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Plurality and Resistance
in Berlin and Istanbul

Tuba İnal-Çekiç /
Urszula Ewa Woźniak (EDS.)

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We, the City: Plurality and Resistance

Shaped by global capital and local and regional political turmoil, the cities of Berlin and Istanbul have been the sites of market-oriented policies aimed at increasing global competitiveness, commodification, and the political sterilisation of public space over the past decade. Rapid and drastic changes resulting from neoliberal urban transformations have led to political polarisation and social injustice, undermining the possibility of living together in a democratic society based on the principles of equality, inclusiveness, and connectedness. Despite the rise of exclusionary politics, the promotion of monolithic identities, and the widespread homogenisation of physical spaces in these two cities, their populations have been undergoing continuous diversification. Called forth by political, economic, and ecological changes alike, migration not only connects these two places in both past and present, but being fundamental to the urban experience, it also stands at the centre of a current global backlash of anti-pluralist rhetoric and politics.

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In the face of the uninhibited neoliberal restructuring of both Berlin and Istanbul, the struggle for affordable housing, access to public space, sustainable living, ecological justice, and the right to live differently has intensified. Various forms of *resistance* have unsettled the urban tectonics of both cities, forcing us to remap the urban as a primary terrain for political struggle, contested by a *plurality* of voices. Interferences ‘from below’ have put the relationship between local governments and social movements to the test, provoking questions about where and how the political subjects of the city emerge: Who are we, the city?

Embracing Diverse Formats of Knowledge Production: From Conference to E-book

To answer this question, the conveners¹ of the international conference “We, the City: Plurality and Resistance in Berlin and Istanbul” invited the authors of the following three

1 We would like to credit and thank the co-conveners of the conference Ertuğ Tomuş and Tuğba Yalçınkaya as well as the other two conference committee members Silvia von Steinsdorff and Bettina Emir. The conference was organised by the coordination team of the programme “Blickwechsel: Contemporary Turkey Studies” at the Department for Social Sciences of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and was funded by Einstein Foundation and Stiftung Mercator. A special thank you extends to the babies Ida Su and Cato Leon as well as their various caretakers for accompanying the production of this publication with patience and love.

chapters to present their work from May 23–25, 2019 at two venues, Humboldt-Universität and Aquarium in Berlin. From the beginning, the format of the conference was catered to create synergies between practitioners and theorists of the urban in both Berlin and Istanbul. A minimum of one collaborator from each city was invited to work in bi-urban tandems and to decide on the format with which they wanted to have their topic of expertise presented and discussed.

This unorthodox approach towards the conference organisation not only allowed for a diversity of disciplines and perspectives but also fostered a truly horizontal culture of collaboration. The result was a three-day conference during which activists, cultural producers, and scholars alike navigated a wide array of knowledge production. Most of them coming together for the first time during this event, they decided upon formats as diverse as moderated talks, panels, film screenings, multi-media installations, guided tours, and performative acts. The multiplicity of these formats, which all had either implicit or explicit comparative aspects to them, allowed to tread new analytic paths between these two urban scapes—paths that move beyond the oriental-occidental patterns of thought with which Turkish-German encounters would previously have often been framed. Instead, the comparative threads spun between Berlin and Istanbul throughout the conference allowed for a two-way dialogue at eye level.

Following a long halt forced onto us by the Covid-19 pandemic, three years after the conference, this e-book reflects on this unique set of bi-urban collaborations between both cities. The variety of formats, which the event was widely applauded for by many of its attendants, is now mirrored in this e-book: conversation pieces and essays are accompanied by critical reflections on conducted workshops. This freedom of experimenting with different text forms is in many ways detrimental to what the academic system requires from its members—many of whom have contributed to this edited volume. Professional uncertainty and the pressure to publish in indexed journals, coupled with sheer unruly competitiveness, are the drivers behind the oftentimes unwanted necessity to produce texts of a certain shape and form, inhibiting the possibility to experiment with other valuable formats. With the e-book being available as open access, this publication at hand furthermore allows for wider availability, including to readers from Istanbul, Berlin, and beyond.

Chapters and Contributions

How do residents of Berlin and Istanbul experience, express, and contest the physical, political, and normative reordering of their cities? Can we find the elements of an egalitarian democratic imaginary and a nonhegemonic conception of “we” by thinking together the instances of *resistance* in Berlin and Istanbul and the *plurality* that both cityscapes represent? Who are “We, the City”?

Ayşe Çavdar provides a first answer to the latter question with her opening of Chapter I, “The City in Resistance / Resistance in the City”. Her contribution “A City without ‘We’: The Subject Lost in Urban Transformation?”, sheds light on the im/possibilities of forming a singular collective “We” through resistance as viewed in relation to the urban movement in Istanbul, a cityscape tormented by its increasing fragmentation. Contemplating on missed opportunities of Turkey’s urban activists of the past decade as viewed through a journalistic and auto-ethnographic lens, she inquires into the ethics and politics of activism. Applied to the case of Berlin, politics of activism is also the subject of the following chapter, Matthias Coers’ photo essay “The Housing Issue is a Societal Responsibility”. Pondering upon photographic material documenting a strengthened Berlin tenants’ movement, the essay owns up to its pamphlet-like title by introducing the reader to some of the main actors of urban resistance from the 2010s in Berlin as well as by broaching the issue of the social divide which the lack of political will concerning the housing question has produced (and we may add here, continues to produce).

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Closing the chapter with another photo essay, Sister Sylvester’s “Kaba Kopya / Rough Copies” profiles another form of resistance, one that has forcefully emerged following the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey that has—among others—resulted in the dismissal of over 2,000 academics. The struggle for freedom of speech, thought, and research in Turkey, which continues to this day, is portrayed through an intriguing series of pictures taken in, for example, Istanbul, Mersin, and Amed/Diyarbakır depicting the so-called “solidarity academies” that have emerged as a result of the state’s various attempts to suffocate academic freedom in the core. They have opened up space for radical forms of pedagogy that have, among many things, also turned court rooms into lecture halls.

Chapter II, “The I in We: Un/Silenced Subjects” investigates the second defining moment of this e-book’s title, namely *plurality*, through the dual prism of subject and group formation. With “The Pandemic State of Emergency as a Reading Guide of Notable Absences in the Urban Class Society of Istanbul”, Aslı Odman analyses the class relations in Istanbul by emphasising the role of labour. Underlining how the actual makers of the city, their occupational risks, and also their fatalities, remain unseen (in opposition to, as she writes, the “hegemonic ‘We’s’ constructed in official and public discourses”), her map-based analysis not only renders labour (as well as labour’s resistance) visible. Her long-term examination of the necropolitical sphere of public health is given additional topicality by including latest data on the Covid-19 pandemic. The other two contributions to this chapter zoom in on another group seldomly recognised as political subjects in both Berlin and Istanbul: Syrian newcomers. The piece “Spaces of Encounter and Change: Mapping Migrant Economies of Syrian Entrepreneurs” examines both cities

along a comparative axis. Here, Tuba İnal-Çekiç and Urszula Ewa Woźniak draw a bi-urban map of migrant economies as they successfully navigate the paradoxes of labour market integration and encounter. Their reflection piece discusses a joint workshop on Syrian entrepreneurship conducted by an interdisciplinary group of students from both cities and sheds light on food practices as a form of inhabitation and the persistence of everyday racism. The chapter closes with Hilal Alkan and Anna Steigemann's dialogical piece "What Makes It a Home? A Conversation on Syrian Refugees, Neighbourhoods, and the Right to Be a Host in Istanbul and Berlin", which identifies various elements to homemaking, such as hospitality and the crucial role of the neighbourhood. In it, Steigemann, among other things, scrutinizes the challenges of state-managed refugee mass accommodations vis-à-vis place-making practices of Syrian refugees, while Alkan compares their settling experience in Turkey and Germany by looking into the im/materialities that turn a place into a home.

The final Chapter III, entitled "Walking the City", consists of two practice-based contributions that both successfully *queer* the mundane practice of walking—thereby dismantling the epistemological hegemony of the white, cis-male, heterosexual flaneur. The practice of walking as discussed here relates to both resistance and pluralism, as Sema Semih, İlayda Ece Ova and Kristen Sarah Biehl demonstrate with their text "Curious Steps: Feminist Collective Walking and Storytelling for Memory, Healing, and Transformation". Reflecting on their workshop programme *Cins Adımlar*, they examine two alternative walks through Istanbul's historical Beyoğlu neighbourhood, thereby emphasising the importance of an alternative approach to knowledge production and feminist pedagogy for the achievement of reconciliation, justice, and democracy. In a similar vein, Banu Çiçek Tülü looks into the political and gender-related implications surrounding the sonic experience of walking. In "Queer Urban Sonic Analysis: Blocking the Sound", she discusses a workshop she conducted with various groups, including women, LGBTQIA*², and people with disabilities. The material result of the workshop, a subject-centred design of headphones as a tool of resistance, raises awareness for the very different experiences of power/less(ness) that various city inhabitants make with this seemingly simple act.

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Reflecting on the decade that led up to the Covid-19 pandemic, this e-book tries to grasp some of the social and political changes that neoliberal urban transformation and migration movements have in/directly brought about in both Berlin and Istanbul. These changes are in turn accompanied by a wide set of social practices, some of which are highlighted in this publication: the fight of local communities against the housing crisis, the home-making practices of migrant newcomers,

2 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersexual, Asexual, and Ally.

the creative forms of resistance in the name of academic freedom, and the appropriation of seemingly profane acts such as walking, to name just a few.

Showcasing the historicity of urban resistance practices and various possibilities of alternative pedagogy, the following three chapters of this e-book all embrace the idea of a multiplicity of political subjects in the urban. Essentially, our emotive title “We, the City” represents the multiple fights for compliance with the yet unfulfilled promise of equality in plural democracies and advocates for an understanding of (urban) society as a pluralistic assembly worthy of preservation.

Tuba İnal-Çekiç & Urszula Ewa Woźniak
Berlin, October 2022

CHAPTER I:

The City in Resistance / Resistance in the City

A City without “We”: The Subject Lost in Urban Transformation

AYŞE ÇAVDAR

This essay¹ is part self-reflection and part invitation to self-reflection, and I write it with a very specific and yet ambiguous audience in mind: the “we”. The central question I grapple with is who this “we” is and its relation to the people in the city, understood as individuals, and to the city, understood as a collectivity. The reader may believe that I am writing about the urban resistance in Istanbul, but I want to dispel this possible misconception. I am writing about who I was in relation to that movement, what the movement was in relation to the city, and what the city was in relation to every one of us, as individuals and as collectives. If that seems like a meandering way of saying that I do not precisely know what I am trying to say, that is because I don’t.

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My uncertainty does not stem from a lack of information or analytical framework. What I lack is a sense of where I belong in this picture, and where all of us belonged. This puts me in an unusually difficult position of figuring out my relationship to this topic. I am not sure whether I have the authority to write about myself as an activist who claimed to defend the city and has only half-believed this claim, as an observer/scholar who observed and analysed my own trepidations and shortcomings, or as a journalist who desperately wanted to inform people of what happened. I am at once a naive actor and a jaded observer. Therefore, my relationship to my own analysis here is as contentious as my relationship was to the urban resistance movement in Istanbul. This writing is borne out of this tension and doubt. As such, it offers no comfort to the reader who expects a story of valour and resistance. That story has been told many times and will no doubt be told again, and I do not intend to challenge it. It is just as true as the story I am setting out to tell.

As all honest self-reflection, this essay discloses wounds. It is indeed an invitation to discuss and deliberate what went wrong and how it can be prevented in the future. I ask this question to myself, to fellow activists, and to the reader: how

1 I am greatly indebted to two people for this essay. The first is Tuba İnal-Çekiç, one of the editors of this book. Despite my long slacking and running away, she never got tired of insisting and supporting me. The second is Aysuda Kölemen, who edited the article in detail and encouraged me to express things I hesitated about. My dear friends, there is no way I know to express my gratitude to you.

can we move from individuals from different backgrounds, classes, interests towards a collectivity, towards becoming a “we” with a common goal, a collective to defend “us”, when deep down we have accepted the narrative that rights and duties, action and resistance are the domains of the individual and the private. This is about the activists’ quiet submission to the discourse that places private property above the interests of the city as public and the city as commons; that “we” can only stand on the side lines, enter the game only when called to the field by the coach; that we need permission to be a “we”, to defend the city, the “us” as a collective. Do we need permission to declare a home, or a street we never set foot on before, part of our city, of our commons, and therefore ours to defend against the state and private interests? I ask these questions with a heavy heart. Is resistance (or advocacy) an invitation-only game that we are merely allowed to watch without first obtaining a license? Should we remain in the audience and respect the “players”, support them only with our encouraging chants and reporting of scores? It is a question of agency and authority. Is a house a private property that only belongs to its deed holder, does a neighbourhood only belong to its residents? Maybe you find the answer easy. Yes, it is, yes it does! But then, how can we claim the city?

If it is merely a collection of private households and neighbourhoods, does the city exist at all? Is it intervention or self-defence when we defend a neighbourhood where we do not reside, a lifestyle of which we are not a part? Isn’t the city more valuable than the right to private property? Can we deal with such lofty questions when we are trying to deal with the urgency of demolished neighbourhoods? Urgency is the enemy of ideals and principles, and governments love creating urgent situations. How do we stay true to our principles and long-term goals when we are constantly fighting urgent battles? In the face of such problems, did the resistance, the unformed “we” ever stand a chance? I do not claim to have answers, but I know that these are the questions we need to ask ourselves, so I dare to ask them. As I wrote before, this is an invitation to a possibly painful reflection.

Versions of a Simple Question

I talked about Turkey with someone I recently met on social media and had never met in person before. Still, I think we have become friends after a few phone calls during which we discussed different aspects of authoritarianism we (Turkey) had fallen into and could not get out of. Eventually, we found ourselves asking that cliché question: “When did all this happen? When did things go off the rails?”

For many years in Turkey, we have asked this question whenever we saw someone cruelly treating another person or an animal or proudly engaging in an obviously and disgustingly corrupt act. There are two kinds of responses to

this question: the first is silence. I know the meaning of this silence. It is, in fact, a desperate expression of a state of affairs about which one wants to say so much, yet no longer has the fortitude to do so. *Lahavle*², I say to myself whenever I hear this rhetorical question. Didn't we pave the ways to this idiotic hell together? The second response is, "weren't we always like this? Look at the country's past." Even when this response is in writing, one can hear the scolding tone in it. It is meant to remind the interlocutor of the best-known embarrassing moments in the country's history, including genocides, massacres, state-organised lootings against minorities, and the destruction of communities through forced migration of Kurds from their villages and towns in the 1990s. When discussing the ubiquitous high-level political scandals, such cliché questions and answers ring hollow and offer no satisfying insight into the situation.

I have enough reason to believe that many Turkish people, whether at home or abroad, often replay this conversation in their heads, posing the question to themselves and answering it as a soothing ritual. Regardless of the degree of political engagement and involvement; everybody I know who is dealing with the consequences of Turkey's political transformation in the last 30 years keeps asking this question: "What happened to us?" Often, "what" is replaced by "when" or "how": "How did we end up in this situation?" When I ask myself the "how" question, I first ponder on the pace of the decline: was it gradual or sudden? Second, I contemplate the process. As a journalist and ethnographer observing the religious, nationalist, and conservative segments of society in their relation to the state, I can trace how the administrative and political agencies brought the country to its current state and analyse the reasons behind their actions. There are many ways to map the inner or alternative motives of the agents.

However, any explanation based solely on the wrongdoings of governments, parties, politicians, and particular groups is nothing but an act of scapegoating, which either does not provide effective solutions for the future or further deepens the current long-term political, legal, and ethical crises. In fact, I suggest that the fundamental reason that the state could be corrupted and society could be corroded by political actors was that there was nothing, or no one, to stop them.

While everyone in Turkey predicted this apocalyptic phase, no person, institution, organisation, or community had the power to prevent or alter this obvious outcome. Although everyone agreed that corruption had invaded the body politic like a malignant tumour and that this would lead the country to a great disaster, there was a sense of hopelessness whispering to everyone that fighting against this corruption was futile. As a matter of fact, long before the AKP, Turkey had surrendered itself to political, bureaucratic, and ethical decay.³

2 Expression meaning "May God (Allah) give me the strength to endure".

3 Şarlak, Zeynep, and Besim Bülent Bali. 2008. "Corruption in Turkey: Why cannot an urgent problem be a main concern?". *Crime & Culture, Discussion paper series* 14. University of Konstanz, Research Group Sociology of Knowledge.

After 2002, pious segments of society represented by the AKP began to receive the lion's share of the persistent corruption. Authoritarianism emerged as a cooperation model among competing elite groups that organised this decline to maintain their privileges. It was inevitable that such a high level of moral and institutional corrosion would ultimately be crowned with an absolutist regime.

Worst of all, hardly anyone had the motivation to organise society against impending disaster and corruption. Everyone kept repeating that society had no intention of solving this problem. That means nobody trusted society's ethical, moral, and political integrity. Second, in the case of political actors, they did not believe that correctness and veracity had enough appeal to convince people to stop this exhaustive decline. There might be a third reason: the sum of these two reasons. Those who predicted society's political, ethical, and moral decline wilfully avoided creating a common language or a mechanism to combat the corrupting transformation, which culminated in the current authoritarian regime. They did so because they sincerely believed that any claim to political power or representation could be seductive, perverting, and corrosive. In other words, they saw refraining from any claim to power as a way to protect themselves from the corruption that dominates the social and political landscape. This essay will lay out some of the symptoms arising from all these loss of power cycles, using the resistance against the urban transformation as an example, which emerged as a result of corruption networks and further expanded their radius of action.

A Fallen City: Istanbul

Many people have long treated Turkey as a "lost country" and Istanbul as a "lost city". The city happened to be the scene of a stimulating cultural and economic life throughout the 2000s. While a flawed but vibrant civil society injected dynamism to the city, Istanbul also underwent a malignant transformation. Since the ruling party (the AKP) turned the construction sector into the engine of the national economy, districts and neighbourhoods have undergone dramatic changes. This strategy further shattered the city's already fragmented structure by classes, lifestyles, cultural habits, and political attachments.

My central argument is that we fell short of creating a "we" discourse to overcome the city's current fragmentation. There are several reasons for this: the first and most tangible is that Istanbul is a large and crowded city. The historiographies of the neighbourhoods and organisational structures in the current political environment are fundamentally different. The neighbourhoods targeted by the government and companies were physically distant from each other. Even when they were geographically close, it was impossible to construct a coherent story to connect them and find common ground.

Moreover, the initiatives formed by people who are not residents of these neighbourhoods but are concerned about their problems—intellectuals, journalists, architects, urban planners, lawyers, students, in a word, activists—, were not able to establish a convincing narrative that tied their stories together. There are many reasons for this. Like neighbourhood dwellers, these intervention groups had diverse political affiliations, different areas of expertise, and therefore disputes due to discrepancies between the proposed modes of intervention.

For instance, the biggest dilemma, especially for journalists like me and other campaigners who prioritise informing the public about the situation, was that we, somehow, regarded the mutual relations between the people and the state as belonging to a private sphere. Penniless activists that most of us were, we were predictably cynical of the notion of private property, and yet the idea of private property was so intrinsic to our actions and explanations. Hence we felt distressed by the limitations that resulted from the individual, house-by-house negotiations between neighbourhood households and the state. Weaponising their political and economic power, urban transformation actors “demolished” all remnants of collectivity that had survived the prior fragmentation of the city. Against such abhorrent politicking, we, the activists, could not formulate a response to convince neither ourselves, nor the neighbourhood residents of the continuity and necessity of collectivity/collective action. It was as if all of this urban transformation emerged from a series of complex negotiations among companies, the municipality, the state, and individual households. It was as if “the city” as a collectivity was only the subject of negotiation, and not a party to it.

There was no one who could muster enough courage to speak up on behalf of the city. Whoever attempted to speak up from such an ambiguous position met with vast resistance that companies and state institutions rarely encountered. As we were preparing to resist, we were simultaneously questioning our right to intervene in such private matters. Who were we to intervene? Right there, before our eyes, in *gecekondu* neighbourhoods or Tarlabası or Sulukule, the primacy of private property was being reinforced via a series of deeds and contracts between the state and the individual citizen. We as outsiders could not eschew the idea that it was shameful to talk about such private affairs. While the AKP and its partner companies were invading the city via urban transformation, we could not determine to what extent and by what means we were allowed to intervene in this affair. We could not establish what the city was and who we were in relation to it. The most critical obstacle in this, I can only speak for myself, was that our theoretical assumptions about the city could have only a negligible effect on our relationship with it.

Shocks and Aftershocks

We began to ask the “when did all this happen” question in the aftermath of a very long chain of economic and political crises. That is why, in most circumstances, I take this question as the expression of a shock that we are still collectively experiencing, reminding me of Naomi Klein’s “shock doctrine”⁴:

“The idea of the shock doctrine is connected to ... disaster capitalism. There are certainly points of intersection with the idea of creative destruction, but ... a little different. Part of the shock doctrine is really a philosophy of power. It’s much more a political strategy, the premise of which is that there is total integration between corporate and political elites. That is the goal of this ideological crusade that some people call neoliberalism, but it is much more from the political side of things, not talking about how the market creates and then feeds off its own crises. That’s connected to it because some of the crises I am talking about are market crises, although not only market crises. ...the main difference: that this is a philosophy of power, understood at the highest levels, that the best time to push through a policy tsunami, sometimes called ‘economic shock therapy’—the whole corporatist programme of privatization, deregulation, cuts to government spending—is in the aftermath of a crises.”

For those who participated in various forms of resistance against the urban transformation in the 2000s, the forced migration of Kurds to the major cities in the 1990s could be one of the most crucial shocks. This wave of migration extended the geographical sphere of the “Kurdish problem”, which should have been titled “equal citizenship dilemma”. Hundreds of thousands of families whose villages were torched and living areas closed off by security zones were deported to big cities. The “Kurdish problem” became more visible and challenging for the central government.

As a result of this migration, the need for cheap labour was met in many sectors, deepening informal labour relations, and ethnicising the competition within working classes. Concurrently, the areas inhabited by Kurds in the major cities were subjected to a series of political and economic speculations. One reason why there was no efficient and broad opposition to the destruction of neighbourhoods such as Ayazma and Tarlaş in the 2000s had been the state’s “security” policies that practically outlawed the existence of Kurds through the “struggle against terrorism” discourse since the 1990s.

The second major crisis began in the 1994 local elections, when the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi), the predecessor of today’s AKP, won the metropolitan municipalities of Ankara and Istanbul. This unpredictable “success” emerged within the political vacuum created by the split of the

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4 Klein, Naomi, and Neil Smith. 2008. “The Shock Doctrine: A Discussion”. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26: 582–95.

centre-right and left-wing parties. Subsequently, these two cities evolved into performative stages, disputed by religious and secular lifestyles throughout the 1990s. The rise of Islamist politics on the claim that the laicist state excluded religious people from the political and economic spheres hinted at the century-long competition between these two political camps. The revenge of Islamism would occur via political and economic power redistribution. The urban transformation in big cities was one of the spheres of this revanchist political act. In other words, urban transformation functioned as both an instrument and a yardstick for the performance of this transfer process.⁵

The third major crisis erupted with the Marmara Earthquake in 1999. The state institutions were late and inadequate in responding to emergencies in cities related to the consequences of massive and fatal destruction. This crisis resulted in a significant break in what the state represents directly to the citizens. Marmara was not a distant or underdeveloped region but the largest contributor to the national economy. Nevertheless, even in such a region, the state was not able to drag its citizens out of the debris. Thus, the image of the state was ruined in 1999. The civic solidarity that emerged in response to the earthquake initiated one of the central dynamics of a vibrant civil society environment throughout the 2000s. Meanwhile, almost all political parties represented in the governments (ANAP, DYP, DSP, DTP, and MHP) dramatically lost votes in subsequent elections.

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The fourth major crisis was undoubtedly the economic crisis in 2001. Millions of citizens lost their savings, jobs, and futures overnight. The society accepted the subsequent IMF policies and the AKP as the implementer of those policies.⁶ Many, especially politicians, remembered the curative and soothing role of social solidarity during this crisis. If people were not starving and revolting, it was thanks to the support from their relatives or neighbours still living in the villages.⁷ The AKP reversed the dependency and support relations between the village and the city via its agricultural policies. Subsistence farmers, in particular, have become unable to produce without the financial support of people living in the city. Meanwhile, jobs in the city were becoming increasingly precarious and insecure. Meanwhile, urban transformation destroyed the neighbourhood-level solidarity networks. To

5 For a reading of the process of the minarets in Ankara, see: Batuman, Bülent. 2013. "Minarets without mosques: Limits to the urban politics of neo-liberal Islamism". *Urban Studies* 50 (6): 1097-1113.

6 Öniş, Ziya. 2012. "The triumph of conservative globalism: The political economy of the AKP era". *Turkish Studies* 13 (2): 135-52.

7 An example: Nilüfer Narlı. 2002. "İlksel Bağlar, Hemşehrilik, Gettolaşma" [Primordial Bonds, Fellow Townsmanship, Ghettoization]. *Bianet*, 31 December. <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/8376-ilksel-baglar-hemsehrilik-gettolasma>. However, Ayşe Buğra suggested that the silence in the face of the crisis stemmed from the collapse of the "moral economy" indicated by these solidarity networks. "Bir Krize ve Bir Ahlâki Ekonominin Çöküşüne Dair" [About a Crisis and the Collapse of a Moral Economy]. *Birikim* 45 - May 2001. <https://birikimdergisi.com/dergiler/birikim/1/sayi-145-mayis-2001/2336/bir-krize-ve-bir-ahlaki-ekonominin-cokusune-dair/6237>.

replace these, the government developed poverty assistance mechanisms open to partisan use.⁸ In other words, the state had firmly tied the hands of the household, which it had turned against itself in the bargain I mentioned above, in which private property was reconstituted. Ironically, it was as if the AKP was rebuilding the state's authority via that negotiation.

Then What? Patterns of Intimidating Demolition

It is possible to say that the confusion indicated by the question “how or when did we come to be like this” expresses a painful insight of defeat. We more or less know the winner. However, I am not sure about the identity of the loser. The general pessimism regarding the destiny of the country and Istanbul provides some clues: the answer must be “we”. Then, who is/are the “we” who lost the battle? Was there a “we”?

These four crises mentioned above formed a double-layered experience of helplessness and an affective vacuum regarding the state in society. Thus, they also laid the groundwork for the emergence or strengthening of various forms of civic solidarity and collectivities. For instance, the “Kurdish problem” created a human rights network that persists despite all kinds of pressure from the state. The Marmara Earthquake produced a broad basis of legitimacy for a vibrant NGO environment. The tension between Islamist politicians and the state created several solidarity networks among the religious communities within the market mechanism. It resulted in the AKP becoming an engine of revanchist distribution of privileges and welfare. Therefore, the urban transformation we witnessed in the 2000s was a manifestation of the struggle between those contesting collectivities.

The AKP expropriated its power and created a party state in 20 years by eradicating all remaining solidarity networks in the areas I have mentioned. The following are two typical patterns the AKP pursued to break political and civic solidarity in Turkey.

For the first pattern, I follow the flow of events after the mine accident in Soma in 2014. First, we witnessed the decline of agriculture, and thus of farmers, through many policy instruments. That is how young farmers turned into unqualified workers.⁹ They met the cheap labour needs of the investors in the construction and mining industries. The 2014

8 Akçay, Ümit. 2021. “Authoritarian consolidation dynamics in Turkey”. *Contemporary Politics* 27 (1): 79–104.

9 Topal, Çağatay, Fatma Umut Beşpınar, and Çağrı Topal. 2018. “Soma’da madencilerin risk anlamlandırılmalarında kurumsal ve yerel bilginin üretim dinamikleri” [The production dynamics of institutional and local knowledge of miners’ risk sense-making in Soma]. *Mülkiye Dergisi* 42 (3): 371–402.

explosion in Soma killed 304 workers and revealed the essence¹⁰ of the AKP's administrative and distributive choices. Most of the workers who died there had not received proper mining training, and the company had violated the necessary security measures.¹¹ More precisely, the defence mechanisms of the existing political parties were strong enough to prevent them from implementing and fulfilling the duties imposed on them by such a major accident.

This pattern summarises the primary method the AKP resorts to in every crisis in almost every field, spreading hopelessness in every respect. Let's see how this pattern works in a completely different context, namely in Istanbul's cultural environment once led by some NGO groups.

I suggest that the process that destroyed the vivid NGO environment of Istanbul began with the declaration of Istanbul as the European Capital of Culture in 2010. This was one of the instances in which the AKP implemented the intimidating destruction pattern that I discussed using the Soma mine accident as an example.

The story began when a group of pioneers known for their work in various NGOs nominated Istanbul as European Capital of Culture. The responsible EU commission accepted Istanbul together with Essen, Germany, and Pécs, Hungary. However, the regulations for the use of the relevant funds required the establishment of a mechanism in which the municipality, central government, and NGOs would work together during the promotion of Istanbul as the European Capital of Culture. In other words, the EU was going to (partly) fund a process in which the central government, local administration, and civil society in Istanbul would get along like siblings (I beg the reader's forgiveness for my sarcasm). The government would also contribute to the allocated fund, thus creating a participatory practice. In the case of Istanbul, this "dream" turned into a nightmare. The government took over a field of action initiated by the NGOs with all its might. It transferred most of the funds to the NGOs (GONGOs) and companies established by pro-government groups. Instead of bringing this scandal to the attention of the relevant international bodies, the original initiators accepted it as a "reality" to be dealt with. They became involved in the formation

10 I suggest Soma as an "accident" revealing the particular substance of the political ecology of the AKP era. The idea comes from Virilio, Paul. 2005. *The Original Accident*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 15–16: "...an accident is no longer unexpected, it turns into a rumor, a priori scandalous, in which the presupposition of a fault tends to outpace anything involuntary or, conversely the near certainty of the will to do harm is covered up in the overriding concern not to provoke panic." The explosion that caused the death of dozens of young people in Suruç who gathered to send toys to the children in Rojava and another attack in Ankara that killed dozens of pro-peace civil society actors (both in 2015) could be accepted in the same category as Virilio's point of view suggesting politics as spectacle. "Accident or attack? From now on, uncertainty rules, the mask of the Medusa is forced on everyone thanks to Minerva's helmet or, rather, this visual headset that endlessly shows us the repetition (in a mirror) of a terror we are utterly fascinated by." Ibid, 21.

11 Adaman, Fikret, Murat Arsel, and Bengi Akbulut. 2018. "Neoliberal developmentalism, authoritarian populism, and extractivism in the countryside: the Soma mining disaster in Turkey". *Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World*, edited by Ian Scoones et al. London: Routledge.

and activities of the agency to execute the organisation for that year. It was their way not to lose this opportunity to act together with the government.¹² Some of them I interviewed during that period said they saw this as an opportunity to “transform” the ruling party towards a more democratic one.

After this incident, the AKP systematically replaced those NGOs, creating GONGOs in almost every field, from cultural organisations to refugee assistance. Following the failed coup attempt in 2016, the government suspended many NGOs still functioning and rendered some inoperable. This process ended in two complementary but paradoxical sentiments often voiced in diverse activist circles today: “The state cannot protect us from crises as it is the source of these crises.” And with respect to civil society: “We do not have the power and means to force the state to accept our demands as the civil society is too weak and busy with its own predicaments.”

This path led to a destructive phase in which any NGO that came into conflict with the government in any way was at risk of being declared “traitors” and “terrorists”. Human rights organisations suffered the greatest harm as they have been rendered incapable of working and expressing themselves. Civil society actors that the government sued for organising the Gezi Resistance, a total and spontaneous revolt against all aspects of urban transformation, were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 18 years to life imprisonment. In this way, the AKP government conveyed the message to society as a fictitious whole: “No one can protect you against me, I will declare anyone who tries to protect you from me and defend your rights as my main enemy, and I will punish them in every way I can.”

In the first stage of this pattern, we see that the AKP presents itself as a liquefying and separating factor. First, the AKP selects one or more actors to collaborate with on an issue and excludes other actors. This phase creates a visible fragmentation in the field. Then all the fragments, including the ones that collaborated with the AKP, are ready to be dissolved. To put it briefly, the AKP expands and perpetuates its own sphere of power by disintegrating and dissolving society.

24

The Subtleness of the ‘We’ Question

Only through a participatory practice could the city acquire the power to break these destructive and fatal patterns. Indeed, it was the only idea “we” shared. That is why, and because of the pattern I described above, part of me knows that “we” were not just passive observers of the whole process. The problem was that nobody felt strong enough to become

12 Hoyng, Rolien. 2012. “Popping up and fading out: Participatory networks and Istanbul’s creative city project”. *Culture Machine* 13.

a “we”. Who the hell are “we”? I witnessed dozens of meetings where “we” gathered to discuss how to stop the demolition and transformation projects. However, almost every time, at some point, somebody ended the discussion by asking that thrill-killer question: “Who are we? Do we have the right to represent anyone other than those attending this meeting?” This question provided an excuse to shelve all the remaining issues. On most occasions, this question served as an escape from the central problem: Do “we” know how to stop them? The Turkish language facilitates the use of the “hidden subject” by forming sentences without a subject/actor. These discussions helped to erase the content of “we” from the sentence and the context.

Strangely enough, this question echoes another one Erdoğan frequently asks his opponents, e.g. opposition leaders, international bodies like the ECHR, etc.: “Who are you?” Erdoğan often uses this short question to say, “Who are you to disagree with my decision and stop my actions?” He often continues with an expression that erases any kind of will over his: “Your decisions are null and void in my eyes” (benim nezdinde yok hükmündedir). In fact, in those meetings we were repeating his rhetoric to each other and to ourselves, “who are we to oppose his decision? Who are we to try stopping him?”¹³

Obviously, the “we” question was all about the ethics and politics of activism. Thus, it was always followed by a set of further questions making it even more unresolvable: does anyone have the right to answer this question? Which “we” do “we” cite in this question? There were, of course, many types of actors in these discussions, and each category of actors has its subdivisions. I do not remember any answer that would force us to continue together. Instead, we were ending the meeting and chatting about other everyday, mostly personal matters.

For instance, “we” were not able to solve the diversity problem “we” faced in meetings attended by representatives of the neighbourhoods affected by demolition and transformation. Each of these neighbourhoods had very different histories. Therefore, they differed in terms of their social positions and political affiliations. Sometimes they even competed for the privileges they could get from the various administrative bodies that destroyed the neighbourhoods. In such meetings, “we” usually consisted of people whose houses were not in danger of demolition, who did in fact not even have a

13 A couple of examples, “Erdoğan’dan AP’ye: Bizim için yok hükmündedir” [Erdoğan to EP: It is null and void for us]. *Cumhuriyet*, 16 April 2015. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/erdogandan-apye-bizim-icin-yok-hukmindedir-255941>. Accessed 3 August 2022; “Erdoğan: Biz Avrupa Birliği kararlarını tanımıyoruz, yok hükmündedir” [Erdoğan: We do not recognise the decisions of the European Union, they are null and void]. *Pirha*, 8 December 2021. <https://pirha.org/erdogan-biz-avrupa-birligi-kararlarini-tanimiyoruz-yok-hukmindedir-300406.html/08/12/2021/>. Accessed 3 August 2022; “Erdoğan: Trump’ın açıklaması yok hükmündedir” [Erdoğan: Trump’s statement is null and void]. *Bianet*, 10 December 2017. <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/192300-erdogan-trump-in-aciklamasi-yok-hukmindedir>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

house, but who, as students, lawyers, journalists, academics, or NGO representatives, were somehow connected to the issue of the people living in the neighbourhood and were eager to contribute to its solution for their sake. In this context, all “we” could do was nothing but to make the issue known to the public and make more people aware of the dangers and loss of rights awaiting these fellow citizens. This kind of activism first of all assumed a public (opinion) that would act in the face of the loss of rights arising from urban transformation. Moreover, this assumption was the feature of another naive premise: the state would abandon its planned destruction when considering the discomfort of negative public opinion. In this context, “we” were nothing more than the mediators who made the “innocent” and “ignorant” public (opinion) aware of the injustices inflicted by the government on a group of citizens who were also part of the public. Lawyers were busy bringing the transformation projects to court. City planners were endeavouring to find solutions to delay the demolition based on the legal history of the land where the neighbourhood is located. However, the government or the municipality had to be slowed down for these two processes to work correctly. Informing the public could help the neighbourhood to buy some time. That was the only aspect to which “we” as intermediaries could contribute. If so, who did “we” talk to and what sort of stories should we have told?

Mourning for the Lost ‘We’

26

On the phone with my new friend, I found myself in the middle of a conversation that I would feel uncomfortable witnessing between two other people. The subject was poverty and the degree of its visibility on the streets of Istanbul. We were talking about the struggle of Hacer Foggo, whom many of us met while she, together with many others, was struggling to prevent Sulukule from being demolished. She is still struggling to support Roma people who were deported from their neighbourhood, where their ancestors had lived for more than six centuries. Hacer expanded the boundary of her issue to “deep poverty”, including not only Roma families but any group trapped in hopeless economic conditions without any assistance for various reasons. On the phone, my friend talked about Hacer’s courage, persistence, and brilliance.

We also compared the 2001 economic crisis, which brought the AKP to office, with the crisis that has been going on for years. I asserted that urban transformation has a significant role in deepening poverty. Despair spread like an epidemic with the disintegration of solidarity networks, which had still been functioning during the 2001 economic crises. It was these solidarity networks that made the difference. However, in the districts of Ayazma (Kurdish) and Sulukule (Roma), the government easily played with identity politics to prevent further solidarity with the surrounding

neighbourhoods. When some intellectuals, NGOs, and celebrities attempted to engage with these neighbourhoods, the rest of the city, especially the nearby areas, took it as a negative stigma thanks to the century-long moral envy towards these identities. In this setting, although destroying the most disadvantaged groups, the government paradoxically became the voice of the people. That is why the posters celebrating Sulukule as the city's source of "entertainment" reminded their physical neighbours of their resentment towards Roma cultural and historical heritage. In this case, in the eye of the city, the Roma were completely isolated not only from the city but also from the gaze of their immediate neighbours.

The same mechanism also worked in Tarlabası. Most of those struggling for the preservation of the Emek Movie Theater were not "sufficiently" concerned by what happened in Tarlabası. Tarlabası had a more complex stigma. Was it possible for those who did not oppose the destruction in Tarlabası to stop the destruction of the Emek Cinema? The leading figures in the resistance against destruction in Tarlabası and of the Emek Movie Theater were the same people. But when it comes to those who "just" participated in the protests, the situation was different. Tarlabası was not Beyoğlu for many people, although the distance between these two sacrificed locations was just a hundred metres. Everyone knows more about what happened in Fikirtepe because the producers of a mafia TV series were involved there (*Kurtlar Vadisi*), so the story got much more attention in the media. In Başibüyük, the situation was completely different as this neighbourhood was inhabited by conservative and pro-AKP families. I also remember how I felt when I tried to find a *gecekondu* for me to rent there; a community leader from Başibüyük told me that I would be a negative role model for the daughters of locals as I was a single "*serbest*" (I translate it as "liberal", although it could also be interpreted as "loose") woman.

The problem was not confined to urban transformation. Workplace murders were also a case in point for years; families tried to make their voices heard by everyone in front of Galatasaray High School. It was only the "usual suspects" (left-wing journalists, lawyers, students, etc.) who showed up to listen to them. That's why I could not refrain from asking my friend on the phone: "Where were you then?"

We fell silent for a while. "Hacer keeps asking the same question," she said and continued, "where were we back then, really?" I felt horrible and embarrassed. I know it was not my business to ask people such questions. I apologised, "Sorry, it was mostly our fault. We couldn't find a right way to publicise what was happening and to explain how it could be ended. It was a task we somehow took on, and we could not do it." My face was burning while she responded, "Don't worry, I know what you mean."

The Housing Issue is a Societal Responsibility

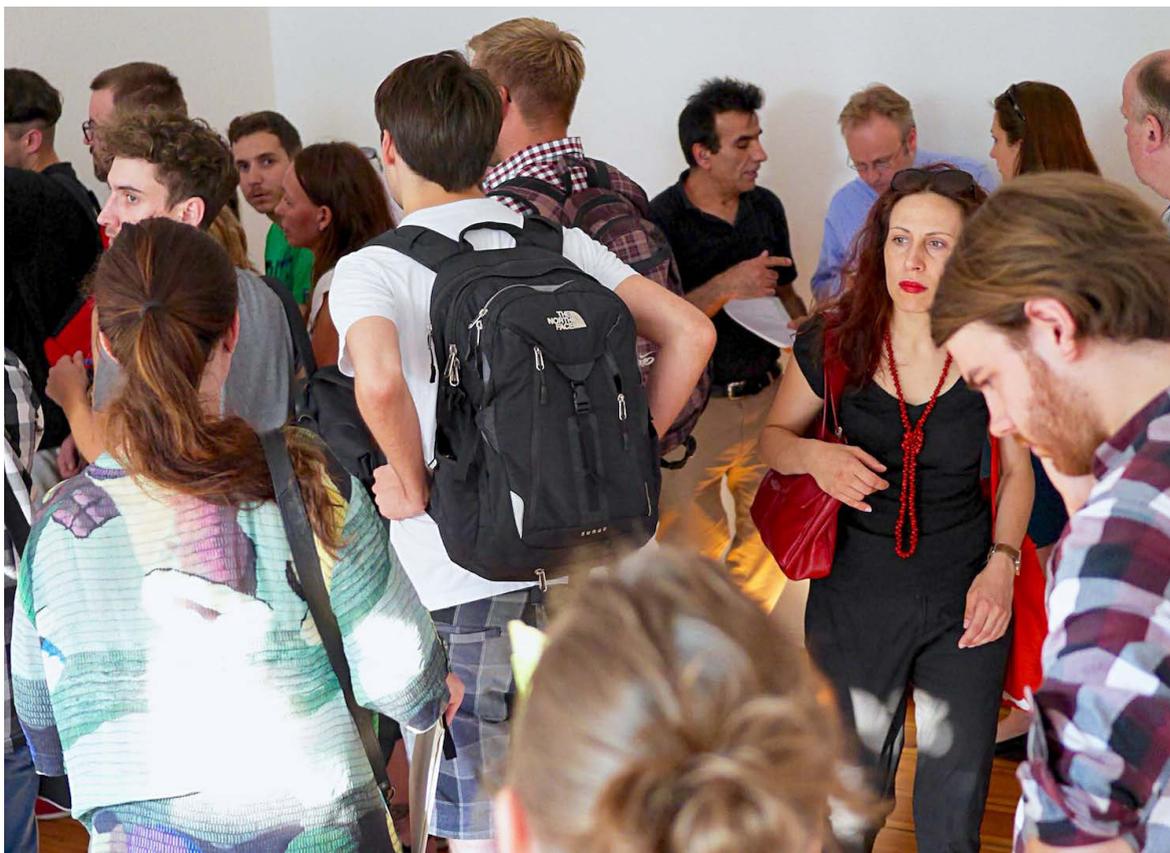
MATTHIAS COERS



MATTHIAS COERS: THE HOUSING ISSUE IS A SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

Flat viewing in Berlin-Neukölln. Especially for one- and two-room flats, the supply situation for new tenants is catastrophic. Even people with an average income have to apply for viewings with 40, 50 or more interested people. It takes a lot of patience to find a new home. Administrators and owners take advantage of this to select tenants who are as well-adjusted and unproblematic as possible and who do not make any demands.

FIG. 1: Flat hunting, Berlin-Neukölln (2015).





Action artist Kurt Jotter from the Büro für ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen / Office for Unusual Measures has been supporting tenants for decades. Basically reasonable modernisations to improve the energy efficiency often lead to a disproportionate increase in rents for existing flats. The old tenants are 'modernised out' under a green pretext and lose their affordable dwellings. Pictured here at a DÄMMOKratie action with Styrofoam panels together with tenant activist Sven Fischer and the then Federal Minister of Justice Heiko Maas.

Homelessness has become a mass phenomenon in the last decade. With air domes as emergency accommodations, social institutions try to alleviate the hardship, in particular in the cold season. In the process, personal needs fall by the wayside.

FIG. 3: Homelessness, Berlin-Schöneberg (2015).





FIG. 4: Senior citizens, Berlin-Mitte/Kreuzberg (2014).

Various population groups have only a small income and are therefore threatened by poverty due to high housing costs. Pensioners in particular are unable to increase their income. Therefore, more and more elderly people have to decide: eat or heat if they do not want to lose their homes.

Municipal housing construction or repurchase of private properties into municipal hands are among the most effective means of ensuring affordable rents on a broad scale in the long term. Here, tenants demonstrate in support of the communalisation of their high-rise residential building at Kottbusser Tor in front of a hotel, where the bidding process is currently underway.

FIG. 5: Participation in communalisation, Berlin-Charlottenburg (2017).





FIG. 6: Rent increase, Berlin-Friedrichshain (2019).

Many owners are shamelessly charging higher rents from new tenants and always find ways to circumvent protective laws like the *Mietpreisbremse* (rent brake). The political representatives of the real estate lobby have succeeded in overturning the rent cap, which was supposed to prevent such excesses. Every move, every termination of a rental contract thus inevitably leads to increased rents.

Tourism is an important economic factor in a city dominated by the service sector. In many places, however, touristification is taking place. The infrastructure of residents is threatened by businesses being oriented towards wealthy visitors. If the number of tourists is too large, local residents are annoyed by noise or displaced by the creation of holiday or Airbnb flats.

FIG. 7: Tourism, Berlin-Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (2018).





FIG. 8: Living Levels / Urban restructuring, Berlin-Kreuzberg (2015).

After the end of real socialism, Berlin is no longer the showcase city of the two systems but the capital of all of Germany. Since the 1990s, the city has been planned as a democratic-capitalist metropolis, as a gateway between eastern and western markets. Global capital is pouring into the real estate market en masse. Huge infrastructure projects, railroad junctions, and an airport are being implemented. The many government officials, highly paid diplomats and intelligence officers, and the managerial and employee class of international corporations are fuelling the rise in housing costs as they are able and willing to pay high rents. The picture shows Living Levels, a condominium complex on the Spree River built in the cynical architectural style of Favela Chic.

In recent years, the urban sociological term gentrification has become established for the process of valorisation and displacement. So-called pioneers—art and culture practitioners, or people pursuing alternative lifestyles—discover neighbourhoods, whereupon event culture and creative businesses follow and bring the area into public awareness, thus attracting the interest of investors. Considering the financial and human resources of the real estate industry, it is unlikely that it is dependent on such pioneers and can certainly identify from existing databases where investments promise worthwhile returns in the short and long term.

FIG. 9: Gentrification, Berlin-Friedrichshain (2016).





Making an impact as urban activists, tenants, or house residents in the immediate vicinity is certainly one of the strongest weapons for the tenants' movement. On one's own, it is usually only possible to keep the contractual relationship stable on a legal protection level. But if you want to have an impact in the residential environment or in the district, to mobilise local actors or politicians, and to build up public pressure, you need neighbourly, practical solidarity in the house and in your own social environment. People who know each other and exchange ideas, who collect shared experiences in concrete struggles, can in the long run successfully oppose even seemingly hopeless attacks, e.g. by property owners.

Locations representing alternative ways of living and socialising, lifestyles that attempt to break the dominance of market-conforming normality, are having a hard time due to the increasing valorisation of the cities. Despite huge support, many projects are losing their spaces as they often cannot withstand the financial pressure. Places that have been able to hold on to urban niches for a long time need special protection, since in the perfect neoliberal city no place is supposed to remain unexploited. Urban society and its political representatives would do well to recognise the mental diversity of youth and subcultures and to give them open spaces.

FIG. 11: Subculture, Berlin-Neukölln (2017).





Forced evictions are no longer accepted silently, and no matter for what reasons people and families lose their apartments—mostly lack of finances—, the indignation about this is even carried forward into the bourgeois media. The Berlin initiative “Zwangsräumungen verhindern / Prevent Forced Evictions” has made a big difference here. However, city-wide solutions such as a general suspension of evictions due to lack of housing supply are not in sight, and even municipal housing associations continue to carry out evictions. Thus, individual, legal, social, and political support continues to be needed in the face of any threat of eviction.

Kaba Kopya / Rough Copies

SISTER SYLVESTER



SISTER SYLVESTER: KABA KOPYA / ROUGH COPIES

Istanbul, 2017. Dismissed academics created a play based on a Dostoyevsky short story to demonstrate the absurdity of the charges against them: here they unfurl a banner on stage protesting the detention of their colleague Onur Hamzaoğlu.

In January 2016, a group of academics in Turkey signed what seemed to be a fairly standard petition, the kind regularly circulated around universities. It was written by an organisation called Academics for Peace (AfP) that had formed in 2012 “to contribute to the ongoing Turkish-Kurdish peace negotiations from a scholarly perspective”. By 2016, those peace negotiations had broken down, and there had been a resumption of armed conflict, military operations, and curfews by the Turkish state. The petition called for a cessation of those hostilities and of the human-rights violations taking place in the Kurdish areas of Turkey. The 1,128 academics who signed the initial petition, and those who signed a solidarity letter later, became known as the *Barış Akademisyenleri*, or Peace Academics. In the purges that followed the attempted coup of 2016, many of these academics were expelled from their positions, banned from any state jobs (effectively rendering them unemployable, as those in the private sector also feared the repercussions when offering them work), and had their passports confiscated. In addition to this, they faced legal charges accusing them of creating propaganda for a terrorist organisation.

Some of the academics responded to their situation by putting into practice or inventing new types of pedagogy outside of the official institutions: these experiments became known collectively as Solidarity Academies. The best known

of these internationally were the “Street Academies” in Ankara, where professors continued their lectures on the streets of the city, inviting former students as well as passers-by to join them. But Solidarity Academies were happening in cities and regions across Turkey and beyond. Many of the academics chose to pursue alternate forms of pedagogy, breaking down the barriers between different types of institutions, inviting students and professors from different sectors of society into the same spaces, and using non-hierarchical methodologies. These were experiments in new kinds of teaching and new kinds of learning, searching for a new relationship between academia and society that could answer the extremities of the time.

In the situation of an international crisis in academia, the idea that a group under such extreme duress were the ones to enact another system was intriguing and inspiring. These projects seemed to embody what David Graeber said about direct action: that it is the “defiant insistence on acting as if one is already free”.¹

I moved to Istanbul in 2013 to run a neighbourhood art space with some friends from the city. One of the projects at this venue had been an exploration of radical pedagogy, looking at the works of Augusto Boal, Paulo Freire, and others. The art space succumbed to political pressures, but I remained in the city, working on independent projects and collaborating with artists I had met through this space, one of whom was teaching at Boğaziçi. In the months after the attempted coup, I watched as he and other academic friends frantically tried to ascertain whether they were caught up in the firings and the court cases. I learnt about the Solidarity Academies from them and met first with the academics in Eskisehir and Istanbul, and then, through the generosity of the academics there, with members of the other academies. I began documenting the Solidarity Academies and gave my project the name *Kaba Kopya*, meaning “Rough Copy”, based on a quote by a president who called the academics “Rough copies of intellectuals”².

In line with the experimental pedagogy and make-shift spaces of these academies, the idea of a “rough copy”, something open to change, to collaboration, intentionally unfinished, seemed not a slight but a concept to be reclaimed and celebrated. This project of documentation is also an ongoing rough copy. It is neither comprehensive nor definitive. Instead, it is a small fragment of an attempt to document a radical and heterogenous resistance effort, which, in a situation of extreme duress, declares that it will exist in the world as if already free.

1 Jeffries, Stuart. 2015. “David Graeber interview: ‘So many people spend their working lives doing jobs they think are unnecessary’”. *The Guardian*, 21 March 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/21/books-interview-david-graeber-the-utopia-of-rules>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

2 Tayyip Erdoğan used the terms *aydın müsvedelleri* [bad copy of intellectuals] and *akademisyen müsvedelleri* [bad copy of academics]: <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/baris-icin-akademisyenler-inisiyatifinin-bildirisine-sorusturma-dalgasi>. I used another word for ‘rough’—*Kaba*.

Istanbul (2017)

The Istanbul academy was one of the first places I visited, a room above a café in Kadıköy where the Istanbul Kampüssüz (Academics without a Campus) organisation met, before they moved to an old trade union building nearby. It was early summer, and street sounds from beyond the open doors of the balcony mixed with the lively discussions inside. After the group left, the room seemed charged with the energy of those discussions, the empty chairs slightly askew, still holding the presence of those who had been there.

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FIG. 1: Istanbul (2017). After the class: the empty room above a café in Kadıköy.

Izmir (2017)

An off-season holiday camp was the location for a week-long workshop organised by the Izmir Academics for Peace, Solidarity Academy. The carefree atmosphere of the setting—students and academics jumping into the pool or ocean between seminars, the white plastic chairs more commonly associated with weddings or celebrations—contrasted sharply with the political realities of the situation. It was at this workshop that students expressed hesitation about being caught on camera, in case of future repercussions, and I decided to document only the settings of the workshops and the academics whose identities were already public, not the student participants.

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FIG. 2: Izmir (2017). A break between lectures.



← FIG. 3: Izmir (2017). Picnic tables and benches became spaces for impromptu conversations between the workshops.

Amed / Diyarbakır (2019)

The workshop in Amed was the last one I documented before the pandemic prevented gatherings and travel. This workshop, organised by dismissed academics, brought together graduate students from architecture and urban planning. The workshop was a reminder of why the academics had signed the original petition. Many of the students were researching the ways in which city planning had been used as an act of war: the building of dams that flooded the valleys, blocking paths previously used by guerrillas; or the areas of the old city that had been bulldozed, new buildings going up behind the hoardings advertising “traditional Diyarbakır living”. During a break, students cooled off with their feet in the Tigris, which, as we learnt from one of the local academics, had been downgraded by the AKP from a ‘river’ to a ‘stream’ so that they could circumvent laws on pollution that had previously protected it.

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FIG. 4: Amed/Diyarbakır (2019). The academics and students are taken on a tour of the Gardens of Hewsel, near Amed.



← FIG. 5: Amed / Diyarbakır. Students at the Amed workshop take a break in the Tigris.

Eskişehir (2018)

Bariş Ezgiler, or *Melodies for Peace* is a folk music group started by dismissed academics in Eskişehir, a university town about a two-hour train ride from Istanbul. These photos were taken during rehearsal in the kitchen of an apartment used for academic gatherings by the Eskişehir Solidarity Academy. Dr Ozan Devrim Yay, one of the founders, explained that the idea had come to him when a famous folk musician played a protest song outside of one of the prisons where academics were being held. Yay and his friend decided to take instruments with them to their next protest, and from that *Melodies for Peace* was born. All but one of the musicians present at this rehearsal were amateurs who had barely played before their dismissal from the universities: Yay commented wryly that, as most of them were scientists, the dismissals had also robbed them of their labs, and so they had ample time for rehearsal. Yay also, half-jokingly, told me that their new aim was to sound good enough that people came to see them not just because of their status as dismissed academics but for the music alone.

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FIG. 6: Eskişehir (2018). Rehearsals with *Melodies for Peace*, based in Eskişehir.

Mersin (2018)

The *Kültürhane*, or Culture House, in Mersin is a library, study room, café, and workshop space located on the ground floor of an apartment building. Some of the dismissed academics from the Mersin sociology department had managed to leave the country before the passport ban came into effect. They donated the books they left behind to those who stayed, and this was the beginning of *Kültürhane*. I was there for a conference that brought together Peace Academics from across the country, with tea from the café fueling discussions late into the night. One of the academics took us on a tour of a farm she had started nearby: her dream was for it to become a place of retreat for academics, a place to think anew about the connection between the land and their work.

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FIG. 7: Mersin (2018).



← FIG. 8: Mersin (2018). *Kültürhane* in Mersin, a library and workspace, a place for meetings, study and experiments in alternative pedagogy.

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← FIG. 9: Mersin (2018). A farm near Mersin: the dream of growing vegetables, ideas and communities.

Çağlayan Akademisi (2017)

The majority of the trials were held in the Çağlayan courthouse in Şişli, Istanbul. Çağlayan means “waterfall”, a name that evokes the site’s past before the construction of this concrete monolith.

As academics from across the country were required to attend trials here, the corridors of the courthouse, and the cafés that lined the perimeter, became spaces of reunion, exchange, and debate. Aslı Odman, one of the organisers of the group that co-ordinated support for the academics on trial, and ensured no one faced the judge alone, described the meetings at the court, sometimes up to five times a week, as a new part of her academic work:

“Contrary to the seriousness of the case, it makes me feel very good to come here every time there is a trial. If I don’t come, I have some symptoms of depression because I can’t see my friends in the coordination, because I can’t be here myself. I would say that this is also a way of doing an academy, in these extraordinary days of Turkey. It is a part of our academic job now to be here. We therefore call it the Çağlayan Akademisi, which has become one of the academies that were established in Turkey’s difficult days.”¹

The court is referred to as *Çağlayan Akademisi* in part because of the way its layout mirrors that of a traditional lecture hall. The judge and the prosecutor are positioned in front and above the defendant and audience, like a professor in front of their students, a sharp contrast to the spatial arrangements of the Solidarity Academies. Many of the academics also wrote their defences as a kind of lecture, using their own discipline to argue against the trials, support the original petition, and condemn the government policy both against the Kurdish regions and the dismissed academics. This was the second meaning of the name: the court did become a lecture hall, the academics on trial speaking to their former students and peers, and each defence contributing to an archive of resistance.

1 Interview with the author.



← FIG. 10: Çağlayan Akademisi (2017).



← FIG. 11: Çağlayan Akademisi (2017). After and between trials the cafés around the courthouse became spaces for meeting, exchange and reunions—a conviviality that contrasted sharply with the severity of the charges the academics were facing.



← FIG. 12: Çağlayan Akademisi (2017). On the stage, on the street. A press release is read outside the courthouse before the trials commence for the day.

In 2019, the constitutional court ruled that the original Academics For Peace petition had been lawful within the boundaries of freedom of expression. Although the court cases are no longer pending, only a few of the dismissed academics have been able to return to their former positions, and the Solidarity Academies continue.

On 1 January 2021, the crisis in academia took on a new dimension with the midnight replacement of the dean of Boğazici, one of the most prestigious universities, with a state-appointed official. The resulting student protests, occupation, and arrests are part of the still unfolding struggle for freedom of speech, thought, and research in Turkey.

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FIG. 13: Izmir (2017). After early morning discussions in Izmir.

CHAPTER II:

The I in We: Un/Silenced Subjects

The Pandemic State of Emergency as a Reading Guide of Notable Absences in the Urban Class Society of Istanbul¹

ASLI ODMAN

The Berlin Conference “We, The City. Plurality and Resistance in Berlin and Istanbul” back in 2019 took place in a vibrant environment of exchange and comparison. It deserved its title and exemplified a clear orientation towards engaged research on and for urban justice and equality:

“Who are we, the city? Can we find the elements of an egalitarian democratic imaginary and a non-hegemonic conception of ‘we’ by thinking the instances of resistance in Berlin and Istanbul together? How do residents of Berlin and Istanbul experience, express, and resist the physical, political and normative reordering of their cities? Over the course of three days, we invite practitioners and theorists of the urban—activists, cultural producers, and scholars alike—to explore various forms of knowledge production through moderated talks, panels, and installations.”²

The invitation was well received, and there was a consistency between the contents discussed, questions of the research presented, and the forms in which the discussions evolved. Looking back on those face-to-face social moments of engaged research exchange, it seems as if not only years passed but a qualitatively entirely new period has evolved between now and then. In fact, the pandemic lockdown that slowed down direct social interaction in both cities confirmed the relevancy of the research questions that the conference had set itself as a task to tackle, often overshadowed in the ‘normalised course of urban interactions’. For example, in our comparative panel with Stefania Animento, our aim was

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1 This article is based on an expanded and significantly modified version of the following two articles. The author would like to thank the editors of both articles and the translator of the latter: 1. “Keeping the Wheels Turning at all Costs: Factories as COVID-19 Clusters—Interview with Asli Odman”. *TRAFO—Blog for Transregional Research*, 10 August 2021. <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/30605> (edited by Görkem Akgöz, Nurçin Ileri, Malak Labib, Natasha Klimenko); 2. Odman, Ash. 2020. “The exceptional state of the pandemic policies: Working Citizens”. *saha*, December, Special Issue 3, edited by Fırat Genç, translated from Turkish into English by Yeşim Öztaracı, 52–60.

2 Excerpt from the self-description of the conference at: <https://wethecity.info/wethecity2019/wethecity/www.wethecity.info/index.html>. Accessed 1 August 2022.

to make visible the production sphere behind the thick curtains of private property and labour as its main agent in those two cities.³ In this panel, one of Animento's and my main thesis was that the analysis of working life is underrepresented and overshadowed both in urban research and journalistic activity, and even in the everyday narratives of the working participants of the city, according to the motto, 'Don't bring work home, right?'. Yet we focused on everyday practices—including resistances—and the 'hidden injuries'⁴ of the 'citi-zen'⁵ as worker in contrast to the 'citi-zen' as consumer, 'citi-zen' in public spaces etc. How does the naturalisation of working life as the 'second nature' of cities and the inequalities it causes facilitate the reproduction of urban class societies? Where and how can we see and sense this process of naturalisation and de-historicisation of urban tensions and the discourses about them? In our understanding, this perpetuation mainly passes through the invisibilisation of workspaces from the hegemonic "We's" constructed in representations of the city in official and public discourses. Thus, the urging aim of our panel was to shed light on how renewed class realities are constructed in and between the workspaces, including homes as the space of reproductive labour linked to the former by ways of commuting.

We wanted to reflect upon the meaning and role of one's work and labour in general in city residents' lives: what does invisibility of labour mean? How can we trace this invisibility, which is a paradoxical task in itself? What is the relevance and epistemology of making labour visible in the city today? What are the relationships between the ones who produce commodities in the cities and the ones who are reproduced/

3 The title of the joint panel held on 23 May 2019 was "We, the Invisible Hours, Spaces and Relations of the City: Labouring Istanbul, Labouring Berlin". The title of the paper Stefania Animento presented was "Making Labour Visible in Berlin: Exploitation at the Nexus between Work and Play". There she focused on the flourishing service and IT sectors in the platform economies of Berlin and the grassroots organisations of the new workers controlled by an algorithmic time and space management. For an overview, see: Altenried, Moritz, Stefania Animento, and Manuela Bojadžijev. 2021. "Plattform-Urbanismus. Arbeit, Migration und die Transformation des urbanen Raums". *sub\urban. zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung* 9 (1/2), 73–92.

4 Here I refer to the 1972 book by Richard Sennett / Jonathan Cobb, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (Austin: Gold Books), stressing the term 'hidden' in connection with the widespread invisibility of labour in the reflections on the city. In their seminal book based on qualitative interviews with relatively lower-class workers of that period—yet with a secure job and income—in Boston, the authors masterfully displayed the everyday experiences of workers in a hierarchically structured city, how this makes them feel, and how they make sense of those feelings. One of the coping mechanisms of this everyday urban tension is dividing the self between the identity attached to the urban citizen through work and the 'real self'. In this dualism, home and consumption around home-making becomes the place of the self-esteem and internal freedom of the 'real self'. Yet functions and performances accomplished in workplaces are pushed to the background as a defence mechanism since they come with a sense of submissiveness, lack of autonomy and creativity, injured dignity, and individual failure for which only the worker carries the responsibility in the discursive order. Therefore, introversion to oneself, individualism, consumerism, and attachment to one's home and urban leisure have to do with the working life in an indirect and even more powerful manner.

5 Here I opt for the neologism 'citi-zen' instead of 'citizen' to underline the social tissue of the city as the imprint of the spatialised class conflict and to contrast it with a, *by definition*, space-less national identity.

represented in the brand images of the cities?⁶ What are the concrete workplaces behind the very much propagated images of shiny and fun workplaces of IT start-ups, cultural industries, and smart cities? To make our reflections tangible, we tried to set out an epistemological basis for a comparison between Istanbul and Berlin in terms of a spatialised focus on new workspaces. Mushrooming construction sites of infrastructure mega-projects was the main case for Istanbul as highly location-based yet volatile workspaces. The fluid and algorithmically controlled workspaces created by the new platform urbanism (gastronomy, call centres, and delivery services) was the counterpart for Berlin.⁷ Those ‘rescaled’ workspaces in both cities were nurtured by young, gendered, and mostly migrant workers on whom work imposed effects of atomisation and deskilling, long working hours, less than a living, often minimum wage, lack of conventional organisation, and increased risks regarding health and safety at work.

Capital organised in and between the myriad scales alongside the global commodity chains transcends urban spaces and turns them into abstract spaces⁸ of production for profit. Labour, in turn, is confined to social spaces of production, which are centred around the workspace with its commuting and living spaces. These are lived routes constituting chaotic—unless organised—networks, where ‘citi-zens as workers’ circulate, accumulating experiences of making a living, inequality, adverse effects on their health, psyche, and dignity. Labour, as opposed to abstract urban capital, is always a location-based practice. Workplaces are therefore not simple boxes where working life prescribed from above ‘plays out’.

The (brand) images of and about the metropolises are also always structured, thus ‘class-based’ and ‘class-ified’ images, obscuring further those splintered, unclassified moments of production experiences. Efforts to make labour visible in the city are looking at the latent, slow shifts underlying the ‘planetary urbanization’⁹ that have consequences for

6 For an earlier discussion on the social restructuring of the discourses on Istanbul contrasted with the evolution of the labouring world, see: Odman, Asli. 2015. “Reflections on the Panel ‘Working Poor or Working Deprived in Cool Istanbul’”. *Cool Istanbul. Urban Enclosures and Resistances*, edited by Derya Özkan, translated from Turkish by Funda Özokçu, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 61–78.

7 Altenried, Moritz, Stefania Animento, and Manuela Bojadžijev. 2021. “Plattform-Urbanismus. Arbeit, Migration und die Transformation des urbanen Raums”. *sub\urban. zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung* 9 (1/2), 73–92.

8 ‘Abstract space’ is the outcome of the ordering, quantifying, measuring of space and linked to the concept of ‘conceived space’ in the spatial triad by Henri Lefebvre. It is the inevitable by-product of capital accumulation processes, which is the main motor behind the ‘place’–‘space’ tension. For further information, see: Merryfield, Andy. 2006. *Henry Lefebvre. A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

9 The term ‘planetary urbanization’ signifies the recent change in the perspective of urban studies which defies the former urban-rural divide and city-centric epistemologies. Decentering the ‘real existing’ administrative urban borders, it is an invitation for looking at multi-scalar entanglements between workspaces and territories of resources, on spatial fixation, accumulation by dispossession, and on how the globalised capital accumulation has pushed towards implosion and explosion to produce more but dispersed urban fabric. For more on the operationalisation of the concept, see: Brenner, Neil and Christian Schmid. 2014. “Planetary Urbanization”. *Implosions and Explosions. Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, edited by Neil Brenner, Berlin: jovis Verlag, 160–64.

a much vaster territory than the metropolis itself. It might be necessary to point to another cleavage that needs to be taken into account between labour as a socio-spatial process and the items on the agenda of single trade unions as its self-proclaimed representatives. Needless to say, the approach taken here opts for the first one and distances itself from ‘trade union fetishism’¹⁰ when caring for the ‘representation of labour in the planetary city’, especially during ‘long times of drought’ when it does not ‘stage itself in the urban present and history’ in the form of organised and visible movements and demands.

The contrast between the shiny images of the ‘cool cities Istanbul and Berlin’ and the obscure/d everyday working realities is striking and bears both political and methodological paradoxes and backlashes: everyday work of the labourer ‘secretes’ the social tissue of the city, yet remains ‘secret’ to the ‘public opinion’, made invisible inside the realms of the privately owned workspaces. Yet in two instances the veil of invisibility is broken: death or resistance of the worker.

In my talk in Berlin, I tried to apply this ambitious research framework, which strives to make labour in the cities visible, although only little by little. On that occasion, I had to limit the talk to the howling construction sites in Istanbul, the economic capital of an almost unrestricted conservative-liberal accumulation regime. Though the construction sector may have slowed down during the pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis, it has not lost its backing by the ever-expanding neo-populist regime, the emergency laws granting the construction companies exceptions to build and expand, its disproportionate share in work-related deaths and in the destruction of the ecosystems. Striving to make the labour on the numerous scattered construction sites visible, I focused on two instances when the construction workers become visible: first, when they die, and second, when they resist and protest.

Back in June 2019, my focus was further narrowed down to the biggest mega-project Istanbul had ever witnessed: the third airport.¹¹ Data of work-related fatal accidents in Istanbul compiled by the Istanbul Health and Safety Labour Watch since 2011¹² clearly showed that construction workers had one

10 Atzeni, Maurizio. 2021. “Workers’ organizations and the fetishism of the trade union form: toward new pathways for research on the labour movement?” *Globalizations* 18 (8): 1349–62.

11 Odman, Aslı. 2019. “Third Airport of Istanbul/Turkey: Assault against Human Life, Ecosystem, Urban Heritage and Public Finance”. Paper presented for the Fact Finding Committee of the International Trade Union Confederation, 25 March. https://www.academia.edu/39798654/Third_Airport_of_Istanbul_Turkey_Assault_against_Human_Life_Ecosystem_Urban_Heritage_and_Public_Finance. Accessed 3 August 2022.

12 For the Istanbul Health and Safety Labour Watch, see: “Turkey: Unions and campaigners stand up to murder at work”. *Hazards Magazine* 144, 2008. <https://www.hazards.org/workingworld/workiswar.htm>. Accessed 3 August 2022: “In 2007, a network of progressive academics, journalists, lawyers, doctors and engineers joined forces with workers and trade unionists and labour organisers to set up a joint campaign and to fund investigations into why so many workers were being killed in the country’s shipbuilding and repair yards. The network now funds a coordinator to campaign across all sectors in Turkey. It carries out painstaking research, scanning local and national, print and online media on a daily basis, compiling and publishing monthly updates and the annual Report on work murders”.

of the highest mortality rates while making a living in Istanbul. I separated the data on construction workers of the third airport from the data on all fatal workplace accidents and compared this ‘necro-political’ data¹³ with the demands of the wildcat strike right ahead of the ceremonial opening on Republic Day, on 29 October 2018.¹⁴ During the five-year construction process, at least 52 workers died, but the demands of the wildcat strike did not prioritise the ‘right to live’. The long list of demands mainly comprised, firstly, basic economic rights like full and timely payment of wages, no arbitrary dismissals and, secondly, improvement of the daily working conditions, which the workers spontaneously and unanimously described as ‘attacks against their dignity’, like a bed-bug infestation in workers’ sleeping quarters, bad and cold food, overcrowded workers’ transportation services in which they were transported ‘like livestock’. The living wage and living dignity thus took precedence over the right to live, which was clearly violated by the working conditions established for the around 30,000 workers employed with dozens of different subcontractors over those five years. In my talk, I dealt with this puzzling relationship between the two types of rare ‘public opinion’ visibility of labour in our cities, branded with cool images on the ‘smart’, high-tech, and sterile renders. I kept asking whether a holistic representation, social mapping of the myriad workplaces and the living element that kept them going was possible. And what this would imply for the methodological conventions of urban studies we were sticking to. These questions lurked in the research I pursued in the following years, to be faced again in the situation of urban emergency triggered by the pandemic.

Becoming Visible when Labour Stages Itself on the Urban Scene

Back to today, March 2022, this article is being penned amidst a period of an intensive, unexpected wave of strikes.¹⁵ More wildcat strikes effectively stopping production took place in the first two months of 2022 than during the whole of 2020.

13 Presidency Communication Center (CIMER). 2018. “52 Deadly Occupational Accidents Occur in Construction of 3rd Istanbul Airport”. *bianet*, 3 December. <https://bianet.org/english/labor/203151-52-workers-lose-their-lives-in-construction-of-3rd-airport-in-5-years>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

14 Sinclair-Webb, Emma. 2008. “Construction Workers At Turkey’s New Airport Jailed For Protesting Work Conditions”. *Human Rights Watch Bulletin*, 21 September. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/21/construction-workers-turkeys-new-airport-jailed-protesting-work-conditions>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

15 Birelma, Alpkan. 2022. “Is Labor Making a Comeback in Turkey. The 2022 Strike Wave in Turkey”. *Cambridge Core blog*, 2 March. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/blog/2022/03/02/is-labor-making-a-comeback-the-2022-strike-wave-in-turkey/>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

Istanbul and its wider productive hinterland was the number one strike hub, followed by Gaziantep, the textile hub, and the province of Izmir, dominated by the resistance of ship recycling workers.¹⁶ In Istanbul, striking delivery workers at Yemeksepeti, acquired by Berlin-based Delivery Hero, are tearing down the company's consumer-oriented brand image by laying bare wages below subsistence level, outsourced death risks hidden behind the 'solo-employment' status, and systematic mobbing. The warehouse workers of another city-maker image brand, Migros—Turkey's largest supermarket chain—are organised to claim decent wages and dignity and emerge victorious in a struggle without being backed by previous collective bargaining rights. Sock workers, whose mass existence is only marginally covered by working class dailies under 'normal conditions', make their grievances at their workplaces heard in the general urban public. And most of the striking workers do so without the backing of traditional formal unions but stage themselves in the urban public spaces and spheres. These brief impressions of struggle make visible the everyday conditions, routes, inequalities of 'citizens as workers', who are also for the moment a latent, not apparently resisting part of the 'citizens as workers' and the labouring city as a social space.

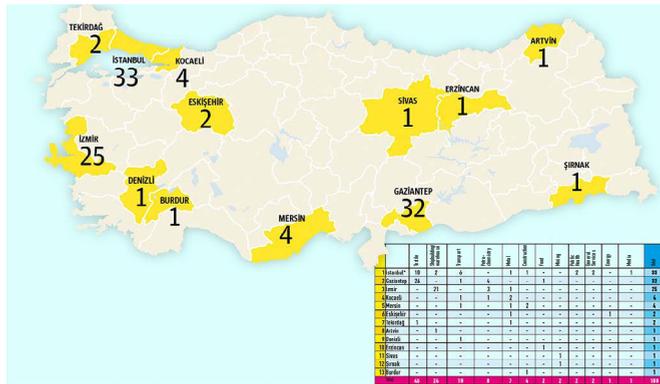


FIG. 1: Distribution of wildcat strikes by provinces. Report on the 2022 Strike Wave (2022 Grev Dalgası) by the Labour Studies Group (Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu) and Evrensel Newspaper, March 2022. Translated by Aslı Odman.

16 For a strike map by industry and workplaces, see the interactive map of the daily newspaper Evrensel: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/454269/turkiyenin-dort-bir-yaninda-2022de-baslayan-devam-eden-isci-eylemlerinin-haritasi>. 03. Accessed 3 August 2022.

Becoming Visible when Workers Die en Masse

These insights also make visible the everyday 'state of emergency' of the 'citizens as workers', which is naturalised/normalsed behind the billboard images of the city. According to the reports and calculations of the Istanbul Health and Safety Labour Watch, at least around 20 to 30 people die in Turkey every day due to work-related reasons, mainly because of work, the way they work, the conditions under which they work (workplace accidents, occupational diseases, or work-related suicides), out of a population of around 85 million people and a workforce of around 32 million (around 49%), with an official informality rate of 29% and the widely defined unemployment rate of 22% by November 2021, with 99,9% of enterprises being SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises)—1 to 250 workers—, employing 76% of the workforce and responsible for around 80% of workplace accidents, which are related to bigger holding companies through supply and commodity chains.¹⁷ Only a minor fraction of those work-related deaths are officially registered. And the majority of them take place in Istanbul and its wider productive hinterland, described as a city region.

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There is a clear linear relationship between 'development' and death. More accelerated capital accumulation/'growth' in a sector invariably leads to more fatalities and injuries at work in this sector. This is why the Istanbul Health and Safety Labour Watch tends to refer to the current economic system as 'accumulation by work-related deaths'. In the more rapidly expanding/deepening sectors there are more, repeated, accelerated deaths but also more urbanicide and environmental destruction. This type of capital accumulation stresses the integrity and longevity of the body both of the worker and the ecosystem beyond vital biological limits. Clear examples from Istanbul for this linear and fatal relationship are, first, the shipbuilding region in Tuzla, Istanbul's easternmost district, which experienced a boom in global demand for new ships back in 2007; second, the construction sector throughout the period; third, the TV series sector, which became a Turkish export commodity, using Istanbul as a movie set reproducing only its cool images; and last but not least in the death toll among health, education, municipal, delivery, warehouse, and market workers whose essential work made survival in the cities during the pandemic possible at the 'unrecognised' expense of longer and more intensive work, increased social risks, and systematic negligence of their occupational health and safety by employers. Dozens of workers routinely die during ordinary everyday production

17 World Bank Labour Force Statistics on Turkey. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?locations=TR>. Accessed 8 February 2022.

at their workplace. This situation is in fact the real state of emergency of the ‘citizens as workers’ and is pushed towards invisibility. This invisible real state of emergency is further aggravated by the state of emergencies initiated both by the political regime in 2016 and by the pandemic in 2020.

Discovering the Cartographies of Disease¹⁸ Two Years after the Initial Research for Visibility

Two years after those first attempts at tracing the everyday state of emergency and the lethal production of Istanbul by the ‘citizens as workers’ behind its invasive marketed images, the state of emergency triggered by the pandemic offered—paradoxically enough—a new window to make visible urban class society and its spaces.¹⁹

The pandemic not only unveiled the already existing social inequalities but also aggravated them. Sociologists of health have long been addressing the social determinants of health and life expectancy, so this did not come as a surprise to researchers working on inequalities arising from how, where, and when one works in a capitalist society, i.e. the class position. Yet social inequalities produced in spaces where capitalism reproduces itself—that is, primarily in physical workspaces—and inequalities based on socio-professional activity were neglected in terms of data-sharing and pandemic policies in most countries. This is especially true if we exclude some bits of information that exposed otherwise obscure areas. For example, these were either very salient, visible COVID-19 workplace clusters, like care homes, hospitals, and slaughterhouses, or resistance clusters voicing out loud the health inequalities during the pandemic, such as those that occurred in warehouses and organised industry zones, among other locations. In Turkey, however, we can speak of a total eclipse of the discourse on and politics against workplace risks, which in fact constitutes a continuity with the pre-pandemic attitude of state, corporations, and other ideological apparatuses, like the press or academia towards the working world.

As far as the impact of the pandemic specifically on industrial workers is concerned, we should talk about two different types of relations. In doing so, we should first of all

18 Koch, Tom. 2005. *Cartographies of Disease. Maps, Mapping and Medicine*, Redlands CA: ESRI Press; Patino, Marie. 2020. “Coronavirus Outbreak Maps Rooted in History”. *Bloomberg CityLab Design*, 11 February. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-02-11/coronavirus-outbreak-maps-rooted-in-history>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

19 This part of the article is a shortened and revised version of: “Keeping the Wheels Turning at all Costs: Factories as COVID-19 Clusters—Interview with Aslı Odman”, *TRAFO—Blog for Transregional Research*, 10 August 2021. <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/30605>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

distinguish between the scales of industrial work. From largest to smallest, these include organised industrial zones (which sometimes take the shape of special production zones, free zones, etc.), factories, workshops, small informal units (which are attached to housing units called “under-the-counter workshops”), artisanal units, homes, and streets.

Firstly, large-scale industrial workplaces were important COVID-19 clusters. When employers failed to meet the increased demands for workers’ health and safety measures during the pandemic, these industrial workplaces became superspreader spaces and public health problems. This was mainly due to the large numbers of workers toiling, eating, and moving alongside each other with little or no distance, and going to work every day using public transportation, crowded especially along the commuting routes. In Turkey, no data was kept and shared on the infection rates at workplaces, on COVID-19 workplace clusters, or regarding socio-professional backgrounds—that is, the *cursus laboris* (or work history) of infected or deceased people. Workplaces and capitalist working relations of different sectors and scales were systematically kept invisible, which quickly became one of the reasons of the accelerating spread of the disease. The acute lack of measures to protect workers’ health and safety was translated into severe public health negligence. The state didn’t view and keep data on workplaces and did not allow or facilitate local governments or civil society organisations to do so, so its policies were not directed towards these large-scale sources of infection. As a result, the population close to industrial workers—such as their families, people they shared public facilities with, or people who lived next to or within those production facilities—suffered because the chain of transmission was not cut off at the start of the spreads. Similarly, non-essential lines of industrial production were not stopped by measures such as compensating workers from public funds set aside for states of emergency. Instead, “keep the wheels turning at all costs!” was the motto of the corporatocratic regime.

Secondly, most medium and small-sized industrial workplaces are not separated from central residential areas in Turkish metropolises. Rather, they are tightly interwoven into the urban fabric. Despite their smaller size, their proximity to all age segments of the urban population made them an additional type of superspreader.

To give a concrete example, let’s illustrate a few relevant aspects of Istanbul’s industrial landscape. The city accommodates millions of employees working in nearly 15,000 different formal business units registered with the Istanbul Chamber of Industry. This includes the Tuzla Shipbuilding Zone, nearly 20 Organised Industrial Zones, and Small Industrial Areas (five in Tuzla, three in Ümraniye, Küçükçekmece, and Büyükçekmece), and three Free Zones, where thousands of people work side by side every day. Thousands of poorly ventilated, sometimes windowless, formal, informal, or semi-formal workshops, flats, and under-the-counter businesses in the neighbourhoods near the two highways that crisscross the city form an

luxury of staying at home”, and a significant number of them work in conditions that cause the pandemic to spread faster. At least 40 percent of the formally employed—that is, nearly 1,720,000 workers in the city—work in a total of 10,000 businesses employing more than 50 workers.²¹ This was and still is a massive category of potential COVID-19 clusters that were not registered or accounted for, and for which no policy was developed.

During the pandemic, the Istanbul Health and Safety Labour Watch has documented other violations of workers’ rights beyond the right to health. At some well-known, globally producing, and established factories (e.g., in the food and metal sector, i.e., Vestel Electronics owned by the Zorlu Holding or the Dardanel canned food factory) and on (mega-infrastructure) construction sites (i.e., of Limak Inc.), workers were literally locked in at their workplace. Their freedom of movement was restricted to keep the production process going. In the case of the Dardanel food company, workers were forced to reside in nearby vacated student dormitories or construction site containers, otherwise they were threatened with dismissal—to name just one of the illegal enforcement methods. Healthy workers replaced the ill ones and worked longer hours and harder to keep production at pre-pandemic levels.²²

There is also a perfect continuity from the pre-pandemic to the pandemic period in recognising occupational diseases. Here, there is a policy of non-policy, systematic ignorance, and the active invisibilisation of the relation between disease and work. Despite the general difficulties in recognising occupational diseases throughout capitalist countries, we have reliable estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) stating that deaths due to occupational diseases occur approximately six times more often than deaths from work accidents.²³ Since 2011, the Istanbul Health and Safety Labour Watch has been documenting deaths from occupational accidents, recording at least around 2,000 deaths per year. In other words, despite the fact that—according to the most conservative estimate—10,000-12,000 employees lose their lives every year due to occupational diseases in Turkey, no one seems to have died from an occupational disease between 2013 and 2019 according to the official statistics by the Turkish Social Security Institute SGK! Figures before 2013 rarely exceed 10 fatalities. Another reliable estimate²⁴ is that at least 10 percent of those who die from cancer each year die from occupational

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21 Odman, Aslı. 2020. “The exceptional state of the pandemic policies: Working Citizens”. *saha*, December, Special Issue 3, edited by Fırat Genç, translated from Turkish into English by Yeşim Öztarakçı, 52–60.

22 “Keeping the Wheels Turning at all Costs: Factories as COVID-19 Clusters—Interview with Aslı Odman”. 2021. *TRAFO—Blog for Transregional Research*, 10 August, edited by Görkem Akgöz, Nurçin Ileri, Malak Labib, and Natasha Klimenko. <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/30605>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

23 World Health Organization. 2008. *The global burden of disease: 2004 update*. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43942>.

24 Pandey, Kaushal Raj. 2007. “Occupational cancer kills more than 200,000 people a year”. *BMJ*, 5 May; 334 (7600): 925.

cancers. More than 13,000 occupational cancer deaths should have been recorded, but the official figure is “zero”. Getting sick because of work is an area that the capitalist regime in Turkey pushed into invisibility. The burden of proving that the disease is linked to the working conditions legally lies with the workers, who are thus placed against the big bureaucratic social security machine they can never overcome to prove that their disease is linked to their work. It is as if there are no peasants or seasonal agricultural, factory, mine, and shipyard workers who come in contact with toxic materials, dust, pesticides, or inhumanely long working hours and work pressure on a daily basis during their entire working life. These structural limits were reinforced during the pandemic. Under public pressure in the face of serial losses of health personnel²⁵, the Ministry of Health was pushed to issue a special circular concerning only the health personnel in December 2020 as to how to recognise COVID-19 as an occupational disease. But even this hasn’t changed the basic traits of the system. The infection or death of a health worker is not automatically accepted as an occupational disease. Even the family of a nurse who dies while working in a pandemic hospital is expected to prove that she was infected while working (and not while resting at home). Thus the burden of proof is placed on the employees or, if they have died, on their family. At the moment, only a few cases among the hundreds were won by families of diseased healthcare workers, who had to go to court for this (four official recognitions of the death of health personnel as of 2020, according to the latest data available). Meanwhile, all other actively working parts of society—millions of essential workers, like couriers, teachers, cashiers, and warehouse and factory labourers—who fell ill or lost their lives did not seek official recognition of their occupational disease because of the practical impossibility and a lack of support and organisation for such an endeavour.

Due to the economic crisis that accompanied the health crisis, there was also a series of dismissals and practices of forced unpaid leave, which further weakened the already low organised power of the collective resistance of industrial workers in Turkey.²⁶ However, the fragmented workers’ resistances did not lose pace or frequency but rather increased during the pandemic. The wheels of the economy kept turning, as did the fragmented resistances of the workers. A small but significant part of the mass of formal and informal workers (mainly refugees, women, and children) who could not “stay home” did not stay at their workplaces despite curfews and

25 According to the records of the Turkish Medical Association, 552 health workers died due to a COVID-19 infection in the first two years of the pandemic. TTB, “Pandemi Sürecinde Türkiye’de Sağlık Çalışanı Ölümlerinin Anlattığı’ Güncellenmiş İkinci Yıl Sonu Raporu Yayınlandı”. 29 April 2022. https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=93f4f220-c786-11ec-8bef-40694c436a49. Accessed 3 August 2022.

26 [Covid-19 Labour Rights Violations Monitoring Group. 2021. “From Closing to Opening—Labour Rights Violations during Covid-19 (11 March–31 May 2020)”. *Despite the Pandemic. Selections From 2020–2021 Kocaeli Solidarity Academy Events*], edited by Hülya Kendir, Hakan Koçak, and M. Ruhi Demiray. KODA Yayınları, 156–87.

local bans on rallies, but interrupted the production processes, protested their dismissals, and reclaimed their rights in terms of work, severance, and accident payments, workers health and safety, and unionisation in several sectors, like healthcare, municipal services, mining, retail trade, construction, gastronomy, tourism, metal and electronics, garment, warehouses, energy, communication and post, and transportation. New independent workers' organisations were formed among the urban workforce, among others also under the umbrella of "Solidarity of Urban Workers".²⁷ This included workers in places like cafés, bars, malls, restaurants, in the delivery and tourism sectors, private universities, and schools. The lethargy and a lack of dynamism of established unions' communication channels empowered social media as a medium for the expression of workers' culture and resistances,²⁸ even though

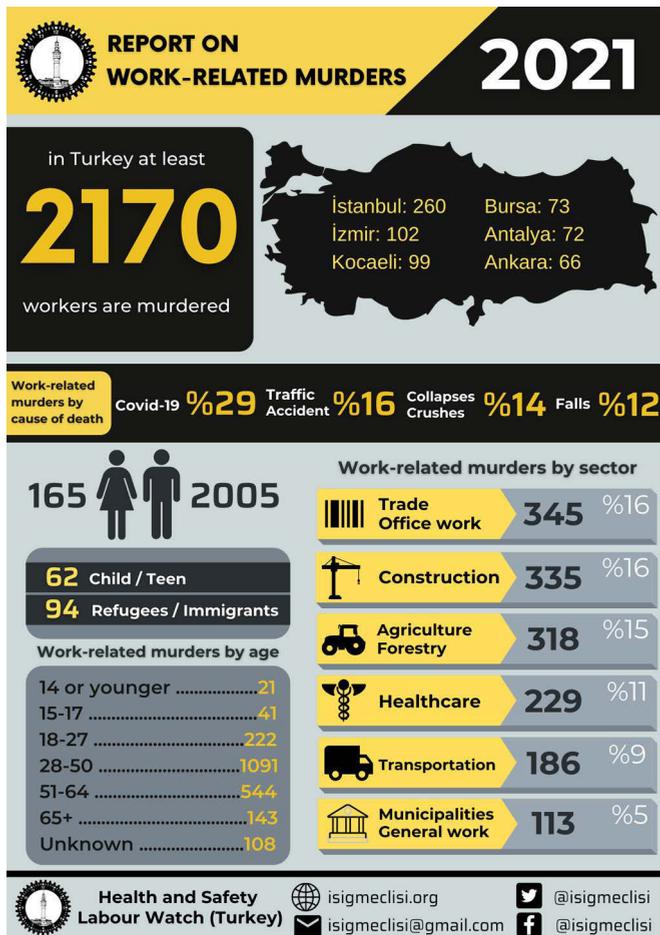


FIG. 3: Report on work-related murders for 2021. Source: Health and Safety Labour Watch, Turkey.

27 Kent Emekçileri Dayanışması [Solidarity of Urban Workers] under @emekcilerikent on Twitter.

28 İnce, Elif. 2021. "I felt I existed in this world': TikTok gives a voice to Turkey's labourers". *The Guardian*, 24 July. www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/24/tiktok-gives-voice-turkey-labourers-factory-workers. Accessed 3 August 2022.

this medium was dispersed. Retrospectively, we detect that those slow and dispersed struggles prepared the wave of strikes in early 2022.

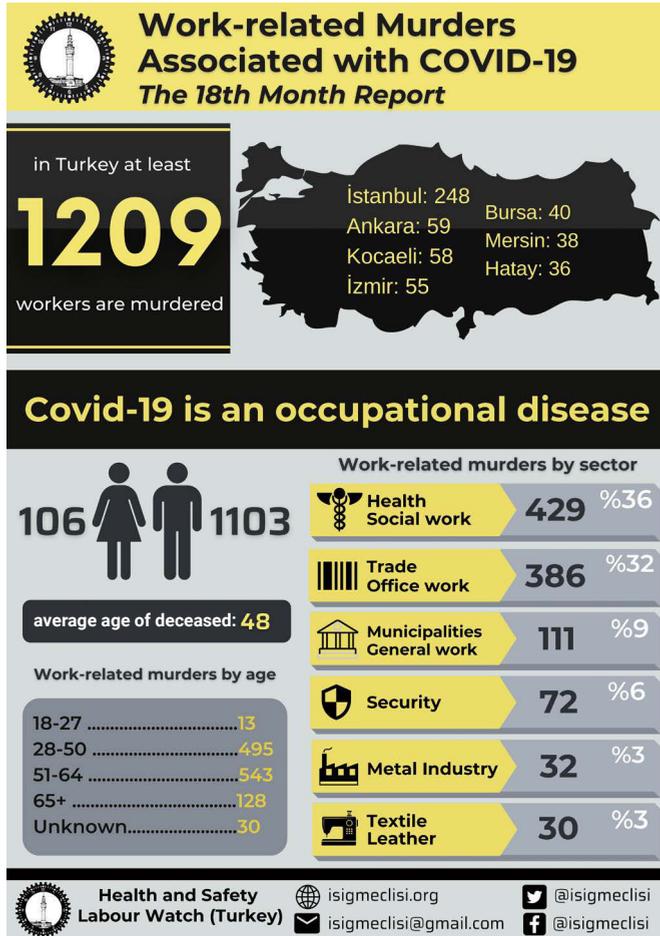


FIG. 4: Report on work-related murders for the first 18 months of the pandemic. Source: Health and Safety Labour Watch, Turkey.

A Social Cartographic Attempt at Circumventing the Lack of Data on Workplaces

The much-lamented lack of transparency in the sharing of pandemic data should be seen in the light of the structural invisibility of the conditions of living and dying of the ‘citizens as workers’. The lack of transparency during a pandemic is not only a problem for record keeping, but it is also indicative of a lack of accountability and appropriate pandemic policies, which costs thousands of lives. These lives

are among the most vulnerable populations, like refugees, people who live on daily incomes, unemployed women caring for their family, and workers squeezed into workplaces.

The data shared by the Turkish Ministry of Health that served as the basis for the public pandemic policy only contained aggregated and under-documented figures, without differentiating according to relevant micro-administrative scales, such as districts and neighbourhoods, gender, age, income groups, occupational groups or sectors, workplaces, ethnicity, educational opportunities obtained, accompanying diseases, disease symptoms, and risk groups. A second form of publicly accessible information was a mobile phone application called HES, which vaguely showed infection rates in the form of a heat map. This was, however, based on the residences of infected people. Both data categories excluded the importance of COVID-19 workplace clusters and the socio-professional factors for the risk of infection.

Confronted with this blatant absence, Murat Tülek, an urban researcher and planner, and I created social maps.²⁹ Murat Tülek superimposed the heat maps with the groundbreaking market value+age group distribution map of Istanbul updated in 2020³⁰ and a map of the distribution of industrial workplaces in Istanbul.³¹ We were able to make some spatial analyses about the perfect invisibility of large-scale, isolated industrial areas and the relative safe havens of gated communities, which allow mainly educated middle and upper-middle class people working from home to “introvert into class”. The third cluster of analysis concerned the urban areas in the European part of the city, where light industry, including the garment industry, is mainly situated.

The neighbourhoods where small and medium-sized businesses and dwellings are nested without any distance or differentiation between them have never ceased to be hubs of continuous infection. In neighbourhoods where small-scale businesses (mainly textile, metalwork, chemical, paper, and food industries) are intertwined with residences on the European side of Istanbul, an intense infection cluster is observed when using HEP records from different periods during the pandemic. The areas where the workplaces

29 Odman, Asli, and Murat Tülek. 2020. [“Socio-spatial inequalities during the pandemic and data/public health relationship”. Turkish Medical Association-Monitoring Board, Covid-19 Sixth Month Report], edited by Osman Elbek, 510–32. https://www.ttb.org.tr/kutuphane/covid19-rapor_6/covid19-rapor_6_Part60.pdf. Accessed 3 August 2022.

30 Urban95: Data-Driven Policy Tool, <http://map.kent95.org/istanbul>, was supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and implemented by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV). The data analysis, mapping, and digital tool creation stages of the project were carried out in collaboration with the Kadir Has University Istanbul Studies Center. [Age and market value maps: Murat Güvenç, Murat Tülek, Funda Dönmez Ferhanoğlu, Gizem Fidan, Arjin Taş (Kadir Has University / Istanbul Studies Center); field research and coordination: Bürge Elvan Erginli, Baran Karsak; interactive mapping: Murat Tülek; design: Oğuzhan Erdurak; software: Yakup Çetinkaya].

31 Temurçin, Kadir, and Yolcu Aldırmaz. 2017. [“Industry in Istanbul Province: Historical Development, Structural Change, Spatial Transformation”. Spatial and Regional Transformations in Turkey], edited by Kadir Temurçin and Murat Ali Dulupçu, Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Yayınları, 8.

of small and medium-sized manufacturing industries are concentrated in the districts of Bağcılar, Bahçelievler, Güngören, and Esenler between the two highways became and have remained a grave ‘red infection island’ in terms of epidemic risk very early on. The created social maps clearly showed the densely populated neighbourhoods with little access to green urban areas and with proximity to central transportation routes, which constituted condensed COVID-19 islands, reflecting the spatial inequalities inflicted upon the working class.³²

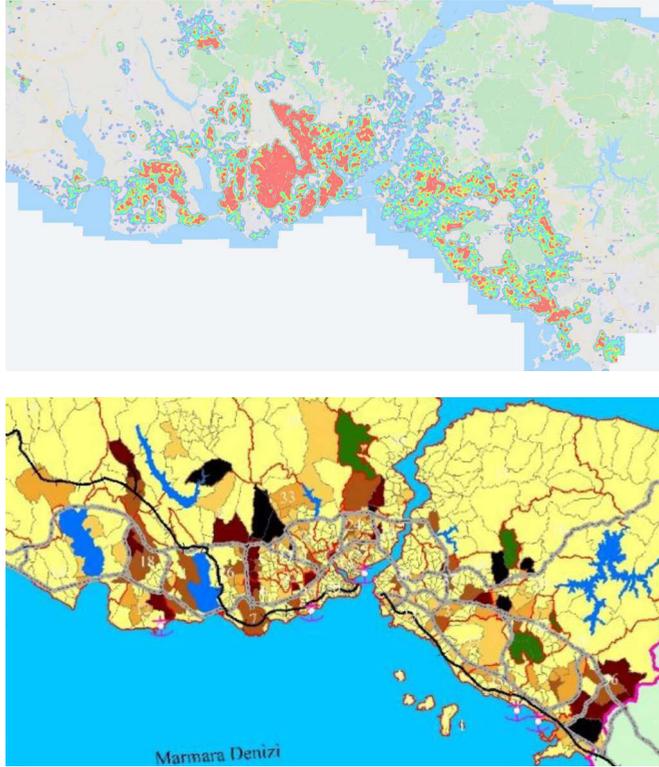


FIG. 5: Juxtaposition of the official COVID-19 heat map from 6 September 2020 with Istanbul’s industrial clusters from 2014. Upper map: See Fig. 6 for reference. Lower map: See Fig. 2 for reference.

With those maps, the invisibility of labouring Istanbul becomes more visible in the condensed areas of production like organised industrial zones. The heat map of the disease seems to stop at their borders. The areas of small enterprises within

32 For interactive, juxtaposed versions of all nine maps focusing on different zones in Istanbul for 6 September 2020, see the hyperlinks in the following article: Odman, Ash. 2021. “Pandemide çalışmak zorunda olmak: İşçi Sağlığı Yoksa, Halk Sağlığı da Yok!” [Having to work in a pandemic: No Worker Health, No Public Health!], 20 January. <https://sendika.org/2021/01/pandemide-calismak-zorunda-olmak-isci-sagligi-yoksa-halk-sagligi-da-yok-606282/>; for the more general maps: Istanbul general (clusters of industry and a COVID-19 heat map), light industry on the European side of Istanbul (market value+age group differentiations and a COVID-19 heat map), and heavy industry on the Asian side of Istanbul (market value+age group differentiations and a COVID-19 heat map).

densely populated areas, sometimes within the same residential building, never ceased to be hotspots of COVID-19 infection. And the areas with a discernible density of gated communities offer the possibility of working from home and “introverting into class”.

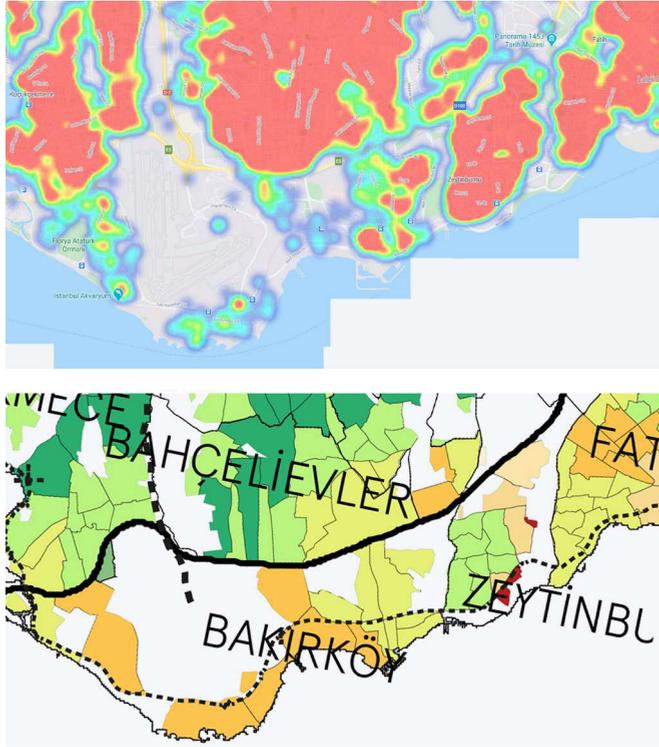


FIG. 6: Juxtaposition of the official COVID-19 heat map from 6 September 2020 with the urban95 social profile map indicating market value and age group differentiations for the districts around the E5 highway from 2018. An extract of this map: Light industry on the European side of Istanbul. <https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/juxtapose/latest/embed/index.html?uid=b1233010-3c0d-11eb-83c8-ebb5d6f907df>. Accessed 10 August 2022.

Outlook

This contribution seeks to document three tumultuous years of a modest and collective research agenda aimed at making the workplaces and the ‘citizens as workers’ in Istanbul visible behind the uproarious images of the Istanbul city brand. From an eclectic, case-based approach to the construction workers involved in the mega-project of Istanbul’s third airport to an attempt at holistically mapping labour in the COVID-19 workplace clusters hidden behind the official disease heat maps, the motivation remains the same: it is a work in progress towards social and environmental justice ‘at the point of the production of cities’, where potentials of emancipatory and inclusionary social struggles ultimately lie.

Spaces of Encounter and Change: Mapping Migrant Economies of Syrian Entrepreneurs

URSZULA EWA WOŹNIAK AND TUBA İNAL-ÇEKİÇ

Shaped by various layers of migration and representing different forms of internal border regimes¹, the two neighbourhoods of Neukölln in Berlin and Aksaray in Istanbul engender spaces of encounter between different groups and their everyday practices in particular ways. In addition to each being super-diverse places² in their own right, these two neighbourhoods share the specific characteristic of having received a high number of Syrian migrants since the outbreak of the war there in 2011.

A decade later, Germany and Turkey remain to be the two leading countries to receive this wave of Syrian migration. While Turkey has taken in the most Syrian refugees worldwide with 3,793,000³, there are presently around 611,400 so-called Syrian “protection seekers” living in Germany⁴, i.e., Syria-origin foreigners who are staying in Germany on humanitarian grounds. If we look at the figures of Syrian

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1 Next to state policies on migration and asylum, it is factors such as market barriers and structural racism that shape the ways that social and civil rights can be accessed by Syrian and other migrants. See Hamann, Ulrike, and Nihad El-Kayed. 2018. “Refugees’ access to housing and residency in German cities: internal border regimes and their local variations”. *Social Inclusion* 6 (1): 135–46.

2 Here, the notion of super-diversity alludes to the fact that both of the above-mentioned neighbourhoods have been shaped by not one but many different waves of migration-driven diversity over the past decade, with effects as to their present-day demographics in terms of, among others, ethnicity, religion, and languages. See: Vertovec, Steven. 2007. “Super-diversity and its implications”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29 (6): 1024–54.

3 Office Of The United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees. 2020. Web Archive. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=2z1B08>. Accessed 20 June 2022. The figure refers to the middle of 2020.

4 Statistisches Bundesamt, Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit Schutzsuchende. Ergebnisse des Ausländerzentralregisters [Federal Statistical Office, Population and Employment of Protection Seekers. Results of the Central Register of Foreigners]. 2020. https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/schutzsuchende-2010240207004.pdf;jsessionid=BE07383CDBBD-238FA36C60105B7FD682.live741?__blob=publicationFile. Accessed 21 August 2022.

residents of Berlin and Istanbul, they remain correspondingly high, with Berlin currently hosting roughly one-tenth of Istanbul's total number of Syrians.⁵

While this migration has left an imprint on the urban fabric of both cities in myriad ways, the *entrepreneurial activities* of Syrians constitute one of the most visible impacts on daily life in both places, especially so in the neighbourhoods of Neukölln and Aksaray. This chapter reflects on the results of a workshop inquiring into small-scale economic activities of Syrian entrepreneurs in these very two neighbourhoods, and thereby also into their socio-cultural and spatial practices. Jointly conducted with a group of students from Humboldt-Universität, Freie Universität and University of the Arts in Berlin as well as Yıldız Technical University in Istanbul, the workshop took place in April and May of 2019 in both Berlin and Istanbul. Coming from the fields of architecture, urban planning, social sciences, and economy, the interdisciplinary group of students⁶ tackled the topic with the help of the abundance of their diverse methodological training.

With its transnational comparative axis, our workshop firstly followed the route that many Syrian migrants have themselves completed: after traversing and at times also living in Turkey for a considerable amount of time, many Syria-origin migrants have resettled in Germany (or other EU countries). This interconnection between both migratory contexts renders the workshop theme even more important. In fact, only very few contemporary studies conduct a comparative analysis of the integration of Syrian refugees into different host societies across national borders.⁷ Secondly, our workshop conducted fieldwork from an agent-driven perspective which analysed Syrian individuals not just as objects of different asylum and migration policy schemes but also as agents themselves, thereby contributing to a still largely omitted field of research.

5 As of January 2020, the number of Syrians registered in Istanbul was 482,000 (with the estimated number of those who actually live there expected to transgress the half million mark by far (Alkan, Hilal. 2021. "The gift of hospitality and the (un)welcoming of Syrian migrants in Turkey". *American Ethnologist* 48: 183). For Berlin, the current estimate is 40,480. (Statistisches Bundesamt [Federal Statistical Office], 7 June, 2021. Anzahl der Ausländer in Berlin nach Staatsangehörigkeit im Jahr 2020 [Number of foreigners in Berlin by nationality in 2020] [Graph]. Statista. <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1094889/umfrage/anzahl-der-auslaender-in-berlin-nach-staatsangehoerigkeit/>. Accessed 21 August 2022.)

6 We wish to cordially thank and credit all student participants of the workshops who actively contributed to the research: Serena Abbondanza, Haya Alkheder, Ragad Avad, Mariame Bentaibi, Katharina Bonengl, Nina Bühler, Finn Dittmer, Emma El Kaladi, Rüya Erkan, Erasmus Famira-Parsetich, Nikoleta Gashi, Sofia Gohlke Butler, Erol Gorur, Marleen Hascher, Maximilian Hauser, Leo Lüdemann, Marlene Míngramm, Jan-Christopher Pien, Neslişah Kesici, Esra Nur Özçam, Vera Pohl, Dian Sheng, Sean Underwood, Gizem Yağınlı, Busenur Yahsi, Sinem Yıldız, Ezgi Yılmaz, Kübra Yılmaz, Emine Ecem Yücesoy. Our thanks also extend to the other two workshop instructors Tolga İslam and Anna Kokalanova.

7 Hilal Alkan's work comparing Germany and Turkey is one of few notable exceptions in the field. See also Anna Steigemann's and Hilal Alkan's contribution in this book (Chapter 2.3).

Prior to discussing the creative outlets of the students' research, we will briefly shed light on two noteworthy paradoxes that shape the overall configuration of Syrian's entrepreneurial coping strategies within the context of urban multiculturalism.

Paradoxes of Labour Market Integration

Our proposed focus on local Syrian economies unveils the paradoxes of labour market integration in both Germany and Turkey: inconsistent government policies⁸ continue to hinder Syrian refugees' access to employment, let alone job security, as much as to other social and civic rights. To this day, Syrian's integration into Germany's and Turkey's workforces as part of the acknowledgement of their long-term presence in both countries is belied by various policies and thousands of lived realities that are shaped by precarity: in Turkey, this is, to a significant extent, the result of legal limbo.⁹ While they technically have access to work permits in Turkey, only about 1.5% of all working-age Syrians in Turkey possess them.¹⁰ This leaves many with no other choice than to be employed in the informal sector¹¹, and by implication, often-times below the official minimum wage.

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In Germany, asylum procedures were accelerated over the last years, fostering an altogether quicker labour market integration of Syrian and other refugees. Notwithstanding, the pandemic caused the official unemployment rate of Syrians to increase by a total of 30% between 2019 and 2020¹²—proving that they are among the most vulnerable groups.

- 8 See Goksel, Gulay U. 2018. "Integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey". *Integration of Immigrants and the Theory of Recognition*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 145–75. For Germany, compare Hamann and El-Kayed, 2018.
- 9 The 2013 Temporary Protection Act that—as its name itself already reveals—wilfully refuses to acknowledge that Syrians are to stay in their new homes. See also Baban, Feyzi, Suzan Ilcan, and Kim Rygiel. 2017. "Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Pathways to Precarity, Differential Inclusion, and Negotiated Citizenship Rights." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43 (1): 41–57; Şenses, Nazlı. 2016. "Rethinking Migration in the Context of Precarity: Case of Turkey." *Critical Sociology* 42 (7–8): 975–87.
- 10 Demircuc-Kunt, Asli, Michael Lokshin, and Martin Ravallion. 22 November, 2019. "A New Policy to Better Integrate Refugees into Host-Country Labor Markets". Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/new-policy-better-integrate-refugees-host-country-labor-markets>. Accessed 15 August 2022.
- 11 ILO. 2020. *ILO's support to refugees and host communities in Turkey*. Ankara, Turkey: International Labor Organization's Office for Turkey. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/publication/wcms_735595.pdf. Accessed 21 August 2022.
- 12 In August of 2020, the number of Syrian's registered as unemployed was 160,000. (Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung [Federal Institute for Population Research]. 2022. <https://www.bib.bund.de/EN/News/2021/2021-07-30-Bevoelkerungsforschung-Aktuell-4-Arrival-on-the-labour-market.html?nn=10055810>. Accessed 21 August 2022.

These paradoxes render informal labour practices to be indispensable to many (not the least given a well-documented drastic gender gap in employment¹³). It also causes Syrian migrants in both cities to develop creative coping strategies, oftentimes in the shape of in/formal self-employment.

Such a shift in perspective on Syrian migrants as urban actors who claim the “right to the city” allows to ask about access to rights not only in formal, legal, or political terms but also in terms of inhabitation¹⁴. It is in this realm not directly addressed by most state-imposed policies (and their respective shortcomings), where the urban neighbourhood itself becomes a potential resource. While the neighbourhoods’ relative horizontality can be theorised in many ways, one way is to think about the possibility of in/voluntary encounters that it entails.

Paradoxes of Encounter

Because of its inherent spatial implications, the notion of encounter offered us a concept which, though lately mostly ‘rediscovered’ by the social sciences¹⁵, allowed for cross-disciplinary discussions during our workshop. Many of the works on conviviality focus on *fleeting* interactions between people and investigate how the relationship between individual and community is managed through various forms of courtesy, that may mitigate and/or cap conflict. Within the context of our workshop, places of consumption, especially food businesses, appeared as sites of everyday encounters in that sense, as places of a conviviality that can foster interethnic interaction and enhance the formation of social networks. The public and semi-public spaces of the neighbourhood, i.e., the beforementioned places of consumption or the street, thereby allow for an encounter between different ethnic groups and classes. Still, this encounter does not dissolve relationships of inequality.¹⁶

- 13 Official surveys maintain that three to five years after their arrival in Germany, 48 percent of the men surveyed were in employment, while only 14 percent of the women were. (Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung [Federal Institute for Population Research]. 2022. <https://www.bib.bund.de/EN/News/2021/2021-07-30-Bevoelkerungsforschung-Aktuell-4-Arrival-on-the-labour-market.html?nn=10055810>. Accessed 21 August 2022.
- 14 Allon, Fiona. 2013. “Ghosts of the Open City”. *Space and Culture* 16 (3): 298.
- 15 Over the past two decades, encounter stood at the core of many works on urban multiculturalism; particularly those theorising the notion of conviviality. For an updated critical review of the concept, see Nowicka, Magdalena. 2020. “Fantasy of Conviviality: Banalities of Multicultural Settings and What We Do (Not) Notice When We Look at Them”. *Conviviality at the Crossroads: The Poetics and Politics of Everyday Encounters*, edited by Oskar Hemer, Maja Povrzanović Frykman, and Per-Markku Ristilampi, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 15–42.
- 16 Rodriguez, Encarnacion. 2020. “Creolising Conviviality: Thinking Relational Ontology and Decolonial Ethics Through Ivan Illich and Édouard Glissant”. In Oskar Hemer et al. 2020, 116.



FIG. 1: Street view of Aksaray. Credit: Maximilian Hauser.

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Any analysis of urban living together must therefore acknowledge what sociologists Les Back and Shamser Sinha have dubbed “the paradoxical co-existence of racism and urban multiculturalism”¹⁷. In the context of our German empirical case study, this entails the sad truth that over the past few years, especially Sonnenallee (the main road of our mapping exercise in Berlin) has become the site of a series of right-wing and racist attacks. Most notoriously, a city-wide known Syrian baklava bakery located on this very street became the target of not one but a total of seven racist assaults.¹⁸ This reality is by now well documented; the mapping project *Acoabo*, for instance, is solely dedicated to the visualisation of police statistics concerning rightwing violence in the whole district of Neukölln.¹⁹

The visibility of entrepreneurial activities in the cityscape can hence also render the encounter a dangerous one for Syrians. While similar attacks or hate crimes on Syrians are to our knowledge not known for Aksaray, a rumour-fuelled outbreak of violence against Syrian shops in an Ankara neighbourhood is among very few well-documented incidents.²⁰ Relatedly, current analysis on Turkey does, however, cover the growing public disfavour against refugees’ long stay in Turkey as well as some incidents of intercommunal

17 Back, Les, and Shamser Sinha. 2016. “Multicultural Conviviality in the Midst of Racism’s Ruins”. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37 (5), 517–32.

18 As of June 2020. See Haarbach, Madlen: “Lieferwagen in Flammen, SS-Runen an syrischer Bäckerei” [Van in Flames, SS Runes on Syrian Bakery]. *Tagesspiegel*, 22 June 2020. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/neue-ermittlungen-wegen-rechter-anschlagsserie-in-neukoelln-lieferwagen-in-flammen-ss-runen-an-syrischer-baeckerei/25938952.html>. Accessed 21 June 2022.

19 “Right-Wing Violence in Berlin-Neukölln. Right-Wing Hate Crimes | 01/2016–06/2020” [Online Map]. https://acoabo.shinyapps.io/hate_crimes_neukoelln/. Accessed 21 June 2022.

20 “Ankara Demetevler’de gerginlik yasandı” [Tension in Demetevler, Ankara]. *Star*, 6 July 2017. <http://www.star.com.tr/guncel/ankara-demetevlerde-gerginlik-yasandi-haber-1233440/>. Accessed 21 June 2022.

violence.²¹ Given this social reality of anti-immigrant attitudes and blunt racist attacks in both contexts, the concept of encounter offers a leeway to research conflict.

Structure of the Workshop & Projects

From its outset, the format of the workshop aimed at the common production of knowledge that could be presented within the scope of both a panel discussion and an installation at the international conference titled *We, the City. Pluralism and Resistance in Berlin and Istanbul*, from which this book emerged.²² Combining regular classroom-based sessions with field excursions and expert meetings²³, the methodology of critical cartography in particular²⁴ was introduced to the workshop participants to analyse the entrepreneurial activities of Syrians in both neighbourhoods. All research was centred around two main streets in both places: Turgut Özal Street in Aksaray and Sonnenallee in Neukölln —the latter of which has oftentimes been stereotyped as “Arab Street” in German media outlets.²⁵ Being a methodological tool that is located at the intersection of social and spatial sciences, it eased the process of knowledge production within the diverse group. Having received an introduction to a socio-cultural and spatial study of migration, the students formed a total of five transnational project groups that each opted for a different visual outcome: with the help of video mappings, drawings, audio recordings, and other tools they each inquired into the instances and grades of encounters between Syrians and other communities in urban space.

In what follows, we will briefly introduce all five projects by juxtaposing our summaries of the projects with an own description written by a group member:

- 21 Altiok, Birce, and Salih Tosun. September 2018. “How to Co-exist? Urban Refugees in Turkey: Prospects and Challenges.” *Policy Brief* 1 (4), *Yasar University UNESCO Chair on International Migration*: 3; compare also “Suriyeli mülteciler ve yükselen ırkçılık. Konuk: Didem Danış” [Syrian Refugees and Growing Racism. Guest: Didem Danış]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HO7_YncFL4A. Accessed 20 August 2022.
- 22 See the introductory chapter for the conference details. The installation was presented once again during the *Long Nights of Sciences*, which also took place at Humboldt-Universität on 15 June 2019.
- 23 The students documented their workshop experiences on a daily basis on this blog: <https://spacesofencounter.blogspot.com/>. Accessed 29 August 2022.
- 24 See Kim, Annette M. 2015. “Critical cartography 2.0: From ‘participatory mapping’ to authored visualizations of power and people”. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 142, 215–25. For a valuable collection of contemporary counter-cartographies, see: kollektiv orangotango+ (ed.) 2018. *This Is Not an Atlas. A Global Collection of Counter-Cartographies*. transcript [e-book].
- 25 Habitat Unit. 2018. “‘New diversities’ and ‘urban arrival infrastructures’? The socio-spatial appropriation and footprints of refugees in Berlin-Neukölln”: 5th Online Report. <http://habitat-unit.de/files/finalreport.compressed.pdf> (edited by Anna Steigemann). Accessed 5 July 2022.



FIG. 2: Panel with workshop participants at the *We, the City* conference on 24 May 2019. Credit: Mathis Gann for CCRD.



FIG. 3: Workshop at Floating University Berlin on 15 May, 2022. Credit: Maximilian Hauser.

1. Kama'a: The Journey of the Desert Truffle

This contribution dwells on Kama'a—a mushroom that grows in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and North Africa. The group of students video-recorded interviews with Syrian, Turkish, and German people during their encounters with Kama'a. Their video mapping traces the route of this special food from Syria to Germany via Turkey. Inquiring into the mushroom's role within Syrian cuisine, this work contrasted the enthusiasm of Syrians when being served their beloved Kama'a with the blunt ignorance of members of the respective receiving societies regarding this precious food:

“The main protagonist of this video is a desert truffle; a mushroom that grows beneath the surface of the Syrian and Iraqi deserts. The search for Kama’a that combines good timing and a little superstition can sometimes become a dangerous activity for those who prize the desert truffle. Driven out of the territory they controlled in Iraq and Syria, the remaining fighters of ISIS in Iraq have started to carry out sporadic attacks, notably kidnapping and, in some cases, executing Iraqi truffle hunters, mostly in the deserts of western Anbar Province. This mushroom does not simply represent a lucrative but sometimes deadly business for these Bedouin truffle hunters but has larger economic, social, and cultural significance for Syrian, Turkish, and even German people. The video offers a glimpse of the various connections people from different backgrounds and countries have to this commodity. Syrians with an emotional attachment to what they describe as “heavenly food”, the Turkish who describe it as a “rotten potato”, and the Germans who simply refer to it as a truffle. Through the story of a simple mushroom, we follow a narrative of homesickness and rootlessness of a people that fled their home, a narrative of discrimination, and a narrative of integration. The Kama’a demonstrates the antagonism between the way the truffle emotionally triggers Syrian people, who see it as having religious value, and the way Turkish people sceptically disregard it as having no real importance, reflecting the underlying racial resentment of Turkish people towards Syrian migration. The video finally traces the mushroom’s journey to Berlin to show how an encounter with a mushroom can potentially foster cultural exchange and further understanding of the other.”²⁶

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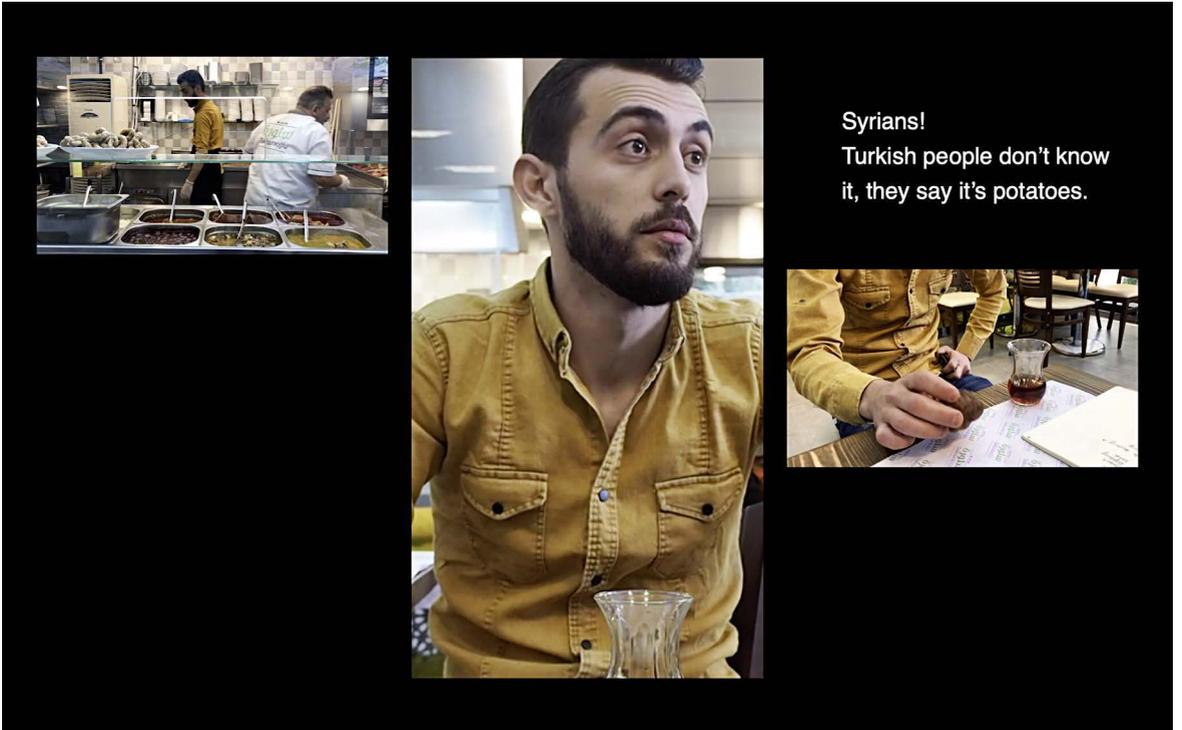
2. Places of (Non-)Encounter: Talking about the ‘Other’

This group of students investigated the non/encounters between migrants and the receiving community through the practice of gossiping. Their video thereby tackles the practice of ‘other’ing newcomers by artfully juxtaposing video footage of (semi-)public spaces of encounter with audio files documenting gossip. The faces of those ‘other’ing Syrian migrants remain unknown as the viewer is presented with long shots of (semi-)public spaces, such as parks, or a bar—revealing how bias is produced and avoidance fills social space, rendering them into places of (non-)encounter:

“Aksaray and Sonnenallee have been highly visible in discussions throughout the media. Different in their social fabric and context but connected through the scope of migration, they are home to a multitude of nationalities and



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Syrians!
Turkish people don't know
it, they say it's potatoes.

FIG. 4 & 5: Film stills "Kama'a". Credit: Serena Abbondanza, Ragad Avad, Ezgi Yılmaz, Vera Pohl.

histories of refuge. The vivid and diverse social fabrics in direct geographical proximity could offer space for encounter, exchange, and the creation of mutual stories and lives. But, does the encounter actually happen?

Nationality is based more on excluding than on sharing. Every “we” creates an “other” that remains separate to the collective. Every group looks for approval within itself, while biasing its imagined counterpart. While similarities are often stronger in the subtext of the dominant culture, racism is deep inside the perceptions of our world.

Do mutual experiences in the same neighbourhood bring us together?

Our shared spaces of life and interaction show us that we can live together without knowing each “other”—we can live side by side without living together. While indifference and ignorance sometimes ignite scandalous conflicts and outbreaks, they are obstinately rooted in the mundane flow of everyday life: in the eye contact, ambiguous gesture, and babbling between insiders, in short: gossiping.

Shielded by intimacy and irresponsibility, gossiping about “others” is an emotional, anecdotal, and lively form of “othering” in the absence of these others.

This video displays records and locations of gossip. It portrays the exchanges of different ethnic groups on the street, in the bars and cafés, where those judgments and impressions about others were collected, as it’s exactly here where they originated. The gossip “specimens” tell us about the real hide-and-seek of special encounters—about whom we meet, whom we trust, and whom we view as deserving to be unmasked by the insider talk.”²⁷



FIG. 6: Shooting “Places of (Non-)Encounter” in Aksaray in April 2019. Credit: Marleen Hascher.

3. Spaces of Transit and Permanence: Neu-Aksaray

The third group wanted to reveal the similarities of both neighbourhood spaces in the two cities by focusing on Syrian economic activities. They mixed footage of marketplaces, shops, and voices of shopkeepers selling their products. What emerged from the editing room with this video piece is a new, virtual space of encounter called “Neu-Aksaray”. It sheds light on how migrants inhabit space in countries still foreign to them and make them their home with the help of these very practices:

“Sometimes different places can tell similar stories. Recognising how Neukölln and Aksaray resemble each other, this video attempts to see if both the places and the people inhabiting them bear similarities. The aim of this work is thus to incorporate the striking resemblances of two districts shaped by Arab—and since 2015 especially Syrian—migration. Public discourse, not only in German but also in Turkish, has often framed these spaces in a generally negative way, stigmatising inhabitants and others who use these spaces.

However, people—mostly through building culturally preserving economies, often connected to their traditional food and clothing—have succeeded in making themselves a home, making goods and jobs available to their communities, and in making ends meet. People have come due to the attraction of affordable rents, job opportunities, family, friends, or community, or to curtail language barriers.

They have given new life and a new face to the streets they frequent in everyday life. The names of restaurants and shops are often reminiscent of their owners' places of origin.

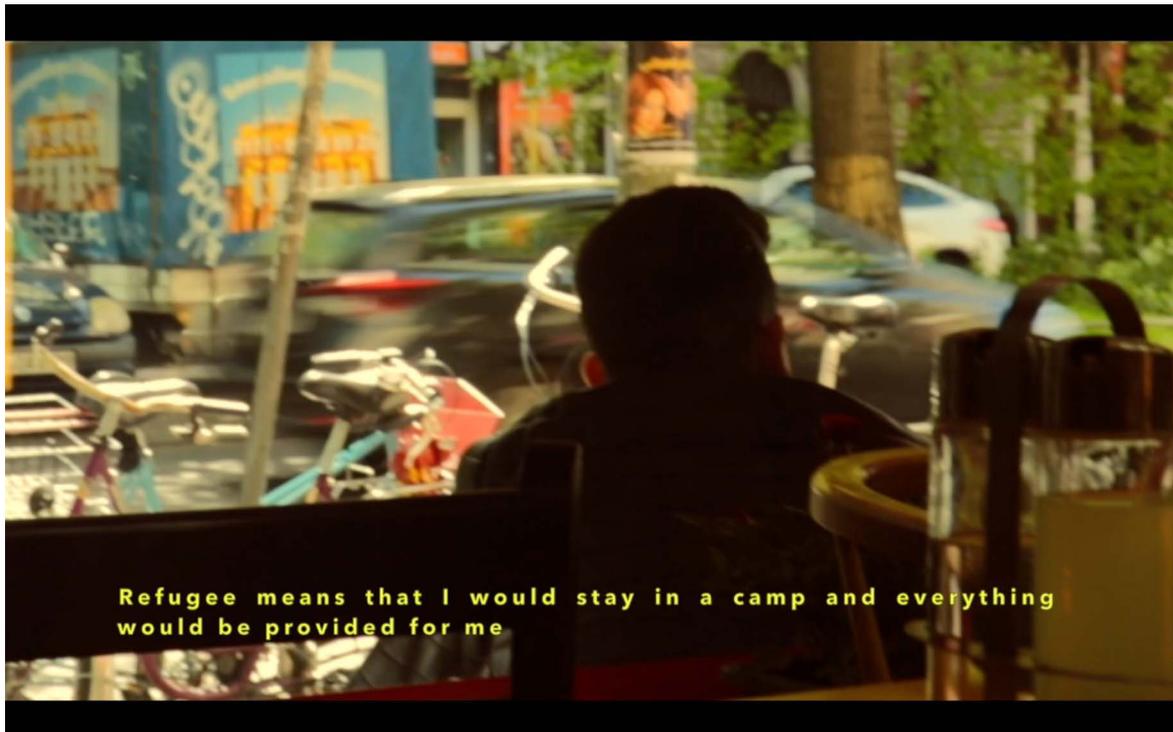
This video work attempts to capture the scenes of everyday life, together with the impressions and experiences of local residents, giving an overview of the atmosphere of the areas and their changing development. Starting in the district of Aksaray in Istanbul, it ends in Berlin, questioning how similar Sonnenallee feels. Through the selection of visual and graphic material emerges the synthesis of Neu-Aksaray.”²⁸

4. Mapping Movements in Aksaray and Neukölln: Uproot, Commute, En Route

This group decided to map the daily routes of people through the streets of Aksaray and Neukölln. Echoing the practice of *dérive*, they followed them through the respective neighbourhoods and carefully traced the languages they speak. Colour-coding the users of the streets based on their spoken languages, the emerging two maps of Aksaray and Sonnenallee in Neukölln represent a myriad of intersecting ethno-scapes as spaces of encounter:

“In a world where an estimated 258 million people are on the move, these two maps aim to reflect a comparative and transnational contemporary image of daily local migrant and non-migrant journeys made in Berlin and Istanbul. The project, conducted via a series of observations over a two-week period in the districts of Neukölln in Berlin and Aksaray in Istanbul, maps designated entrance and exit points to establish how and why individuals are using public space in all its forms: from the main road to the side street, from market corner to bus stop, to pass through or speak to a few! The districts were identified as homogeneously diverse spaces of encounter, function, and transit, each with its own history of migrants amongst non-migrants. For Aksaray, this manifested principally as Syrians amongst the Turkish. For Neukölln, this manifested in a more complex and mixed picture. Recordings of the routes taken by German-speaking and non-German-speaking individuals during the day across Sonnenallee in Neukölln and the Turkish-speaking and

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FIG. 7 & 8: Film stills "Spaces of Transit and Permanence: Neu-Aksaray".
Credit: Mariame Bentaibi, Erasmus Famira-Parcsetich, Esra Nur Özçam, Busenur Yahsi.

non-Turkish speaking on Turgut Özal Street, Aksaray, were animated by visuals and language.

The eyes and the ears were the main bodily tools used to distinguish persons of interest who made these journeys in the streets. The immediate language spoken by locals was the determinant category of interest. Acting as another layer to the identification process, language can often distort the initial visual perceptions concerning an individual's background. Simply, it acts as a filter for the subconscious judgments that colliding and by-passing individuals pass on each other every day. At times, however, language can be misleading, particularly in the case of Berlin, which has a long history of migration and mixed nationality. A colourful trail of footsteps, phonetically listed as foreign-language words as they were heard, blazes across the Sonnenallee map of Berlin to highlight the rich, diverse, and culturally complex social makeup of a hybrid city. In this case, categorisation in the city no longer functions like a two-tier process in the case of a (mostly) homogenously Turkish Aksaray.

The maps encourage thinking about why it is that German speakers use the streets of Neukölln more than Turkish speakers use the streets of Aksaray.”²⁹



FIG. 9: Aksaray map of “Mapping Movements in Aksaray and Neukölln” in the making. Credit: Ezgi Yılmaz.

5. Encounter Games

Unlike the other four groups, the last group of students decided to craft an original board game, with its own board and playing cards. It allows players of the game to move back and forth between Aksaray and Neukölln, its transnational cafés, retail shops, restaurants, and barber shops. The game skilfully deconstructs the elements inherent in every encounter—conflictual or not—between migrant and host society by underlining and at times caricaturing processes of everyday categorisation and stigmatisation:

“The board game ‘Encounter Games’ is a creative critique of the everyday categorisation of ourselves and each other based solely on observable features. The player of the game slips into the role of one of 12 independent actors, each with their own secret personal story and needs. Only observable features are shared with the other players, leading to categorisation into four hard, overly simplistic categories (male/female, local/foreigner). While these categories also restrict the players from entering certain places, each player has to use them to try to predict where the others are going, since encountering them at various places in the game is necessary to win: encountering others is the only way to find out what skills and resources the fellow players really have. Without them, the player won’t be able to fulfill her or his own personal needs. Encounters can be positive or negative, shallow or deep, representing the random nature of everyday life.

The work cleverly simplifies the social reality of immigrant societies in Aksaray, Istanbul and Sonnenallee, Berlin by showing how simplistic our everyday categorisation of each other really is. The game board functions as a distorted representation of space, warping some aspects, for example by pre-determining which identities may enter places. The player is placed in an absurd enactment of this representation. By slowly revealing each other’s identities, the players realise that they need to overcome the oversimplified categorisation and make lasting social bonds based on their own personal needs. Moreover, the game makes its players realise how volatile identities can be by travelling from Aksaray to Sonnenallee, effectively transforming from being a local to being a foreigner, and vice versa.”³⁰

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FIG. 11: Playing the Encounter game at Humboldt-Universität in May 2019. Credit: Marleen Hascher.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

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As a result of their two-week exchange and fieldwork in both cities, the five research projects portrayed the multiple ways in which Syrian newcomers to Berlin and Istanbul compensate for the loss of home through particular food practices and various forms of spatial appropriation. Investigating the advantages and hindrances of the specific spaces for encounters, the projects looked into the intercommunal perceptions and tensions among different groups. They examined the role of gossip and its potential for othering; detected visual resemblances between both neighbourhoods; shed light on common coping strategies; and deciphered the unwritten rules, linguistic barriers, and other obstacles that shape the form and depth of encounter.

Being native Arabic, German, and Turkish speakers and possessing a broad methodological and technical skill set, our students had all the tools necessary for a critical mapping of Aksaray and Neukölln as “spaces of encounter and change”. Meeting and interviewing Syrian entrepreneurs, the latter appeared to be more than subjects of internal and external border regimes. Rather, they emerged as those very actors maneuvering all paradoxes, initiating *change* in the host society’s everyday life, and interfering with it. The result of this can be an *encounter* which is not at all times welcomed by all: unanimously, all our workshop participants were unsettled by the oftentimes violently blunt forms of discriminatory and racist language used to denote Syrians. The encounter does not start nor stop with words; neither is the non-encounter exhausted by avoidance. The workings of these sometimes intricately intertwined mundane forms of inclusion and exclusion is what more collaborative research across disciplinary and national borders should continue to unveil.

What Makes It a Home? A Conversation on Syrian Refugees, Neighbourhoods, and the Right to Be a Host in Istanbul and Berlin

HILAL ALKAN AND ANNA STEIGEMANN

Hilal Alkan and Anna Steigemann separately worked with Syrian refugees in Istanbul and Berlin. In this conversation, they ask each other questions about the processes of arrival in the place of asylum, new neighbourhoods, homemaking practices, and feeling at home. Benefiting from interdisciplinarity, due both to their own multidisciplinary approaches and to this encounter of an anthropologist and an urban researcher, their conversation revolves around the material, social, and affective aspects of home and homemaking.

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This exchange has two focal points: first, it delves into neighbourhood characteristics and how they actually affect homemaking and settlement processes. Hilal Alkan and Anna Steigemann approach the neighbourhood as a (potential) place of home, with significations and senses of belonging, attachment, safety, and, eventually, wellbeing. They explore the processes that turn a newly settled neighbourhood into a home, the desired place of a dignified life. Their analysis also involves hostilities and material hindrances to belonging and homemaking. Second, they bring together hospitality and homemaking by approaching hospitality as a catalyst of intimacy and as a right to claim sovereignty over a place, hence making it one's home.

ANNA: How I ended up doing research with and on Syrian refugees in Germany is a long story. Originally, my main research focus was on local economies in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods in Berlin, and I was interested in the place-making and contributions of shopkeepers with a so-called migration background (which I find a very othering term, but it's still the official statistical term) and how they socially influence life in the neighbourhood.³¹ After 2015, this research brought me to work on the municipal 'integration strategies', i.e., housing, provision, asylum policies. We examined how local governments (that sometimes didn't 'want' the refugees

31 Steigemann, Anna. 2019. *The Places Where Community Is Practiced*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

either) actually negotiated and manoeuvred between growing strong racism and nationalism on the one hand, and the humanitarian task to provide the newcomers with housing, food, and all kinds of other services and infrastructures needed for survival on the other.

So, with these two bigger projects in the background from around 2012 until 2016, I then gradually turned away from the analysis of city governments and their governance and towards refugees' spatial politics and spatial production through the conceptual lens of homemaking. When I started my postdoctoral projects at TU Berlin, this praxeological focus became the centre of my research. Our team focused on the material dimensions of homemaking and the spatial practices of Syrian refugees in Jordan (in the UNHCR-operated refugee camps Zaatari and Azraq and in the capital city of Aman) and in five different refugee accommodations in the city of Berlin. As an urban and community researcher, I have assumed from the beginning that the spatial practices and homemaking within the accommodations and camps as 'temporary' accommodation represent only a small part of the longer story of how people actually settle into a city. However, since all newcomers strive to normalise their life at a new place of arrival, the camps are turned into long-term accommodations despite the fact that they are officially planned for temporary use only (e. g. the name "Tempohome" in Berlin) and sometimes become urbanised settlements. However, if they can, refugees also withdraw or escape from the strictly controlled and surveilled camps and accommodations and turn to the wider city and surrounding neighbourhoods for their survival, provision, social life, and everyday mobility. Particularly in Berlin, from the first observations onwards, I realised that refugees prefer not to meet friends, acquaintances, and other people in the camps—for obvious reasons, since they are strictly controlled and provide only very few private spaces. So this is where the neighbourhood context comes in. Neighbourhood matters as a scale, as a context, as an infrastructure, where refugees can get rid of their refugee status and label and act, behave, and move just as a 'regular Berlin person', as one interview partner mentioned. So, long story short, this was the research project context that brought me to collaborative research with refugees on a neighbourhood level.

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HILAL: The questions concerning the neighbourhoods are also very pertinent to my research. For my Ph.D., I worked in a provincial medium-sized town in Turkey on poverty alleviation schemes by local organisations. It is possible to call them religious organisations although they are not necessarily connected to religious groups but motivated mostly by religious sentiments. They used to provide various kinds of aid, from food to cash, to the neighbourhoods they were functioning in. I looked into the mundane but significant care and gift relationships that developed between the workers and volunteers of these organisations and their registered beneficiaries. I figured that the highly pertinent disciplinary aspects of these relations were intrinsically tied to the care and gifts given. The beneficiaries and the workers/volunteers

established relations that went far beyond the one-off institutional encounter. By giving each other gifts and being obliged to reciprocate, they had expanded their connections over time, kicked off relations of mutual (but not equal) care. However, on the flip side, these reciprocal relations created the conditions of docility for many of the beneficiaries and increased the workers'/volunteers' capacity to discipline them.

I later transferred this framework of reciprocal exchange to two neighbourhood settings in Istanbul, which are home to Syrian migrants. The neighbourhood initiatives in Istanbul did similar work to those in Kayseri. They came together and created some resources, contacted the people who would need them, and eventually tried to meet those needs. They distributed stoves, they found furniture, they helped with school registrations. At certain times of the year, like at Ramadan or before religious feasts, they distributed food or supermarket vouchers.

While doing this, they also had to develop networks with the Syrians themselves, because they needed people who spoke the language. They also needed people who would help them connect others and vouch for them. Hence, certain Syrian migrants became gatekeepers in these networks. Moreover, through these interactions, some of these migrants eventually became real neighbours to the members of these initiatives. They established neighbourly relations, as anybody in the neighbourhood would have. They became friendly and started getting involved in the reciprocal exchange of gifts with those who are part of the initiative. So, the hostilities, aggression, and xenophobia notwithstanding, the neighbourhoods became place where homemaking became possible. For homemaking does not happen within the walls of one's home; it is socially situated. And especially in Turkey, as in Syria, a house or flat becomes a home only if there are good neighbours. As the Arabic saying goes, '*Al-jar qabla'l-dar*', meaning the neighbour is more important than the house, or as the Turkish saying goes, '*Ev alma, komşu al*', don't get a house, get neighbours.

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ANNA: This is actually where our two research interests come together very nicely, combining the social with the physical. What I see in your articles³² is that a lot of attention is paid to how neighbourhoods are defined as conglomerations of certain kinds of social relationships based on trust and reciprocity. You also describe neighbourliness as, on the one hand, care work and, on the other hand, as based on reciprocal gift giving,³³ as always involving certain expectations with regard to the behaviour of the other person. When we look at your text regarding the reciprocal practice and expectations about neighbourly relationships, it becomes clear that

32 Alkan, Hilal. 2020. "Syrian Migration and Logics of Alterity in an Istanbul Neighbourhood". *Urban Neighbourhood Formations: Boundaries, Narrations, Intimacies*, edited by Hilal Alkan and Nazan Maksudyan, London: Routledge, 180–99; Alkan, Hilal. 2021a. "The gift of hospitality and (un)welcoming Syrian migrants in Turkey". *American Ethnologist* 48: 180–91.

33 Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. "The Work of Time". *The Logic of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice, Cambridge: Polity Press, 98–111; Mauss, Marcel. 1990. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, translated by W. D. Halls. New York: W. W. Norton. First published in 1925.

we need to define neighbourhood as something social and spatial. The supportive relationships that eventually help you make yourself at home and that eventually become an integral element of what is defined as home always require a concrete spatial context, a concrete space to interact. The physicality, the design of the neighbourhood opens up opportunities for interaction or it doesn't. What I also find interesting in your articles is that you point out that neighbourhoods are made up of ambivalent and ambiguous socio-spatial relationships. They are places with a certain level or that enable certain kinds of encounters that move along a spectrum rather than being binary, as inclusion/hospitality or exclusion/hostility. However, my question in regard to these interactions and social relationships is if you can spatialise them a bit more? What are the concrete places and spaces where these kinds of relationships develop, where are they broken or torn down, where are they irritated, where exactly are they fostered, where can social interactions be localised and spatialised in general?

HILAL: I think your research is much stronger in terms of spatiality. That is something I really liked reading your papers. Nevertheless, in my Istanbul research,³⁴ I noticed that for women, neighbourliness usually took place at homes. Migrant women and longer-time residents demonstrated neighbourliness by visiting each other. However, men's neighbourly relations, I mean the positive neighbourly relations, took place either in shops, in the mosque, and sometimes on the main shopping streets. Therefore, men's neighbourliness has a more public orientation. The more competitive or hostile relations that developed between different residences of the neighbourhoods generally took place in public places, too—mostly coming from strangers. But there is certainly a fine line here. For although the relationships women developed involved intimacy and care, they cannot be seen as simply nice and cosy. They also make women vulnerable to the gaze and disciplinary interventions of others. And this comes with the care package. So for women, the subtly or overtly insulting but also caring interventions again happened at home. These interventions often relate to a particular homemaking activity, like housework, cleaning, home decoration, the state of furniture, parenting, and the languages spoken at home. 'Well-meaning', caring neighbours consider it their task to discipline their Syrian neighbours in order to make them adhere to the hegemonic ideal of good Turkish motherhood (dubbed always as womanhood). These expectations are obviously highly gendered, but they also sometimes border on racism.

ANNA: Public spaces are often male-dominated. They are designed, coded, governed, and dominated by men, and thus they are often very hostile to and exclude women, regardless of the geographical context. The private domain is more often assigned or allocated to women. But what the private is and

if it is safer for women are still empirical questions. Often, there is no clear distinction between private and public spaces and this differentiation is also very 'western'. In addition, for refugee accommodations, what is private and what is public is often blurred, because in some cases there is no 'privacy' or private space at all. The spaces in camps are much more surveilled, controlled, and thus differently coded than the spaces outside of camps. Even though more women claim access to and visibility in public space in general,³⁵ we find that women are frequently confined to the so-called private spaces (often meaning indoors)—as also shown in your research—, and even more so in refugee camps. Women often retreat more to private spaces for numerous reasons, but mostly because of patriarchal spatial politics. This is why subjective understandings of and an intersectional approach to what makes a public or private space a safe or inclusive space respectively which spaces help generate a feeling of home are key for the research design. Consequently, how much somebody can make themselves feel at home strongly depends on class and gender and previous social and spatial experiences. And both our works further show that home spaces, the private spaces, are not necessarily safe spaces. When the homes as private spaces are also prone to harassment, to sexual abuse, and all kinds of violence and aggression, women retreat to public spaces. Yet, your work and mine so far reveal that women's neighbourly interactions take place more in private or semi-private spaces, in the 'homes', whereas men practice neighbourly interactions mostly in public or semi-public places. Homemaking thus depends on different mobility patterns and spatial politics.

But let's turn to homemaking in the Tempohomes and *Modulare Unterkünfte für Flüchtlinge* (MUFs), as container or modular accommodations for refugees in Berlin are called. The container complexes in the Tempohomes mostly consist of two-bedroom containers, connected by a kitchen and bathroom container in the middle. Sometimes, these three containers house people, who don't know each other at all, but usually families are allowed to stay together or have to live with another family. Because of the lack of infrastructure in the public spaces outside the containers and the lack of privacy and space, most everyday activities are carried out in places outside the camp, in the city, or the surrounding neighbourhoods, e.g. meeting friends in the park or in stores, reading a book or a newspaper on a bench in the neighbourhood, or just wandering the streets to kill time or exercise.

In the camps, all public space is controlled, as is partly also the scarce private space in the containers. There are strict orders and so-called house rules and other regulations

35 Crawford, Margaret. 2021. "1.2 Blurring the Boundaries: Public Space and Private Life". *Public Space Reader*, edited by Miodrag Mitrašinić and Vikas Mehta. 1st edition. New York: Routledge; Torre, Suzanna. 2021. "4.5 Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo". *Public Space Reader*.

imposed by the operators of the accommodations and the security guards. There are many conflicts resulting from the surveillance and high level of social control in the camps. Actually, it's almost impossible to do anything without being seen by other family members or camp residents, such as doing care work, reproduction work, or self-care such as cleaning the containers, doing laundry, cooking for the family, watching TV. Kids and teenagers can almost never escape adult control, which, of course, results in a lot of conflicts within the families or with the group of people with whom one is forced to share the space.

Again, this example emphasises that the distinction between private and public space is a very exclusive idea, a middle-class privilege, linked to the possession of enough space in one's own home and power over space. However, what we find in the accommodations are what Michel De Certeau calls subversive spatial tactics in homemaking and managing everyday life that blur the spatial order of what is designed to be public and private space.³⁶ This is, on the one hand, the mere result of or reaction to the very high level of ordering, surveillance, and sanctions and, on the other hand, because there the dichotomous distinction between what is public and what is private does not correspond to the everyday needs and mobility and spatial requirements of the residents in the camps. But the practices that blur what is private and public, together with the general lack of space, lead to another set of conflicts, which in turn lead to many new practices of manoeuvring through and managing life in the camps. This includes the development of very smart techniques and tactics to then counter the high level of control and surveillance, trying to escape, trying to hide activities, or finding unsurveilled spots—and finally to create a home corresponding to the personal needs and means. In terms of neighbourly interaction, if you are forced to share a location and space with somebody you don't know and that you eventually don't like and if you are forced to move to a place involuntarily, previous sociological studies have proved that people are not very willing to invest in the neighbourhood and the relationships there.³⁷ Nor will people easily develop a sense of belonging or attachment to the place, or an interest in the neighbourhood at all. But if people decide for a place voluntarily, because, for instance, the neighbourhood has certain characteristics or because they already know somebody, they open up and eventually identify with the neighbourhood.

36 Certeau de, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

37 See, for example: Cuba, Lee, and David M. Hummon. 1993. "Constructing a Sense of Home: Place Affiliation and Migration across the Life Cycle". *Sociological Forum* 8 (4): 547–72. *JSTOR*. www.jstor.org/stable/684963. Accessed 10 May 2021; Desmond, Matthew, Carl Gershenson, and Barbara Kiviat. 2015. "Forced relocation and residential instability among urban renters". *Social Service Review* 89 (2): 227–62; Gans, Herbert J. 2008. "Involuntary segregation and the ghetto: Disconnecting process and place". *City & Community* 7 (4): 353–57.

So, in the situation of Syrian refugees, who are allocated to these accommodations according to a top-down distribution scheme, never knowing how long they can stay there and sometimes only with a temporary residence permit, this and the insecure and unstable status and housing prevent them from really making themselves at home, from building relationships, from identifying with the space. Nonetheless, we found that refugees build up relationships with the people and the surrounding neighbourhoods in Berlin, which are key for feeling at home. But for this, refugees withdraw from the camps and turn to the bigger city, because there are the people and infrastructures that help them feel more at home, freer, and more welcome than in the accommodations themselves.

HILAL: We can also unravel this notion of voluntariness a bit. I perfectly see how you use voluntary as opposed to top down, and it makes good sense. However, we also need to consider the structural conditions. Market conditions very much limit the housing available to migrants. For most new migrants, it is very hard to find a landlord who will rent a place to them in the neighbourhoods they would love to live in. This is due to both the extremely high rents and discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. In Istanbul, it is gradually improving for families who managed to find jobs or establish themselves in the city, but many others still live in the worst of apartments, often paying extraordinarily high rents. I mean, often they have to pay much more than Turkish citizens. This puts them in competition with their fellow neighbours because they are accused of raising the rents in these neighbourhoods. They are the ones to blame in the eyes of lower-income families who also want to move there. It is like a double trap: they are given the worst apartments—leaking, cold, damp, insecure—, but at the same time they are scapegoated for making rents and housing less accessible for the lower-income strata of society.

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In Berlin, too, the chronic housing crisis is accompanied by racism.³⁸ As a result, the Syrian refugees who want to move out of the Tempohomes have to resort to informal strategies, to black markets. They have to turn to ‘simsars’ (brokers) who help them in return for crazy commissions ranging between 2,000–10,000 euros just to find a flat and get a contract.³⁹ So ‘voluntary’ is often a bit of a euphemism.

ANNA: True. The camps in Berlin are an emergency solution, leaving the residents with a very restricted agency inside the camps. They are a reaction to the tight housing market and the housing crisis. And the financialisation of the city of Berlin along with the highly racist and discriminatory practices in the housing market and the general lack of public housing

38 Hamann, Ulrike, and Nihad El-Kayed. 2018. “Refugees’ access to housing and residency in German cities: internal border regimes and their local variations”. *Social Inclusion* 6 (1): 135–46.

39 Alkan, Hilal. 2021b. “Temporal intersections of mobility and informality: Simsars as (im)moral agents in the trajectories of Syrian refugees in Turkey and Germany”. *Migration Letters* 18 (2): 201–13.

results in a situation where the temporary accommodations become rather permanent lodgings. If refugees can afford to move out of the camps with often very restricted financial means, this is mostly achieved through their own social networks and not through official administrative support. I am very much interested in where and how these networks are formed. These spaces and people represent an important infrastructure for making oneself feel at home. My questions here are: how and where is the new local knowledge formed in order to make oneself at home; what are the relationships like with other migrants who have been living here for a longer period of time and who eventually helps refugees to move out of the camps and to private apartments; and in what spaces do these relationships take place? Looking for the spatial context where this information is shared brought me to Sonnenallee and Neukölln. Sonnenallee is a main shopping street with a cluster of store owners from Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and increasingly from Syria since the 1980s. Many of the supportive informal networks with the newcomers are established while shopping, eating, or having a drink there. The relationships evolving from this everyday interaction bring refugees into jobs or into housing. I call this neighbourly interaction, even if people don't live in the same area. However, many of those networks were also exploitative, capitalising on the vulnerable Syrian refugees, who don't have a lot of local knowledge. So, many neighbourly interactions, as you also mention in your research, are not necessarily fair and just relationships, and sometimes they also come at a price. And they often also enforce a certain level of social control about the other party involved.

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HILAL: We both work with Cathrine Brun and Anita Fábos's approach to homemaking.⁴⁰ Brun and Fábos claim that "homemaking for refugees and displaced persons is rather like a dialogue that spans place and time, incorporating ideal concepts of home and the homeland, and aspirations to return 'home' and hopes 'to achieve a more stable exile'"⁴¹. Their research show that all these shifting concepts of home exist simultaneously. Hence they suggest the concept of constellations of home, to explore the multiplicity of meanings homes attain at any given point in time and space in a person's lifetime. With 'home' they refer to daily practices. 'Home', on the other hand, refers to the values, traditions, memories of what makes a home. 'Home' as such brings together the past homes, future homes, and lost homes. Finally, 'home' refers to geopolitics and the notion of the homeland, as well as the regulations and jurisdictions that define and shape who belongs where. These three meanings become very tangible in your research, and one of them is very much about control and surveillance. You say that the guidelines regulating the use of Tempohomes also define a certain Germanness, and they materially enact it.

40 Brun, Cathrine, and Anita Fábos. 2015. "Making homes in limbo? A conceptual framework". *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 31 (1): 5–17.

41 *Ibid.*, 12.

ANNA: Yes, these distinct and very normative ideas about Germanness and how to live and behave in Germany affect rules, regulations, decoration, provision, the type of furniture and services provided, as well as sanctions if somebody dares to change or challenge any of the aforementioned. The accommodation operators' and administration's entire notion of a home is deeply entangled with ideas about Germanness, socially and spatially. I mean, it is very hard to define what a home is, it depends on who you ask, and even among scholars there's no agreement on how to define home, alas this also depends on what social groups and geographical context you're looking at. In our research, we most often leave it to our interview partners to define what a home is or what it takes to make oneself at home. And we worked out that the previous spatial and social experiences pretty much determine what somebody considers a home. The camp operators and the bureaucratic actors control and order the camps. Hence their ideas about what is enough or what is a home also pretty much predefines or limits homemaking for the residents.

Sometimes it can mean having four walls and a roof over your head, sometimes homemaking requires something else and is much more complex. The different subjective and objective understandings of what makes a home and the ideas and rationalities around it clash quite often, particularly in camp contexts. What constitutes a home is complex and requires much more self-autonomy than the operators of camps and accommodations think or allow for. There is a certain emotional attachment, a relationship with a place but also with the people. Consequently, spatial researchers often consider home as a limited fixed space, while sociologists and anthropologists consider it as something affective or social. We tried to combine these two and to follow refugees in their everyday routines, e.g., from having breakfast to taking their kids to kindergarten and school, walking them to integration classes or all kinds of courses and bureaucratic appointments they have to keep, from cleaning or how they tried to keep the containers clean to preparing food, spending their leisure time, if they have such thing, and, most of all, how they negotiate them in view of the aforementioned control and surveillance strategies. With this research design, we found that in the camps, home seems to be something highly conflicting, always involving social encounters of different kinds inside and outside the camps, with people you have a close relationship with but also with people that are strangers or that are not really good for you.

HILAL: That does not sound very much like a home anybody would long for. How do refugees change these places to turn them into something at least resembling a home?

ANNA: That was the most fascinating part of our ethnographic work. In the Tempohomes, many of the decoration and furnishing practices are officially forbidden. The operators and LAF (Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten / State Office

for Refugee Matters) point out that rugs are not allowed in the accommodation because of fire protection regulations. But the rug has a main function in many households. It's the place where you receive guests, where you eat dinner, particularly during religious festivities, it's the place where many activities are carried out. What we found is that the lack thereof irritates and prevents families and single travelling refugees from performing their everyday routines that makes a home for them. So what they do is, for instance, they put the preinstalled table away, turn it in all possible ways, they put it in this corner, in that corner. Since the rooms and containers are very small, the table takes up a lot of precious space. Residents need to navigate around this always annoying table. Quite often the table was only used by the kids to do their homework; but even this and most playing was also done on the rug or the self-installed couches, or on the bunk beds. However, bringing a rug or an additional couch was heavily criminalised at first, when we talked to the security guards and camp operators. In the early days of the camps, it was completely forbidden for fire safety reasons, as they say; but also because, as a temporary emergency accommodation, they didn't want people to make themselves too much at home, assuming that people would soon leave. As the name Tempohome indicates, it is designed as a very temporary accommodation; at some point, people are supposed to go elsewhere or "back home", as a security guard put it, or to find a flat elsewhere in the city. But for reasons mentioned before, refugees end up spending much more time in these camps.

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Knowing this, or anticipating this quite quickly, refugees start on the first day they move into a container or a MUF room to turn it into a home, in as much as the spatial design, the order, their restricted financial means allow. For instance, we found informal trading of furniture, of tools, or things that can be used as tools. In order to hang curtains on the sheet metal walls of the container, we came across all kinds of knowledge exchange on how to decorate them, how to become a craftsperson. Many residents have become quite skilled architects of their containers, others have acquired renown for being skilful with their hands. There is a lot of neighbourly help from residents who were trained in their previous places of residence and who helped each other to install everything needed for daily routines.

There are also many fascinating examples of people who kind of hybridise their rooms, trying to make them look more similar to their homes they once had in Syria. Hybridising here means combining decorations, techniques, and materialities from different geographical contexts. We compared their previous homes and how they now decorated and furnished their container homes. It's a very interesting process because those practices and stocks of knowledge that people apply to make themselves feel more at home in terms of the space, often originated in different places. So spatial practices and the underlying knowledge migrated with people to Berlin. And this transforms the city, its appearance, the social and spatial relations there. An example outside the

camps is again Sonnenallee, which was pretty vacant and run down (also due to disinvestment) before the arrival of refugees and new migrants. Right now, Sonnenallee is developing into a very cosmopolitan place, where you can actually observe new phases of migration and inclusion on a day-to-day basis—with new signs, symbols, materials, spaces, and products that contribute to the existing diversities in Berlin.

Exploring how refugees thereby negotiate and defend their small spaces for manoeuvre given the very high level of control and surveillance and the many rules that forbid most of the things you would do when you move into a new flat, such as furnishing, decorating, painting, reveals another difficulty in that the containers are only borrowed by the Senate, the LAF. Hence they are supposed to be given back in their original state at a certain point. There are not supposed to be any holes in the walls, any lamps on the ceiling, they should be super clean, by contract and law they need to be returned some time in the future. So the materiality itself does not allow to be fully appropriated to make it a home. Nonetheless, the residents prove to be very skilled in making room for manoeuvre and interpreting the rules and regulations in ways that they can't really be sanctioned by the security guards or the operators.

What is also very important here is the refugees' retreat to non-verbal communication through spatial appropriations. All involved actors communicate with each other through the spaces and spatial orders and elements, e.g., refugees claim their right to stay put, to stay to be considered regular Berliners, as long-term residents, through installing more permanent details and furniture, planting vegetables or a garden in front of the container. Making themselves at home is therefore also a political move, namely claiming the right to be accepted as regular residents of Berlin. This results from long discussions with the camp operators about why they need a sofa or a rug to feel at home. Finally, in some of the accommodations, the refugees convinced the guards and the operators that their spatial practices are not necessarily breaking fire regulations or any kind of law but rather help them to "integrate", which is still the declared aim of the LAF and the Senate. So the local authorities should actually be happy about the refugees' spatial appropriation, because it is proof, a symbol, and a sign of what the Senate and the camp operators are working for in the end: "integration, integration, integration..."

I think the part where you deconstruct and reconstruct hospitality is very interesting here, because what we found in both our observations is that having rugs and couches provides the possibility to host or offer tea and sweets, and that seems to be a key element to feeling at home. Being able to host people is very essential to feel at home, because this is what people would do in their homes in Syria. A home is where you can host guests, period. Being able to host also helps to overcome this ascribed 'guest status' as a refugee. Aside from always being reduced to your temporary status, to being only 'tolerated'. Being able to be a host, to entertain

guests turns these power relationships around: having the spatial setup to host enables you to get rid of the guest status. Being the person who welcomes guests, you gain a lot of dignity and empowerment, and I would be very much interested to hear more about how hosting neighbours actually affects homemaking in your cases.

HILAL: In migration literature, hospitality is often discussed at the level of the hospitality extended by the societies/states that are the receiving part of migration. Thus, the acts of hospitality on site and especially the hospitality of migrants and refugees is little explored. I approach hospitality as a gift, which immediately evokes feelings of obligation to give something back. In the context I worked in, hospitality necessarily creates these gift relationships where gifts entail a return. It is not a calculated equivalent or a return of the same kind but always something reciprocated. In contractual relations, the return is predetermined and the exchange ends exactly when it is fulfilled. In gift relations, it is the contrary. Once you give something back in reciprocity to a gift, you give a gift that expects something back. So it goes on like a spiral and creates lasting relationships. As I explored in depth elsewhere,⁴² hospitality actually opens room for that. If the person who is given something is also given the chance to give something back, it has the potential to pull people into relationships. Your examples support that very well. The initial giver of a gift can be the guard of the camp, a neighbour who gave a helping hand with finding the furniture, or a complete stranger who brings a food package to the house. If the person receiving something can actually invite the giver in to offer something in return, whether it is coffee, tea, snacks, or just a nice chat, the relationship becomes more balanced, though certainly not equal. These two parties have discrepant access to resources and occupy differential positions of power, but as you just said, it creates the possibility to be at eye level with each other. On the other hand, it is important to recognise the dangers of the notion of hospitality used as a state discourse. Being the host and having the power to open the door to somebody also carries with it the position of the master. The master of the house sets the rules. Framing the state or the citizenry of a country as the host and the migrants as the guests is a hugely unequal and problematic conception. All we can expect from that are control and discipline. But if we start looking into the micro level, into the everyday, we notice that so-called guests become hosts by inviting somebody to dinner. The tables are turned around, and I think this is promising in terms of healthier social relations.

Therefore, what you have said perfectly resonates with my observations: home is the place where you can host people. This is the case for my Syrian research participants here and in general in Turkey, too. Hosting is one of the foundational elements of homemaking. In a recent article, Susan Rotmann and Maissam Nimer also explored this phenomenon for Syrian refugee women

42 Alkan, "The gift of hospitality and (un)welcoming Syrian migrants in Turkey", 180–91.

in Turkey.⁴³ They argue that through hospitality women create the occasions for reversing the guest-host dichotomy in the migration setting—quite in parallel to my own argument. However, they also say that by showing hospitality, women also valorise their status in the family and community.

ANNA: True. Hosting holds a lot of power in terms of empowering people that are marginalised in many ways—it’s a powerful practice. Following Brun and Fábos’ conceptualisation of homemaking as a day-to-day practice, or as memories of traditions and subjective feelings of home, but also as an institutionalised set of norms and regulations that in the end determines how refugees are governed and disciplined,⁴⁴ I think we could also apply this threefold definition to hospitality. It is a day-to-day practice, it is, as you said, gift giving and gift exchange, it’s a means to build up relationships, and it is a set of everyday routines. But hospitality also comes at a price, following certain traditions and rules that might be conflicting with one’s own traditions. It’s raising expectations that might lead to conflict. And it’s also about norms and values regarding who is hosting how and what we expect from hospitality. But it is also based on a set of norms and regulations that determine who is in and who is out and who is offered what; and often with inter-cultural exchange, the behaviour of guests and the hospitality practices, just as the host or guest themselves, get significantly ‘othered’. Othering in the sense that they are perceived and excluded from the imagined group of ‘we’ by exoticising their behaviour and looking for the slightest differences in the other person’s behaviour. That’s why I find it very interesting how these two concepts of home and hospitality are linked, but also how they have different meanings depending on the spaces and scales they are applied to (micro, meso, macro), in the private or public realm. However, as a practice on the individual level, on the neighbourhood scale, or within the accommodations, hospitality and hosting can potentially be a very powerful practice. Hosting contributes to the relationships that are crucial to build a home. I was hugely inspired by your article about hospitality through the lens of the Maussian gift. It really helped me to think further about how hospitality is an incremental element of homemaking.

But, in the case of refugee accommodation, it is in terms of hosting sometimes also very difficult to maintain a certain level of cleanliness because of the limited space available. What if you’re ashamed of how you live, what if you can’t live up to the standards that you have been used to in your previous homes or to the standards of the visitor? As a result, you don’t want to invite people or you become very selective. Most refugees had much more means and space before they

43 Rottman, Susan B., and Maissam Nimer. 2021. “We always open our doors for visitors”—Hospitality as Home-making Strategy for Refugee Women in Istanbul”. *Migration Studies* 9 (3): 1380–98.

44 Brun and Fábos, “Making homes in limbo? A conceptual framework”, 5–17.

moved to Turkey or Germany. With limited means to buy furniture or a nice set of tea cups—all the kinds of things you want to show and use when you invite somebody to your home—hosting becomes even more challenging and complex. And even if some camp residents might be physically and materially able to host, because they do have a couch or a rug, they still don't feel or dare to invite somebody over because they feel so ashamed and guilty about being forced to live under these circumstances. I find the part in your article very interesting where you talk about imposing social control on one another when visiting each other. One woman, if I remember correctly, was not able to live up to her own standards of cleanliness but even less to the standards of her neighbour, right? Think about somebody living in a Tempohome or a MUF; they do their best to keep their home clean, but consider the limited amount of space and the high number of people sharing this small space. It's a Sisyphus job to keep it clean and tidy.

HILAL: This is true. I remember the example you gave about following a girl to her home in a Berlin Tempohome complex, where she was looking for a place to plant her tomato plant.⁴⁵ As soon as you entered their unit, the mother of the house quickly tried to cover the things that were cluttered by the wall because they did not have any place to put them as she would have wanted. A stranger came in and the first thing she did was to tidy up the space for the eyes of that stranger. It is not just that though, it is also the embarrassment of not living up to one's own standards. This is projected through the eyes of the other person, but it is also like a double projection: the projection of her former standards of living, which are now unattainable.

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ANNA: Previous homes work as a reference point. You always compare what you do and how you live with previous home(s), where you had all the things you miss so much now. But this comparison is also an incentive to achieve more. This is a new topic in our research recently, and we have to explore it much more—these ambitions and future aspirations and how they are based on previous home experiences, and the constant comparison between different past, present, and eventually future homes and ideas about a home. These comparisons either push you and fuel your homemaking or they prevent you from fully making yourself at home in the new place, and certainly more so, if it's a camp context.

HILAL: So here too we see that the affective and material aspects of home are interlinked. Previous homes may have emotional significance in people's lives in that they long for them and remember them fondly. But the material conditions, as you have mentioned, are so drastically different that these previous homes also haunt the present ones. This also creates communication problems. In

45 Steigemann, Anna Marie, and Philipp Misselwitz. 2020. "Architectures of asylum: Making home in a state of permanent temporariness." *Current Sociology* 68 (5): 628–65.

Istanbul, I heard the people who had helped the new arrivals complain very often that Syrians did not know how to use coal/wood stoves. They were really surprised about that. Because in Turkey, people from the middle class often live in flats with central heating or gas heating. So stoves are used either in villages or by the urban poor, who know very well how to use them. In the imagination of the middle class, being poor and using a stove always go together. When they figured that impoverished and displaced Syrian migrants didn't know how to use stoves, this was something they really didn't understand: how can you be so poor and not know how to handle a stove? This is based on two presumptions, both of which are wrong: first, Syrian migrants must have always been poor, that they could never have had middle-class domestic comforts. Second, stoves are for burning coal or wood. When I asked one of my Syrian interlocutors about the stove, she told me how much she hated the beast. She was not at all used to handling coal, because back then on the outskirts of Aleppo, they only used fuel oil. Coal brought with it many difficulties: it was messy, it required a dry storage space, it was expensive, its transport was a hassle (and again expensive), and it worked with a different technology. Yet, in the eyes of the Turkish benefactors who gave them the stoves, their hardship in dealing with coal stoves was interpreted as neglect, as they also did not know how stoves were used in Syria. Syrian migrants' ways of doing things are very hard to communicate through practice because the other party does not speak the same language. It is not only a linguistic issue. It is, as you say, communication through spatial practices. These spatial-practical languages have a very specific vocabulary and also need to be translated.

ANNA: People often lack the systems to decode, decipher, and interpret, which depend on their respective and highly varying stocks of spatial and local knowledge. It leads to constant misunderstandings, not because certain materialities entail certain cultural values in different contexts but because of the lack of communication about the value and meaning of things, of why people behave this way, of what they do, or why people do certain things they do. There is no or a lack of communication, and there is misinterpretation and a huge misunderstanding about homemaking, also between the longer-established population and the newcomers, as long as they don't talk to each other and explain why they do what they do. These misunderstandings tell us so much about the class differences, the lack of intercultural communication, the lack of curiosity and respect for the newcomers, the different interpretational frameworks.

In this context, another example from our work was not being able to hang up curtains, because, as I mentioned before, the containers made of sheet metal were supposed to be given back to the donors in a clean and original state. But some of the containers didn't have shutters. So there were no pre-installed devices to hang curtains, to cover the windows, to hide the inside from the view of outsiders, passers-by. For practicing Muslim women, for instance, but also for all residents, this meant an impairment of their privacy. If you wear

a headscarf, without a curtain, it is almost impossible to take it down as long as anybody walking past these containers can have a clear view of what is happening inside. So the residents acquired skills in developing tools and techniques and invented ways to cover the windows. In my previous studies in Thuringia, they used newspapers for the windows due to the lack of financial means. But newspapers on the windows evoke the impression that a drug addict lives in the flat, because they prefer gloomy lighting, as the social workers told me. So landlords, operators, and neighbours weren't happy about these shading practices, also because in their eyes it deteriorated and impaired the appearance of the building, resulting in a lot of conflicts. It took a very long time until refugees finally dared to raise the issue, also because nobody ever asked why they put a privacy screen on the windows. They kept bringing it up, until finally the social workers and the housing company installed shutters. The same issue arose in the Tempohomes years later, because there was no possibility to cover the windows either. So refugees squeezed a spoon into the corners of the containers, which could then be used to hang the curtains. This spoon technique became a common solution for hanging curtains in the camps. It is very interesting to see how these kinds of spatial practices and spatial techniques work for decorating your home, but also for protecting your privacy. It became a very widespread practice that supported homemaking and helped women in particular to feel safer inside the containers. However, it was only because of constant fights and appeals for these things that the operators of those accommodations very gradually and very slowly learned their lesson, and only after a long time started to provide such things as shutters.

HILAL: I am really glad that we had the chance to have this exchange. It is definitely useful to see how contextual differences unfold between Germany and Turkey. However, it is even more enlightening to see the patterns and the systematic problems pertaining to the intimate (but essential) details of migrants' homemaking and settlement in both countries.

CHAPTER III:

Walking in the City

Curious Steps: Feminist Collective Walking and Storytelling for Memory, Healing, and Transformation

SEMA SEMIH, KRISTEN SARAH BIEHL, ÖZGE ERTEM,
AND İLAYDA ECE OVA

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How are silences in social memory reflected in the spaces of the city? How can we read the relation between gender, urban space, and memory through the stories of people inhabiting the city in different times and places? How does collective urban walking and storytelling open up space for people whose stories are systematically excluded from mainstream historical narratives? With these questions in mind, in 2014 a group of scholars and students at Sabanci University in Turkey took the initial steps towards designing Istanbul's first "Gender and Memory Walks" while preparing for the Women Mobilizing Memory¹ working group meeting to take place in Istanbul. The academic coordinator of *Curious Steps*, Ayşe Gül Altınay, who sowed the first seeds of the programme, had drawn inspiration from similar feminist city walks taking place across the globe, such as in Budapest led by historian Andrea Petö,² in Bochum by Linda Unger of the feminist archive collective *ausZeiten*,³ and in Santiago led by Soledad Falabella Luco⁴ as part of the previous Women Mobilizing Memory working group meeting held there in 2013. There were also several domestic sources providing great inspiration, including the Militourism Festival (2004–2006) organised by an antimilitarist group of conscientious objectors drawing attention to the "militarist" sites of Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir with creative "antimilitarist" performances, and the opening of the Women's Museum of Istanbul⁵ in 2012, a virtual and multi-lingual museum dedicated to showcasing the silenced history and significance of women in the city

1 <https://www.socialdifference.columbia.edu/projects-/women-mobilizing-memory>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

2 <https://women.danube-stories.eu/2017/04/27/women-in-the-labyrinth-of-budapest-bus-tour-by-prof-andrea-peto-and-budapest-walkshop/>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

3 <https://www.auszeiten-frauenarchiv.de/guided-womens-walking-tour-of-the-city-for-women-and-men-2-2-2-2/>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

4 <https://www.socialdifference.columbia.edu/faculty-/soledad-falabella-luco>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

5 <http://www.istanbulkadinmuzesi.org/en>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

since its very founding over 2000 years ago. Guided by such great inspirations, in 2014 Istanbul's first feminist walking tour was organised in the Beyoğlu district with the collaboration of students and faculty from Sabancı University and activists from Karakutu, an NGO also organising memory walks. These first steps were taken with the participants of the Women Mobilizing Memory working group.⁶

These initial steps then led to the birth of the *Curious Steps* programme, coordinated by Sabancı University's Gender and Women's Studies Center of Excellence (SU Gender),⁷ which brings together diverse groups of people to collectively explore and experience urban space with a gender lens through walking and storytelling. In Turkish, the name of the programme is *Cins Adımlar*, 'adımlar' being steps and 'cins' alluding to multiple levels of meaning, including kind and species, but also peculiar, curious, and queer. Cins is also the root of the terms 'cinsiyet' (sex) and 'toplumsal cinsiyet' (gender). The adjective 'curious' was chosen for the English name of the programme for similar reasons, as it makes references both to feminist curiosity and being queer. *Curious Steps* walks are organised today in three different Istanbul neighbourhoods (Beyoğlu, Kadıköy, and Balat), with over 1,200 people taking part in over 50 walks (2014–2022). The programme has employed and continues to expand upon a growing repertoire of interventions to accomplish several interrelated goals, including: drawing attention to the silencing of women's and LGBTQIA* lives, contributions, and struggles in the city; making visible the nationalisation and militarisation of public spaces; introducing forms of alternative memorialisation; co-witnessing and co-resisting with memory activists; exploring feminist and LGBTQIA* struggles connected to space; making visible sites of gendered violence; exploring the gendered memories of recent cases of urban transformation; exposing the problems of the marginalisation of women and LGBTQIA* in other rights struggles; and drawing attention to multiple layers of dispossession that mark public space.⁸

Curious Steps continues to grow to this day. In 2018–19, a small project was implemented for deepening, enriching, and diversifying stories told as part of the walks. Some of the stories already being told were strengthened through archival and qualitative interview research. New stories were also added to the repertoire, including women and LGBTQIA* people re-making the city at present. Overall, a greater emphasis was placed on creating a diversity of representations in stories based on cultural/ethnic group, gender identity, age, class, profession, and religion. In recent years,

6 Abiral, Bürge, Ayşe Gül Altınay, Dilara Çalışkan, and Armanç Yıldız. 2019. "Curious Steps: Mobilizing Memory Through Collective Walking and Storytelling in Istanbul". *Women Mobilizing Memory*, edited by Ayşe Gül Altınay, María José Contreras et al., New York: Columbia University Press.

7 <https://sugender.sabanciuniv.edu/en>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

8 Abiral et al., "Curious Steps".

Curious Steps has also begun incorporating new layers of history and media of expression into its repertoire. Due to the very significant change in Turkey's global position as a country of immigration and asylum over the last decade, the *Digital Story Map of Migrant Solidarity in Istanbul* project (2019–2020) was developed with a focus on the interrelations of migration, gender, memory, and space. The recently launched web documentary entitled *Buluşan Adımlar (Steps of Encounter)*,⁹ mapping different solidarity initiatives in Istanbul with and by migrants, aims to open up an inclusive digital space that challenges divisions of 'hosts' and 'guests' and makes visible efforts to co-create communities of solidarity. Last but not least, two digital walks were organised during the pandemic,¹⁰ which have created the grounds for reconsidering understandings of walking, storytelling, and memory-making in a digital age.

Following this brief introduction to the story of *Curious Steps*, this essay presents the methodological sensitivities of the Gender and Memory Walks of Istanbul, together with a selection of two stories from Beyoğlu: the first reflecting the dynamic connection between the individual memory(ies) of the storyteller(s) and the collective memory of the space; and the second showing how different methods such as oral history contribute to deepening the layers of urban (hi)stories.

Why We Walk and Tell Stories

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Built around models of experiential and experimental pedagogy, *Curious Steps: Gender and Memory Walks* offer participants an opportunity to engage dynamically with the many spatial and temporal layers of the city and to become part of a process of alternative urban knowledge production through their mere presence in space. Through collective walking, we position ourselves as a moving group in the public space, which is sometimes perceived as a magnet of curiosity. Most people ask questions like "What are you doing here?"; "Is this a course?"; "Is this a tourist group?". They sometimes listen to our stories being told and make contributions. In this way, the Gender and Memory Walks offer a temporary intervention in public space to commemorate the lost stories of people who made great contributions to urban culture and society. And the stories invite participants, as well as bystanders, to witness and acknowledge past traumas and their effects on contemporary times. As Judith Butler expresses in

9 https://www.bulusanadimlar.com/#Acilis_Sayfasi. Accessed 3 August 2022.

10 The first digital walk took place as part of the International GEARING Roles Conference on Leadership and Gender in Research and Higher Education on 9 November 2020 (see: <https://gearingroles.eu/reflections-gearings-second-annual-conference/>), and the second one during the WOW—Women of the World Festival Istanbul on 6 March 2021. <https://www.wowistanbul.org/en>.

a recent interview¹¹ in another context, collective walking/gathering challenges power structures through non-violence, which rather than being a form of passivity is an active and dynamic force that transforms both the experience and workings of power. Hence, for us as *Curious Steps*, collective walking is a medium for creating a resistant and resilient pose in the everyday urban context. Also, our walks provide an opportunity for participants to experience the space directly through their senses of movement, sight, hearing, and smell. In this way, the space itself becomes an object of knowledge, not just through the stories told, but also through the personal and collective senses embodied.



FIG. 1: *Curious Steps: Gender and Memory Walk*, Kadıköy, 2016. Credit: Ayşe Gül Altınay, Curious Steps Visual Archive.

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During the walks, we pay attention to telling stories that are excluded from conventional narratives about Istanbul's urban space and its public. And we have a critical approach towards history-making practices that affirm and impose the nationalist and patriarchal ideologies of the state that purposefully aim for the erasure of particular life histories. Yet, storytelling for us goes beyond what is actually told, as we see it also as a medium of community formation, healing, and transformation. Public storytelling is a traditional art form that has been practiced predominantly in the geographical area of present-day Turkey by diverse cultural groups to pass on the wisdom of human experience to future generations. It has also been used for forming communities through sharing experience, creating affective bonds and intimate relationships among people.

As *Curious Steps*, we work with volunteer storytellers, some of whom join us after taking part in one of the walks. The volunteers initially receive training from us on oral history and storytelling methods. They choose themselves what stories they wish to tell and how to tell them, with guidance

11 Butler, Judith, and Simon Critchley in conversation about Butler's new book, *The Force of Nonviolence: The Ethical in the Political. The People's Forum NYC*; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTsd40tj3R8&t=3s>. Streamed on 7 February 2020.

from us if needed. In this way, our walks do not consist of stories that have already been produced with pre-determined plots, beginnings, and endings. Rather, we encourage storytellers to write their own stories, which remain open to development and change through time and also include the linkages between their own stories and memories of the city and the other ones being told. That way, we seek ways of connecting different histories and memories to one another, and to the present. And by engaging with the art of storytelling, our endeavour is to open up a space for dialogue and interaction on how to co-create a better future and a better story that makes sense for all.

How We Choose Our Sites and Stories

The sites that we visit on our walking routes in *Curious Steps* rarely include sculptures, graveyards, monuments, statues, museums, or the like, which are most often conceived as sites representing and commemorating persons or events historically marking the city. Rather, we search for layers and details of the city that are not easily recognised by a passer-by, like street and apartment names, abandoned buildings, or places that have no cultural and historical significance in predominant narratives of the city. For example, in Kadıköy, we venture into a small side street named after Dilhayat Kalfa, who took on important administrative roles in the Ottoman state and was the first Muslim woman to make significant contributions to Turkish classical music. We also stop in front of the *Bakla Tarlası Apartmanı* (the Bean Field Apartment), where we tell the story of Mihri Müşfik Hanım (Lady Mihri Müşfik), who was a prominent woman painter and worked for the involvement of women in fine arts faculties in Turkey. While the apartment has no historical significance, we know that there were bean fields in Kadıköy when Mihri Müşfik lived in that neighbourhood. The place and time are the two important components of a story. In our walks, the place is physically there, although it is transformed by urban planning, policies of the state authorities, or social and cultural developments or changes.

Even when we do include sites specifically built for commemorative purposes on our walks, we go well-beyond the conventional story associated to such places. For example, in Istanbul's notorious Galatasaray Square, located in the Beyoğlu district, there is a monument that was erected in 1975 to symbolise the 50th anniversary of the Turkish Republic. During our walks, we stop at this monument, but rather than telling the story of the Republic or of the person who constructed the monument, we tell the story of Maryam Şahinyan, an Armenian and Turkey's first woman photographer who, through her studio located in what is now Galatasaray

Square, witnessed and documented the transformation of culture and society in great detail over five decades from the mid-1930s up until 1985. Her archive is a unique inventory of the demographic transformations occurring on Istanbul's socio-cultural map after the declaration of the Republic. Here on this spot, we also tell the story of the Saturday Mothers/People, a group of women seeking justice for their forcibly disappeared children and relatives who met at Galatasaray Square every Saturday at noon for 15 years, starting in 1995. It was one of the longest running peaceful protests in the world, ended forcefully in November 2020. In this way, *Curious Steps* invites participants to look beyond what is visible and represented through sharing stories reflecting different layers of urban time and place. With all these different elements of collective walking, storytelling, and site selection combined, as argued elsewhere,¹² feminist walks such as *Curious Steps* offer both the possibility of mobilising silenced memories and making visible creative mobilisations of memory through a gender lens.

In what follows, we would like to share two stories written by the current organisers and the storytellers of the *Curious Steps* programme. Özge Ertem tells the story of Narmanlı Inn, one of the stops of the Beyoğlu walk. Being a story already told by *Curious Steps* volunteers before her, Özge brings new life to the story, following the traces of invisible non-human protagonists and residents of the space, city, and the story: the cats. This version of the story was first told during the pandemic in the format of digital walks, hence it merges digital representations of the space and the protagonists into storytelling through a creative use and juxtaposition of photographs. It encapsulates the ways in which *Curious Steps* merges through the feminist gaze the past and present, public and personal, the human and non-human, and it shows how the stories told continue to evolve with the changing life of the city and the new forces infringing upon it. İlayda Ece Ova tells the story of the Hayata Sarıl Restaurant, drawing on an oral history interview carried out by herself with the restaurant's founder, Ayşe Tükrükçü. This is one of the new stories added to the *Curious Steps* Beyoğlu route in an effort to diversify the stories told and focus on the present moment of history-making through a gender lens. As opposed to the glamour and consumption ascribed to this place in popular memory, this story reflects the "other" Beyoğlu from the perspective of homelessness. As with the Narmanlı Inn story, it also touches on the impact of neoliberal economic policies in the locality, going hand-in-hand with increased policing. By its very methodology, it also sets a strong example of the transformative power of oral history and storytelling, wherein the story that one chooses to tell can also give voice to greater optimism regarding the future, irrespective of the pain of the past.

Walking Slowly Around the Lost Home: Narmanlı Inn

Since 2014, Narmanlı Inn has been the second stop of *Curious Steps*' Beyoğlu route. It is one of those spaces where "witnessing" becomes an interspecies act of the gender walk. We remember not only the story of the famous painter and engraver Aliye Berger (1903–1974) who lived and worked there, but also the cats of Narmanlı Inn. We remember *them*; and we remember *with* them. We witness the history of the building, the story of Berger and her studio, the cats who used to live there and were gradually displaced in 2015, with a final blow in 2016. The demolition of the historical Narmanlı Inn building started physically in the name of "restoration" in 2016 and was completed in 2017. The family that had taken care of the inn was displaced; the cats, living sheltered in the beautiful courtyard, were expelled from the inn and made homeless. *Curious Steps*' act of walking and storytelling at this stop includes both the history of the inn and its destruction. The story does not end with this destruction; however, it follows the traces of the historical inn by following the steps of the few cats who have remained (not in the courtyard anymore but outside, across the street). Thus, what is lost is remembered not only to commemorate but also to remember caring for those who still live in the area (even in decreasing numbers and diminishing visibility): the street animals of Beyoğlu and the trees, the parks, the memories of an historical cultural and intellectual hub, and a vibrant urban space with all its diversity.

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FIG. 2: Narmanlı Inn, Beyoğlu, 2016. Turkish translates to "Private Property! Entering is Dangerous and Forbidden". Credit: Ayşe Gül Altınay, Curious Steps Visual Archive.

When the *Curious Steps* walks started in Beyoğlu in 2014, for the first few years it was a common occurrence that some of the participants would feed the cats of the inn while listening to Berger's story at this stop. At that time, it was still possible to enter the inn as it was not yet surrounded by fences and signs saying "Private Property! No trespassing!". When these signs were then put up in the yard, storytelling in this space became a simultaneous act of recording and witnessing a loss.

The story usually started with the building. The participants looked at the inn from outside and talked about its history, which dated back to the early nineteenth century. Built in 1831 as the Russian embassy building, the inn also included a Russian prison. Its diplomatic and social functions intensified as a space of encounter with the arrival of Russian refugees following the First World War. It was used by Russian trade and consular offices until 1930s.¹³ One of the turning points of Narmanlı Inn's story took place in 1933, when the Narmanlı brothers bought the building. This family rented the rooms of the inn as studios, work spaces, and residences to artists, authors, publishing houses. Aliye Berger was one of them.¹⁴

The participants of the walk then slowly entered the marvellous courtyard, which was home to beautiful trees with purple blossoms, wisteria, and cats walking around and taking naps under the trees. The participants usually fed the cats accompanied by Mithat *Bey*, the caretaker of the courtyard, while listening to Aliye Berger's story and imagining her studio in the building. Thus, in this part of the walk, the participants focused on Berger's story.

Aliye Berger came from an art-loving upper-class family that supported her to pursue her passion for painting and later engraving. It was not easy for young women to follow careers in the arts. The first official school of arts for women, The Faculty of Fine Arts for Women [*Inas Sanayi-i Ne se Mektebi*], was opened in 1914 while its counterpart for men had been opened in 1882. With her elder sister also being a painter (Fahrelnissa Zeid), Berger became familiar with painting in her teen years and started to paint herself. She had a good, private educational background gained at French colleges and many opportunities to meet artists and to travel during her childhood and adolescence years. Not only her strong and colourful life as a woman artist, but also her love story challenged social norms. She fell in love with her music teacher, Hungarian musician Karl Berger, at the age of 21 and lived with him, while they got married only 23 years later, just 6 months before he died. After his death, Berger, then in her mid-40s, went to London with her sister and attended

13 Günal, Asena, and Murat Çelikkan. 2019. "Narmanlı Inn". *A City That Remembers: Space and Memory From Taksim To Sultanahmet*. Istanbul: Truth Justice Memory Center, 292–93.

14 "Aliye Berger (1903, Istanbul–1974, Istanbul)," *Curious Steps*. <http://cinsadimlar.org/aliye-berger/>. The original text in the *Curious Steps* booklet was written and the story was told by Derya Acuner.



FIG. 3: Aliye Berger at her studio/home. SALT Research, Yusuf Taktak Collection. <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/41404>. Accessed 17 August 2022.

the workshop of artist John Wright. Engraving became her main passion. After three years, she returned to Istanbul. Her first solo exhibition took place in 1951, and her work was also exhibited in Europe.¹⁵

After giving some details about Berger's story (and referring to the booklet if participants want to know more about Berger), the walk highlights the connection between Berger and the Narmanlı Inn. Her room at the Narmanlı Inn in the 1950s and 1960s was one of the places that inspired not only her art but also provided a cultural and intellectual hub in Beyoğlu. The Narmanlı Inn created a community, a network of painters, artists, photographers, writers who lived there and those who frequently visited. Writers and poets Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, journalist Neş'et Atay, the Armenian newspaper *Jamanak*, sculptor Dr. Firsek Karol, the Andrea Bookstore, and D Group

exhibitions all shared the space in the inn in different years.¹⁶ The cats were also part of the community as permanent residents of the courtyard.

The participants are invited to imagine the space through the stories about inn residents and their guests. They become guests to the courtyard and to the memory of Berger's colourful studio full of life until they encounter another layer attached to the story: the assault of gentrification. The memory of Berger's studio and the inn community is then transformed into the memory of a forced exile in the same city, a harsh intervention into the story by an aggressive urban renewal project. Here, the story takes a new turn: the part about destruction and loss begins.

In 2014, when the first walk took place, plans for the restoration of the building were going on, but construction work had not started yet. In 2001, 15% of the shares of the inn were sold to another real estate investment company, Yapı Kredi Koray, for restoration purposes. The project then became a controversial issue between the investors, owners, and NGOs opposing the project. The heirs of the Narmanlı family won the trial they had opened against the company in 2008 and took back their shares. Then, in 2013, they sold the inn to two businessmen, Mehmet Erkul and Tekin Esen, who negotiated its restoration with architect Sinan Genim.¹⁷

Meanwhile, thanks to the Gezi Park resistance¹⁸ and ecological urban rights movements, NGOs and civic platforms were much stronger. Beyoğlu Kent Savunması [Beyoğlu City Defense Platform] struggled hard to protect the historical and cultural heritage of the Narmanlı Inn, demanding that it should not be a shopping mall or a shopping boutique but stay as a communal place like it used to be, with its cats, beautiful trees, numerous rooms to be rented again to art initiatives, artists, writers, bookstores, and art workshops.¹⁹ Yet, under the term "restoration", the historical inn was demolished and rebuilt as an artificial shopping area with coffeeshops, a kitsch "Museum of Illusions", all the trees cut down, and more than 50 cats evicted together with the inn's caretaker family.

The sources used for the *Curious Steps* walks can be summarised as such: "official histories and archives (often to talk about their silence), intimate archives (in the form of oral histories, memoirs, and private collections), and the personal memories of storytellers and participants."²⁰ In most recent stories told about the Narmanlı Inn by the author of

16 Günal and Çelikkın, "Narmanlı Inn", 292–93.

17 Sarıçayır, Ecem. 2014. "Narmanlı Han 57 Milyon Dolara Satıldı" [Narmanlı Inn Was Sold For 57 Million Dollars]. *Arkitera*, 21 January. <https://www.arkitera.com/haber/narmanli-han-57-milyon-dolara-satildi/>. Accessed 25 April 2021.

18 This refers to the protest and resistance that started against the government's plans to demolish Gezi Park near Taksim Square and grew into a country-wide protest movement with accelerating police violence in June 2013.

19 "Beyoğlu Kent Savunması: Narmanlı Han Kamulaştırılsın" [Beyoğlu City Defense: Make Narmanlı Inn A Public Place!]. *Sendika.org*, 24 January 2016. <https://sendika.org/2016/01/Beyoglu-kent-savunmasi-narmanli-han-kamulaştirilsin-323979/>. Accessed 25 April 2021.

20 Abiral et al., "Curious Steps", 85.

these lines in the context of *Curious Steps* walks, this time in the digital space due to the pandemic,²¹ the last source, the storyteller's personal memory, added yet another layer to the story: the gaze of those cats after the eviction.

Our digital walk around this stop starts just across the restored inn, looking at the photo of a cat used in a twitter post by the Minister of Health, Fahrettin Koca, on 26 May 2020.²² In this post, Koca announced that the curfew due to the COVID-19 pandemic would soon be over. The picture of the cat showed the caption: "We are slowly returning." The cat was looking sternly in a direction a bit to the right side of Istiklal Avenue. The photo does not show where the cat was looking, we just see the cat and its eyes focused on something. The storyteller asks the participants of the digital walk: "What is this cat looking at?" The participants of the digital walk try to imagine the avenue, the cat's position on the street, the focus of its eyes, and the reply comes easily. The cat was looking at the Narmanlı Inn, the home it had lost; it was one of the evicted Narmanlı Inn cats.

Then, the participants follow the storyteller through photos taken inside the Narmanlı Inn in the 1960s, photos of Aliye Berger and Ayla Erduran, the violin player who visited Berger in her studio. The photo archive of the SALT Research Center in Istanbul has a great collection of these photos taken by photographer Eliza Day,²³ showing the two (three with the photographer) women chatting, laughing, and Erduran playing the violin on the balcony of Berger's studio, while passers-by watch her from the street. Looking at these photos, the participants of the digital walk, the evicted cat, and the passers-by in 1960s join each other almost on the same level of memory. The memory of the cats and of Narmanlı Inn as a place of friendship between the three women and of a social art community come together. A question is brought up: are there any remaining places of art communities like the one that once existed at the Narmanlı Inn, especially created by women and queer people in Beyoğlu and Istanbul?²⁴ Another question is whether remembering the laughter and almost hearing the music through the photos helps bring the Narmanlı Inn back to life, if only for a moment, and if the answer is yes, what happens when we remember? These questions accompany us on the walk.

21 See footnote 10.

22 Koca, Dr. Fahrettin. 2020. Twitter post. 26 May, 11:10 p.m. <https://twitter.com/drfaheerinkoca/status/1265374812375068673?s=20>. Accessed 3 August 2022.

23 Maksudyan, Nazan. 2017. "Arşivden Çıktı: Eliza Day Bu Hikâyenin Neresinde?" [Came From The Archive: Where is Eliza Day In This Story?]. *SALT Blog*, 22 July. <https://blog.saltonline.org/post/158702922474/arşivden-çıktı-eliza-day-bu-hikâyenin>. Accessed 25 April 2021.

24 Here, we also remember the punk sub-culture created in Deniz Bookstore at the Narmanlı Inn in the 1990s. Deniz. "Deniz Kitabevi" [Deniz Bookstore]. *Türkiye'de Punk ve Yeraltı Kaynaklarının Kesintili Tarihi, 1978-1999* [An Interrupted History of Punk and Underground Resources in Turkey, 1978-1999], edited by Sezgin Boynik and Tolga Güldallı. İstanbul: BAS, 2007, 299-303. I am grateful to Deniz Özgür for the reference. For reflections about high and 'elite' cultural circles in Beyoğlu from a late-Ottoman bureaucrat-caricaturist's perspective, see Bahattin Öztuncay and Özge Ertem (eds.) 2017. *YOUSSOUF BEY: The Charged Portraits of Fin-de-Siècle Pera*. İstanbul: ANAMED.

We slowly leave Berger's studio, come across the few cats (through photos) still wandering in and around the courtyard, follow them while they pass in front of the sculptures placed in the courtyard by the restorer: the sculptures of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Aliye Berger, and cats! The cats of the Narmanlı Inn were evicted, most of them got sick and were lost, not more than 10 remained, but there are cat sculptures in the courtyard... Ironically, the sculptures stand just opposite the Museum of Illusions.

The participants leave the inn, continue to follow the cats and the storyteller across the street until arriving at the few cat homes set up in front of an old building. The shopkeepers of Beyoğlu usually feed the few remaining homeless cats there, while some are given shelter in the garden of the Swedish Consulate. The former spot has a view of the Narmanlı Inn; this is where Süleyman Akova, an elderly man, once came every day to feed the cats and sit with them for a few hours while he was providing weighing services to people with his small scales. He stopped coming to feed them before the pandemic; and Mithat *Bey*, another person who had been taking care of the cats and also of the inn (before it was demolished), died during the pandemic.

There are still shopkeepers and volunteers who feed the cats, and recently there is also a female municipal employee, who together with the volunteers takes care of the animals in Beyoğlu. Unless the municipality takes an active position, it is impossible for any volunteer to sustain especially the medical care required for the animals. Even though what is done is not enough, the employee's responsive attitude to the needs of the volunteers helped turn the feelings of being on their own a little in a positive direction. This also makes her part of the Narmanlı Inn's story in the *Curious Steps* gender walk as a female municipal employee whose position is crucial for taking care of the cats in the present. This is also an opportunity to talk about the responsibilities of official public institutions and municipalities as they respond to the needs of the city's human and non-human residents.

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Then Narmanlı Inn cats still look at the building. They were evicted, yet they still look at their former home, walk and live around it. The participants of the *Curious Steps* walk are invited to stop once more and look at the Narmanlı Inn together with the cats, from the latter's position. Together we look at Berger's balcony where Ayla Erduran once played the violin, and we come back to the cat's position and think about other cats of the Narmanlı Inn, one-eyed Korsan (Pirate) for example. Korsan lost one eye before the pandemic, and we were told that he was taken in by a volunteer afterwards; however, we have not been able to confirm this yet. Sadly, Korsan is not around anymore.²⁵ Juxtaposing the pictures of Korsan and other cats with the photos of the Narmanlı Inn, which is transformed into a kitsch mall-esque courtyard, evokes various feelings in all of the participants. In the

25 Korsan had unfortunately died during the pandemic.

context of the walk, we try not to identify them, but to just feel and realise how they accompany us while we continue our walk through a continuously transforming Beyoğlu... With few Narmanlı cats accompanying us in corners, near shops, and side streets.

Walking Around a Home to the Homeless: Hayata Sarıl Restaurant and Ayşe Tükrükçü

On 15 February 2017, Ayşe Tükrükçü and her friends founded the Hayata Sarıl (Embrace the Life) Association to take the first steps towards opening the restaurant she had been dreaming of. After years of sex work, severe health problems, and homelessness, she had joined a group of volunteers in Beyoğlu who distributed free soup to the homeless in the neighbourhood every night. Realising that giving away food to homeless people was only a temporary solution, she decided to open a restaurant where they would serve food to the customers in the daytime like any other restaurant and distribute free food to the homeless in the evening using the revenue generated from the restaurant. The more transformative part of this idea was that homeless people would be trained in the art of cooking, receive psychological therapy, gain experience in doing kitchen work, and after several months be recruited in restaurants, hence offering the possibility of not being homeless or jobless anymore. When asking any Istanbulite, the Hayata Sarıl Restaurant may not be among the first places in Beyoğlu to come to mind. However, for Istanbul's homeless, Hayata Sarıl is a vital hub in the city. And for *Curious Steps*, it is vital to tell the stories of both the Hayata Sarıl and Ayşe Tükrükçü while walking through Beyoğlu, because they are an inseparable part of the locality's current history-in-the-making.

Hayata Sarıl Restaurant is located on Kurabiye Street, just behind the well-known French Institute, whose front steps are used by many Istanbulites as a meeting point before venturing off into the bustling life of Beyoğlu. Kurabiye Street, like many such side and back streets of Beyoğlu, contrasts starkly with Istiklal Avenue, one of Istanbul's main tourist attractions that is littered with shiny gold-coloured nameplates, touristy restaurants, and is always jam-packed. It once was a lively living space for transsexual workers and LGBTQIA*s, while today it is a place of low-quality hotels and has become the back-door dumping site of some restaurants on Istiklal Avenue, with a few cafés and restaurants remaining that are known to old Beyoğlu regulars. Hayata Sarıl was located next to the cosy vegetarian restaurant

Zencefil and the Muaf pub, both popular meeting points for leftist people and groups. Having been rooted in this locality for several decades, the restaurant's founder, Ayşe Tükrükçü, maintains strong relations of solidarity with these neighbours, along with many other shopkeepers and residents in the area.

Why open a soup kitchen/restaurant in Beyoğlu? Ayşe Tükrükçü tells the story in her own peculiar way: "I was living at the lower end of Beyoğlu, in Tarlabası, so I knew the neighbourhood. I also knew this area because I was making and distributing soup in Cihangir. When I was homeless myself because I wanted to disappear... So today is Sunday, 5 million people pass along Istiklal Avenue in 24 hours, nobody will notice me among those 5 million. My chance of getting lost is higher and feeding (oneself) is slightly different here. There were many more places like Burger King, McDonald's back then, you could sit in the places around Gezi Park. You know those Burger King, McDonald's restaurants that you don't like, I do. The waiters do not serve you there, you get your own menu—or you don't—, and only you know whether you did or not. Then you can go upstairs and either eat (the food), sit there for hours, or doze off. They won't interfere, even though that's changing slowly now; but I wish it wasn't. For instance, now you cannot (enter) the toilets without the password on the receipt you get, that was not the case in our times. So, the homeless can live slightly differently here. Finding shelter, for instance, (was possible in) the parks. The entrance fronts of the banks on Istiklal Avenue were so open in the past, but after the Gezi incidents, and arguing that there is always trouble on the 1st of May, they closed them off. The guys are right, the banks are right, I'm not saying they're wrong. The business places are right as well, there's always an incident, a window is broken, this or that is damaged, it is eventful all the time. And when they don't want to have these repaired, again and again, they have to install pull-down shutters. They use the place efficiently in their own way; however, they reduce the area for the homeless, there's less concrete area to sleep on at night, in the rain."

When, through these words, Ayşe Tükrükçü depicts Beyoğlu from the perspective of someone who is homeless, she brings to our attention that there is a class dimension to even the simplest act such as walking. The fact that thousands of people walk down Istiklal Avenue each day becomes a precondition for survival. This crowd might be deeming Beyoğlu unattractive for middle and upper-class visitors, while the very same crowdedness creates ideal conditions for satisfying basic needs such as eating food and having a place to sleep or have a wash, without being scared away. She also touches upon the fact that mass protests like the Gezi events or Labour Day celebrations on the 1st of May have been instrumentalised as security concerns against homeless people living in Gezi Park or around Beyoğlu as a whole.

One can imagine that walking through a unique historic neighbourhood such as Beyoğlu, once a ritual of civility for the middle and upper classes, now a mode of habitation for

the poor and ostracised such as Arabs, Kurds, homeless, LGBTQIA*s, is a different experience depending on who you are. Moreover, whether for the purpose of transiting through, passing time, going shopping, going for a night out, or taking part in *Curious Steps* walks in Beyoğlu—each mode of walking produces different experiences in terms of how safe, easy, welcoming, or desirable one feels. Given this, it is not possible to think of a restaurant like Hayata Sarıl as a place that embodies all the encounters that happen in this neighbourhood. Yet it was a deliberate choice on our part to tell Hayata Sarıl's story during the Beyoğlu route as this neighbourhood is a significant site for understanding the impact of neoliberal economic policies on the day-to-day lives of residents and workers in this area.

Ayşe Tükrükçü is a woman whose life story has attracted a lot of interest, she has given many interviews, delivered public speeches, and a biographical book is written about her. However, these accounts often start with a particular moment in her personal story, which is the years when she was engaged in sex work. When as *Curious Steps* we did an oral history interview with her, we had the chance to hear new parts of her life story by shaping the interview around the Hayata Sarıl Restaurant. The oral history methodology already has a transformative effect as it aims to form a more democratic way of writing history, and in the specific case of Ayşe Tükrükçü, the space-based way of conversation broke the mould of Ayşe Tükrükçü's self-narration centred around being a sexual violence victim. Instead, she emphasised the focus of her work, her strong criticism of the state policies towards the homeless, and her dreams to change the cycle of violence against the homeless in Turkey. Having worked in the field of homelessness for years, she highlights that Istanbul is still seen as a destination of emancipation for many people; however, when arriving in Istanbul without having found a job, they quickly find themselves homeless, and institutional mechanisms are very insufficient in finding recruitment and accommodation for the homeless. She is particularly concerned with the vicious cycle of homelessness: homeless people are not given jobs because they are not clean or do not have proper clothes and because they do not have jobs, they stay homeless. Thus, her next goals are to establish a free laundry and shower facilities and ultimately, she wants to build a comprehensive rehabilitation centre. In this way, the story of the Hayata Sarıl Restaurant is an immense source of power and optimism for Ayşe Tükrükçü for the many more steps she plans to take in the future.

New Steps...

Having been inspired by a multiplicity of resources and themes, the *Curious Steps* team continues searching for new stories, exploring new routes, and asking new questions. On 15 December 2021, the team organised a Beyoğlu walk within the scope of the *Beyoğlu Senin (Beyoğlu is Yours)* project, implemented by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. The project brings together various groups and initiatives who conduct strategic planning projects for Beyoğlu. *Curious Steps* walks contributed to drawing the attention of public policy makers and Beyoğlu strategic planners to the district through a gender lens and making visible the urban transformation and the forgotten cultural and historical values and sites. In addition to that, the *Curious Steps* team curated a new Beyoğlu route in 2022, in collaboration with the Meşher Art Gallery, Istanbul. The walk includes a selection from the stories of women artist whose works were shown in Meşher's exhibition *I-You-They: A Century of Artist Women*, curated by Deniz Artun with the intention of unravelling the names, the art, and the stories of many female artists who have left powerful marks on art history in Ottoman and republican times, and yet could not find the space in public memory which they very much deserve.

As we do during our walks, we would like to end this text with questions rather than answers: What do the cats try to tell us by appearing in the pictures of the Narmanlı Inn taken at different times? Who remembers the smell of the wistaria and locust trees, which no longer exist in its garden? Who knows the taste of the vegetable soup that was cooked out of solidarity in the Hayata Sarıl Restaurant? By contributing to the documentation of urban culture, politics, and ecology, programmes like the *Curious Steps* programme foster many inspiring questions and new discoveries on gender relations and history in the present. And by presenting an alternative to hetero-normative history-making and learning practices that mostly underestimate the wisdom of oral traditions, neglect the significance of cultural memory, and are unaware of the affective aspect of human experience, collective walks like *Curios Steps*, which are accompanied by storytelling grounded in queer feminist methodology, expand our awareness to remember, to move, to resist, and to act in a variety of forms with authenticity and uniqueness, with freedom and hope.

Queer Urban Sonic Analysis: Blocking the Sound

BANU ÇİÇEK TÜLÜ

Introduction to a Workshop for an Alternative Urban Space

This article aims to explore one way of considering non-sexist urban design strategies by analysing the ongoing workshop series *Blocking the Sound* organised by the author, which was started in 2019. In the context of sound, urban space, and participation, these workshops consider soundwalks and walking as a privileged act. While walking is one of the most performative and embodied actions in daily life, most of the users of urban space consider it an easy way of moving around. However, walking can be difficult, challenging, uncomfortable, and even impossible for women and communities like LGBTQIA*, minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, etc. This workshop has been devised after a number of soundwalks conducted by the author with different groups and participants in different urban areas. After the introduction, the history and connections of soundwalk will be briefly explained. As the *Blocking the Sound* workshops are the focus of this article and it is an ongoing project, further suggestions will follow.

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Introduction

The feminist critique of urban theory and planning that developed in the 1970s demonstrates how urban planners have created gendered environments that are predominantly suited to the needs of men and the heteronormative family. Following the rise of feminist theory and the second wave of feminist protests in the 1970s, planners have considered gender in their work since at least the 1970s.¹ Initiated by feminists, the earliest work reconstructed the ways in which the man-made environment was the material manifestation of a patriarchal society creating gender inequalities. Therefore,

1 Sandercock, Leonie, and Ann Forsyth. 1992. "A gender agenda: New directions for planning theory". *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58 (1): 49–59.

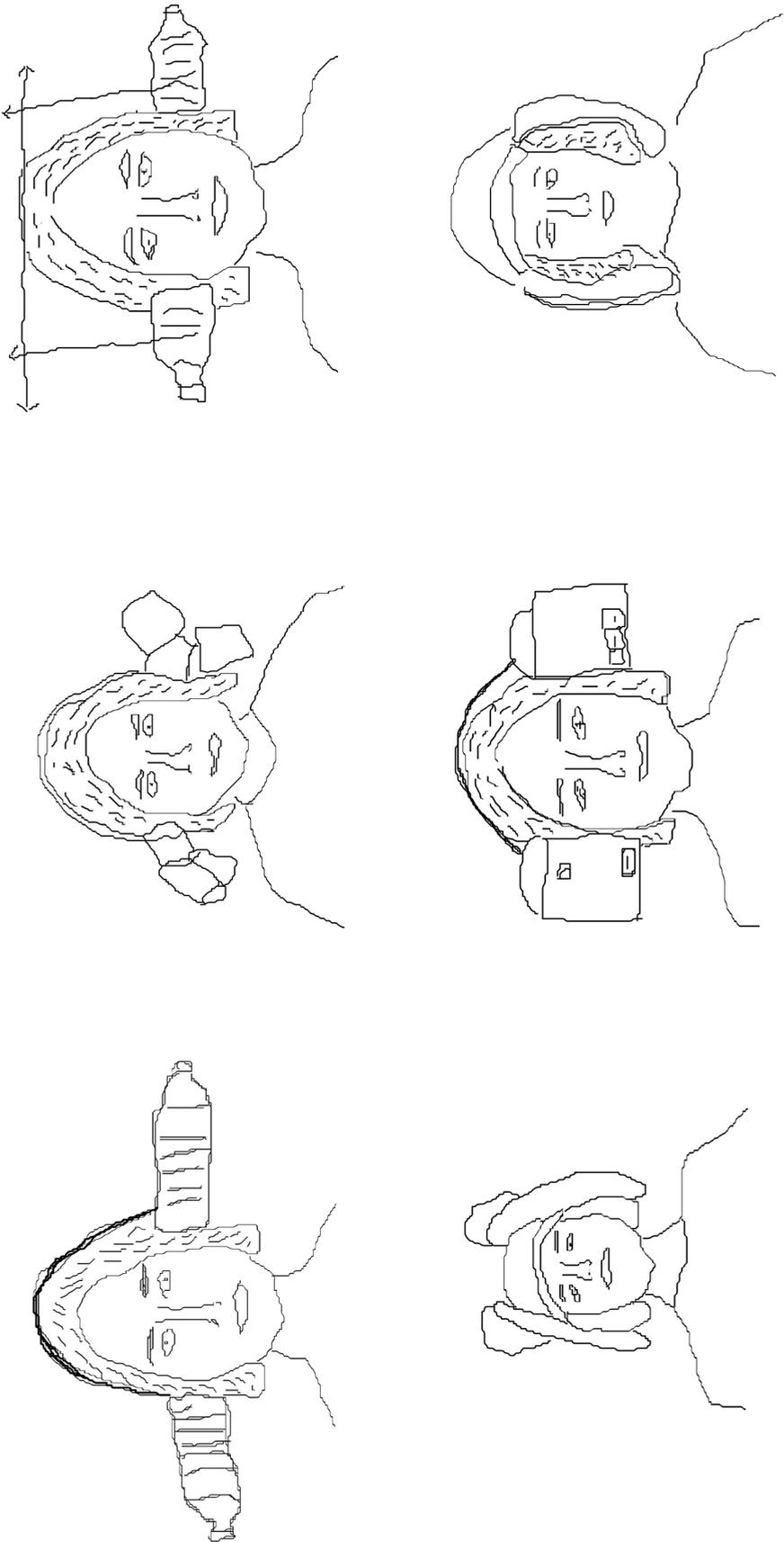


FIG. 1: Sketches from the *Blocking the Sound* workshop.

it was obvious that there is a huge problem for women and communities like LGBTQIA* in urban space, which should be clearly addressed.

While urban space has always provoked gender disparities, how we conceive of them is in flux. Despite the introduction of intersectionality into feminist theory, many feminist works still reduce gender to an essentialist or binary concept in which people can only exist as men or women.² As we see with gay prides, women marches, and a continued fight against structural sexism, heteronormative urban space production does not function anymore. As a consequence, urban planners and designers have to adopt strategies for comprehensive inclusion³. In that sense, the idea of being queer as well as queer theory overthrows the heteronormative culture and breaks down power structures. It is also a very productive approach to reach out to the current social inequities in urban planning with queer theory and artistic work. Ahmed⁴ uses queerness as a framework to rethink how all historically marginalised people can be included in public spaces, rather than just people who don't conform to gender and sexual orientation norms. Over the course of the last two decades, queer literature has challenged white feminism and has adopted a more intersectional perspective representative of various people, rather than just one monolithic group.⁵

Queer spaces as the fluid spectrum of identities related to non-normative gender and sexual orientations occur at the margins of society. They constitute a safe space for women and LGBTQIA* oppressed by the heteronormative nature of urban areas. Overlapping identities and oppressive systems exacerbate LGBTQIA* community's marginalisation, resulting in unfair geographies and urban space that intertwine race, class, gender, and sexuality. For an intersectional urban space, it is time to acknowledge the range of gender identities that exist in the communities that we as urban planners and decision makers plan for, as well as the ways in which ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and class interact with gender to create safe experiences in public space.

There is a dearth of information in the literature about how queerness can be a solution for inclusion. In order to provide a framework, this article suggests that artistic interventions are crucial⁶. One can start with the question

- 2 Beebeejaun, Yasminah. 2017. "Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 39 (3): 323–34; Giesecking, Jen Jack. 2020. "Mapping lesbian and queer lines of desire: Constellations of queer urban space". *Society & Space* 38 (5): 941–60.
- 3 Doan, Petra L. 2015b. "Planning for Sexual and Gender Minorities". *Cities and the Politics of Difference*, edited by Michael A. Burayidi. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 135–58.
- 4 Ahmed, Sarah. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology Orientations, Objects, Others*. Duke University Press.
- 5 Ahmed, Sarah. 2000. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. London: Routledge.
- 6 Nusser, Sarah Parker, and Katrin B. Anacker. 2013. "What sexuality is this place? Building a framework for evaluating sexualized space: The case of Kansas City, Missouri." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 35 (2): 173–193.

posed by Dolores Hayden's seminal work, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like?"⁷, in which Hayden asked readers to imagine how a city might be spatially organised if working women and mothers were considered the primary "clients" of urban planners and designers. The *Blocking the Sound* workshops aim to find an answer to the aforementioned question by focusing on the embodied method while including sound and soundwalk. It tries to understand and analyse the idea of queerness in urban space with a great interest in users' hearing and listening abilities.

Soundwalk

Hearing and listening is one of the most important human senses, and sound is a crucial element in public space. According to Hildegard Westercamp⁸—a long-time practitioner and avid supporter of soundwalk—, hearing is considered passive, while listening is active. We are surrounded by sounds, and sound changes our perception of a space. We hear or we closely listen to understand our environment. It should also be noted that noise is not only the negative condition in cities, it is also a signal for the urban space, culture, and community.

Drever (2009) explains the pre-history of soundwalks with experimental music, sound art, and the Fluxus movement. Putting John Cage's infamous piece *4'33"* from 1952 in the centre, Drever describes the particularity of open-air activities as an evolution of the soundwalk method; as in Philip Corner, Max Neuhaus, and Ben Patterson's radical interventions in which the urban space was used as a concert hall.⁹ Drever emphasises the importance of Neuhaus' *LISTEN* performance from 1966.¹⁰ Each participant had a stamp with the word "listen" on their hands and walked through the very crowded urban area of Manhattan, New York City to unusual sites such as power stations.

The soundwalk was invented as part of the initiatives undertaken by the World Soundscape Project (WSP). The group was founded by Murray Schafer with an acoustic ecology profile in 1970s in Canada. The research of WSP emphasised the noise pollution that exists in people's sonic environment and the need to reacquire our "lost skill" of conscious

7 Hayden, Dolores. 2005. "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work". *Gender and Planning: A Reader*, edited by Susan S. Fainstein and Lisa Servon. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 47–64.

8 Westercamp, Hildegard. 1974. "Soundwalking". *Sound Heritage* 3 (4): 18–27.

9 Drever, John L. 2009. "Soundwalking: Creative Listening Beyond the Concert Hall". *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*, edited by J. Saunders. Aldershot: Ashgate, 163–92; Drever, John L. 2020. "Listening as Methodological Tool: Sounding Soundwalking Methods". *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sonic Methodologies*, edited by Michael Bull and Marcel Cobussen. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 599–613.

10 Drever, "Listening as Methodological Tool".



FIG. 2: *Blocking the Sound* workshop at Die Neue Sammlung—The Design Museum Munich. Credit: Elif Simge Fettahoğlu.

listening¹¹. Initially, the practice of soundwalking was used as a method allowing us to “hone our hearing”, i.e. to boost our sonological competence, to show the human condition in relation to modern reality.¹²

Listening through soundwalking could function as a research tool for a wide range of disciplines. Dr. Andra McCartney, sound artist and faculty member of the Communications Department at the Concordia University Canada, directed a research project called Soundwalking Interactions, where she organised different types of soundwalk to establish a dialogue with the participants.¹³ The end result was a performance and interactive installation using the data the author had collected over the years. The project highlights the variety of disciplines that have been using the soundwalk as a scientific or artistic approach, with a focus on acoustic ecology and performing arts. Referencing the Situationist International (SI), walking is the fundamental act for studying everyday situations and environments while listening.¹⁴ Soundwalking became an inspiration for many artistic practices that use the sonic properties of the environment and employ various listening strategies. Conscious listening, which reveals the multisensory relationship with the world, with others and objects, focuses the subjective aural experience.¹⁵

11 Schafer, R. Murray 1993. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester (VT): Destiny Books.

12 Drobnick, J. 2004. “Listening Awry”. *Aural Cultures*, edited by J. Drobnick. Toronto: YYZ Books; Baff, Alberta: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 9–15.

13 Paquette, D. and A. McCartney. 2012. “Soundwalking and the Bodily Exploration of Places”. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37 (1): 135–44.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.



FIG. 3: *Blocking the Sound* workshop at the SGFA Tokyo (Sound: Gender: Feminism: Activism) by CRISAP. Credit: author.

Blocking the Sound

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As mentioned above, soundwalk has been used by various disciplines. The artistic contribution is one of the most interesting as it proposes multisensory and embodied ways to discover the social, cultural, and (sometimes) political geography. Brandon LaBelle explains soundwalk as “a practice that encourages a deeper, more sensitive approach to location based on actively exploring specific environments through walking and listening”.¹⁶ Pauline Oliveros, a feminist sound artist, proposes the “Deep Listening” practice. She encourages attentive listening—listening carefully—which provides us with a new way of listening and considering our environment. Oliveros highlights the importance of attentive listening, which can take us into a transcendental community, if we listen hard enough not only to each other but also to the environment that connects us.¹⁷ Hence, Pauline Oliveros invites us to focus on one of our most important senses: hearing and listening.

16 LaBelle, Brandon. 2010. *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 104.

17 Oliveros, Pauline. 2005. *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*, iUniverse, Inc. USA.



FIG. 4: *Blocking the Sound* workshop at Die Neue Sammlung—The Design Museum Munich. Credit: Elif Simge Fettahoğlu.

The senses guide people through the city in everyday life. The visual approach in architecture and urban design eclipses hearing and listening abilities. Sound is one of the important elements that help users understand their environment¹⁸. The construction of the urban space, different materials, and everyday objects affect our hearing and listening as the different examples in the previous section have shown. Acoustic environment is not just the background sound or a specific soundscape, neither is it a question of noise pollution caused by traffic or daily activities. It is rather about understanding the auditory experiences and discovering the sonic territories in urban space through listening and hearing.

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FIG. 5: *Blocking the Sound* workshop at Die Neue Sammlung—The Design Museum Munich. Credit: Elif Simge Fettahoğlu.

18 Blesser, Barry, and Linda-Ruth Salter. 2007. *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press.

Regarding intersectionality, soundwalk can be seen as an inclusive tool for analysing the urban space. *Blocking the Sound* adopts this idea. The workshop starts with a soundwalk, during which the participants are asked to listen carefully to their environment while walking. They are encouraged to focus on various sounds, i.e. cars, people, machines, etc., rather than just the sounds of nature. The point is that it is a special moment for the group to realise that we can walk and at the same time listen and hear. The idea of walking and discovering the urban space relates to Walter Benjamin's "flâneur". Usually the "flâneur" is a white bourgeois male who wanders through the city, separating himself from the society as an observer. The critique from gender studies in the twentieth century of the denial of the female character in urban space¹⁹ started to change the understanding of the missing character of the female body in urban space. *Blocking the Sound* is an intersectional feminist approach to soundwalks and invites only women and the LGBTQIA* community, with queer theory guiding both the artist and the participants.

The main point of the workshop is to expose oneself to the sonic violence (i.e. catcalling, swearing, verbal harassment as well as honking, pushing the car and engine to the limits, etc.) that mostly women, the LGBTQIA* community, minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, etc. are confronted with. With such a rupture, walking becomes very problematic and difficult. One of the most common forms of protection/isolation is using headphones—even if everything can be heard, it is easy to pretend not to hear anything. After the soundwalk, the workshop invites participants to create different headphones. They produce, design, create several headphones using recycled or used material. These headphones are provocative rather than aesthetic. The reason is two-folded: first, to highlight the political possibility of design. Design is political and provocative, design sexualises, design also colonised, design manipulates, design segregates. Design objects are related to a political context and in many cases, there was/is a socio-political intention behind their development. With these self-designed headphones, the workshop aims to initiate a conversation with and for women and LGBTQIA*. The designs look like headphones, but it is safe to say that they are not meant to be used for hearing or listening. They are colourful and eye-catching. While creating them, the participants were encouraged to think about the use of headphones, and they also start sharing their personal experiences and strategies for dealing with sonic violence. Second, hearing

19 Wolff, Janet. 1985. "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity". *Theory, Culture and Society* 2 (3): 37–46; McDowell, Linda. 1999. *Gender, identity, and place: understanding feminist geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Elkin, Lauren. 2016. *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*. London: Random House.

and listening are totally different notions. Working with both these challenges can teach us “attentive listening”²⁰, which can have a great impact on us in terms of creating awareness, understanding different perspectives, and enhancing our political imagination. A larger line of research can address the politics of sound, empowerment of women, LGBTQIA*, and minorities through sound, using the *Blocking the Sound* workshops as an example. In that sense, incorporating queer methodology and consider the needs of the queer community in urban space can be a useful tool.

Future Suggestions

Blocking the Sound is a first step towards think about the politics of sound. Overall, it is an urban analysis tool and the process of the workshop aims to create empowerment of women, the LGBTQIA* community, migrants, and any minority through sound. The workshop itself creates a safe space for the participants and it makes clear suggestions on how to transfer this to the urban space. Contrary to urban planning policies and practices of the past that only consider heteronormative needs and requirements, *Blocking the Sound* explores how to create non-sexist urban spaces and how sound, radical listening, and sonic archives can contribute to this process. It is obvious in cities that the queer community is struggling with the top-down and heteronormative decisions in urban planning. In that sense, projects like *Blocking the Sound* can change people’s awareness of urban space. It can even promote the imaginative possibilities of the future, while fighting against patriarchal decision-making and promoting queer urban spaces.²¹

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Blocking the Sound workshops can be seen as a new way to mix different methods in soundwalk and as a productive tool for inclusion. Soundwalk should be considered as a participatory tool. Working with queer communities will allow planners to implement specific measures to support queer people in their local context.²² It takes its stand from the cultural, social, and political connections of sound.

20 Oliveros, *Deep Listening*.

21 Sandercock and Forsyth, “A gender agenda”.

22 Doan, Petra L. 2015a. *Planning and LGBTQ communities: the need for inclusive queer spaces*. New York, NY: Routledge.

TUBA İNAL-ÇEKİÇ got her Ph.D. degree from the Urban and Regional Planning Department of Yıldız Technical University in Istanbul. She was a visiting fellow at the Berlin Institute for Co-operative Studies of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2013 and 2016. She worked at HafenCity Universität Hamburg between September 2017 and November 2018 in the research team of the “Horizon 2020” project on participation in mobility-related projects. She was affiliated at the Department of Social Sciences of Humboldt-Universität as a Senior Einstein Fellow until May 2021. Tuba currently works as a postdoctoral researcher at Hertie School in Berlin. Her research interests are focused on urban movements and urban commons from a participatory governance perspective. She has written several papers that were published in journals and edited volumes.

URSZULA EWA WOŹNIAK holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Until June 2022 she worked as a research associate at the Chair of Comparative Political Sciences and Political Systems of Eastern Europe, Department of Social Sciences at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research interests include political sociology and political anthropology, migration and transnationalism, urban studies and Turkish studies. Based on ethnographic research on two Istanbul neighbourhoods, her Ph.D. examined the relevance of the neighbourhood (*mahalle*) as a contested system of order in both the realm of everyday life and political discourse. Besides her academic publishing work, in recent years Urszula has been actively engaged in questions of equal opportunity policies and diversity mainstreaming at the university. She previously also worked as a freelance cultural practitioner, collaborating, among others, with Depo Istanbul, Maxim Gorki Theater, Polnisches Institut Berlin, and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

AYŞE ÇAVDAR is a journalist and academic who graduated from the Journalism Department of Ankara University. She received her MA in history from Boğaziçi University. She completed her Ph.D. thesis entitled “The Loss of Modesty: The Adventure of Muslim Family from Neighbourhood to Gated Community” at the European University of Viadrina in 2014 (supported by the Global Prayers Project initiated by MetroZones). Ayşe worked for several universities and news outlets in Turkey. Between 2018 and 2020, she worked as visiting scholar at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS), Philipps-Universität Marburg. Presently, Ayşe is a visiting scholar at the CNMS at Bard College Berlin. She coedited (with Volkan Aytar) *Media and Security Sector Oversight, Limits, and Possibilities* (TESEV 2009) and (with Pelin Tan) *The State of Exception in an Exceptional City* (Sel, 2013). She is currently working on the transformation of religious/conservative family structures in Turkey through the narratives of their secularised children.

MATTHIAS COERS is a Berlin-based filmmaker, photographer, sociologist, and a city activist. He organises events on city and housing

topics and is in charge of the photography editorial team of the Berliner MieterEcho. In 2016 and 2018, Matthias was a jury member at the Berlinale International Film Festival. Movies like *MIETREBELLEN/RENTREBELS* show the tenant movement in Berlin, *DAS GEGENTEIL VON GRAU/THE OPPOSITE OF GRAY* the open space movement in the Ruhr area, publications like *Umkämpftes Wohnen/Contested Housing* give insight into neighbourhood work in Europe or *MITTEN DRIN DRAUSSEN/IN THE MIDDLE OUT THERE* into homelessness in Berlin. The website www.zweischritte.berlin provides information about his work.

SISTER SYLVESTER is an artist based in New York and Istanbul. Her work explores modes of knowledge transmission and is based on first-hand research and documentation. Her most recent film, *Our Ark*, co-directed with Deniz Tortum, premiered at IDFA and toured internationally. Installation work includes *Pieces of Our Ark* at the Museum of the Moving Image, New York; *Shadowtime*, part of Protocinema’s multi-city exhibition *A Few In Many Places* at Kiraathane Istanbul; and *Kaba Koşya* at Amsterdam University and Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. Recent live performance work includes *The Eagle and The Tortoise* at National Sawdust in New York, *The Fall* at Yale University and *Three Rooms* at Shubbak Festival, London. She also writes, most recently her work on virtual reality and orientalism was republished for the New Inquiry Classics edition. Sister Sylvester is currently a fellow at ONX new media studio, New York, and is a 2019 Macdowell Fellow. She has taught or mentored students at Columbia University, Princeton, MIT, Colorado College, NYU, and Boğaziçi, Istanbul.

ASLI ODMAN is a social scientist, a lecturer at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, and a founding volunteer of the Istanbul Health and Safety Labour Watch. She studied economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business and received her MA in political science from the University of Vienna. Her Ph.D. research, conducted at the Atatürk Modern History Institute at Boğaziçi University, considers the global production network of the Ford Motor Company condensed in Istanbul. Her recent research focuses on the university as a profit-oriented corporation and the health aspects of the capitalist work organisation with regard to shipbuilding, mining, construction, agriculture, film, and platform industries. As part of her action-oriented research, she participates in grassroots struggles responding to corporate crimes and state abuses against the right to the city, the environment, and public health.

HILAL ALKAN is a researcher at Leibniz Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin. She holds an MA in sociology from Boğaziçi University and a Ph.D. in political science from the Open University UK. After working on charitable giving, poverty alleviation, and social citizenship, she has directed her focus on Syrian

migration to Turkey and Germany. This research has been published at *American Ethnologist*, *Citizenship Studies* and *Migration Letters*. She has also co-edited two books: *Urban Neighbourhood Formations: Boundaries, Narrations and Intimacies* (2020) and *The Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary Turkey: Reproduction, Maternity, Sexuality* (2021). In her current research she explores the effects of multi-species care relations on the home-making of migrants.

ANNA STEIGEMANN is an interdisciplinary urban researcher and sociologist with a special interest in the intersection of critical migration and urban studies. She currently works as a professor for urban and spatial sociology at University Regensburg and as an assistant professor at Habitat Unit, the Chair of International Urbanism and Design, at Technische Universität Berlin. Anna has extensive experience as an urban scholar and has worked at many planning and sociology departments before, such as at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, at Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York, at TU Dortmund, at TU Berlin's Sociology, Architecture and Urban Planning Institutes, and the TUB Center for Metropolitan Studies (Ph.D. in 2016). Her research interests focus on neighbourhood and community studies, critical participation and governance research, gender, diversity, migration and the city, spatial and social qualitative research methods, and spatial production 'from below'.

SEMA SEMİH was born in Istanbul in 1987. She studied philosophy (BA) at Boğaziçi University and cultural studies (MA) at Istanbul Bilgi University. Sema is a project coordinator at Sabancı University Gender and Women's Studies Center of Excellence (SU Gender). Since 2016, she has been working in the projects *Transformative Activism: Rethinking Gender and Politics* (2017–present) and *Curious Steps: Gender and Memory Walks*.

KRISTEN SARAH BIEHL is a research faculty member at Sabancı University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and Women and Gender Studies Center of Excellence (SU Gender). She holds a BA in social anthropology and development studies (SOAS, 2005), an MA in sociology (Bogazici University, 2008) and D.Phil in social and cultural anthropology (University of Oxford, 2018). Since 2006, she has been researching, both academically and professionally, the migration and asylum field in Turkey. Her research centres on ethnographies of migration, diversification, and urban change, governing effects of migration and asylum policy frameworks, and gendered impacts of migration. In recent years, she has also been exploring intersections of gender and environmental issues, including her last research comparing the gender awareness and approaches of civil society initiatives working in the migration and environmental fields. She is currently the coordinator in Turkey on two EU funded projects called *ReROOT* (2021–2025) and *Whole-COMM* (2021–2024).

ÖZGE ERTEM is a historian of the late Ottoman era. She completed her BA at Marmara University's Political Science and International Relations Department (Istanbul, 2003), her MA at Boğaziçi University's Atatürk Institute (Istanbul, 2005), and her Ph.D. at European University Institute's History and Civilization Department (Florence, 2012). Her research topics and articles have focused on the history of childhood in early Republican Turkey, famine and hunger in the late Ottoman era, communal relations, disaster and everyday life, relief and charity networks, and famine memory. She is part of the Transformative Activism and Curious Steps teams at Sabancı University's Gender and Women's Studies Center of Excellence (SU Gender).

İLAYDA ECE OVA holds a BA in international relations from Bilkent University and an MA in sociology and social anthropology from Central European University. She worked for academic and civil society organisations focusing on refugees' access to rights, feminist activism, and institutionalisation of gender equality. İlayda is currently a Ph.D. student at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, planning to work on youth's political engagement and citizenship practices.

BANU ÇİÇEK TULÜ is a Berlin-based artist, producer, DJ, researcher, and urban designer from South-East Turkey. Her academic and artistic interests include participation, public space, sonic environment, collective listening, environmental spatial justice, urban activism, intersectional feminism, and interdisciplinary methodologies. She completed a Ph.D. at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg and was a scholarship holder of Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. Between 2018 and 2021, she has been teaching at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Having started when she was a BA student (2003–2009) in Istanbul, she continues her political engagement also in Germany while working with different activist groups.

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the City

In the face of uninhibited neoliberal restructuring, Berlin and Istanbul have for the past decade been subject to various forms of political polarisation and social injustice. As a result, the struggles for affordable housing, access to public space, fair labour, ecological justice, and the right to live differently have intensified. Various forms of grassroots resistance have put the relationship between local governments and social movements to the test, provoking questions about where and how the city's political subjects emerge. Blending dialogues, essays, and critical reflections, this e-book investigates the ways in which the residents of Berlin and Istanbul experience, express, and contest the physical, political, and normative reordering of their cities. Three chapters focusing on (I) various forms of urban resistance, (II) the un/silencing of subjects, and the seemingly mundane (III) practice of walking put the idea of a multiplicity of political subjects in the urban to the test, to ask: Who are *We, the City*?