When Duty Calls…:
Questions of Sensitivity and Responsibility in Light of the Tophane Events

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But I think that sensitivity is also a good counselor
when it comes to enforcing one's interests.
Johannes Rau[1]

Don't worship my hurt feelings, Mr. Intentional.
Lauryn Hill[2]

On the evening of September 21, 2010 the Tophane Art Walk, a coordinated series of exhibition openings centering in large part along Boğazkesen Street in Istanbul, marked the beginning of the art season after the summer break. Shortly after 8pm, a mob of around 20-40 people attacked the galleries and their visitors one by one, undisturbed by the police for the best part of around 30 minutes, if not longer.[3] Tracing the Artwalk almost to a T, they left a trail of destruction, injury, and maybe most importantly– intimidation. Some present stated that they recognized their neighbors among the attackers, but that it were also neighbors who came to their aid, and averted much worse damage than both the visiting crowd and the galleries had already incurred. While a variety of theories explaining the event was quickly at hand –questions related to divergent (or rather clashing) life-style choices of the inhabitants and gallery visitors, local political orientations averse to the thrust of the artworks and the (at least presumed) progressive political stances of the gallery visitors, conservative elements emboldened by the recent government party-led constitutional referendum[4] violently reacting to alcohol consumption on the street, the inequalities brought on by and underlying gentrification processes– none of them seemed to be able to fully account for the events of that night. While especially the daily newspapers and network TV jumped to fold the Tophane "*mahalle baskısı*" [lit. neighborhood pressure] into the referendum and, by extension, Islamist conservative politics, it was clear early on that this particular explanatory model not only painted a facile, wholesale picture of a neighborhood and its inhabitants, but also decontextualized the event from the actual place in which it had occurred.[5] After all, this was not the first time that bats and fists (and in this particular instance, pepper spray and frozen oranges) were used in a highly coordinated manner, nor that organized intimidation had made itself felt in Tophane: protestors fleeing from the police, be it on Mayday 2009 or on the occasion of the IMF meetings in Istanbul in October of the same year had been met with similar violence.[6] Özen Yula's play *Yala ama Yutma* [Lick but don't Swallow] scheduled to open in February of 2010 at Kumbaracı50, a performance space in the same neighborhood, was cancelled when the Islamist daily *Vakit* rallied against the show, and elicited threats from Tophane as well. This, of course, does not come to mean that the actors in

[1] Quoted from former German President Johannes Rau's 100th anniversary address to GEMA (Gesellschaft für musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte), a German performance rights organization. While Rau referred to copyright interests in particular, it has become customary to employ his quote referring to enforcing one's interests in general. For the full speech, please see http://nobby-bell.privat.t-online.de/gema_rau.html.

[2] Quoted from "Mr. Intentional" by Lauryn Hill from her album Lauryn Hill *Unplugged* (2002).

[3] Eyewitness and news reports vary in terms of the number of attackers (20-50) and the length of the attack (30-45 minutes), parts of which, it seems were observed by police officers who did not intervene until back-up arrived; e.g. see http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=175432, Neslihan Tanış, "Tophane'de Yara Sarma Zamanı", *Radikal Online,* September 25, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1020654&Date=25.09.2010&CategoryID=77; "Sanat Galerisine 'İçki Baskını,' *CNNTurk Online*, September 23, 2010, http://www.cnnturk.com/2010/turkiye/09/22/sanat.galerisine.icki.baskini/590408.0/index.html.

[4] The constitutional referendum package introduced by the Justice and Development Party was approved through 58% of the votes, and frequently regarded as a vote of confidence for the governing JDP and Prime Minister Erdoğan.

[5] For the background and social context of Tophane see Yaşar Adanalı, "Tophane 2010," *Birgün Online*, October 1, 2010 and Asena Günal, "'Burası Tophane!'," *Bianet,* September 24, 2010, http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/125013-burasi-tophane.

[6] For an intervention that connects these previous attacks to the one on the galleries, see Süreyyya Evren, "Tophane Saldırısı Ardından Belirlenen Resmi Açıklamanın Bir Reddi," *Birikim*, October 2010, http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale.aspx?mid=669&makale=Tophane%20Sald%FDr%FDs%FD%20Ard%FDndan%20Belirlenen%20Resmi%20A%E7%FDklaman%FDn%20Bir%20Reddi.

all of these instances were necessarily the same. Still, that the media did not make any of these connections and drew no parallels between these events remains in itself quite notable.

Rather than attempting a comprehensive description or detailed analysis of the Tophane attack (the exact causes and motivations of which are to date still subject to substantial research to be fully understood), I try to offer some thoughts on two strands of discourses that were produced in the aftermath of the attack and the significance they might have within the wider fields of cultural policy (as enacted by the state) and cultural politics (in the sense of critical cultural and artistic contestations from "below").[7] The first of these strands is the official reaction to the event, exemplified by the statements of the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ertuğrul Günay, on the day following the attack. The second pertains to the ways in which –at least in some part– debates on the role of arts spaces in gentrification processes were conducted in the weeks after the attack. While this article centers on questions of responsibility in two different but interrelated areas, official cultural policy on the one hand and the cultural politics of arts spaces in a neighborhood such as Tophane on the other, I do not mean to equate these two registers of responsibility. Yet, in order to arrive at more just cultural policies and a politics of more socio-economic equity both of these areas need to be critically investigated.

When Duty Calls …: No One to Answer but the Sensitivities of the People

In contrast to other incidents in which arts events have been hampered, artworks suppressed, artists targeted and intimidated or outright censorship has been enacted, the Tophane attack markedly differed in that –at least at first sight– the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ertuğrul Günay, took a seemingly strong position on the event, if only by being on site the following day.

It might be a stretch to categorize the Tophane attack as an act of censorship per se, since the structure of the attack made it difficult to discern if and to what extent artworks were of concern to the perpetrators. The fact that according to eyewitness reports some attackers yelled at the gallery visitors that they should "go (back) to Nişantaşı,"[8] seems to at least indicate that the arts crowd, if not the artworks were perceived as undesirable. Publicly available statements from the neighborhood (including from the *Tophane Haber* website –a portal dedicated to news pertaining to this area of the city) seemed focused on the comport of the gallery visitors, specifically during openings when people stepped outside for a conversation and/or for a smoke with their drinks in hand. But as Galeri Non, and its exhibition by Extramücadele featuring among other plays on Turkey's official iconography a sculpture of Mustafa Kemal as a "tilted" maybe even fallen angle in the gallery window,[9] were the first to be hit, questions lingered if this was due to the content of the exhibition or to its location: Galeri Non is the first contemporary art venue uphill when canvassing Boğazkesen from the south side. Either way, it is important to note that the attack has left a question mark for some of the arts spaces, about whether not only certain kinds of behavior, but also certain artworks and artistic contents might not be compatible with the neighborhood they were (to be) shown in. That in the months following the Tophane attack police details were present during openings, and visibly so, in front of each art space might have exacerbated this kind of unease and might have had a delimiting effect in itself.[10]

[7] For a critical discussion of these concepts and their partial convergence, see Mark Stevenson, "German Cultural Policy and Neo-Liberal Zeitgeist," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 22, no. 2 (1999): 64-79.
[8] Nişantaşı is a central district of Istanbul, which is both residential and houses some of the most expensive shops, restaurants, cafes, bars etc. in the country.
[9] The work entitled *Melek Atatürk ya da Rodin Kemalist Olsaydı* [Angel Atatürk or If Rodin Were A Kemalist](2010) can be seen at http://galerinon.com/extramucadele.
[10] If previous examples are any indication, police presence at art openings have not made artists feel safer. Quite to the contrary, when the Hafriyat collective called the police after their exhibition *Allah Korkusu* [Fear of God] had been targeted by the daily *Vakit*, the arriving police detail actually found some of the artworks questionable and attempted to open an investigation against them. For a more detailed account of this particular case, see Banu Karaca, "Images Delegitimized and Discouraged: Explicitly Political Art and the Arbitrariness of the Unspeakable," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 45 (2011): 155-184.

Broadly televised, Günay together with Istanbul's governor, Hüseyin Avni Mutlu, first visited the targeted galleries before embarking on a tour of the neighborhood and talking to its "people." The Minister made a series of announcements at different stops. Because there was no singular press release from official sources, I center my discussion on a selection of news clips that have been made available online by the respective news programs. One of the most broadly broadcast statements was the following made by Günay exiting Outlet Gallery: "While we are trying to eradicate terror throughout Turkey, we will not tolerate and allow such a display to be exhibited on the streets of Istanbul."[11]

Much could be said about the parallelism Günay invokes between terrorism and the Tophane attack, as he takes the opportunity to reference 30 years of war with one single sweep; yet, it is the second part of the sentence that is more important for the purpose at hand. Whereas the media highlighted Günay's qualification of the event as intolerable and his condemnation of the use of force as evidencing the "tough" and "clear" stance taken by the Minister, it is worth noting that he first chose to point to the *display* of violence that the event produced. This concern about the visibility of violence and the rupture in or stain on Turkey's image it produces comes up towards the end of his visit in a clip broadcasted by Kanaltürk. After opening a box of chocolates to be distributed to neighborhood representatives as the symbol of an amicable resolution of whatever grievances or tensions there might have been (a gesture manifesting the literal translation of the Turkish expression "*tatlıya bağlamak*," i.e. "tying into sweetness" or smoothing things over), Günay stated: "It is by no means acceptable that we punch each others' faces in front of foreigners or in front of their eyes."[12] That it was the international visibility of the event, rather than the event itself that was troubling to the Minister is not surprising when one considers Turkey's longstanding concerns regarding its perception abroad.[13] Given the fact that representatives of foreign cultural institutions were present during the attack and that Istanbul as one of the 2010 Cultural Capitals of Europe was even more in the international eye than usual,[14] it stands to reason that these factors contributed considerably to the Minister's quick presence –and some of his stern remarks.

In another televised moment, Günay stressed once more that there was no excuse for the attack, no matter what had transpired as to "provoke" such a reaction in the neighborhood. Another clip features him talking to residents who express that their previous complaints related to the disturbance of public order by gallery visitors had fallen on deaf ears. Here the Minister is seen impressing on them that they have to get in touch with the respective authorities. But we can also find a notable instance in which his statements start to oscillate and take on a particular, relativizing register. Consider the following quote: "No one has the right to impose their Anatolian ways of living to Istanbul, *but no one* has the right to dismiss the customs and traditions of the people here (meaning: in Tophane) either."[15] It is the conjuncture, the "but" of this statement and its rationale that is significant. At first-sight it could be categorized as signaling even-handedness, a call for mutual respect and sensitivity in dealing with each other. Yet, I want to propose that when brought together with Günay's and his departments' statements and (in)actions –and those of their municipal counterparts in Istanbul– in other instances when art has come under attack, and juxtaposed with the actual mandate and mission of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, a different picture emerges. To give but two examples: in late 2008 an aid

[11] "Biz Türkiye'nin her yanından terörü silmeye çalışırken, İstanbul sokaklarında boyle bir görüntünün sergilenmesine müsamaha göstermeyiz ve izin vermeyiz"; video clip, Kanal 24, September 24, 2010, available at http://www.beyazgazete.com/video/2010/09/23/Günay -kimsenin-siddet-kullanmaya-hakki-olamaz-kanal24.html.
[12] "Yabancıların veya onların gözü önünde birbirimizin yüzümüzü yumruklamamız katiyen kabul edilemez."
[13] Bami Karaca, "Images Delegitimized and Discouraged."
[14] For news items that specifically reference the event within Istanbul European Capital of Culture tenure see for example: Oğuz Tümbaş, "Kültür Başkentinde Kültüre ve Sanata Sopalı Saldırı!," *Milliyet Blog*, September 23, 2010, http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/kultur-baskentinde-kulture-ve-sanata-sopali-saldiri-/Blog/?BlogNo=265893, Enis Tayman, Serkan Ocak, Neslihan Tanış, Özlem Karahan, "'Kültür başkenti'nde sopalı düzen!," *Radikal*, September 23, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1020346&Date=04.10.2011&CategoryID=77.
[15] "Ama hiç kimsenin de burada ki insanların, örfünü, adetini, geleneğini yok saymaya, görmezden gelmeye hakkı yoktur." Video clip, Tv 8, September 23, 2010, available at http://www.beyazgazete.com/haber/2010/09/23/kimse-kimseye-karsi-siddet-kullanma-hakki-yok.html.

to the Public Relations Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, İbrahim Yazar, threatened to withdraw funding for the Culturescapes Turkey festival organized in Switzerland in 2008 if a scheduled screening of Hüseyin Karabey's *Gitmek,* a film notably funded by the very same Ministry, was to go ahead. In an Interview with Kai Strittmatter, Yazar explained his motion to censor the screening of the film as being based on the film's premise of a "Turkish girl" falling in love with a "man from Northern Iraq," i.e. a Kurd. Strittmatter tried to explore further what Yazar found objectionable in this relationship and asked if it would not even be desirable for more Turks and Kurds to fall in love with each other. Yazar answered: "Of course, in normal times everyone can fall in love. *But* we live in times of terror. I am a representative of Turkish *sensitivities (sensibilities)*."[16]

In Yazar's statement it is again the qualifier "but" that underwrites his censoring motion, and that he takes to represent "Turkish" sensibilities. It emerged quite quickly that Yazar had acted without the direction or the knowledge of his superiors. Yet instead of rectifying Yazar's unsanctioned actions, Günay chose to state that censorship efforts on part of his department were never intended, but in the same breath justified Yazar's threat to the organizers as they had included a text on the film in the program that referred to southeastern Anatolia as Kurdistan –a move, that according to Günay, his department had been unable to remain silent to ("*Türkiye'nin bir bölümünün bir başka isimle isimlendirilmesi karşısında sessiz mi kalmalıyız?*").[17]

It is a similar "but" that director Okan Urun encountered when trying to put on the play *Yala Ama Yutma* at Kumbaracı50 in Tophane. After the scandalization of the play by the daily *Vakit* based on the synopsis of the piece in which an angel returns to earth in the body of a porn actress, the troupe first received email threats and then had their space shut down by the municipality, supposedly due to a missing fire escape. Although the space was open to use again shortly afterwards, the troupe had been severely discouraged and intimidated by the events, and decided to cancel the play. Urun describes the appearance of Minister Günay on CNN on February 12, 2010 where he was asked about his assessment of what had transpired at Kumbaraci50: "I am someone who is against censorship, *but* I also think that artists have to be respectful towards some of the values of society." Urun noted that if a cultural minister, regardless of having seen the play or not, makes such a statement, then "the people of Tophane say, 'mind your step' to Kumbaraci50: We'll come with bats and feel justified in doing so."[18]

Notably, no one seemed surprised about the particular inflection of Günay's statements. A few words about the general thrust of cultural policy under the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP) governments and since the 1980 coup d'état might be of use, both to contextualize the above examples and to explain further why expectations on part of the art world towards official cultural policy are rather low, if not non-existent.

Contemporary art in Turkey has developed largely outside the patronage of the state, and maybe even despite the state. It is not only the fact neither the Ministry of Culture and Tourism nor local government agencies have established standing provisions to support independent arts spaces and artistic production through public monies, but that contemporary artists have –by and large– rejected any dealings with the state –including voicing demands for more funding and support.[19] This is in part because of long-standing and calcified notions of the arts having to be in service of the state on part of successive governments. In addition, the structural violence enacted by the Turkish state and the systematic oppression of free expression have also engendered a legacy of distrust among artists towards the state. This stance has to some extent softened, most recently

[16] "Tabii ki normal zamanlarda herkes aşık olabilir. Ama biz terör dönemindeyiz. Ben Türk duyarlığının temsilcisiyim"; quoted after "Terör Varsa Aşk Yok!?," *Radikal Online*, November 5, 2008, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=Detay&ArticleID=906900&Date=05.11.2008&CategoryID=82;
[17] Ibid.; see also Erol Önderoğlu, "Kültür Bakanlığı 'Gitmek'i Festival Programından Çıkarttı," *Bianet*, November 3, 2008. http://bianet.org/biamag/bianet/110616-kultur-bakanligi-gitmeki-festival-programindan-cikartti.
[18] Okan Urun during a panel discussion entitled "Censorship in the Contemporary Arts" at the Fourth Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop, Istanbul, May 28, 2011.
[19] The film sector with its particular financing structure and needs has been a notable exception in this regard.

in the period of Istanbul Cultural Capital of Europe tenure where funds both from the EU and Turkey were funneled through government agencies. While European sources of support both in the form of funding schemes and of foreign cultural institutions based in Turkey have impacted the contemporary art scene considerably,[20] arts funding has largely come –as more than just a mixed blessing– from the private sector. Entering quite willingly into a peculiar (and mutually beneficial) division of labor with the state by funding arts projects, providing exhibition spaces and opening museums, corporations and industrialists have often patched-up the void in structural arts funding through their PR budgets, all criticisms of the influence of private monies in the Turkish art scene notwithstanding. In comparison to previous governments, the JDP has often been accredited with being more open to at least logistically supporting the contemporary arts, particularly on municipal and local levels,[21] and creating conditions that have led to the invigoration of especially Istanbul's art world. The JDP has also undoubtedly recognized the importance of the arts as an image and marketing factor, especially abroad. The advanced openings of two high-profile locations, the *Istanbul Modern Museum* (December 2004) and the *santralistanbul* exhibition complex (July 2007), that perfectly accommodated Prime Minister Erdoğan's schedule –EU accession talks in the first, national elections taking place in the second instance– are just two cases exemplifying how adept the JDP has been in claiming the success of contemporary art from Turkey at strategic points.

Yet, cultural policy officials have seemingly felt uncomfortable with contemporary artistic production and have frequently confined themselves to the rather narrow definition of traditional arts, and –in the past few years– to heritage-based flagship restoration projects. This discomfort might also account for Günay's seeming hesitation –or unwillingness– to identify the attacked venues in Tophane as what they actually are, namely arts spaces. In the publicly available online resources, he refers to gallery owners as "our friends who are opening new businesses here" [*burada yeni işyerleri açan arkadaşlarımız*],[22] and condemns those standing by idly while businesses are being attacked [*burada işyerleri saldırıya uğrarken*].[23] While in another context he might be commended for highlighting the labor of artists and other cultural workers as a legitimate way to make a living [*"burada çalışan insanlar ekmek parası kazanmak için çalışıyorlar"*][24] or plainly representing productive contributors to society, the complete disregard for the fact that it were indeed art spaces that were attacked is somewhat at odds with his official function –or evidence of his solely functionalist view of the contemporary arts as a "sector."

But apart from the contentious relationship that the JDP seems to have with contemporary art, the point I want to emphasize here is that whenever art or artists have come under attack, the Ministry and its municipal counterparts have failed, time after time, to step up for the arts as they should by definition and as part of their pronounced duties. Articles 26 and 27 of the Turkish Constitution guaranteeing the freedom of expression and of the freedom of the sciences and the arts respectively not only have to be understood as protecting the arts, but also as mandating the state to support the arts. Yet neither the government at large, nor the cultural ministry in its different incarnations has taken up the responsibility for this mandate. However, Günay and his colleagues are by no means exceptions: Looking back over the past 30 years, Fikri Sağlar's initiative to lift bans on literary works instated by the military junta stands out as one of the few instances in which a minister of culture has taken a clear stance on suppressed artworks.[25] In

[20] See Beral Madra, "The Hot Spot of Global Art, "*Third Text* 22 no. 1 (2008): 105-112.
[21] Asu Aksoy, "Zihinsel Değişim? AKP İktidarı ve Kültür Politikası," in *Türkiye'de Kültür Politikalarına Giriş*, ed. H. Ayça İnce and Serhan Ada (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009), 179-198.
[22] Video clip, Tv 8, September 23, 2010, available at http://www.beyazgazete.com/haber/2010/09/23/kimse-kimseye-karsi-siddet-kullanma-hakki-yok.html.
[23] For an analogous framing of the galleries as businesses by Istanbul governor Hüseyin Avni Mutlu, see "Galeri Saldırısından Yedi Kişi Gözaltında," *Bianet,* September 22, 2010, http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/124971-galeri-saldirisindan-yedi-kisi-gozaltinda.
[24] Video clip, atv, September 23, 2010, available at http://www.beyazgazete.com/video/2010/09/23/sanata-mahalle-baskini-atv.html.
[25] See Fikri Sağlar, *Ulusaldan Evrensele Çağdaş Kültür* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1992), 34-35.

contrast to this kind of endeavor, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism remained deafeningly silent when Aynur Doğan was being booed off the stage during a concert in the Istanbul Jazz Festival series in July 2011, for the sole reason of signing in Kurdish. By remaining silent, those whose official duty it is to be advocates for the arts, thus legitimized a discourse in which the usage of Kurdish was equated with terrorism as well as the much cited "Turkish sensitivities" in the wake of the deaths of Turkish soldiers. [26]

When it comes to freedom of expression, Ertuğrul Günay has mastered the skill of dabbling in the repertoire of sentiments instead of clear political positions. This became clear once more when he commented on the banning of journalist Ahmet Şık's unpublished book in March 2011. The Minister proclaimed that he observed the banning of a draft of an unpublished book with "apprehension" [*kaygıyla*] and that he found the situation "worrisome" [*sıkıntı verici*].[27] It is not that these feelings are expressed that is problematic, but the seeming exclusivity with which his statements do not go beyond diagnosing them. Instead of taking a clear stance, and taking up the responsibility of unequivocally defending the freedom of expression, the arts and sciences – which also encapsulates the freedom to publish– as it is mandated by his office, Günay limits himself to a solely emotive stance.

Here, as in his comments on the Tophane event, Günay relied on a frequently employed rationale in Turkish politics, that of deflecting issues of politics and power to that of sensibilities and sentiments. This is not to say that these sensibilities do not exist, but the question remains whose sensitivities and sensibilities are deemed legitimate in political discourse and whose are not. Is it not, as Pelin Başaran too has recently stated, that when the "sensitivities of the people" [*halkın hassasiyetleri*] are cited as grounds for relativizing the suppression of free expression, artistic or otherwise, that it is the sensitivities of power that are, in fact, at stake?[28] Seemingly veiled in the language of the voiceless, victimized masses whose sensitivities are presented to be violated, and supposedly speaking for them, this discursive mode not only cuts off any further debate but also paternalizes those who are supposedly spoken for. The exclusive retreat to sentiments thus forecloses discussions of rights (on part of the artists) and responsibilities (on part of cultural policy officials), and legitimizes political indifference to different types of repression and – ultimately– violence.

Debating Gentrification after the Tophane Event

On November 3, 2010 an *Açık Masa* event[29] at the arts space Depo dedicated to the "Social dynamics of the city and its relations with contemporary art production" took place. Put together by Pelin Tan and Yaşar Adanalı, the evening focused on the rapid urban transformation and gentrification that Istanbul had gone through in the past 10 years, and also tried to shed light on the Tophane attack. The event thus opened a discussion on the question to which extent art is a conduit of, but also a possible site of resistance against gentrification processes that, in short, goes something like this: Equipped with little economic but much cultural capital, artists and arts organizations repeatedly go into neighborhoods that are marked by disinvestment. Once a "scene" manages to establish itself in a respective area, the mechanism of gentrification starts to set in: restaurants, coffee shops and boutiques tend to follow in the trail of art. A formerly "problematic" part of town gains attractiveness and becomes an object for "redevelopment." Speculators, developers and investors appear on the scene, converting the artistic allure into higher rents, raising the cost of living in a given neighborhood. Most artists and arts organizations as well as most of the long-term residents are not able to meet these new costs and have to leave the neighborhood to start the cycle somewhere else, anew.

[26] For an extensive collection of news items on the incident please see http://www.siyahbant.org/?page_id=335.
[27] "Endişe Dalgası," *Radikal Online,* March 23, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1044146&Date=15.10.2011&CategoryID=77.
[28] Pelin Başaran, "İktidarın hassasiyetleri," *Bir+Bir* (June-July 2011).
[29] *Açık Masa* (lit. open table) is a "sharing platform which has been initiated by artist Mürüvvet Türkyılmaz in 2000." For detailed information, please see http://acmasa.blogspot.com/.

Among the speakers was the late Şaban Dayanan who had been working at Depo, which is also located in Tophane, since the former tobacco warehouse had been converted into an arts space, and who had, in fact, formed a vital link between the arts space and the neighborhood of Tophane. Opening his presentation with the words "I was very surprised to hear that the Tophane attacks were seen to be connected to gentrification," Dayanan stunned the audience, but also drew attention to different interest groups and power struggles within the neighborhood.

And indeed, over the following weeks and months, while it crystallized that gentrification had a part to play as it had undeniably impacted the social make-up of Tophane, it seemed that those who had instigated if not coordinated the attack were actually not among those disenfranchised by gentrification, but most possibly among the real estate owners in the area. Apart from the opposition of urban planning activists, it seems that it has been mainly these real estate owners and the judiciary that have been in the way of Galataport[30] –a redevelopment project aiming to transform the area extending from the Golden Horn to the outer boundaries of Tophane from a residential neighborhood with small businesses into a shopping and entertainment complex. This group apparently managed to galvanize local discontent that not only centered on crowding sidewalks and drinking in public, but also on stories that inhabitants had been verbally harassed by a group of gallery visitors (one prominently circulating story recounted that a fully veiled woman was heckled as "the reason Turkey does not get into the European Union"). Transcending the focus on the gallery openings (which, after all, happen only once a month or even less frequently, once every two months), the discontent was also geared against the increasing number of hostels, cafés and bars and their clientele, whose behavior too was experienced as disruptive and disrespectful to the neighborhood. While visitors and gallery workers experienced the Tophane attacks as unprovoked and shocking, signs of growing dissatisfaction were found in abundance on the *Tophane Haber* website after the attack.[31] Especially in the sections with readers' comments, residents voiced grievances on how specifically openings –most probably due to their high visibility– were impacting their neighborhood. Complaints –and threats– to at least some of the galleries had apparently been made before (most notably during an opening at Rodeo Gallery one week prior to the attack). Although this did not come to mean that the residents of Tophane found the attack justified, it made clear that the communication between the arts spaces and other residents of the neighborhood was broken, or, was not as strong as formerly assumed.

In their seminal article "The Fine Art of Gentrification," Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan forcefully stated that "[i]t is of critical importance to understand the gentrification process –and the art world's crucial role within it– if we are to avoid aligning ourselves with the forces behind this destruction."[32] Their call to responsibility on part of arts spaces, artists –and arts audiences– although issued almost 30 years ago, and in the context of the Lower East Side in New York City, still holds true today. To be clear, with this quote I do not mean to make a wholesale and facile critique of arts spaces located in the area. In contrast to the arts spaces of the Lower East Side, those in Tophane never fashioned themselves as urban pioneers and marketed themselves as "warriors at the new urban frontier" who conquered new, unchartered territory as Neil Smith had diagnosed in his essay "Class Struggle on Avenue B. The Lower East Side as the Wild, Wild

[30] Originally opened to bidding in 2005, the project has –so far– not been realized. It is interesting to note that during his opening speech for Istanbul's 2011 Shopping Fest, Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that if the Galataport project had gone ahead as planned "we would not have seen the hideous events of Tophane." See "Galataport Bitmiş Olsaydı, Tophane'deki Çirkinlikleri Görmeyecektik," *Cumhurriyet Online*, March 25, 2011, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?kn=6&hn=228170.

[31] See "Galeriye Saldırının Şifresi İnternette," *ntvmsnbc online*, September 22, 2010, http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25133807/, as well as "Tophane'deki Olayi Tetikleyen Neden," *Tophane Haber*, September 23, 2010, http://tophanehaber.com/goster.asp?nereye=yazioku&ID=136&tophane_haberleri, and "Tophane Boğazkesen Caddesinde Olaylı Gece," *Tophane Haber*, September 23, 2010, http://tophanehaber.com/goster.asp?nereye=yazioku&ID=134.

[32] Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara G. Ryan, "The Fine Art of Gentrification," *October* 31 (1984): 94.

West."[33] They have also been much more sensitized to the issue of gentrification in general. But like in the Lower East Side, many arts spaces and artists have gravitated towards Tophane and found refuge there, because they have been out-priced in those areas of Beyoğlu or Nişantaşı that are more centrally located. Artists, arts organizations, and arts spaces, commercial and noncommercial, frequently cite their own precariousness as the basis of their choice for gallery or studio locations, or, for that matter living arrangements, in areas that are still close enough to the urban center to pull visitors, but marginal enough to be affordable. Deutsche and Ryan's invitation to rigorously analyze the role of art, its spaces, producers and visitors, and the kind of developments that follow in their wake, is also a call to acknowledge the implicit complicity of the art world in gentrification processes; a complicity that is structural and goes beyond all individual intentions.[34] Surely, the independent arts spaces and galleries of Tophane and the impact they have on the neighborhood cannot be equated to that of the IKSV (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and the Arts) with its concert hall, design shop and restaurant in the adjacent Şişhane district, where drug addicts along with small businesses and residents have been displaced to make way for luxury lofts, upscale restaurants and bars. But the dynamics of gentrification transcend the efforts of individual artists and arts spaces to foster good relations with other residents in the neighborhood they are located in; it is their mere presence that already contributes to gentrification processes. As Deutsche and Ryan argue, strong local solidarities against urban redevelopment initiatives have to be build, which might or might not be possible in Tophane and its complex make-up, but have to be endeavored if one is serious about struggling against gentrification.

One small business owner, who has lived and worked in Tophane all his life, relayed to me that he knew the people who had formed the mob carrying out the attack against the galleries. In fact, he himself had at different occasions been targeted by the very same people as they have aimed to control and designate where locals can sell their products. Although having been victimized both through physical intimidation and economically, the shop owner sympathized nonetheless with the thrust of the attack as a way of demanding respect for the way of life in the neighborhood that he thought was under threat. However, his account also spotlights the possible nexus around which solidarities might be established in the future.

While the Tophane attack cannot necessarily be explained out of the dispossession and displacement that characterizes gentrification processes, and although diversity of lifestyles and the changing socio-economic make-up of the neighborhood too, have to be considered, it nonetheless allowed for the problematic of gentrification to be broadly discussed among those working in the context of Istanbul's art world. These discussions could potentially be a first step in assuming the kind of responsibility demanded by Deutsche and Ryan, and maybe even to foster the kind of solidarity between art world actors and their neighbors in Tophane necessary to resist gentrification based on their shared, if divergent, precariousness.

[33] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier. Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 3-29.

[34] Deutsche and Ryan elaborate on the necessity to acknowledge this complicity further by stating that "[f]or despite their bohemian posturing, the artists and dealers who created the East Village art scene, and the critics and museum curators who legitimize its existence, are complicit with gentrification on the Lower East Side. To deny this complicity is to perpetuate one of the most enduring, self-serving myths in bourgeois thought, the myth that, as Antonio Gramsci wrote, intellectuals form a category that is 'autonomous and independent from the dominant social group. This self-assessment is not without consequence in the ideological and political field, consequences of wide-ranging import'" (Deutsche and Ryan, "The Fine Art of Gentrification," 102).