

**DIFFERENT FACADES OF “WRECKEDNESS”: YOUNG
WOMEN’S UNCERTAINTY EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE(LESS)
NARRATIVES IN TURKEY**

by
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ABSTRACT

DIFFERENT FACADES OF “WRECKEDNESS”: YOUNG WOMEN’S UNCERTAINTY EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE(LESS) NARRATIVES IN TURKEY

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This thesis aims to investigate the daily lived experiences of young women who feel frustrated with the political and social context in Turkey and to explore their range of emotions vis-a-vis growing economic crisis and state authoritarianism in Turkey. As the neoliberal context makes the transitions from youth to adulthood more complex globally, the young people in Turkey also struggle in their attempts to transition into social adulthood. Focusing on young women from major universities in Istanbul, I aim to understand the particularities and emotions that actually existing neoliberalism in Turkey produces in this context. The main point in this thesis is that the participants are reluctant to subscribe to the readily available narratives and dreams - such as economically stable adulthood, politically stable country, intimately stable relationships, and dream life fantasies abroad. This reluctance, alongside with failure to replace these narratives and dreams with the new ones create an emotional/affective constellation, which I refer to as *wreckedness*.

ÖZET

YIKIKLIĞIN FARKLI YÜZLERİ: GENÇ KADINLARIN BELIRSIZLIK DENEYİMLERİ VE GELECEK(SIZLIK) ANLATILARI

CANSU CEYLAN

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Anahtar Kelimeler: gençlik, belirsizlik, gelecek, yıkıklık, toplumsal cinsiyet

Bu tez, Türkiye'deki siyasi ve sosyal bağlamdan rahatsızlık duyan genç kadınların günlük yaşam deneyimlerini araştırmayı ve Türkiye'de büyüyen ekonomik kriz ve devlet otoriterizmi karşısında duygularını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Neoliberal bağlamın küresel olarak gençlikten yetişkinliğe geçişi daha karmaşık hale getirmesiyle birlikte, Türkiye'deki gençler de sosyal yetişkinliğe geçişte zorluklar yaşamaktadır. İstanbul'daki başlıca üniversitelerden genç kadınlara odaklanarak, Türkiye'deki mevcut neoliberalizmin bu bağlamda ürettiği özgünlükleri ve duyguları anlamayı amaçlıyorum. Bu tezin ana fikri, katılımcıların ekonomik olarak istikrarlı yetişkinlik, siyasi olarak istikrarlı bir ülke, duygusal olarak istikrarlı ilişkiler ve yurt dışında gelecek kurma gibi hali hazırda sunulan anlatılara ve hayallere katılmaya isteksiz olduklarıdır. Bu isteksizlik, bu anlatıları ve hayalleri yeni olanlarla değiştirememesi durumuyla birlikte, "yıkıklık" olarak adlandırdığım bir duygusal bir konstelasyonu ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

There is a growing interest in categorizing young people's emotions in the midst of proliferating uncertainties and crises under neoliberalism. Futurelessness, anxiety, sadness, depression, hopelessness, or despair are among these emotions. Especially during social upheavals, such as Arab Spring, Gezi Parkı protests in Turkey, protests in France, or elections globally, young people's emotions have come under close scrutiny (Gümüş 2017; Lüküslü 2013). However, the populist political discourse attempts to construct "youth" as a homogenous group and to erase the differences among different youth groups, young people's own perspectives and voices are disregarded. In this regard, the futurelessness or despair that young people are subjected to constructed as fixed, static and unchanging emotional/affective positionalities.

In this thesis, I focus on the present and future imaginaries of young women who become carriers of hopelessness, unease, and anxiety as they feel frustrated with the political and social context in Turkey. The literature on neoliberal youth subjectivities is filled with accounts and analyses of uncertainty regarding the future. These uncertainties are tied to the economic and social insecurity that neoliberalism brings to young lives. In my thesis, rather than considering youth as a mere transitory stage between childhood and adulthood, and thus reducing young people to only future-oriented subjects, I look at the daily lived experiences of young women who feel frustrated with the political and social context in Turkey and I aim to explore their range of emotions vis-a-vis growing economic crisis and state authoritarianism in Turkey. I suggest that neoliberal uncertainty cannot be reduced only to the uncertainties regarding the future. Instead, neoliberalism which is tightly enmeshed with gender-based and societal violence, alongside state authoritarianism in Turkey (Kandiyoti 2016) generates ever-expanding present and future uncertainties whose outcomes are gendered. These uncertainties produce a range of emotions,

alongside new topographies of spatiality and temporality.

Peck, Brenner, and Theodore (2018) suggest that neoliberalism is not a homogenous social project. Instead, with the concept of “actually existing neoliberalism” they highlight the need for analyzing partial, multiple and contradictory practices of neoliberalism in different contexts and geographies. Bringing together their suggestion and Kandiyoti (2016)’s analysis on the way in which the neoliberalism in Turkey is characterized by authoritarianism, proliferation of gender based violence and societal violence, I focus on actually existing neoliberalism in Turkey in the intersection of gender and youth.

During the 20-year rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP), we witnessed growing state authoritarianism. While the first ten years of AKP rule has been characterized by economic growth, institutional and legislative reforms “for the sake of either European Union (EU) or International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality, democratization, rationalization, and good governance” (Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018), the last ten years is characterized by rampant authoritarianism and economic down turn. In this rampant de-democratization process, the rule of law has eroded, the dissident groups and individuals have been subjected to persecution, and societal violence and polarization have become the norm (Arslanalp and Deniz Erkmen 2020; Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018; Esen and Gümüşçü 2016). Moreover, the politics of gender and changing gender regime in Turkey are important pillars of this transformation. Kandiyoti (2016) identifies three central nodes where gender regime is intrinsic to the AKP’s ideology: (1) Use of gender as a central pillar of populism and central node of difference, (2) marriage of convenience between neoliberalism and neoliberal familialism, (3) normalization of violence in everyday political discourse.

Arat (2022) also suggests that AKP governments have instrumentalized women’s rights in constructing an authoritarian regime. Lastly, the AKP government had withdrawn from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2021 stating that “the Convention was against Turkish family values (citing ‘gender’ and ‘sexual orientation’ as the culprit), and that it even led to an increase in violence and therefore had to be annulled” (Altan-Olcay and Oder 2021; Amnesty International 2021). As the gender-based violence has been a critical issue, and the burden of care labor has been placed on women, the women in Turkey have been in a precarious position for decades.

Alongside with a new gender regime, another crucial aspect of the AKP’s attempt to building a New Turkey is constructing a new youth narrative (Alemdaroğlu 2018, 2021; Lüküslü 2016; Waldman and Caliskan 2017; Yilmaz 2018). On the one hand,

the pious generation project has implications for education policies, social policy, as well as discussions around young people's attitudes toward religion and their life styles, on the other hand, the economic crisis has disproportionately affected youth, youth unemployment and poverty, and young people's transition to social adulthood.

In this intersection between youth and gender, understanding young women's experiences in the midst of growing social, political, and economic crises becomes important. Firstly, the political and public discussions around young people's hopelessness, futurelessness, anxiousness, and unhappiness are conducted without the young people themselves. There is a growing emotional and social unrest among young people and although they attempt to open up spaces for themselves, especially in social media, their voices are generally reduced to either their political identifications or their aspirations about the future. Secondly, on the one hand, the discussions about young people's experiences tend to overlook the gender perspective, and on the other hand the discussions about women's experiences in the midst of growing gender-based violence and following attempts to mobilize tend to overlook the age perspective. I aim to bring these two perspectives together and highlight the intersection of young women's daily experiences.

1.2 Literature on Neoliberal Youth Subjectivities

Two different but intertwined perspectives can be defined in the field of sociology of youth. The first one is the transition perspective which analyzes the transitions from youth to social adulthood through secure employment, social recognition, and creating a new household (Cole and Durham 2008; Lüküslü 2020). This perspective acknowledges that in the neoliberal condition where the economic crises are inherent to the system and possibilities of attaining "social adulthood" is restricted for the most, the transitions have become more and more difficult and complex (Dalsgard et al. 2014; Kelly and Kamp 2015; Pimlott-Wilson 2017; Yılmaz 2017). However, the transition perspective risks reifying youth as a "distinct transitional phase of life, between the more stable categories of childhood and adulthood" (Worth 2009, 1051). On the other hand, the cultural perspective analyzes the youth subjectivities and youth cultures (Lüküslü and Çelik 2021). Thus, the cultural perspective looks at the category of "youth" as a dynamic social phenomenon, made and unmade through different sociocultural processes and different groups of young people. Bringing together these two perspectives, I suggest, can enable us to unpack the complexity

of youth subjectivities amid neoliberal uncertainty where "failed transitions" do not foreclose possibilities but offer new ways of being "young" and "adult". Through cultural perspective, we can revise the term "transition" "to capture the complexity and non-linearity of situated lives that are always in a process of becoming" (Hörschelmann 2011, 379).

Breaching this distinction between the two perspectives or traditions, the youth research focusing on the everyday lived experiences of young people has been proliferating since the mid-2000s. However, this emergent literature also has a couple of problematic tendencies: Firstly, the literature on lived experiences of young people, and especially on youth subjectivities in the midst of global economic crisis, increasing youth unemployment, and state authoritarianism disproportionately focuses on overtly "disadvantaged" groups, such as migrant youth, worker youth, minority youth, and young people who do not have access to education or other sources of social capital. Although it is crucial to unpack the problems and struggles of disadvantaged youth, this literature risks both overlooking the dissemination of "disadvantage" and "marginality" in neoliberalism and containing "disadvantage" temporally and geographically (Frederiksen 2017, 10). Thus, I suggest, it is equally important to study the youth groups who are defined as "well-off" in terms of the ability of "transitioning to adulthood" but whose daily and future aspirations are ruptured in neoliberalism (Dalsgard et al. 2014) to better understand the lived experiences of young people and of "actually existing neoliberalism"s (Peck, Brenner, and Theodore 2018). Secondly, this literature disproportionately focuses on young men, "failed" or subordinate masculinities, and masculine youth spaces (Frederiksen 2017; Jeffrey 2010; Mains 2007; Masquelier 2013). It is argued that as young men are required to subscribe to the "male breadwinner" norms, facing the structural inequalities the disadvantaged young men become "failures". Although it is important to analyze the unfolding masculinities, it is also important to understand how young women's self-making and transitions unfold through neoliberal uncertainty, patriarchy, and increasing visibility of women's movements, as well as anti-gender movements. As Çelik and Lüküslü (2012) put it, it is crucial to address the gender gap in youth studies and the age gap in the women's studies.

The majority of existing research on lived and embodied experiences of young people in Turkey come from two subfields: (1) research on youth subcultures, (2) research on youth political mobilization. Although the youth subculture studies give attention to daily life experiences and cultural production and consumption habits of young people, it risks reifying and demarcating so-called "subcultures", ignoring its dynamism and fluidity (Saktanber 2003; Şahin 2020). On the other hand, the studies on youth mobilization are also vibrant. Until recently not only in Turkey but

also around the world the daily life experiences of young people are given attention on the condition that it is visibly politicized and/or on the street protesting. In Turkey's case, I think this is in line with what Lüküslü (2009) calls the "myth of youth". According to Neyzi (2001), not only in the construction of the Turkish Republic but also in the following decades until the 1980s, the youth is "identified with the mission assigned them of transforming society from above" (412). This modernist project, Lüküslü (2009) suggests, aims to construct an "ideal youth" as a "political object" and to interpellate youth as homogenous, undermining the heterogeneity and divergences between different youth groups and their subjectivities. Although Neyzi (2001) sees an opening in terms of the possibility for young people's self-representation in the media after the 1980s, I suggest in the public and academic discourse the traces of the "myth of youth" are still proliferating.

There are also recent interventions for integrating lived and embodied life experiences of young people into the sociology of youth literature in Turkey (Akalin and Lüküslü 2021; Alemdaroğlu 2015; Lüküslü 2013; Neyzi and Darıcı 2015; Çelik and Lüküslü 2012; Özyeğin 2015). These studies are also important in their intervention on the one hand in looking at mundane life experiences of young people, and on the other hand in integrating the emotions of young people into their analysis. It is important to shed light on the emotions of young people in a time and space where young people's emotions are constantly analyzed, criticized, and often marginalized in the public and political discourse.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis is based on the in-depth interviews that I have conducted between 2021-2022 in Istanbul. However, my observations on "wreckedness" exceeds these interviews and are also based on my observations on social media. I conducted these interviews with 11 young women who are either 3rd or 4th year students, or recent graduates of the major universities in Istanbul - namely Bogazici, Sabanci, or Koc universities (for more information on participants, see Appendix A). As my starting point was to understand wreckedness (*ynkıklık*, in Turkish) which is a slang term young people use for an emotional constellation of unease, frustration, hopelessness, and paralysis, I have chosen my participants among young women who become carriers of hopelessness, unease, and anxiety as they feel frustrated with the political and social context in Turkey. Four of my participants are currently undergraduate students at Bogazici, three of them are at Sabanci and one of them is at Koc. One

participant is a graduate student at Koc, and also an alumna of Bogazici. One participant has graduated from Sabanci and one from Bogazici in 2021.

I have chosen to focus on young women who study in the major universities in Istanbul for a number of reasons. Firstly, the students from these major universities are interpellated as “upwardly mobile” because of their acquired social and cultural capital in these institutions. In her book on Bogazici University students’ gender, sexuality, and self-making, Özyeğin (2015) suggests that:

Because of its [academic] selectivity, students at the [Bogazici] university have a strong sense of distinction as gifted and high achievers and identify themselves as a select crowd. . . . As an elite institution, [Bogazici University] offers its students an avenue for upward social and economic mobility but also brings together students with vastly different biographies . . . (39)

Taking into consideration that Ozyegin has conducted her research between 2002-2003, I had vastly different experiences and observations during my undergraduate degree between 2015-2020 at Bogazici University. Although the sense of distinction among Bogazici students still prevails, the aspirations of “upward social and economic mobility” have been shattering for the most. Instead of dreams about upward mobility, future anxiety have become the norm. Ozyegin’s entrepreneurial, autonomous, and self-inventing Bogazici students have been replaced by mostly depressed, anxious, and tired students, as I observe. Thus, the students with the highest rankings in the university entrance exam and who have been growing up with the promises that meritocracy entails have been suffering from shrinking opportunities for social mobility. My aim is to look at the social afterlives of these dreams which I will elaborate in the next section. Secondly, I have chosen these universities simply because I have access to the student groups there. As a former Bogazici and current Sabanci student, I am an insider not only to the student groups there but also to the promises and disappointments that these institutions do and undo.

I have recruited my participants through social media announcement and snowball sampling. The interviews were conducted in cafés and they were semi-structured in format. At the beginning of each interview, I informed my participants about my research topic, ethics guideline and that I would use pseudonyms instead of their names. I explained to them the main topics I want to talk about, such as college experience, daily practices and habits, close relationships, and future plans and my

intention to let them direct the flow of conversation. Conducting the interviews at cafés of my participants' choice had facilitated this flow of conversation since cafés are places where most young female university students gather and talk about their daily life and emotions.

Alongside these interviews, my daily life observations and attempts to make sense of what my friends and I, as young people living in Turkey, have been going through were major sources of data for this thesis. Taking into consideration the problematization of “home versus the field” in the literature (Gupta and Ferguson 1997), I do not know where the fieldwork starts and ends for me, or for the purpose of this research. More than referring to a spatiality or locality, I consider my fieldsite as a specific “emotionscape” – namely wreckedness.

As I have been conducting this research, I have wandered around wreckedness at a more personal level. This research was also a means through which I try to sustain my present and future dreams of having a place in academia, a dream that is uncertain and hopeless -a dream which if happens to come true, would be precarious. Sometimes this thesis became the source of wreckedness for me, the question of what I will do after finishing it has haunted me. As I was also trying to deal with the emotions and experiences that resonate with that of my participants, sometimes I felt empowered through the feeling of not being alone, through knowing that my affective grammar is a product of many layers of social reality that I have been trying to get entangled with. At other times, the fact that we share these emotions of anxiety, frustration and hopelessness provoked my frustration even more. Thus, not only the research process but also writing this thesis exhausted me. I only got through it with the support of my mentors, my friends, and of course the stories that my participants had trusted me with.

With these emotions, I consider myself as an “intimate insider” (Taylor 2011). Although Taylor uses the term to refer to their own positionality within Brisbane queer scene and their personal entanglements with their participants and the scene itself, I attempt to position intimate insider to the emotionscape of wreckedness within the scope of this research. I am not in the same social circles as my participants, although I share contacts with a few them, but as a young women living in Turkey the experiences, uncertainties, promises and disappointments in the accounts of my participants evoke strong emotions for me.

Thus, Taylor's definition of “intimate insider” as a researcher who “is working, at the deepest level, within their own ‘backyard’; that is, a contemporary cultural space with which the researcher has regular and ongoing contact” (9) resonates with my positionality. However, I do not assume an “authentic insider's perspective” that

can “unproblematically represent the associated group” (Narayan 1993, 678) and acknowledge that the line between the insider and outsider positions are always permeable (Taylor 2011). Rather, what I am trying to highlight is my personal involvement with my participants’ accounts and emotions. Through this involvement and shared emotions, the interview process was a constant reconfiguration of my own positionality and feelings. Contrary to the hierarchical positioning of the all-knowing and “rational” researcher, this positioning allowed me to be vulnerable in the sense that I tried to understand and work on the emotions that circulated during the interviews and encounters with my participants, the emotions that “stick” to me and “move” me (Ahmed 2014, 4). I would say that this thesis is a product of “working with and being worked on by stories”(Page 2017, 115) of my participants.

Although we acknowledge that the interviews that we conduct as ethnographers are always active processes and social encounters through which not only our participants’ but also our narratives and meanings that we put together in these instances are “strategically assembled” (Gubrium and Holstein 2012), what it does to us is largely an ignored question. Although we have a certain body of knowledge on how to “handle” or “work through” the emotions of our participants, the emotions that arise during the interview process for us, researchers, was an emerging theme for me in these instances. After some interviews, I was left with a heavy feeling, I was haunted by the way in which my participants talk about their experiences not because these emotions were something entirely new for me but because they are somehow familiar. In these instances, I have tried to manage two things: Firstly, I tried to decenter my own emotions and listen to my participant. Secondly, after each interview, I tried to understand how I feel and why this encounter has moved me, and to which direction. The emotions of the researcher are always a part of the research process whether or not we try to disguise them under the claims of rationality. Thus, rather than disguising them, I let these emotions get a hold of me and try to work through them. Paradoxically, acknowledging that some interviews had left me feeling frustrated, sad, or wrecked has -to some extent- enabled me to decenter my own emotions.

All my participants seemed eager to be a part of this research. I can think of about this eagerness: Firstly, there is an assumption that we share similar experiences and emotions because of my age and gender, as well as our shared background. The fact that I am also a young woman trying to navigate through uncertainties has certainly enabled these conversations. In addition to that, I think it is also important to note that my research topic has resonated with my participants since the experiences and emotions I work with occupy a large portion of their daily lives. These are the stories that are told and retold in many instances for them. Thus, rather than assuming

an “over easy rapport” (Duncombe and Jessop 2002, 117), I consider the relaxed-and-ready nature of our interviews as a sign of the fact that my research topic has occupied the daily lives of my participants and has been extensively articulated.

1.4 Theoretical Background and Overview of the Chapters

This thesis takes *wreckedness* of young women in Turkey as its object of analysis. I focus on which emotions young women carry in the midst of growing social, political and economic crises in Turkey. In this regard, I follow the uncertainties that seep into every aspect of my participants’ daily lives and consequent emotions. My main point in this thesis is that my participants are reluctant to subscribe to the readily available narratives and dreams - such as economically stable adulthood, politically stable country, intimately stable relationships, and dream life fantasies abroad. This reluctance, alongside with failure to replace these narratives and dreams with the new ones create an emotional/affective constellation where uncertainties, hopelessness, frustration, unease, and anxiety become the norm. This is where I locate the wreckedness.

In this sense, Chapter 2 explores the daily gendered uncertainties that my interlocutors experience. Following the idiom, “Anything can happen (Her an her şey olabilir)” that my participants frequently articulate, I look at how the social, economical, and political uncertainties seep into the mundane experiences of daily life. I categorize the daily uncertainties as following: (1) The economic uncertainties refer to the way in which my participants talk about their experiences of economic crisis and how they feel anxious about sustaining their present livelihood. (2) The political uncertainties explore how the state authoritarianism and the enmeshment of AKP governments and law are felt and lived. (3) The intimate uncertainties focus on how close relationships become also a site of uncertainty and a state of limbo. Combining the three, this chapter explores the difficult transitions to social adulthood in the actually existing neoliberalism in Turkey.

Chapter 3 focuses on the questions of future aspirations, dreams and plans. Particularly considering the overemphasis on young people’s desire to migrate, I look at how spatiality and geography become intertwined in the future desires of my participants. In this regard, while a future in Turkey is imagined as short-spanned and dangerous, a future in abroad can be imagined as long-spanned and desirable. However, the desire for migration is not all optimistic, it intersects with daily and future uncertainties and always referred through negations and “but”s. I refer this

constellation of spatiality, geography, and emotions as “affective topographies of future.”

Chapter 4 maps out the wreckedness as a neoliberal youth subjectivity. In this chapter, following Ahmed’s 2006 conceptualization of disorientation, I explore the “homing devices” of wreckedness. Through looking at how my participants live despite and with the uncertainties they experience, I argue that not knowing, waiting, failing, delaying, and disillusionment with the readily available social narratives and dreams are the main homing devices through which the wrecked youth makes an ever-growing uncertain world familiar and legible.

2. *ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN: EVERYDAY GENDERED UNCERTAINTIES*

2.1 Introduction

. . . Turkey is a really unjust country. This is a country where there is no right and law (hak ve hukuk). Okay, nothing happened to me yet but I may be exposed to something unjust anytime (her an adaletsiz bir şeylere maruz kalabilirim) and I may lose everything. I don't want to live with this risk. I mean it's selfish maybe but it really scares me. Because someone can experience something really wrong, something really bad and they can realize that they don't have any right and law. (Deniz)

The aim of this first chapter is to explore the idiom “Anything can happen” (Her an her şey olabilir) that my participants use in relation to the uncertainties that surround their daily life. Although the idiom can be taken as referring to the open-endedness of different possibilities -both optimistic and pessimistic, the way in which my participants use the phrase favors the latter possibility.

The literature on neoliberal youth subjectivities is filled with accounts and analyses of uncertainty vis-a-vis the future. This uncertainty is tied to the economic and social insecurity that neoliberalism brings to young lives as school-to-work transitions are rendered more complex. However, the uncertainty of what the future would bring is only one façade of the daily uncertainties that female university students in Turkey face. Thus, my aim in this chapter is to complicate the temporality of neoliberal uncertainty, and analyze how uncertainties seep into every aspect of today's daily life in the “actually existing neoliberalism” (Peck, Brenner, and Theodore 2018) in Turkey.

Human life is always endowed with uncertainties and indeterminacies. Thus, uncer-

tainty is not new to the neoliberalism or its repercussions on young people's lives in Turkey. However, what I want to highlight is the growing anxiety of my participants around the extent and content of these uncertainties. This anxiety, I suggest, is the remnants of the readily available dreams and promises that my participants refuse to share. If the readily available dreams of a smooth transition to social adulthood, social mobility, a safe family or building their own family, trusting the law and the state, or recently a safe and comfortable life abroad offer "certainty" to some extent, as the uncertainties stemming from dissolution of these institutions grow my participants refuse to share the promises of these dreams. Similar to the way in which Frederiksen (2013) follows ruins and social afterlives in Georgia, I attempt to follow the dreams of social adulthood and future that were available to youth in Turkey once but made impossible as a result of different layers of social reality. As Frederiksen notes, "[to] inhabit a ruin is to live in a world of lingering remains and residues that are both material and social" (16), and affective in this case. Unable to replace or transmute these ruined dreams, what young people in Turkey share is a growing sense of anxiety, frustration, and a state of limbo -what, following its use on the social media by the young people in Turkey, I refer to as wreckedness, or *yıkıklık* in Turkish. It is also peculiar how ruin or ruination resembles to "wreck" or affective wreckedness in this sense.

I have categorized the uncertainties that my participants dwell upon under three categories: economic, political, and intimate uncertainties. The economic uncertainties are related to the uncertainties around sustaining the present, as well as future, livelihood. As the economic crisis has been deepening in Turkey, it has a considerable impact on people's lives and young women constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in the face of economic downturn, rising inflation, currency fluctuations, and rising youth unemployment. Although my participants currently study or have graduated from the major universities in Turkey that share a promise of "social mobility" or "good future prospects", this does not protect them from possibility of unemployment or precarious working conditions. Coupling this picture with the debates around dissolution of myth of meritocracy and nepotism in Turkey, young people articulate their frustration and anger at a growing rate.

2.2 Economic Uncertainties

The economic uncertainties are one of the many uncertainties that my participants dwell on. According to World Bank's Turkey Economic Monitor April 2021 report,

the gradual recovery of Turkey's economy after the mid-2018 currency crisis has halted with the economic impact of COVID-19. The economic downturn in Turkey has a considerable impact on people's lives and young women constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in the face of growing economic crisis, rising inflation, currency fluctuations, and rising youth unemployment.

In this section, I explore my participants' struggles and frustrations vis-a-vis economic crisis in two axis: (1) how the economic crisis is experienced, and (2) how it forges new dynamics between young women their families. These two axis illustrate how the financial independence as a tenet of social adulthood becomes unattainable for the young women.

2.2.1 Experiencing Economic Crisis

Sertap is a graduate student at Koc University and also an alumna of Bogazici. We met at a café around Hisarüstü, the neighborhood where Bogazici University is located and where not only the students but also graduates of Bogazici, such as Sertap, reside. Most of the students spend their days at Hisarüstü cafés, studying or having a chat with friends. Night life is also vibrant at the neighborhood where bars or student houses are overflowing at night. Notwithstanding Bogazici students' preference for living around Hisarüstü, the cost of living at Hisarüstü is high as it is located near more expensive and high-end neighborhoods of Etiler and Bebek. Because of the demand for accomodation around Hisarüstü, the rents are higher than the average in Istanbul and apartments are relatively old. It is not an exception that the students share their houses with two or more other students in order to pay the rents of old and moldy apartment houses.

Sertap is one of the Bogazici graduates who choose to continue living at Hisarustu. She has two other roommates who have also graduated from Bogazici recently. At the beginning of our interview, we immediately bonded over our experiences of graduate school, her at Koc University, and me at Sabanci University. She has an assistantship at her department that she is very much enthusiastic about although it is unpaid. As she left her previous job and does not have a steady income aside from her three tutoring jobs, and sporadic transcription services that she provides on online platforms. However, she finds it difficult to make a living on these occasional sources of income:

... I have my rent and other expenses to take care of. So, I'm trying to

make ends meet, but I'm generally struggling to do so. I can say that clearly. That's why I'm currently talking with companies for potential employment opportunities during my thesis year and for summer.

Dispersed in almost every daily interaction in Turkey, the phrase "We can't make a living" ("*Geçinemiyoruz*" in Turkish) has become a political slogan, alongside with "We can't shelter" ("*Barınamıyoruz*"), as the economic crisis deepens in 2021 (see bianet, 2021a; 2021b). Tracing the former phrase which Sertap uses is important to tackle the daily imaginary of young women in the midst of economic crisis. In Turkish, "*geçinmek*", as its English translation "to make a living", refers to sustaining oneself to live. In Sertap's case, failing to do so gives way to her withdrawal from certain aspect of her life which she sees crucial in her identity, in her becoming as the young adult that she desires to become. One aspect is her academic life:

C: Is there something that bothers you nowadays? S: Economy.. Really.. Unbelievable.. Maybe I am exaggerating, I don't know but I don't think so. Let me tell you this. Some days I look at my bank account, there is only 11 liras and I have to get by on these 11 liras for five days. But going to school costs 15 liras. I feel so terrible sometimes.. I feel really unsafe when I have so little money if I go out. So, I don't go out. Sometimes this is the reason I don't go to school. I don't want to experience this

Not only she hesitates to go to school when she does not have money, but also she has to work in the private sector in her dissertation year. Her enthusiastic tone which I felt immensely while she was talking about her school and research projects she takes part in shifts:

C: What kind of position are you applying for? S: I'm mostly applying for talent acquisition and HR-related roles. In fact, there's a company that said they would make an offer, but they haven't sent it yet. I went through several interview stages, including a case study. This morning, I had another interview with a different company, also in HR. It seems like I'll be doing something along those lines during the summer. Otherwise, it's quite challenging.

She also notes the hesitation she experienced about this decision which she refers as a "trade-off":

Today, I talked to my advisor. I told them that there is no scholarship from the school, and I will work to support myself. They were really understanding and supportive. I was a bit worried when I went to talk to them because there is a certain attitude at Bogazici University that says, "If you're working, then you're not focused enough on being a master's student." So, I approached the conversation cautiously, but my advisor responded very positively. They said that it's important to make a living first and then focus on school. It made me feel really good. However, of course, it will take up a lot of my time, but there's nothing I can do about it. It's a trade-off.

Thus, for Sertap, the experience of economic crisis is a constant trade-off between a self that she desires to become, and a self who has to withdraw from the spheres that make the former possible to unfold. However, it is not fair to suggest that she is stuck between the two, ripped from her agency to become. She looks for different possibilities, maybe a middle ground between the two; although, sometimes this leads her to dead-ends, alongside with feelings of frustration and failure.

2.2.2 Family and Economic (Inter)Dependency

The transition perspective suggests that the markers of social adulthood, such as parting with the family or having a job also indicate financial and social "independence" from the family (Dalsgard et al. 2014; Çelik and Lüküslü 2012). This proposition is proved problematic on two ends: Firstly, because of the precarious working conditions, increasing youth unemployment, and growing economic crisis in Turkey, many young people struggle to make their own living even if they work, and thus their families try to support them financially and socially (Yılmaz 2017). Global examples also show similar tendencies (Honwana 2014; Khosravi 2017). Secondly, the binary between "dependence" versus "independence" from family is rather simplistic as it does not correspond to the lived experiences of young people. Even if they move out of their family homes or have the ability to support themselves financially, new lines of dependencies and independencies are forged in their relationships with their families where they constantly negotiate their positioning and create new tactics to move in and out of familial spaces.

In Turkey, income support for young people is limited, but as Yılmaz (2017) suggests, "young people in education are in the most advantageous position to get income support from the state" (47) which can take two forms, either as student loans with repayment or scholarships. The repayment scheme for student loans has caused strong dissent of the university students, ranging from social media hash-

tags to protests ?(Candan 2022; Nazher 2022; Öztürk 2022). On the other hand, the scholarships are limited in its extent since they are “income means-tested and dependent upon school performance” (Yılmaz 2017, 47). Thus, they mostly rely on their families financially. However, studying at the major universities of Turkey, my participants have a higher chance in terms of access to scholarship based on “merit” or school performance. But this also does not protect them from needing financial support from their families because of the rising inflation rate and cost of living in Istanbul. This complicates young women’s relationship with their families.

For my participants, being able to sustain themselves financially is important for the way in which they make sense of themselves and their projected becoming as adults. Deniz was one of the top students in the university entrance exam, and thus secured a scholarship from a state institution. For her, not relying on her family is important:

C: How do you make your living? Scholarship, family? D: Yes, I have scholarship, I mean I don’t get money from my family. I did work hard for not getting money from my family, I studied really hard in the 12th grade. I didn’t want to rely on them, so achieving this makes me *happy* [emphasis added].

However, with the economic crisis and high inflation rate Deniz struggles financially:

Before the pandemic, I was able to make both ends meet. Now, anyone feels the consequences of the crisis. I also feel it. But it is not that big of a deal. At my university, the cafeteria is arranged hierarchially: The most expensive restaurants are at the top floor. Before I was able to go to these restaurants. Now, I can only eat at the cafeteria but I don’t have big problems. But it is also true that I have less comfort in my life now. But still getting money from my moms is not an option.

Ash also gets several scholarships from her private university because of her success in the university entrance exam, in addition to KYK student loan. Similar to Deniz, she mentions that although she can get by on her scholarships before the economic downturn, she now struggles and relies on her family:

I had tried to sustain myself without the help of my family until this year. But this year with the economic downturn... Before, I was able to handle it with my scholarships. But now I am getting regular allowance from my family. I hadn't gotten money from them for a long time. I guess since I was 16... Because they were in jail, my older sister helped me a little. Then, I came to university and got the scholarships. I really forgot the concept of asking for money. I felt really ashamed [emphasis added]. I know it is wrong, everyone gets money from their families. And they don't talk behind my back or tell me that I'm spending too much, they want to help me.

Aslı's confident tone while narrating her success in earning the scholarships shifts, she lowers her shoulders and voice as she proceeds to narrate her feelings of shame and unease as she became more dependent on her family financially. Although not directly articulated, the emotions of shame and unease are also traceable in Sertap's account:

[When I don't have money], I text to my grandpa. (laughs) I want money from him. I text to my dad but I don't want to because I am not used to getting money from them. It really bothers me. Not that he won't give me money but it bothers me (bana koyuyor istemek).(Sertap)

I have a problem in my back. I need to exercise to alleviate my pain. But I can't because I don't have money. So, my father offered money for gym membership, he said "Don't think about it, I can pay." But does it bother me? Yes, it does. (koyuyor mu? Koyuyor.) Because he can also say 'Where are you going?!' if I say I want to move out. Or if I want to go on a vacation he can say 'Where are you going? I still pay for your gym membership.' Your father also does this. (Dilara)

If being able to sustain oneself and financial independence becomes a source of pride and happiness, not being able to do this is a source of unease, shame, and unhappiness for my participants. Ahmed (2014) explains the experience of shame as self-negation which "is taken on by the subject as a sign of its own failure and is usually experienced before another" (103).

Shame and pride have a similar affective role in judging the success or failure of subjects to live up to ideals, though they make different

judgements. The possession of an ideal in feelings of pride or shame involves a performance Shame collapses the ‘I’ with the ‘we’ in the failure to transform the social ideal into action, a failure which, when witnessed, confirms the ideal, and makes possible a return to pride. (109)

The ideal, in this case, is the financial independence from the family which is tightly enmeshed with the tenets of social adulthood. The recent economic downturn in Turkey, this ideal has been shattered for the most, giving way to the feeling of “failure”. However, the binary between “dependence” versus “independence” from family is simplistic, which does not correspond to the lived experiences of young people in this context. Dilara graduated from Sabanci University last year and works at a multinational company. Her family stills pay for a lot of her expenses. For example, she needs to go to the gym and exercise because of her backache and her father pays for it:

He [her father] offered to pay for it, he said ‘You have a problem with your back, I can pay for it, do not think about it’. But does it bother me? Yes, it does. Because the same man can say ‘Where are you going?!’ if I say I want to move out. Or if I want to go on a vacation he can say ‘Where are you going? I still pay for your gym membership.’ Your father also does this.

She earns a little above the minimum wage and because of the housing crisis in Istanbul, she lives with her family. Similar to Merve, her relationship with her family is endowed with problems. One aspect is the domestic work she has to do at her familial house:

My father isn’t the sort of man who shares or helps with the chores. We do the chores with my mom. I mean I grow up to be a 26-year-old person who hangs her dad’s underpants at her family’s home. Younger Dilara would look at this Dilara now and say what you have done, what happened to you.

Dilara’s case illustrates how long-held assumptions of transition perspective have been proved wrong by the expanding precariousness. As Yilmaz (2017) suggests “employment opportunities with a decent wage and social security are not universally available for young people” (49). However, similar to the transition perspective,

Yılmaz also proposes educational attainment as a strong determinant in transitioning to social adulthood. But Dilara's case shows that being a graduate of one of the top universities in Turkey does not mean that one can have a "decent wage and social security" that can enable "independence" from family. In her study on youth unemployment, Çelik (2008) suggests that as "the number of young people who continue living with their families is increasing," it results in a "delay in youngsters' emancipation" (431). However, it is also problematic to assume a direct link between living with family and "emancipation" or "independence". Not only do young women try to find tactics to live through the oppressive domestic environments and to find social circles -such as friend groups and social media- to articulate their frustrations and disappointments, but also they strategically move in and out of these spaces (Lüküslü 2013). Moreover, young women's relationship with their family cannot be defined as "dependence" or "independence" unilaterally. Rather, we need to analyze them as "interdependencies" where roles of being young and adult, being a child and a parent shift and transmute where new lines interdependencies are forged.

2.3 Political Uncertainties

The uncertainties in the political field constitute another dimension of daily uncertainties that my participants narrate. By political uncertainties, I refer to the instances where my participants talk about the uncertainties regarding the state apparatus and mostly the law. In these accounts, my participants do not participate in the narrative of a state that protects the rights and lives of its citizens. These accounts also illustrate how state authoritarianism and the enmeshment of the AKP-Erdoğan government and law are felt and lived.

One aspect of political uncertainties is the anxiety and fear of political detentions that my participants hear or experience. The arbitrariness of political detentions feed into the feeling of "her an her şey olabilir." Although a few of my participants experienced or have relatives that experienced political detentions, the anxiety around the possibility of being detained without a legal and sound reason is overarching. Ashi is a third year student at Sabanci University. Her parents were convicted and sentenced to jail as a part of the mass detentions allegedly linked to 2016 coup d'état attempt and Gulen movement. She was 16 years old when her parent were convicted. Her parents conviction affected not only her daily life back then, but also her future plans, dreams, and her world-view.

When I was 16 years old, we all know about the political events that were unfolding. At that point, while I was preparing for the university entrance exam, my father pulled me aside and said, "If you study law, you won't be able to achieve anything in this country. No matter how hard you try, no matter how much you claim to be realistic, studying law won't lead you anywhere in this country." ... I guess I realized that I needed to find a way to make a living, so I decided to pursue computer engineering, thinking maybe I can succeed in that field.

Although Asli had changed her course of studying law, she now envisions to become a social scientist via her dual degree. However, the lawlessness that became the modus operandi of Turkey after the 2016 coup attempt still affects Asli and her family.

My sister was not assigned a position after graduating from medical school for two years. She became a doctor. They assigned her when they needed doctors at the beginning of the pandemic. Then they started working her like a dog. She has to take 10 shifts per month on top of her regular working hours. In the reasoned decision regarding my sister, it said, "It is inconceivable to have different political views from the people she lives with..." They are saying that your family is politically guilty, so we cannot assign you.

Asli describes what her and her family have been going through as a "political war":

We are in the midst of a political war. Everyone feels that they have to choose a side. The ones who do not feel like that are only privileged people. My parent went through something extremely unfortunate. I do not want to elaborate on the political impact of what they went through. I hate both sides... In a way, I felt like my parents were part of it, but only a small portion.

The feelings of unease, exhaustion and resentment are evident in Asli's account. Similar to Asli's encounter with lawlessness, the Bogazici students describe what they have been experiencing during the Bogazici protests. As the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has appointed rector Bogazici University, academics and students started peaceful protests on and around the campus in January 2021. The protests still continue. During and after these protests, a group of students had been de-

tained. Süreyya, a second year philosophy student at Bogazici University, has taken part in demonstrations and social media campaigns as a member of the university club focusing on human rights and social welfare. She explains her bewilderment on the first days of rector appointment:

In January 2021, they dropped a bomb into Bogazici. Everyone was shocked. We were in shock too. I am not sure but I want to describe it as “an academic coup”. All of sudden, all of our agenda is filled with Bogazici protests. Our club focuses on prisoners’ rights. But all of sudden we become the prisoners.

Merve, another Bogazici student, describes her exhaustion during the protests:

I feel exhausted. I witnessed too much right abuse by the state. People from my inner circle experienced it. I have been around these people for too long. I think the state should help you, make your life easier, to protect you. But it is very aggressive here and it exhausts me.

During our conversation, I ask Merve to elaborate more on this feeling of exhaustion:

I don’t know how to fully explain it, but I don’t feel safe. I don’t have trust in the institutions of the state. I believe that the state should protect me, but I don’t trust the police, for example. It’s a troubling situation because you should be able to trust the police. But not feeling safe and constantly thinking that danger could come at any moment... We saw it during the events at Bogazici University, too. Feeling endangered even without doing anything. In a place where such powerful entities exist, I feel weak and defenseless.

This disenchantment signals AKP-Erdoğan governments’ eroding legitimacy in the eyes of the young people who are not its active supporters. If one aspect of the political uncertainties that my participants dwell upon is the arbitrary detentions and police’s use of violence, the other aspect is problem of impunity which is discussed mostly in the cases of gender-based violence. The fear of the possibility of being subjected to gender-based violence in public spaces has been growing for women in Turkey. My participants talk about feeling like they need to be alert every time

they are in a public space. In a recent study, Akalın and Lüküslü (2021) suggest that young women feel unease and anger because they fight against this expected sexual harassment in public.

In our conversation about her daily life at her family home, Dilara remembers an incident that happened two weeks prior to our meeting. In Kadıköy metroline, a man attacked a woman with a knife after a dispute about wearing masks. The detained defendant, who was charged with a prison sentence of up to 18 years and 3 months, was released approximately 7 months later (Evrensel 2022):

I used to not be afraid when walking on the street. Because I had confidence in myself, and I thought that if I reacted, nothing would happen to me, and people would speak up. But look at that woman's experience with the man who attacked with a knife, he has 20 prior records... Now, I fear when going from my family's home to the metro, and for the first time in the past year or so, I fear taking public transportation. I fear walking on the street. I dress according to the climate, damn the climate... I can't wear what I want, I can't wear a mini skirt, for example, I have to wear a bra. I don't want to, it truly makes me uncomfortable. But when I see people's gazes, I get scared. Everyone can do this. It's not related to education level or anything. I was harassed by a professor at our university, and I couldn't do anything about it. Because how can you prove it? But that guy has the upper hand because he knows nothing will happen to him.

Deniz expresses similar emotions and concerns:

I am tired of being a woman in Turkey. I am tired of trying to do something on my own. I don't want to prove myself to anyone because I'm a woman. I want to walk on the streets comfortably. I don't want to feel scared thinking whether someone will harass me. (Deniz)

For Sertap and Ashi the fear of sexual assault in the public space gives way to some degree of self-censorship. They try to tiptoe around the possibilities of danger by navigating the way in which they dress, act and speak. However, they acknowledge that this does not protect them from potential assault. It is significant that in all these accounts there is a degree of externalization. There is an external gaze which imposes the way in which woman act in the public space.

My family didn't allow me to go out wearing shorts. If they saw how I dress now, maybe they wouldn't say as much, but they would comment on the exposure of my midriff or ask why I dress like this during Ramadan. You know what I mean... I mean, I can understand it to some extent. Yes, there are comments and all sorts of unwanted advances happening on the streets, on buses, and so on. But here's the thing, no matter what I wear, it's going to be like this. I'm starting to feel like there's no escape from it. It's not about my clothing choices; it's unrelated to that. (Sertap)

One time when I couldn't find cigarettes on campus, I asked the taxi driver on my way back from the airport if he could stop at a gas station or a convenience store so I could buy some. Even in that situation, I felt afraid. Because there is a societal perception associated with smoking, consuming alcohol, and the concept of "loose women," you know... If I'm seen in that way, it's like people view it as more acceptable to attack or target women like that. And this doesn't necessarily mean physical violence; it could be verbal abuse or any form of aggression. If I go to a bar at night, people might question why I'm there and say things like, "What were you doing there?" if something happens to me. (Aslı)

Akalın and Lüküslü (2021) refer to the way in which the family members try to restrict their daughters' attitudes and clothing in the public space as becoming the "representatives of the street" (14) and that of the external gaze. Akalın and Lüküslü also suggest that as the young women feel that they are restricted not only by the strangers on the street but also by their families, they realize that their field of action is not likely to expand. I suggest, in this instance, both psychologically and geographically, my participants retreat to what is familiar. So, the restricted field of action by the external factors is translated into restricting their own field of action in order to feel safe:

I try to confine my life within a small space where I feel safe. There is this self-imposed limitation within me. Laziness may also play a part in this, but somewhere deep inside, there's a voice saying, "This place is safer for you. You have familiar faces, familiar buildings, familiar streets." I don't like the stares that are received when I venture outside of Hisarüstü. However, I have to go out regularly, like when I go to the hospital in Fatih, and I don't enjoy it. There haven't been any assault that are directly targeted, but my presence there is highly acknowledged to the point of making me uncomfortable. (Burçak)

It is worth mentioning that Burçak externalizes both the fear and threat of sexual assault not only geographically but also discursively. For example, she does not say “the stares that I receive” but “the stares that are received” in passive voice. Similarly she says “There haven’t been any assault that are directly targeted.” instead of saying “assaults that target me” or “I did not experience any direct assault.” The use of passive voice potentially signals the way in which she feels objectified and anxious, alongside with referring to the external heteropatriarchal gaze that is imposed upon her.

2.4 Intimate Uncertainties

The distinction I try to draw between political and economic uncertainties that shatter the readily available narratives is only an analytical one. What I try to demonstrate is how these uncertainties seep into the everyday lives of young women and forge new subjectivities that are grounded on floating uncertainty. In this instance, everything, including intimate relationships from friendships to romantic ones is charged with unease, inconsistency, and unsteadiness.

In *The End of Love* (2019), Illouz tries to understand “what plagues our romantic lives collectively” (12) in the midst of globalization, consumer culture and technology. She suggests that “a generalized, chronic and structural uncertainty now presides over the formation of sexual or romantic relations” (19). Following Illouz, if the study of romantic relationships and romance itself is a sociological one, and if consumer culture and technology alters the way in which we love, or unlove others, what do the authoritarian regimes and neoliberalism(s) with its ability to produce ever-expanding uncertainties possibly do to our relationships with our close ones? What happens to the willingness and capacity to understand other’s psyche and individuality, as well as to build a life together even if it is short lived in the midst of growing exhaustion, anxiety, and fear that my participants dwell upon in the previous sections? In this section, I will try to elaborate on these questions and my aim is to draw attention to this underresearched field and possibly open up a space for further research.

Globally young people’s cultures of intimacy, love and friendships are drawing attention across different disciplines. In Turkey the research on the area is limited in the psychological field. However, there are also recent sociological interventions with emphasis on gender (Özbay 2017; Özbay et al. 2023; Özyeğin 2015). In a recent study Özbay et al. (2023) suggest that in contrast to growing conservatism in

the political and social field, the young participants express progressive values in relation to relationships and intimacy. Alongside with this trend, the researchers also demonstrate that “the traditional relationship patterns and norms, including the idealization of monogamous relationships, robust familial ties, and sensitivity for moral reputation seem prevalent” (29). Taking my cue from Illouz’s and Özbay and his colleagues’ sociological imagination on intimate relationships, I try to understand how the current affective constellation that my participants live through is manifested in their intimate relationships, including romantic relationships and friendships.

Six of my participants are in heterosexual relationships. Although they talk about the difficulties of their relationships, they also mention how their relationships anchor them in the unstable meaning worlds they live in and how they enjoy sharing their opinions and feelings with a significant other. İlke has a boyfriend for two years. Although they have separate houses, she says that they are practically living together. They try to overcome the difficulties of economic crisis together:

We have one computer that is working properly and we use it together because we can’t afford buying another one . . . He has graduated this year and now he has an internship at a firm. It is paid, so we live on with that money, as well as the money we get from our parents. We basically have a joint account for money.

İlke also stresses how their relationships transformed both of them and how she enjoys this transformation:

He has been helping me a lot, I can’t say it otherwise. He is very good at English, he is helping me. If it weren’t for him, I would not have had 3.58 GPA probably. I would have been out everyday probably. He made me more home-loving, maybe a calmer person. He was a calmer person before, and I think I made him more easygoing and sociable. I think we just found a middle ground.

However, daily anxieties are also a part of the intimate relationships. For İlke, her boyfriend’s future anxieties become a site of struggle:

He has a concrete future anxiety. I think it is also because of his grad-

uation. Sometimes he is thinking about his future for like three days, he doesn't think about anything else and gets depressed. He becomes paralyzed. And his future anxiety makes me more anxious. I become reactive, sometimes passive aggressive. I say "Get up and do something then." I shouldn't say that I know...

Sometimes future anxieties come together with families' expectations about social adulthood and long-term relationships:

I have future anxieties about things like this: My family wants me to get married. We have been together with my boyfriend for two years and we have known each other for ten years. My family knows him. And they try to put pressure on us about marriage, we are arguing about this occasionally. That's also a part of future.

Dilara also tries to navigate through economic hardships with his boyfriend. While for İlke, managing income and expenses together with her boyfriend transforms their relationship in a more positive way, Dilara stresses the difficulties they encounter:

My birthday was last week. We went on a date with my boyfriend. Now we have to cut down on our expenses for a month. At least a month! This offends me, you know. He is three years older than me, he is a lawyer. We have good academic credentials, good occupations. But he also lives with his family, he can't have an apartment because he can't afford. We try to find an AirBnB every month for spending a night or two together. This month we can't do that because we spend our money on my birthday. I feel like a high school student. We don't earn a proper wage, they literally give us pocket money. I still try to think about the good parts, we are together, we are happy. But... The nights we spend together... Because you feel anxious when you kiss in the public, they are looking. You want to hold hands... You can do that maybe in Taksim. This is like the bare minimum but it is offending me.

When I ask about whether she has plans or desires about living together, marrying or having a children in the future with her boyfriend, she starts to recite a long list of economic and social problems in Turkey associated with raising a child:

Now people struggle to feed their children. They send their children to public schools, which public school? There are religion classes in

kindergarten now. I am an atheist, but even if I were Muslim, I wouldn't have wanted that. Why do they brainwash my own child? Children are dying in this country. My nephew is two years old. His first name was my name. My sister says "Erdem will go abroad". They are planning the future of a 2-year-old. They have to do that. Before my boyfriend, I wasn't thinking about marriage or having a child. Now it's the opposite. I am in love with a person, I want to have a big family with him, like dogs, children. . . It doesn't have to be biological children, I am thinking about adoption because there are many children without families.

So, for Dilara, her desires are rendered difficult or impossible by the current conditions she is living in. However, sometimes thinking about the desires and plans become impossible, living the fate of intimate relationships "up in the air."

Burçak is planning to move abroad in six months and describes how she feels about the future of her relationship:

I have a partner, I love him so much. I am so lovey-dovey. We are together for three years I guess. We have a great relationship now. I am so happy here or we are constantly talking when we are apart. I say when we are apart but he just lives on the other side of the city. We always find something to do together, like we read, listen a podcast, watch a movie or play a game together. But I think it will end in six months somehow. I don't know what will happen then. . . I don't think like he will be in my future. I don't want to think about it because it will be heartbreaking at the end. Now I feel good, I am very happy.

Merve talks about her relationship in a similar manner:

C: Is there something that has been occupying your mind a lot lately?
M: Well.. There are things that I try not to think about too much. C:
What are you trying not to think about? M: Well, I'm trying to avoid
thinking about problems in my relationship. That's how it is. Deniz's
account is telling as she reflects on the way in which she feels hesitant
and uncertain about her decisions in life, including her relationship: C:
So, how would you describe your mood lately? D: I am so indecisive. I
have doubts about everything. I make some decisions, then they evaporate
into nothingness. I just dump them. My friends are like this, my
relationship is like that, okay, let's roll with it. Then I look at the
situation in the country and wonder why I'm here, why I'm not doing
Erasmus. Then I look at my relationship and sometimes we have problems.
I question why I don't break up with him. We do something

with my boyfriend, I question whether it was the right decision. Should I have done it differently? From the outside it looks okay, everything seems fine, yet I still feel a sense of instability. Recently I've been feeling indecisive, doubtful, and lacking confidence in myself I guess.

Similar to intimate relationships, my participants stress that they form their friendships around the daily anxieties they had to carry, such as political and economic uncertainties. The anxiety about future is presented as one of the hottest topics in friend groups. Friendships can play a vital role in making sense of the existing uncertainties and precarities. As Frederiksen (2013) puts it, friendship relations "can be seen as a social tool to tame an otherwise uncertain future in the sense that they came to serve as a solid core in the midst of societal change" (49).

Sertap names her friends within year graduate cohort as "solidarity networks." As she grapples with academic precarity and her future anxiety surrounding her prospects in the academia, her cohort plays a vital role for her:

In my master's program, I didn't know anyone except one person. They all turned out to be incredibly amazing. So, we formed a great group of friends. They are my solidarity network. It's great in terms of having fun and being social. When you think about it, we are all different but I feel understood and included. It makes me feel really good. When I go to someone else with my academic problems, they don't understand. They say things like "Just quit if it makes me you feel bad, quit the master's, why are you trying so hard?" It's not like that. I am not sharing my troubles because I want to give up, I want to continue. When I explain it to someone who is also in academia, they understand so well because they are going through it too.

Sharing a sense of future anxiety with her friends which she refers as "her people" is also important for Ashl:

When I look at it, it feels like everyone around me has discovered a planet and they revolve around it, while I'm drifting in the outer space. But in reality, this is true for many people. At least the people I consider as "my people" feel the same way. Or let's take my roommate as an example. She also carries similar anxieties, but she found her solution in adapting to the system. her political views are similar to mine, but she says, "I would rather live according to the system's rules and ensure my own security than being crushed by it." And you can't really blame a person for that. You either have to take steps to secure yourself in some way,

conform to the system, or you'll be left drifting and constantly searching for what to do next.

While common emotional constellations play a vital role in socialization, in this case, the feelings of resentment, anger, frustration and exhaustion that are a part of this emotional constellation may give way to more vulnerable forms of friendship, again endowed with uncertainties. For example, Deniz's feelings of instability seep into her friendships as well:

We have a group of 4-5 friends, and actually, everyone is a bit insecure about our feelings towards each other. Even the slightest bit of coldness or a negative reaction triggers thoughts like, "Hey maybe you don't like me anymore and we are hanging out just because we are in the same friend group." I asked the same question, everyone did to some extent. Then one day my friends got really angry and said, "Don't ask me this question anymore, guys. We're friends, why do you think I don't like you?" After that incident, I realized that I am not sure about whether I know my friends' flaws or contradictions. I think that's why.

Political uncertainties also seep into friendships. Sharing the same political view or the same attitude towards a political event can become a foundation for forming or sustaining friendships. Ash's account on how she uses her parents' political imprisonment as a litmus test for her friends is telling in this regard.

I understand this is not okay but I give too much importance to people's political views. It's not like, you know, I'm a leftist, so I don't associate with liberals or anything like that. It's not about valuing political views in that way, but rather being able to have conversations within a certain framework with that person. Can we understand each other's perspectives? Can we approach each other with logical arguments? Can we have meaningful discussions at a certain point? When I realize that I don't speak the same language with my friends, when I feel like they are "not my people," I fall into a void. It's not so much about them understanding me, but rather me feeling that they don't or won't understand me. At that moment, I use my mother's situation as a litmus test. I talk about it and sometimes I receive funny responses. And then I decide whether I will continue my friendship with that person.

Thus, it seems that although close relationships, solidarity networks, or one's people are vital "to tame an otherwise uncertain future", as Frederiksen puts it, the uncer-

tainties of the future and present are not external to them. Rather, the uncertainties form the backdrop to all our relationships. Regarding in this light, Frederiksen's formulation risks drawing a bold line between the personal and private, while my participants' accounts illustrate how the uncertainties seep into our psyche, as well as into our relationships which we try to cultivate in order to protect our psychological wellbeing. However, this is not to say that the close relationships do not function at all. Rather, what I suggest is this contradictory double movement is the characteristic of neoliberal intimacy.

2.5 Conclusion

We started this chapter with the discussion of the daily uncertainties that unsettle the readily available social narratives of an economically stable adulthood, politically stable state, and intimately stable relationships. Through my participants' accounts and Frederiksen (2013)'s conceptualization of social afterlives, I tried to unpack the frustrations and anxieties that the dissolution of the social premises produces.

In this sense, this chapter attempts to explore the temporality of uncertainty that my participants experience. This experience of multiple uncertainties is not limited to the instance of pondering about future prospects. Instead, every minute and every day has been becoming more and more uncertain. Considering that the uncertainties encompass different temporalities and timings, is it possible to sustain a living or dream about future for young women in Turkey? How do these uncertainties transform our everyday lives, as well as our ability to aspire? The next chapter shifts the temporality of uncertainty and focuses on future.

3. AFFECTIVE FUTURE TOPOGRAPHIES

3.1 Introduction

The public discussions on young people in Turkey are oversaturated with a focus on their expanding desire to live abroad. However, young people's voices and authentic perspectives are missing in these discussions. In this chapter, I aim to reflect on how my participants narrate and live through the discourses of living abroad or in Turkey to understand the multilayered, complicated, and sometimes contradictory motivations and desires about future geographies and temporalities. The question of whether young people want to live in Turkey or abroad in the future is a complex one that needs to be unpacked. My participants' narratives of a future spatiality are enmeshed with the questions of temporality and affects that are attached to different geographies.

According to Turkish Statistical Institute (2023), in 2021, 287,651 people had emigrated from Turkey. Moreover, the 20-29 age group constituted the largest migrant population, followed by the 30-34 age group. Although the actual emigration is not in the scope of this thesis, but the desire for emigration, the statistics are striking. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's 2023 Turkish Youth Study gives a glimpse of young people's future expectations, including emigration. The study finds that 63 percent of young people desire to live in another country if given the opportunity. The most cited motivations are improved living conditions (47.8 percent) and having more freedom (20.7 percent) (7).

This trend about young people's desire to live abroad is often problematized by both the government and opposition parties and groups as a moral panic but in different ways. Firstly, the AKP government and Erdogan have been trying to discursively categorize these young people who want to live abroad as deviating from the "Turkish values" and the idea of a "pious generation" (Lüküslü 2016). While the discourse of "raising a pious generation" had become a leverage point of populism

in constructing the desirable youth in the New Turkey, young people's problems and dissent are eclipsed by being targeted as treasonous, dangerous, or against the nation itself. As Lukuslu (2016) suggests, the "pious generation" project "creates its opponents, who are stigmatized as a threat for the larger political project" and national will (640). In this instance, young people's desire for emigration becomes a controversial topic in which the citizens who dreams about moving abroad are coded as the "other" of the "pious generation". The following excerpts from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statements illustrate how the Erdoğan-AKP governments instrumentalize young people's desire to move abroad as a part of the "us versus them", "national vs. anti-national" dichotomy:

"These days, I hear some ungrateful individuals, some rootless people, some clueless individuals talking about finding our country uninhabitable and considering going abroad . . . In fact, it would be appropriate to open an office for them and provide them with the money for their tickets to send them away. Because these people are a burden to this country, a burden." (Diken 2018)

"In social media, there is an attempt to implant the idea into the subconscious of young people that they must necessarily go to these developed countries by glorifying them. We look at those who move to other countries, driven solely by vulgar desires such as riding a better car, buying a newer phone, or attending more concerts, with pity . . . We will not stop until we build a developed Turkey where each of our citizens, but especially our young people, will not envy anything in other countries." (Duvar English 2022)

"They sent their own children to Paris, London, Brussels, and Washington, providing them with the best educational institutions and a life of luxury and extravagance. Meanwhile, they condemned the children of Anatolia and Thrace, who are like diamonds, to poverty, ignorance, deprivation, destitution, and even death. We have disrupted this game." (Günaydın 2022)

This populist use of "politics of resentment that encourages the projection of hatred onto groups or communities seen as either privileged and exclusionary or as potentially treasonous" (Kandiyoti 2016). Thus, young people's potential dissent

and desire for emigration becomes a mere political instrument in Erdoğan-AKP governments' attempt to reify the populist dichotomies through which youth's problems and desires are overshadowed at the expense of increasing polarization. While AKP-Erdoğan governments attempt to interpellate youth's increasing desire for emigration as "anti-national", the opposition's reflex is to reframe the discussion as a "brain drain" problem and a threat to the "survival of the state" (beka sorunu) (Babaeker Şap 2019; Gazete Duvar 2021). In that respect, both government and opposition's perspectives converge. Both approaches undermine young people's complicated motivations and desires for migration by reducing it to economic means or by instrumentalizing it to policy implications.

The recent trend of migration and its relation with de-democratization, economic crisis and shrinking public space in Turkey is widely discussed in the literature (Elveren 2018; Gevrek, Kunt, and Ursprung 2019; Öztürk and Tas 2022). In this chapter, I aim to focus on my participants' multilayered and complex desires about living abroad, taking into account both spatial and temporal aspects. Borrowing from Jo (2018), I refer to this constellation of affect, temporality, and spatiality as "affective future topographies." In this constellation, imagining a future in Turkey is inherently difficult, it is short-spanned and limited to months. This future is also "dangerous" and "uncertain". On the other hand, a future in the West can be imagined as distant future. It is still full of uncertainties, however they seem more manageable. If a future in Turkey is a "future to be avoided," a future in the West is a "future to be created."

3.2 Impossible Futures in Turkey

When I ask my participants how they imagine their future, they give vague accounts. The following excerpt from our conversation with Süreyya illustrates this:

C: What do you think about future then? Do you have any plans, desires? S: I don't think about it. I see thinking about future as a waste of time. Why should I imagine it when we don't know what will happen? Personally, I don't want to live in the future. I focus on the present. For example, in the short term, I think about what I want to do this year. I want to be involved in the club and contribute to my journalism journey.

It is curious how Süreyya says “I don’t want to live in the future” (“Gelecekte yaşamak istemiyorum”) to signal that she does not want to be absorbed in the plans about future. Although the more common use of the idiom is “to live in the past” (geçmişte yaşamak), she inverts the idiom, replacing the past with the future. When I try to dig into her opinions about future, she answers:

So, it seems like making specific plans like "I'll do this, I'll do that" isn't very logical. Especially in countries like Turkey where freedom is directly suppressed. We don't know what will happen because, if I were living in Norway, maybe I would make such plans for myself, but right now I'm not directly planning things like "I'll do this, I'll do that."

Related with the de-democratization and shrinking public space in Turkey, Süreyya feels like she does not have privileges or opportunities to think ahead. Her reference to Norway also appears in other participants' accounts.

If I lived in Norway, my dreams could come true. I could do it. I don't know, maybe I would have a dog, I would have the means to live with a dog. (Eda)

C: You are studying politics. How is it going? D: After choosing my major, I actually regretted it. When you focus fully on politics at a such a young age, especially in Turkey, you experience a serious psychological crisis. I love it but I think I would have liked it more if I had studied in Norway. You know, it's a nice major but I think it requires serious psychological resilience. Even Norwegian prime minister is not as political as us, for example, you understand? (Dilara)

I want to travel to South America. Yesterday I just thought that I haven't even seen all parts of Turkey. If I lived in Norway, I could visit Turkey. (Beyza)

In their research on Sardinian youth about future mobility, Cuzzocrea and Mandich (2016) suggest that the space opened by the imagination of mobility not only construct the geographies of arrival but also the geographies of departure as well, as

“a sort of generic antagonist to the rest of the world” (558). Following them and my participants’ accounts, it is possible to suggest that Norway had become the geography that Turkey is constructed as its generic antagonist. The vagueness in the narratives about future in Turkey persists as it can be only deciphered as the antagonist of another geography.

The anxiety and unease appear as the mostly articulated affects that are stucked to a future in Turkey in my participants accounts. When I ask to elaborate more on the content of these affects, my participants instantly give examples of daily encounters in public spaces.

M: Although I am 22 years old, I am exhausted from living in a country where basic human rights are not expected. I don’t want to explain this to anyone. I only live once and there no need for so much anxiety. All this anxiety, chaos.. I don’t have any nationalist feelings anyway.. C: Could you elaborate on this anxiety a bit more, please? M: For example, you are about to get off the subway and someone tries to get on at the same time, they don’t wait for you to exit. It’s rude and disrespectful. It is an unpleasant behavior, especially for someone who uses the subway everyday. There is no need for this. Or let’s say you are waiting in line and someone is going to cut in front of you. It is exhausting. These little things add up.

D: Actually I don’t want to live far away from my family. I want to live in Turkey but I don’t want to be amidst this chaos. I mean I don’t want to be afraid when I go outside. C: Could you explain the content of this chaos a bit more? D: I feel like everyone is very anxious and angry. For example, driving a car in Istambul is such a difficult thing. Ot talking to someone you don’t know on the street, asking for directions or something... Everyone is so rude and aggressive. These things affect our daily life.

It is not coincidental that young women refer to the anxiety and unease they experience in the public spaces. As Akalın and Lüküslü (2021) notes the streets and public spaces have become increasingly insecure and uneasy for young women in Turkey. My participants feel uneasy because of not only the possibility of facing gender-based violence but also minor aggressions. Thus, my questions about how they imagine their future in Turkey are answered with vague answers, as well as examples about daily life, spanning through a short period of time instead of imag-

ining a long term future. In this sense, the future time in Turkey is expanding, comprising the tomorrow, next week or the next month, while a long-term future becomes unimaginable.

Contrary to the mainstream analysis on young people's desire for emigration, this constellation does not always lead to a desire for emigration. As the discussion centers this desire, it overlooks young peoples' future imaginations who plans to stay in Turkey. Put differently, feeling uneasy and anxious about a future in Turkey does not directly translate into the desire or decision to move abroad. As Khosravi (2017) notes in his ethnography on Iranian youth, deep and wounding precarities may trigger "a longing to be somewhere else", as well as "a longing to be some time else" which can replace the untoward conditions of possibilities. This desire to be in some time else is mostly evident in Süreyya's account:

C: Where do you want to be in the future? In Turkey or abroad? S: I have a dream of staying in Turkey. C: Can you elaborate? S: I think Turkey will become a free country one day. Many of my friends want to go abroad, and they have valid reasons for that. I feel sad about it though. They are right, they are not obliged to take on this responsibility. But I feel sad because I think we should fix things here first. I want to stay and fight. And I want to live in that free country that we struggled for.

So, for Süreyya, staying in Turkey and being part of a struggle against de-democratization is an important part of her future ideals. In Khosravi's words, she desires to live in Turkey but in a different time, maybe in a different Turkey which will be achieved through public resistance. On the other hand, her account is still vague and devoid of concrete plans and desires.

Solidarity networks, friendships and family ties are another reason my participants articulate for their plans about building a future life in Turkey. The contradiction that intimate relationships produce in the face of both daily uncertainties and desire for emigration will be more elaborated on the next chapter. As Türkmen (2022) suggests the affective and emotional factors are important motives in voluntary return of high-skilled migrants to autocratizing contexts. She identifies missing the family and solidarity networks as affective pull factors, whereas discrimination, loneliness, and feeling foreigner are the push factors. As these affective factors are important in return migration of recent migrants in the West to Turkey, they are also important in the decision making process of emigration from Turkey to the West. İlke's account illustrates how belonging and sustaining the solidarity networks are important in this decision:

Even if go abroad for my master's degree, I definitely want to return. Eventually I want to live here. If one day my so-called maternal instinct kicks in and I decide to have children, I want to be in Turkey. It's not a good place to have children but... I guess the idea of being abroad scares me a bit. Besides being away from my friends.. You are going to a different culture that hasn't embraced your culture and everything you have adopted so far. I'll probably live in Turkey but life is unpredictable... Maybe I won't. Most people who say that end up leaving, don't they? (Laughs)

However, it is also important to note that she is also doubtful. She feels unsure whether these reasons will be enough for her to stay in Turkey or not. Again, the vagueness about a future in Turkey persists.

3.3 Looking for a Future in Different Geographies

If the future in Turkey is short-spanned and a future to be avoided, a future in a different country is a future to be created. In line with Mains' 2007 ethnography on young men in Ethiopia, my participants imagine a future in the West as a geographical fix to temporal problem of transitioning into adulthood. Thus, moving abroad becomes a spatial fix for restricted temporal opportunities of expected progress through one's life stages, from youth to social adulthood. While the possibilities of a "progressing" life abroad that is less economically and politically unstable appear as pull factors for my participants, they have also doubts and fears about experiencing migration and becoming a migrant. In this sense, the desire for emigration does not constitute accounts of "dream life fantasies", but rather that of disillusionment and weighting out different uncertainties and opportunities.

A striking difference between my participants' accounts on a future in Turkey and a future in abroad is the temporality. When Deniz starts talk about her desires about living abroad, the future time shrinks and more long-term plans become easier to articulate.

C: So, in the future where do you see yourself living? D: I would be living in Europe, of course... Of course, I would be living in Europe. I don't want to go to the US, it feels too far away. I don't want to go that far away. I think the US is too competitive, the skyscrapers and all.. I prefer small neighborhoods, small towns and pretty houses like in

Europe. A peaceful life and so on.. It seems very beautiful. That's why I want to live somewhere in Europe. A more stable and comfortable life. . . If things continue like this, I want to be in Europe as soon as possible. One of the factors that influenced my decision to accept the job offer from the multinational company that I will be working next year was that you can easily change offices. Like after six months, maybe I could switch to a small office in Europe. That motivates me. I want to move so badly.

In Deniz's account, moving to Europe offers a path for transitioning into social adulthood which is characterized by a more stable and secure life. For Merve, the social values that she sees as lacking in Turkey are important elements of her desire to move abroad:

I want to move to the US or Europe. I want to be in a country where people are respectful towards each other. I don't expect too much, just basic things. I mean, I expect people to be respectful and polite to each other. It is not necessary that everyone helps each other. Being polite and respectful, and most importantly, not interfering in each other's lives, not commenting on what someone wears, how they live, or who they hug and kiss. . . When someone kisses their partner in public, nobody should care about it. These things make me feel safe and happy.

Melda gives a similar answer:

There isn't a specific place I want to live in. But I am thinking about living abroad, away from Turkey. The people here are very judgmental and unkind. I think they are pure evil. I don't believe that people abroad are angels either; I'm not saying that they are "civilized." I guess they are not interfering with each other's lives. Sometimes I just want nobody to care about me. Here people judge others based on their appearance. Like they say, "She dyed her hair purple, she must be lesbian then." I want to live in a place where such things don't happen. I'm not saying that living abroad is better; it's just that people have exhausted me in my 22 years of life.

For other participants the desire for emigration intersects with existing uncertainties. For example, Burçak had been accepted by a university in Germany for her graduate studies. Although she is very enthusiastic about moving to Germany, she needs to figure out her financial situation. These financial problems keep her away from

having long-term plans.

Okay, I had been accepted. Now I need to start saving money. I also happened to find a job with a decent wage by sheer luck and I still feel very fortunate about that. Right now I'll focus on saving money but what will happen after I go to Germany? I don't know. I'm in a place where I feel like I should go and figure the rest out later. Thinking about the next step really triggers incredible panic.

Also, in Ash's case, the economic crisis and financial burden of moving abroad poses a serious problem:

Right now, what I want to do is graduate from college with a computer science degree and then desperately search for scholarships abroad. I don't know if I'll be able to find that scholarship. Because if I can't find a scholarship, my plan to go abroad falls apart. I can't afford that. I can pursue a master's degree somewhere in Turkey, and my family can provide me with financial support during my studies. However, they won't be able to provide that support while I'm abroad. Considering the tuition fees and living expenses in another country, it's not feasible. That's why I'm aware that I need to find a scholarship from somewhere. I'm not even worried about getting accepted because it feels like I'll get accepted somewhere. Maybe it's wrong to be confident about this, maybe I won't find a scholarship and end up in a difficult situation, but... I'm currently more concerned about finding more scholarships.

The possibility of finding a scholarships, paying the tuition fee and sustaining oneself are only one aspect of academic precarity that my participants expect to face. As the cost of moving abroad for graduate studies increase, my participants start to dwell on whether they will be successful or not, or whether it will be worth the struggle at all.

I don't have a plan what to do after Germany. It is very uncertain. Will I really be able to get my master's degree? Because I also think that I am a very mediocre person for academia. That's okay, I could be mediocre because I love learning and at some point I produce a body of knowledge. But I don't want to be in academia because I am afraid that I will not be able to do well. I don't have a long attention span anyway. I don't know what will happen after I get my master's degree, I have no idea. I have only planned it up to there at the moment, we'll see what

happens next. It is not very healthy but that's how it is.

As Taylor and Breeze (2020) suggest “feeling like an imposter is anecdotally ubiquitous in higher education and typically involves sensations of inadequacy and fears of being ‘found out’” (4). In the literature, this feeling is associated with increasing academic precarity in neoliberalism, alongside with race, class, gender, and migrant status (Breeze 2018; Taylor and Breeze 2020; Warnock 2016). Thus, Burçak's desire to leave Turkey in the face growing de-democratization intersects with her possible precarity in the abroad. Similarly, Dilara mentions the way in which she perceives the relations of exploitation will persist if she chooses to live abroad:

At the end of the day, here you are exploited like an animal, but there they will exploit you like a human. You will be still exploited. That's what I think.

As it is clear in Dilara's account, my participants' desires and dreams about living abroad is not pure good life fantasies. In all these accounts, there is always a negation, a “but” that completes them. Racism is one of these “buts”:

Indeed, being from another country, you may face experiences of racism or similar issues. Even if you may not appear visibly different, being perceived as white, there is still a possibility of encountering such situations. I'm not saying it's easy, definitely not, but let's give it a try and experience it as well... That's how I honestly think. It's the fundamental thought and opinion I have. (Merve)

Even with my EU citizenship, they wouldn't consider me an EU citizen. I had lived in Germany, someone yelled “Go back to your fucking country, you bitch” behind me. It was a homeless man. Similar to how they bully Syrians from lower classes here, he also harassed me. It is a double-edged sword! (Dilara)

For instance, am I expecting a completely rosy future abroad? No. After all, every country has its downsides. When I go there, I'll encounter bureaucracy and poorly functioning government institutions, and so on.

It's not specific to Turkey. (Ash)

Thus, dreams and plans about moving to the West is important for my participants through which they imagine to have a more secure, stable, and happy life. However, these dreams are not pure good life fantasies. Instead, they acknowledge and stress the difficulties and uncertainties they expect to face if they migrate to the West. Almost every articulation of desire to move abroad is followed by “but”s and negations. In this instance, I observe a disillusionment which I will elaborate in the next chapter.

3.4 Conclusion

The main concern of this chapter was the overemphasis on young people's desire for moving abroad. I suggest that this overemphasis in the political discourse and public opinion conceals the young people's imaginations about their future prospects. Instead, in this chapter I tried to unpack how my participants imagines a future in different geographies.

In this sense, firstly I argued that the way in which my participants struggle to imagine a future in Turkey. Secondly, a future in abroad seems more desirable and stable. However, the latter also involves uncertainties and vulnerabilities. Thus, different geographies are imagined through different affects and temporal structures. In the next chapter, bringing together present and future uncertainties and the affects they carry, I focus on what my participants do with these uncertainties and affects.

4. THE POETICS OF WRECKEDNESS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I aimed to analyze the way in which the readily available dreams of social adulthood -such as job security, long-term intimate relationships, financial and social independency-, social institutions -family, state, law-, and good life fantasies have been dissolving. In this chapter, I look at how reluctance to subscribe to these readily available narratives and dreams creates new subjectivities and topographies for young women in Turkey. Following the term that young people coined in the social media, I refer to this subjectivity and emotional constellation as “wreckedness.” I use “wreckedness” to describe a neoliberal youth subjectivity through which the readily available narratives are articulated with heavy cynicism and no new narratives are ready to replace them yet.

Bandak and Janeja (2018) analyze waiting as a social phenomenon through “politics and poetics of waiting”, with a reference to Clifford and Marcus (2010). While the former refers to the “engagements with the structural and institutional conditions that compel people to wait”, the latter identifies “the existential affordances of being placed in temporal relations, gaps and intervals where the outcome is uncertain” (3). Following them, this chapter focuses on the poetics of wreckedness, the affordances it takes and the emotional constellation it carries. With this respect, I identify three aspects of wreckedness - disorientation, not knowing, and disillusionment.

4.2 Disorientation

I find Sara Ahmed’s 2006 conceptualization of “disorientation” useful in my attempt to understand the wreckedness, as well as neoliberal youth subjectivities. Ahmed

writes: Let us consider the difference it makes to walk blindfolded in a room that is familiar compared to one that is not. In a familiar room we have already extended ourselves. We can reach out, and in feeling what we feel -say, the corner of a table- we find out which way we are facing. Orientation involves aligning body and space: we only know which way to turn once we know which way we are facing. If we are in a strange room, one whose contours are not part of our memory map then situation is not so easy. We can reach out, but what we feel does not necessarily allow us to know which way we are facing; a lack of knowledge that involves an uncertainty about which way to turn. (7)

When the familiar institutions, life paths, or decisions do not lead us to where they were intended or promised to lead, we become “disoriented” and somehow lost the feeling of “home.” When graduating from a well-known university does not guarantee a secure job, when the pathways to social adulthood seems out of reach, when the state’s repression becomes more and more visible, when the heteronormative institutions of marriage and life-long relationships crumble, when even moving to the Western countries does not seem to offer solution to these problems my participants feel disoriented and uneasy. When life becomes so uncertain that even the dynamics of change become unrecognizable and the road signs that are available to make sense of the changes in life are beings erased, subjectivities of crisis appear.

Moments of disorientation are vital. They are bodily experiences that throw the world up, or throw the body from its ground. Disorientation as a bodily feeling can be unsettling, and it can shatter one’s sense of confidence in the ground or one’s belief that the ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable. Such a feeling of shattering, or of being shattered, might persist and become a crisis. Or the feeling itself might pass as the ground returns or as we return to the ground. (157)

My participants do not use the word “wreckedness” when explaining the way in which they feel but they use similar metaphors related to this feeling of embodied disorientation:

We [referring to young people in Turkey] all live separate lives and somehow get swept into those lives. Decisions are made without asking us, and they affect our lives, but nobody ever asks us. We are never consulted; decisions are somehow made for us. Together, we fall down a waterfall, we are swept away in it. Some people try to row against the

current from there, but it's really difficult to resist the fierce waves. On the other hand, there's a group of people, like me, who are hopeful and say, "Come on, friends, we can succeed. The more paddles we have, the better." Another group, well, they try to find solutions by falling and then going to the source of the waterfall from another place, wondering if they can solve it from there. There's also a group that has already fallen, with no hope at all, because, you know, they've fallen from the waterfall down below. At the bottom, in the deepest part... They're still being carried away. They're still being dragged against the current. (Süreyya)

When you look at it from outside, there seems to be a good pattern in my life. However, I still have this feeling of uncertainty, doubt, and a lack of self-confidence lately. I feel wavering (sallantıda hissediyorum). (Deniz)

The thing I hate the most in my life is the culture of gratitude, you know. But we are in such a crappy situation that I have to be grateful right now. For example, I found a job. I earn a relatively good salary. But it's not enough for me to move out of my family's house or live with someone else. I have to shut down my brain for 45 hours a week. You find a point to dedicate to yourself, you find a blind spot. But of course, we're just living and going with the flow at some point, rolling along. (Dilara)

As I have grown up, I have realized that my future is dependent on me. I wish it wasn't, I wish someone could tell me what to do. That's why my perspective on my future is wavering right now. . . . Thinking about what will come next drags me into a state of incredible panic. (Burçak)

I believe that young people who have similar economic and socio-economic conditions as mine are currently feeling worthless and insignificant. Personally, I feel the same way, and I genuinely think that we are all being swept away. When I look at myself, it seems like everyone around me has found their own planet and is revolving around it, while I feel like I'm drifting in outer space. But in reality, this is true for many people. At least the people I consider "my people" feel the same

way. Even those who don't feel adrift, like my roommate, have similar concerns. Their political views are similar to mine, but they find the solution in adapting to the system. They say, "I'll live according to its rules because I need to secure myself," and you can't really blame them for that. You either take steps to secure yourself within the system, adapt to it, or you drift and keep going from one place to another to figure out what to do, and so on. (Ash)

As pathways that are promised to lead to a stable and secure present and future life fail, "they make what is 'here' strange" (Ahmed 2006, 160). That is mostly evident in the metaphors of "being swept away in a waterfall" or "drifting in outer space." This feeling of disorientation becomes the status quo for my participants in their everyday lives. When we lose our confidence in the ground that is promised to "support the actions that make a life feel livable", what we are left with is the feeling of strangeness and unease.

It is not surprising that Ahmed mentions migration as "a process of disorientation and reorientation" (9). As I have mentioned previously (Chapter 3), desire for migration appears as a spatial fix to a temporal problem of failing to transition into social adulthood. Thus, it becomes an attempt to reorient oneself in a strange geography because the familiar one is not familiar at all, but full of strangeness and unease. Another concept Ahmed introduces to us is "homing devices" through which "we learn what home means, or how we occupy space at home and as home" (9). Through these homing devices, we extend our selves and inhabit the familiar while also transmuting what is unfamiliar into our experiences and make them familiar. So, my question is that what can be the "homing devices" of wreckedness?

4.3 Not Knowing and Failure

The metaphors around the feeling of being disoriented that I have mentioned above convey a sense of limbo and losing agency or control. I suggest these narratives of losing agency or control, not knowing and disillusionment are the main "homing devices" of my participants. It is important to note that I do not mean my participants have lost their agencies and do not have control over their actions. Instead, I find the wrecked's agency exactly in these moments of disoriented articulation.

One of the most used phrases throughout my conversations with my participants is "I don't know." We, as the social scientists conducting in-depth interviews with participants, expect such answers to the loaded questions which we dwell upon so

much. However, my participants' "I don't know"s go beyond; it is not just an answer, it is an attitude.

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam (2011) dismantles the way in which failure is conceptualized as pejorative. They suggest that "under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (2). I think Halberstam's formulation is important for understanding wreckedness for two reasons. First of all, failing and not knowing what is happening now and what will happen in future can be seen as a way of exposing a sociopolitical conjuncture where uncertainty becomes the norm. Secondly, it can be a way of navigating through these uncertainties. The literature on resilience and success relies too much on neoliberal subjectivity through which the individuals are defined as isolated entrepreneurs, trying to maximize their life chances and achieve this only if they are "resilient" enough in the face of existing inequalities and injustices that encapsulate every aspect of the everyday life in neoliberalism. However, recent interventions try to redefine "resilience" by suggesting that resilience can also refer to "the variety of labour that young people do to navigate both individual and societal transition" (Wyn 2022, 170). Cahill and Leccardi (2020) also try to reframe "resilience" to understand the "aesthetics of life-making in the everyday" (67). So, bringing together Halberstam's take on "failure" and recent interventions on the conceptualization of "resilience", I suggest that "wreckedness" can be read as the new aesthetic of life-making in the everyday life of young women in Turkey. In this new aesthetic of life-making, not knowing and failing to subscribe to already crumbling social institutions can be the "homing devices" that Ahmed highlights.

4.4 Disillusionment

Young people's experiences of disillusionment is widely discussed not only in the literature (Dalsgard et al. 2014; Frederiksen 2013, 2017; Jeffrey 2010), but also in the political sphere vis-a-vis young people's so-called "political apathy." In this section, I aim to discuss disillusionment not just as a symptom of growing uncertainties and crises, but as a "homing device" through which my participants attempt to tame the existing uncertainties.

In the previous chapters (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), I discussed how the readily available narratives of an economically stable social adulthood, politically stable state, intimately stable relationships, and moving abroad as an escape from un-

certainties and crises have been shattering for my participants. My participants' accounts illustrate how they become disillusioned with these narratives. Moreover, I have suggested that not only the dissolution of these narratives and pathways, but also the failure to replace them with new narratives and premises creates a terrain of unease, frustration, and exhaustion. These emotions come together in wreckedness.

In his analysis on young men in Georgia, Frederiksen (2017) suggests that for the Georgian young men “disillusion does not inhibit life but is seen as a basic condition of life” (10). In this uncertain terrain of living, Frederiksen coins the term “joyful pessimism” in order to describe young people’s attitude of embracing negation and disengagement. Contrary to Berlant’s 2011 “cruel optimism” where individuals chase after social dreams and promises at the expense of their wellbeing, “joyful pessimism” goes after an attitude where “turning the future something that ‘doesn’t matter anyway’” (10). According to Frederiksen, this mode of engaging with present and future is a way to deal with a sociopolitical context that does not fulfill its own promises for young people.

Considering Frederiksen’s analysis, I do not locate my participants’ attitudes toward present and future either in “cruel optimism” or “joyful pessimism.” Instead, I suggest, wreckedness is an oscillation between the two. Even when my participants choose “cruelly optimistic” paths, they do this with negation, with an attitude of “doesn’t matter anyway” or extreme disillusionment.

Deniz had an internship two years ago at a major multinational company where she will work next year as a consultant. Her account on the work environment illustrates how she feels disillusioned:

I was an intern there. It was so comfortable, you know, we would go and have drinks, chat and have fun. But it was like a scam, I felt like that. . . . I was just an intern, I was still an undergraduate student. A driver picked me up from home, took me to İzmir for a meeting. I was staying at a hotel, the hotel manager came to talk to me, she welcomed me. Just because I was an intern at a big company. I mean I was like I don’t really do much to deserve the money they are paying. It just feels like a scam sometimes. I don’t like it.

Burçak describes her work environment in a similar way:

I am currently working as a freelancer in a British company. I don’t know

if it's okay to mention the name... But, you know, the only qualification that seems to matter is knowing English. It's not like you're doing something based on your own work or using your brain, you know.

This disillusionment is not just limited to working conditions. The accounts in the previous chapter also refer to it. Ilke describes this affective oscillation as follows:

When you think about all of these, you don't take a step, but sometimes, when you do think about it, you find yourself saying, "Let me do everything, let me apply for everything." That's why it creates a sort of dilemma, and I also have this kind of thing in me; I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so I never really got involved in classes.

Turning back to Frederiksen's argument, I suggest that this oscillation makes an uncertain life tameable through making the crises and contradictions visible.

5. CONCLUSION

Tracing the pathways of “wreckedness” enabled us to explore, in this thesis, the emerging neoliberal youth subjectivities and its gendered outcomes in Turkey. Although the literature on neoliberal youth subjectivities is rich, it overwhelmingly focuses on young unemployed men and their emotions. This thesis attempts to make an intervention to this literature. Secondly, the methodological choice of choosing young women from major universities in Istanbul enabled us to explore the experiences of well-off young people, in terms of educational attainment.

Depending on the findings, it is argued that the temporality of uncertainty in the actually existing neoliberalism in Turkey is shrunk (Chapter 2). The pathways to an economically stable adulthood, politically stable state and intimately stable relationships are rendered difficult -sometimes possible. The dissolution of these pathways and reluctance to subscribe to readily available social narratives create an emotional constellation of unease, frustration, and exhaustion for my participants.

Then, we shifted our focus to future temporalities and problematized the overemphasis on young people’s desire for migration (Chapter 3). Through this problematization, it is argued that as the future becomes more and more uncertain, young women in Turkey have difficulty in articulating their dreams about future aspirations. Here, my argument is twofold: Firstly, as the future in Turkey becomes unimaginable, moving abroad becomes an option to overcome the temporal problems of moving forward in life. Secondly, the dreams about moving abroad also involves a sense of disillusionment and disenchantment. Chapter 4 brings together Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 and offers an alternative youth subjectivity - namely wreckedness. Wreckedness is an affective constellation of disorientation. Where uncertainties shatter the ground young women try to build their livelihoods and future selves, young women try to come to terms with this sense of disorientation.

As I have discusses throughout this thesis, in the actually existing neoliberalism in Turkey, failing to subscribe the readily available social dreams and promises and

being a killjoy -or wrecked- makes the contradictions and failures of the sociopolitical context more visible. Moreover, it makes the frustration of not being able to replace these narratives with the new ones more public. When we think about “wreckedness” and “wreck” in the material sense, it also carries the possibility of building new meanings and narratives by making use of the old ones. In this instance, wreckedness reminds me, as Anna Tsing suggests in *Mushroom at the End of the World*, the possibility of building a seemingly disorderly, but actually uniting, supporting, and growing solidarities in the landscapes which are destroyed by neoliberal capitalist devastation.

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APPENDIX A

Participants

More information about participants' pseudonyms, school, department and grade can be found below:

- Süreyya, Bogazici University, Philosophy, 2
- Merve, Bogazici University, Psychology, Political Sciences and International Relations, 4
- Deniz, Koc University, Industrial Engineering, Economy, 4
- Dilara, Sabanci Univeristy, Political Science and Internation Relations, Alum
- Beyza, Bogazi University, Sociology, 3
- İlke, Bogazici University, Sociology, 3
- Melda, Sabanci University, Materials Science and Nanoengineering, 4
- Burçak, Bogazici University, Western Languages and Literatures, Alum
- Sertap, Bogazici University, Philosophy, Alum, Koc University, Cognitive Psychology, Graduate Student
- Asli, Sabanci University, Computer Science and Engineering, Cultural Studies, 3
- Eda, Sabanci University, Computer Science and Engineering, Cultural Studies, 3

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

The interview questions can be found below. As it is discussed in Methodology section (Chapter 1, Section 1.3), the interviews were semi-structured . The questions presented below offered a starting point and the participants were encouraged to direct the flow of conversation.

Introduction

Could you introduce yourself?

Which school/department are you studying in? What grade are you in?

Where are you from?

What do you do outside of school?

Who do you live with and where?

University

How did you choose your major?

What were your expectations about university life before coming here?

Are you part of any clubs, communities, or groups at the university?

How do you feel about your life in university now? How is your experience so far?

How are your classes going? Are you interested in them? How do you feel about your academic performance?

Daily life

How would you describe your overall mood lately?

Has there been a topic recently that has been occupying your mind?

Can you describe your average week day?

Can you walk me through it from the morning to evening?

Where do you hang out most? Why?

How do you sustain yourself financially? Family? Scholarships? Job?

Could you talk about your monthly expenses?

Are you financially comfortable? If not, what would a comfortable life mean to you?

What would you do if you could be more financially comfortable?

If there were no financial constraints, how would your expenses look?

Relationships

How would you describe your group of friends? How do you spend time with them?

What do you do together and what do you talk about?

Do you have a partner? How would you define your relationship? How is it going?

How's your relationship with your family?

Do your family provide you with both financial and emotional support? How do they provide it?

If you were to ask your family, what would they say about you and your life? How do you think they perceive you?

What do they think about your future plans? How do they treat you regarding this? How do they envision your future life?

How were their lives when they were your age? How did they establish their lives?

Future How did you imagine your university life before coming to university? How is it now?

What are your plans after graduation?

Where would you like to live?

If there were no limitations, what kind of life would you want for yourself?

Do you consider living with your partner(s) or getting married in the future? What kind of life do you foresee?

Being young

What does "being young" mean to you? How would you define it?

What does it mean to be young in Turkey?

What does it mean to be a young woman in Turkey?

Do you identify yourself as a young person?

Do you feel young?