediction about the future of the world. I don't wanna hang on to hope too much because, really, our chances of hitting some big catastrophes are high. On the one hand, I choose too accept this. Alright, we bought some land, we wanna build a garden, we wanna provide for our needs, we wanna live healthy, but we may not be able to do these, I mean, if we experience a severe drought or another disaster or some war, we have no idea what would happen.

As revealed in these utterances, this hope is a hope that is constantly qualified both through its presence and absence. Sevtap's wish to "not hang on to hope" is accompanied by a belief in the possibility of "miracles," therefore firmly confirming the existence of hope. In other words, the negation in the sentence already contains the presence of hope .

Sevtap's narrative above points to a search for certainty within the indeterminacy of the future. Since most of this conversation took place as we were conversing about lifestyle changes that she was engaged in, the hope cultivated in this passage is intricately tied to Sevtap's daily choices of alternative consumption as well as her settlement into a rural life. In Chapter 3, I have elaborated on the lifestyle changes and alternative consumption patterns that permaculturists engage in at an everyday level. Daily acts of consumption and anti-consumption, like the hope they are attached to, rely heavily on a constant abeyance and reclamation of agency through everyday actions. As permaculturists engage in these daily actions, such as building one's own house in the village, making one's own yogurt and bread, or petting earthworms to compost one's food, they assert their agency, only to later accept that they have none. Through the repetitive quality of these actions, they deal with the indeterminacy of hope and the indeterminacy of the future through a constant abeyance and reclamation of agency.

As I have explored in Chapter 2, acquiring knowledge is an important part of the process of becoming a permaculturist in Turkey. In addition to the 72-hour certificate course, permaculturists participate in both paid and free workshops to acquire further skills on, for instance, soap production, cheese making, or rainwater collection. While these provide the basis for a formal training, many permies would agree that much of their knowledge relies on experimentation; they learn by doing and failing and trying again. They also converse and share with each other their experiences in informal information sharing networks such as email groups and Facebook. The production, acquisition, and dissemination of knowledge on permaculture-related topics constitute a significant part of permies' everyday lives too. Even though Miyazaki places hope in

the future as positing it as a reorientation of knowledge, permaculturists use knowledge in the present and they hope through this knowledge. Hope for them is not necessarily about the future, but also about the present. The present and the future are not separate, and together reveal an interlaced temporality.

As a condition that implicates the future in the present, anticipation arouses "a 'sense' of the simultaneous uncertainty and inevitability of the future, usually manifest as entanglements of fear and hope" (Adams et al. 2009, 249). In the case of permaculturists, these entanglements mix hope and anxiety. While, as Miyazaki would have it, hope is constantly repeated through the abeyance and reclamation of agency in everyday actions, the affect that accompanies this hope is anxiety. Instead of being an opposite of hope, anxiety is a companion to it. This hope rests on thin ice. The desired results attached to hope, and the effects that are hoped for may never materialize, and the permaculturists are well aware of it. I read this affect that combines hope and anxiety through Sara Ahmed's theorization of "anxious hope" in *The Promise of Happiness* (183). Ahmed uses this phrase to describe the hope that Theo, the protagonist in the movie *Children of Men,* maintains when he, as a former activist who has lost all belief in the possibility of a future, has to save the only pregnant woman in an infertile world by getting her on a boat which is thought to create a new humanity. The existence of this boat is a mystery, yet Theo takes all possible risks to take the pregnant woman and her child there. Despite all uncertainty about the boat, Theo's initial cynicism about the state of the world switches to care when he realizes there is still a possibility for a future through the newly born child. Evaluating the intermingling of Theo's caring and his anxiety; Ahmed writes, "Caring is anxious—to be full of care, to be careful, is to take care of things by becoming anxious about their future, where the future is embodied in the fragility of an object whose persistence matters" (186). Turning Bloch's notion of the not-yet upside down, Ahmed counts on and "act[ing] as if the 'not yet' is already here rather than being a promise of what might come" (191).

Instead of driving permaculturists to despair, the anxiety that they feel about the future accompanies their hopeful condition and all the more pushes them to act in the present, as if Bloch's "not-yet" is already here. The philosophy of permaculture advises acting here and now with whatever resources are available, regardless of the end results. It calls for action and for caring despite the possibility of no future. Without such action, there may as well be no future at all. Indeed, one of the first concepts anyone would be

exposed to in a permaculture class or workshop is this non-consequentialist ethical understanding based on three principles of care described in the previous chapters.

5.4. Catastrophic Hope

While most narratives were filled with expressions of an anxious hope, at times permaculturists articulated a different kind of hope which actively sought catastrophic events—little or small. Catastrophic hope, as I choose to call it, inverts the fragile condition of anxious hope. It is catastrophic because it involves hoping both despite and because of approaching catastrophe. Not only does catastrophic hope maintain that good things will come out of catastrophe, but it also actively seeks catastrophe. The following narrative by Toprak, who had earlier argued that we are being fed with despair for a particular reason and who said we have immense power and agency, demonstrates aspects of this type of hope.

> Yes I do see an environment of conflict in the near future. It seems like we will go through a very troublesome process soon. It seems there will be very serious conflicts worldwide. Like diseases, epidemics, I don't know, certain types of catastrophes, even some wars, it seems to me these will happen, but then after that I think the pendulum will swing to the other side because an extraordinary number of people are striving to change things and they are learning to come together. On the one hand, a lot of absurd things will happen, but on the other hand there will be beautiful things too and it is currently difficult to foresee how these will balance out, but I don't think we have seen the worst yet. It seems like things will get off the rails.

Toprak's narrative combines a catastrophic vision of the future with the conviction that good things will continue to happen despite and because of approaching disasters. Catastrophic hope, then, appears to encompass several things at once. At a first level, it serves as a counterpart to anxious hope by mitigating the anxiety of an indeterminate future. "Worst comes to worst…" scenarios always involve a definite knowledge about the future: *some* good will come out of it *at the end*. While anxious hope embraces the indeterminacy of the future as in Miyazaki's description of hope, catastrophic hope injects a bit of certainty to this indeterminacy.

At a second level, catastrophic hope works to certify the efficacy of permaculture and other radical initiatives as things that will be confirmed after the catastrophe or the catastrophic conditions which will radically alter life on Earth, such as drought,

shortage of food etc. Several permaculturists emphasized the urgency and necessity that will arise and make permaculture a viable alternative and solution. Melis, for instance, prophesized that 10 years from now on, when Istanbul experiences severe droughts, she will teach people how to harvest rainwater and put it to use. After sharing her very dark thoughts on the future, Yasemin emphasized that "the world will not come up without hitting rock bottom." Nisan expressed her belief that "the system will erode day by day and collapse, and all the things we have been trying to breed will be increasingly visible." These predictions attest to the current rise of solidarity economies in Greece through food distribution as a response to the ongoing economic crisis (see Rakopolous 2014).

At the third level, catastrophic hope firmly asserts its relationship to the future and embodies Bloch's notion of the not-yet. This is especially apparent in the recent discussions within the permaculture community regarding the idea of actively pursuing the long-awaited crisis. The conversation goes back to the four energy descent scenarios outlined by David Holmgren, one of co-originators of permaculture. Holmgren's predictions entail four different futures which depend on how fast global warming and peak oil will hit the Earth (Holmgren 2009): Brown Tech, Lifeboats, Green Tech and Earth Steward. In the first two scenarios, global warming is accelerating at a fast pace and a slow decline in oil reserves lead to a Brown Tech scenario whereby technology is thought to solve the problems but does not. In the Lifeboats scenario, the oil decline is faster and a few privileged devise ways of salvation for themselves, leaving the world's remaining populations to destruction. In the Green Tech and Earth Steward scenarios, peak oil accelerates slowly for the former and fast for the latter, and the pace of global warming is slow, therefore giving time for people to prepare and soften the effects of future catastrophe. These two are the benign scenarios.

In a later article titled "Crash on Demand," Holmgren (2013) revisited his analysis of the current state of the world and his predictions of the future. Since the effects of peak oil have since 2009 been softened with alternative forms of oil access (tar sands etc.), Holmgren this time predicts that we are swiftly heading for the Brown Tech scenario, and argues that we have to actively try to accelerate the financial crisis in order to avoid the destructive scenarios. If the downfall happens too quickly, Holmgren claims, then we are more likely to end up with the benign Green Tech or Earth Steward futures.

If the Dark Mountain Project would qualify permaculturists' hope as false hope because permies sustain their belief that it is not too late to act, Bloch may characterize them as the petty daydreams of the bourgeoisie, especially considering that most permaculturists come from socio-economically privileged backgrounds and they do not envision a revolution in the Marxist sense of the term. Yet permaculturists' imagination of the future through some kind of catastrophic rupture is too close to the Bloch's notion of revolutionary hope to be dismissed as daydreams. As Bloch writes, "the world itself, just as it is in a mess, is also in a state of unfinishedness and in experimental process out of that mess" (Bloch 1986, 221). Permaculturists recognize this messiness and unfinishedness and anticipate a future where catastrophic ruptures will put some order to the world. And here emerges a reading of catastrophe as both a harbinger of revolution and the revolution itself. This would not be a class revolution, but revolution as the collapse of the neoliberal world order, revolution as a rupture of the capitalist values that shape the current economic and political systems and as the birth of a new world, however it gets shaped to be.

Similarly to Zigon who conceptualizes hope as "the temporal orientation of conscious and intentional action in moments of what I call moral breakdown" (258), I conceptualize catastrophic hope as an affect that emerges in expectation and anticipation of a breakdown, not solely moral, but also economic, political, and ecological. Unlike in Zigon's take then, catastrophic hope attends to the utopian ideals held by permaculturists and others who strive for a different world. As opposed to anxious hope which is more firmly inserted in the present, catastrophic hope is utopian and relates to the future.

Having said that, I ultimately do not pose this analysis as a dichotomous temporality, but strive to go beyond a binary understanding to show that hope does not necessarily belong to the present *or* the future, but is implicated in the relationship between the two. In addition, while I analyze the intricacies of anxious hope and catastrophic hope, as I have made clear in the introduction of this chapter, I do not generalize these hopes to the society in Turkey at large. On the contrary, following anthropologist Ghassan Hage (2003) who claims that hope is not equally distributed across society, I recognize that the hopes nourished by permaculturists are not equally accessible to all. Permaculturists are able to hope for catastrophe because coming from rather privileged backgrounds, they have not necessarily themselves experienced the everyday catastrophic conditions in which many underprivileged people live. In

addition, any kind of natural or man-made disaster or crisis, small or big, would hit the poor the hardest. Permaculturists are more likely to stay on the safer side, not only because they retain some knowledge on self-sufficiency, but also because they already possess economic and social capital which may, if possible, establish a buffer for them. Even though permaculturists actively pursue the dissemination of their knowledge of self-sufficiency to other people, the permaculture movement is unfortunately still not accessible to all, an issue I turn to in the Conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: A NEW KIND OF POLITICS?

Over the one and a half year in which I conducted my research, many people I interacted with in my daily life inquired about the topic of my thesis. When I told them I was doing research on permaculture, few knew what it was, while some others said they were acquainted with the term. Several people in the latter group told me they had seen the term in a café in Cihangir, an upscale neighborhood in Istanbul that became gentrified starting in the 1990s (Ergun 2004). They were most probably referring to a hipster-style café which hosts the books published by Sinek Sekiz, an ecologically oriented publishing house that printed Bill Mollison's Introduction to Permaculture in Turkish (Mollison 2012), and by doing so, contributed to the spread of permaculture in Turkey.

If people's random acquaintance with permaculture in this anecdote indexes the relative visibility of permaculture in stylish yet "alternative" spaces in Istanbul—and conversely its possible invisibility in others, another anecdote points to how permaculture is perceived by those little acquainted with the movement worldwide. After I presented my work in progress on lifestyle activism in a conference organized at the University of York in the United Kingdom, one of the participants, a woman from Scotland, surprisedly inquired that same evening at dinner, "So you're working on permaculture? I thought it was a middle class thing!" This comment came out almost depreciatively, as if permaculture as a middle class movement could have little connection to the topics of our conference, "Resources of Resistance," and as if a potential engagement of otherwise politically aloof, "apolitical" members of middle classes would not deserve any scrutiny.

Comments and observations like these followed me all throughout my fieldwork. I was, on the one hand, constantly reminded of the limits of permaculture as pertaining to

class, while, on the other, I was listening to those permaculturists who kept telling me how they wanted to "change the world" or "change the system" and how much of a radical thing they were doing through permaculture. I often felt torn, as I vacillated between two different points of view all throughout my research. One minute, I was fascinated by the potential of food sovereignty envisioned by the permaculture movement, and the promised emancipation from capitalist relations of production and consumption. Another, I realized its limited reach, its heavy reliance on economic, social, and cultural capital, and its reproduction of privileges related to class, ethnicity, and in some cases, gender.

This thesis presents a modest attempt to analyze the repercussions of the permaculture movement in Turkey without falling into either end of the pole. I strived to refrain from the two opposite attitudes which would either impose an unquestioned transformative power to permaculture, or which would completely overlook its potential, together with the desires and motivations of the many people, however privileged in society, who devote their lives to it as a way of acting out in the world for change. Instead of positioning my evaluation with one or the other approach, I discussed permaculture in Turkey from various angles which, in one way or another, relate to each other. First, basing my analysis on the narratives of my interlocutors, most of whom come from educated and economically privileged backgrounds, I showed the process in which permaculturists' middle class habitus switches to a more ecological one, or what I specify as a permaculturist habitus. Then, I discussed the meanings attached to lifestyle activism by permaculturists, while again striving to avoid a dichotomizing attitude which would unquestionably either bash or applaud lifestyle activism. I argued that the conception of social change envisioned by permaculturists in fact unwittingly replicates Bourdieu's theory of practice. Next, I turned to the current discussions on post-politics and evaluated the post-political nature of permaculture. While permaculturists attempt to find a post-ideological space that can host *the* human as political subject, and therefore define their actions flexibly, I claimed that permaculture carries a transformative potential that would lack in an exclusively post-political venture. I devoted the last chapter to a discussion on the relationship between apocalypticism and hope, and delineated the two types of hope nourished by permaculturists, anxious hope and catastrophic hope, arguing that the relationship between the two places hope both in the present and the future.

So are permaculturists in Turkey—and worldwide—a handful of people who gullibly think they are saving the world, or are they the pioneers of something that carries an enormous potential for inversing capitalist relations of production and consumption? As I said earlier, I refrained throughout this thesis from giving exact answers to either of these questions, for any attempt would correspond to either a lack of criticism or to a negation of open possibilities. Doing so, however, runs the risk of upsetting those who align with either end of the spectrum. Therefore, in the remaining part of this conclusion I will reiterate some of the points I think are important to emphasize, and articulate some tensions which I have not necessarily resolved in this thesis and which certainly require further thinking.

Let me first dwell on the issue of class and the question of access. Throughout my analysis, I have made it clear that most of the permaculturists come from economically, culturally, and ethnically privileged backgrounds. While these privileges are not problematic in and off themselves, they may at times prevent permaculturists from reflecting on their positions of class and ethnicity, and lead them to mistakenly assume that everyone might have equal access to the strategies they employ for societal transformation. There were exceptions too. Some of my interlocutors expressed their desire to reach out to people from socio-economically less privileged backgrounds, but also pointed to a quandary. If they went ahead and tried to organize the inhabitants of underprivileged neighborhoods, then they would be speaking from a position of arrogance and hierarchy, and they preferred not to do so.

In addition, many permaculturists recognize their own deeds stronger than any attempt to influence others through speech. Ahmet from Marmariç Ecological Life Association, one of the forerunners of permaculture initiatives in the countryside, said that conventional farmers around their area currently remain skeptical of, yet curious about the practices of permaculture in Marmariç. Apparently, farmers doubt that it would be economically viable, especially because permaculture design does not give a substantial return from land in the first few years of its institution. Ahmet, however, predicts that within three to four years, some of them may follow the footsteps of Marmariç by switching to permaculture, after they realize first-hand the productivity of the ecological initiative.

One of the main reasons why permaculture remains limited to the reach of middle and upper classes, it seems, is its method of dissemination through courses and workshops. Even if courses were free, permaculture disseminates through educational

activities which require a penchant for learning in classroom settings as much as on land, and the acquisition of further knowledge through a self-initiated learning process with books and videos. These means may not be accessible to many, as they require free time, literacy, access to technology etc. The most commonly articulated criticism against courses, however, is their high fees. A 72-hour Permaculture Design Course is usually worth more than a monthly minimum wage. Instructors justify charging for their courses by pointing out to their own need to make a living to sustain their livelihoods. They also emphasize the availability of scholarships for those who cannot afford to pay the full amount. However, even within the permaculture community ardent criticisms abound. Toprak, one such critic, expressed his opinions on course fees by relating it to the current condition of permaculture in Turkey. He said,

> [Permaculture] came into the picture as a very petit bourgeois thing, I mean, the people involved... maybe because of course fees... It could have appealed to a much larger audience at the beginning, but from the very start, the course fees caused some raised eyebrows and because of that, people became prejudiced. Now I see that many people in my friend circles are prejudiced, they are reacting against the whole thing, they ask why courses are so expensive, they ask what's so special about it, things like that. So because [permaculture] remains a bit as a petit bourgeois thing, I mean, many people have taken the courses, we appealed to many people, but not to the people who had already been involved in a set of social organizations, those who are more activist. In that sense, I don't think [permacuture] has created much effect in its entry phase to Turkey. (...) But after four years when I look back, I'm a little disappointed 'cause [permaculture] works in fact a bit like a hobby gardening thing. (...) We haven't been able to reach to the people who could have dealt more with the activist part of it, unfortunately. About the courses fees, I've always been marginalized and this has been a big issue since the beginning, and I've developed a particular attitude against it. I mean, it really doesn't have to be this expensive, you know, for example, I've always tried to charge my own courses affordably and I see that this is a cycle. Always a certain kind of people show up to courses, and only some people continue, and when those people start giving their own courses and organizing events, they follow the same fee policy. This has all become a vicious cycle.

In March 2015, permaculture instructor Taner Aksel organized an unprecedented free PDC for 200 participants, with the financial support of Osmangazi Municipality in the city of Bursa. While several people like Aksel strive to organize more affordable or free PDCs and other types of courses, the scope of permaculture continues to unfortunately remain limited, as also revealed by Toprak, perhaps due to the prejudices already formed against the movement. Either way, these criticisms seem to be minority voices

within the permaculture community, and more conscious efforts to appeal to a wider range of audience are required.

While Toprak was disappointed that more "activist" groups have not taken up permaculture—and he is probably referring to leftist groups who already possess some form of organizational structure in underprivileged neighborhoods in Istanbul, Asu pointed to the possibility of convergence between permaculturists and other political organizations. She was happy to share during our conversation that BirGün, a leftist newspaper, reported on one of the permaculture courses. She said,

> Personally speaking, if we are to be equated to an ideology in terms of politics, I believe it will be either Marxism or socialism, by definition of course. But there's still a long road ahead, I mean, for both sides. Well, we need to learn to understand more about economics and they need to come closer to ecology. But in the end, it will all be good. I mean, we show progress, we are on our way. Everybody is becoming more aware of things.

Asu's hopeful comment points to possibilities for cooperation and alliances, and to an underlying desire to appeal to a larger audience. Asu may be one of the few people in the permaculture community who would consciously like to see points of convergences with other political groups. Throughout this thesis, I have referred to conventional forms of organized politics as something that permaculturists seek to move away from, which brings me to the second point I want to discuss in this conclusion: the political promise of permaculture.

While some scholars and political groups critique permaculture for ignoring the structural problems inherent in the agricultural sector and for being a middle class venture, I strived in this thesis to scrutinize why and how permaculture increasingly appeals to primarily a growing number of people from middle and upper-middle classes. Despite being particular to Turkey, my analysis seems to carry some applicability to permaculturists in other countries, as revealed in the comment expressed by a fellow scholar in a conference in the United Kingdom. In Chapter 5, I discussed the hopes nourished by permaculturists, describing how their anxiety about the future pushes them to act in the present for what they consider to be meaningful change. In fact, anxious hope manifests a very thin line between hope and hopelessness. The ubiquitous and colossal nature of capitalism makes people feel without agency as individuals, all the while impelling them to do *something*. Under these circumstances, for many people who would perhaps otherwise be politically disengaged, or "apolitical," permaculture

presents a form of engagement, in other words, an ethical way of acting out in the world for what they perceive to be change, however small.

In fact, permaculture is not inherently "a middle class thing," even if its current manifestation in Turkey, and to a large extent other countries, keeps it generally limited to middle and upper middle classes right now. Permaculture presents a radical critique of the neoliberal world order and introduces techniques that may help people become self-sufficient in food production, therefore showing substantial promise for food sovereignty and food security against the monopoly of transnational capital. As I have shown in Chapter 4, permaculture carries a transformative potential that extends beyond the individual and small communities, and that may more openly manifest itself when opportunities arise. While its effectiveness in inflicting a more permanent damage to capitalism is yet to be proven, the permaculture movement provides us glimpses of the limits of the political and of what we may call "old politics." It seems to put forth a relatively unexplored political imagination which strives to move beyond binary categories and which articulates a desire for a universal political subject that would work for the emancipation of the Earth. In addition, it provides an opportunity for the mobilization of middle and upper middle classes, whose structural positioning in society seems at first at odds with their desire to reverse capitalist forms of production and consumption.

In a twist on the famous motto "Another world is possible," I then ask: is another politics possible? If yes, then permaculture may in one way or another contribute to emerging forms of politics, especially in crisis-ridden contexts, like in Greece, in which people increasingly rely on solidarity economics (Rakopolous 2014). Perhaps permaculturists' catastrophic hope will be fulfilled, and a worldwide salvation will only come after the apocalypse. The unpredictability of the future prevents us from foreseeing whether new contingencies would ever make permaculture a viable and effective alternative. Either way, as a movement, worldview, and technique, permaculture raises multidirectional discussions on the potential transformation of middle classes, on the right kind of political engagement, and on the possibility of keeping hope alive in an era of capitalist destruction. In addition to contributing to theoretical discussions on social and political change, lifestyle activism, post-politics, and hope, I hope this thesis also presents a nuanced and constructive critique of permaculture, which simultaneously analyzes its strengths, shortcomings as well as its present and future potential.

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