Affective Ecologies of Limitation:

Art, Ecology, and Infrastructure on İstanbul's Peripheries

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Contents

Abstract

"Affective Ecologies of Limitation: Art, Infrastructure and Ecology in İstanbul's Peripheries" is a study of the transformation of İstanbul's peripheries and coastlines through the construction of mega-infrastructure projects. This work studies İstanbul's outer peripheries to account for the city's ecological and geographic transformations, its physical expansion, its disruptive megaprojects, and its fetishization of economic growth. To study this geography, I think alongside artists from Turkey who have attempted to represent the peripheries of İstanbul through a diverse series of mediums such as painting, photography, film, and mapping. I place these aesthetic insights in conversation with the 6-months of fieldwork I have conducted in İstanbul's peripheries where I organized collective walking tours, collected ethnographic notes, and conducted interviews with activists, artists, and construction workers. Last, I also provide a context for these aesthetic and ethnographic findings by bringing them in conversation with historical representations of infrastructure across Turkish politics.

Drawing on this archive of artistic, activist, and intellectual work, the thesis proposes the term "affective ecologies of limitation" as a novel conceptualization of the idea of limitation and constraint in political ecology. Studying the limits of a megacity like İstanbul allows us to reconceptualize what we mean by a "limit" in the first place. Against understandings of limitation that are driven by scarcity and lack, affective ecologies of limitation describe the way in which limitation is inscribed within affect – the cultural, political economic and environmental formations within which images of finitude and limitation are registered as sensible and visceral. An affective ecology of limitation addresses how questions of political economy and subjectivity shape the ways in which certain environments are produced, distributed, and consumed *as finite*, and how this image of finitude shapes political economic understandings of ecology, materialism, labor, and technicity in turn. In developing this argument, I bring my archive in conversation with the work of Gilbert Simondon, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on the one hand and eco-Marxist work focused on the critique of growth on the other. Thus, I bring together the critique of İstanbul's physical expansion with the critique of the imperative of economic expansion that has defined Turkish politics.

The various chapters propose different models for thinking through ecological limitation that are all rooted in concrete sites and artistic works. Chapter 1 draws on my ethnographic work to study how the desire for economic growth can also articulate a popular and intimate authoritarianism. Chapter 2 deals with the question of materialism and engages with the work of the artist collective *Hafriyat* as well as Serkan Taycan's *Between Two Seas*, a four-day walking tour of the Western peripheries of İstanbul. Chapter 3 engages the work of *ArtıkİşIer* (SurplusWorks) video collective, the work of film makers Gulia Frati and Elizabeth Lo and photographer Bekir Dindar, to explore the limits of the wage relation. Chapter 4 thinks through the concept of the periphery as a technical and geographical term drawing on Taycan's photography as well as Latife Tekin's novel *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills.* The postscript ends the thesis by reflecting on the themes articulated throughout the thesis in relation to the two massive earthquakes that hit Turkey on February 6th, 2023.

Résumé

“Écologies affectives de la limitation : Art, infrastructure et écologie dans les périphéries d'Istanbul” est une étude de la transformation des périphéries et des côtes d'Istanbul par la construction de projets de méga-infrastructure. Ce travail étudie les périphéries extérieures d'Istanbul pour rendre compte des transformations écologiques et géographiques de la ville, de son expansion physique, de ses mégaprojets perturbateurs et de sa fétichisation de la croissance économique. Pour étudier cette géographie, je pense aux côtés d'artistes turcs qui ont tenté de représenter les périphéries d'Istanbul à travers une série diverse de médiums tels que la peinture, la photographie, le cinéma et la cartographie. Je place ces idées esthétiques en conversation avec les 6 mois de travail de terrain que j'ai menés dans les périphéries d'Istanbul où j'ai organisé des visites collectives à pied, collecté des notes ethnographiques et mené des entretiens avec des militants, des artistes et des ouvriers du bâtiment. Enfin, je fournis également un contexte pour ces découvertes esthétiques et ethnographiques en les mettant en conversation avec la représentation historique de l'infrastructure à dans la politique turque.

S'appuyant sur ces archives de travaux artistiques, militants et intellectuels, la thèse propose le terme « écologies affectives de la limitation » comme une nouvelle conceptualisation de l'idée de limitation et de contrainte dans l'écologie politique. Étudier les limites d'une mégapole comme Istanbul nous permet de reconceptualiser ce que nous entendons par « limite » en premier lieu. Contre les conceptions de la limitation qui sont motivées par la rareté et le manque, les écologies affectives de la limitation décrivent la manière dont la limitation est inscrite dans l'affect - les formations culturelles, politiques, économiques et environnementales dans lesquelles les images de la finitude et de la limitation sont enregistrées comme sensibles et viscérales. Une écologie affective de la limitation aborde la manière dont les questions d'économie politique et de subjectivité façonnent les manières dont certains environnements sont produits, distribués et consommés comme finis, et comment cette image de la finitude façonne les compréhensions économico-politiques de l'écologie, du matérialisme, du travail et de la technicité en retour. En développant cet argumentaire, j'apporte mes archives en dialogue avec les travaux de Gilbert Simondon, Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari et les travaux éco-marxistes centrés sur la critique de la croissance. Ainsi, je rassemble la critique de l'expansion physique d'Istanbul avec la critique de l'impératif d'expansion économique qui a défini la politique turque.

Les différents chapitres proposent différents modèles de réflexion sur la limitation écologique qui s'enracinent tous dans des sites concrets et des œuvres artistiques. Le chapitre 1 s'appuie sur mon travail ethnographique pour étudier comment le désir de croissance économique peut aussi articuler un autoritarisme populaire et intime. Le chapitre 2 traite de la question du matérialisme et s'intéresse au travail du collectif d'artistes Hafriyat ainsi qu'à Between Two Seas de Serkan Taycan, une visite à pied de quatre jours des périphéries occidentales d'Istanbul. Le chapitre 3 engage le travail du collectif vidéo ArtıkİşIer (SurplusWorks), le travail des cinéastes Gulia Frati et Elizabeth Lo et du photographe Bekir Dindar, pour explorer les limites de la relation salariale. Le chapitre 4 réfléchit au concept de périphérie en tant que terme technique et géographique s'inspirant de la photographie de Taycan ainsi que du roman de Latife Tekin, Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills. Le post-scriptum termine la thèse en réfléchissant sur les thèmes articulés tout au long de la thèse en relation avec les deux tremblements de terre massifs qui ont frappé la Turquie le 6 février 2023.

Acknowledgements

I have read enough dissertations by others to know how an acknowledgements page unfolds. Yet being spoiled by such an encouraging support network I feel emboldened to experiment with the genre. As readers of this acknowledgement page may already know, I have participated in and helped facilitate multiple role-playing games throughout the writing of this thesis. Therefore, it feels appropriate to organize my "thank yous" according to the roles people have played in the collective story telling exercise that has been this thesis.

Artificers are known for their ingenuity and inventions. For me these are the scholars and artists who have most influenced my thinking through their creations. Thank you for patiently answering my questions and engaging with my ideas.

Thank you to Bekir Dindar, Gökçen Erklıç, Mustafa Pancar and all the other artists who took time to speak to me during my research. A special thanks goes to Serkan Taycan whose work has been the starting germ for the series of reflections that constitute this thesis. Thank you for your friendship, intellectual comradery, enthusiasm, and incredible support!

Bards are referred to as the "face" of an adventuring party. For me these are people whose brilliance shines through their gregariousness, who are the most generous readers of other people's work and who have been the true conversationalists of my PhD adventure.

Thank you to Hannah Tollefson for hours long phone calls and for being everything I could ever ask for in a friend; to İdil Galip for a decade of gossiping and conversation; to Jordan Kinder and Aaron Vansintjan for their wit and comradery; to Rachel Bergmann for her endless joy. A last special thank you in this group goes to Jonathan Sterne, who's passion, intellect, kindness and mentorship I will strive to emulate throughout my life. Thank you for always having my back even when I seemed lost and for giving me room to grow.

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enough to walk with me. Thank you also to Yuriko Furuhata and Jenny Burman for their valuable comments during the thesis defense.

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List of Abbreviations

AFAD – Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetmeliği Başkanlığı (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency)

AKP/JDP – Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party

AP – Adalet Partisi (Justice Party)

CHP – Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)

ÇED – Çevresel Etki Değerlendirmesi (Environmental Impact Asssessment)

DSP – Demokrat Sol Parti (Democratic Left Party)

HDP – Halkların Demokratik Partisi (Peoples' Democratic Party)

KOS – Kuzey Ormanları Savuması (Northern Forest's Defense)

MAD – Mekanda Adalet Derneği (Centre for Spatial Justice)

TEM – TransEuropean Motorway

TİP – Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Turkish Labor Party)

YKYİ – Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul İnsiyatifi (Either the Kanal or İstanbul Initiative)

Introduction:

Affective Ecologies of Limitation

"Select your departure point 50 meters away from the rocks on the right of the Yeniköy Coast.…Walk about 100 meters along the asphalt paved road. You will see the entrance of the lignite mine pits. Don't get too close. Don't get into trouble with the security guard! Take a right from the utility pole just before the entrance. You are now ready to take the footpath.
With the lignite pits still there on your left climb up the hill up the gradually sloping footpath. On your right you will see a building construction left unfinished. A herd of cows will emerge from the right of the building. Watch out for the shepherd dogs. You will see two beautiful oak trees. And below them an area surrounded by fences. Walk towards the middle of the two trees: if you turn towards the lignite mines you will see a landscape riddled with holes, and further out, the Black Sea. Further ahead there is a grass area about the size of a football pitch. This is a flat field formed in time by silt carried down by rainwater… Walk towards the hill. The lignite mines are still on your left. From this point on, the path will pass through the old mine site for about 3 kilometers. Follow the path that continues downhill over the side of the mine site. Descend onto the defunct mine site. *(Now used by construction trucks for dumping debris and construction waste).* The scene that you will encounter with plants growing on the colorful hill formed by the old remains of the mine on the right resembles a scene out of the movie "Mad Max".
Continue through the old mine site. A small distance ahead you will pass through the area that has almost been transformed into a desert by soil erosion. You will then see a pond of water and marshes. Quite an intriguing scene to come across. A stork will take off from among the marshes and disappear in the sky. Break off a reed branch, and walk on…"
(Taycan 2014)

I am in Yeniköy walking with a group of friends. We have stopped by the site of the old lignite pits which have for the large part been destroyed during the construction of the İstanbul Airport one of the governing JDP's famous "megaprojects" which opened its doors in 2018. We survey the site as I check the batteries of my phone. I feel anxious when I notice they have died and panic about leading the rest of the trip without GPS access. Nonetheless, I am able to make do by reading and following the map. The marshes are indeed there. So are the berries which the map promises grow next to an abandoned quarry. The map incites you to interact with the geography you are walking on, have tea with locals, beware of the guard dogs, break a branch, eat some berries… Once we reach this far, we sit down for a rest and break out our sunscreen. Having been burnt pretty badly on a previous hike along this route, I made sure to bring extra sunscreen this time around. It is late June in İstanbul, and the weather is scorching hot. Nonetheless we are happy to be outside with people after weeks of full quarantine and

stay-at home orders in May of 2021, an effort to curb the exponential rise of COVID-19 cases in the country. As we sit down, one of the dogs following us throughout our hike jumps in the water.

In our conversations, the map's maker Serkan Taycan explains how the walking trail helps city-dwellers re-imagine the "rural" not as a naïve, distant, and pastoral object but rather as thoroughly in relation to the developments and tendencies of urban space. The very closeness of the periphery is itself an indication. The trail is about 3-4 hours away by public transport from Kadıköy, the neighborhood I stayed in for most of my time in İstanbul. It is even closer by car. The geography I am walking is described in the map as the "periphery" (*çeper*) of the city. This periphery is less like an ornamental object to be appreciated at a distance and more like a field of transformations and struggles over which İstanbul's expansion has played out throughout its history. Walking it the first time, it is easy to be oblivious to all of this. Yet repeated walks, reading and reflection has helped me gain a new perspective on the confluences of developmentalism, authoritarianism, neoliberalism and state violence that shapes such peripheral spaces.

The map I am reading and the walking route we are walking is part of an artwork, *Between Two Seas*, a four-day walking route designed by Taycan a photographer, artist, designer and, by now, a good friend.

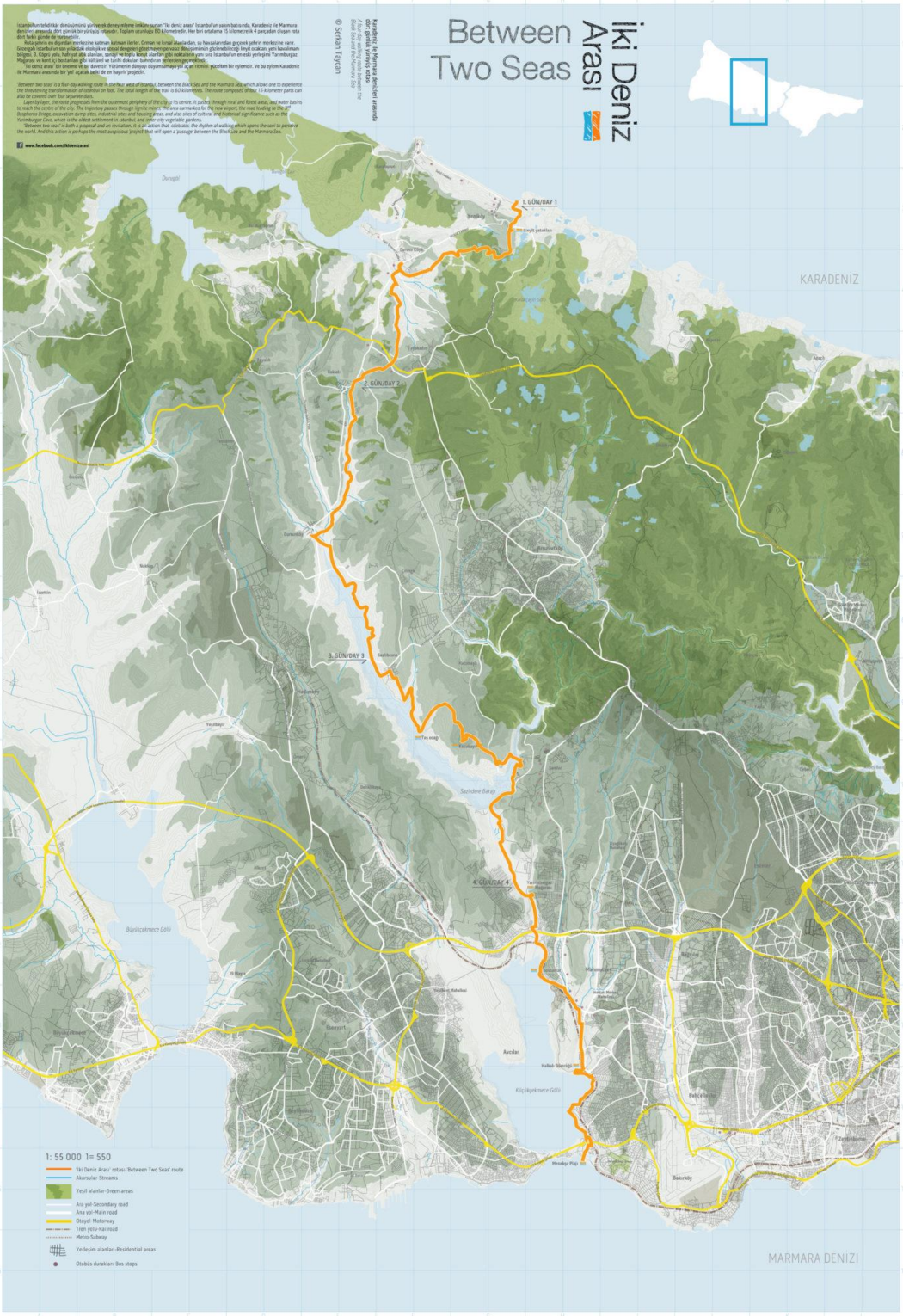
> "*Between Two Seas*" is a four-day walking route in the near west of İstanbul, between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea, which allows one to experience the threatening transformation of İstanbul on foot. The total length of the trail is 60 kilometers. The route composed of four 15-kilometer parts can also be covered over four separate days. Layer by layer, the route progresses from the outermost periphery of the city to its center. It passes through rural and forest areas, and water basins to reach the center of the city. The trajectory passes through lignite mines, the area earmarked for the new airport, the road leading to the 3rd Bosporus Bridge, excavation dump sites, industrial sites and housing areas, and also sites of cultural and historical significance such as the Yarımburgaz Cave, which is the oldest settlement in İstanbul, and inner-city vegetable gardens. "*Between Two Seas*" is both a proposal and an invitation" (Taycan 2014).

The map describes an area that that stretches from the coast of the Black Sea down to the

Southwest, near the Sea of Marmara. Alongside being located next to a city of 20 million people, this area is ecologically diverse and is a refuge for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds that travel between Europe, Asia, and North Africa. This area is the site of three mega infrastructure projects, a new bridge and highway built over the Bosporus in 2016 (*North Marmara Motorway*), an 80-million square kilometer airport built in 2018 and a new waterway to be dredged open between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara currently being constructed. Such infrastructure investments not only seek to shift the borders of the city creating new avenues for property speculation, they also seek to transform this geography into a logistical space, populated with airports, container traffic and a new highway. Beyond carrying the ecological weight of these logistical interventions, this geography also bears the marks of İstanbul's expansion through industries such as construction industry and logistics. This is where one encounters the resources and residues of construction – abandoned lignite mines; active mining operations that extract rock and construction sand; dumping sites overflowing with construction waste, stray dogs collected from gentrifying neighborhoods and left here; and waves of displaced and unemployed peoples who have relocated here over the centuries.

The hiking tours along this route have been taking place since earlier than 2013. As the references to lignite mines and debris dumps hint to, so much of this geography is shaped by the ruins of construction and extraction industries that have determined Turkey's neoliberal developmentalism. In the map, and the corresponding essays written alongside it, this geography is addressed as "the periphery" of İstanbul. The term indicates a semi-rural area just outside the city, where resources are extracted from and where waste is dumped, a space of excavation sites and landfills. The term "periphery" seems to be one that combines the sociological distance between urban and rural life with the geological flows that move between the two. One gets a sense of this superimposition of geological movement and sociological distance in the artwork itself. As Yoann Morvan and Sinan Logie note in their walks around

this geography, so much of the peripheries of İstanbul are constituted by multiple generations of migrants, what they call a plate tectonics of migration, from different backgrounds seeking to establish a foothold in the city.



Figures 1-2. Map of *Between Two Seas*. Images reproduced with permission from Serkan Taycan.

Figures 3-6. Photos from hiking tours of *Between Two Seas*. Images from Day 1. Top to bottom – a herd of buffalos near abandoned lignite mines; author with hikers from *Hiking İstanbul* atop Kocabayır hill, activists from *Kuzey Ormanları Savunması* on the Yeniköy shore. Photos courtesy of Nick Hobbs.

Between Two Seas was first presented as an artwork in the 2013 İstanbul Biennale as a wall of photographs taken from the walks along with a copy of the map. Taycan explains how he wanted to display giant pieces of construction rubble he had found in the 60 km walking trail inside the museum, such rubble being an amalgamation of geology and labor, alongside photos and videos of participants carrying out the walks. Yet the organizers of the Biennale discouraged him from doing so, raising logistical concerns about the transportation of debris in and out of the exhibition space. Starting out his artistic practice as an engineer turned photographer, Taycan describes how he increasingly grew dissatisfied with photography and wanted new ways for his audience to experience ecological transformation. To the extent that *Between Two Seas* is an artwork, its medium seems to be movement. This both opens the work up to different modes of encounter while also limiting the type of person who would be willing and able to carry out a four-day hike.[1] Taycan explains that this commitment to walking arose in part from his efforts to seek out the peripheries of the city. Being originally from Adana, walking became a method with which he himself attempted to make sense of İstanbul, getting a measure of its contours. This experience seems to contain a particular relation to movement and encounter, both because the person carrying out the walk is in motion and because the geography is itself constantly undergoing change. Certain parts of the route become harder to carry out in winter and fall when rainfall, snow, and mud slow one down. Other parts, such as the wallows and lakes, are permanently destroyed as construction has by now altogether transformed the landscape.

There is also something deeply modernist and privileged about walking as a mode of movement. This is reflected in Taycan's influences. He explains how in exploring his fascination with walking, he discovered Situationist practices and concepts, such as the *dérive*

[1] While the activities organized by Taycan center around walking, different participants have taken the map to organize biking and running tours around the same route (Hattam 2020; Ocak 2018).

and psycho–geography which have been important. He adds that through his walks, he hoped to combine a "mental geography with a physical one". And while walking seems to denote a sense of immediate experience with urban nature in Taycan's work, in practice this is far from the case. The route mapped out by Taycan, the primary infrastructure for the walk, is not designed to be accessible, meaning only some bodies are enabled to carry it out. Even then the walk depends on a series of additional infrastructures and networks to be carried out effectively. Groups who carry out the walk often rely on some mode of transportation, often busses along the route, to take walkers to and from the peripheries.

Nonetheless there is something about the rhythm of walking that Taycan wants to hold onto, even today. While aware of the privileged and precarious nature of the walk, he points to a history of resistance, from the civil rights era to the feminist movement, that has depended on walking in public to challenge the state. But more than this he seems interested in walking primarily as a mode of *encounter* that sits somewhere between ethics and epistemology. In his artists statement he explains how walking is

> "an action that consecrates the rhythm of walking which opens the soul to perceive the world. And this action is perhaps the most auspicious 'project' that will open a 'passage' between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea" (Taycan 2014).

Kanal İstanbul: Neoliberalism, developmentalism and growth

Here, Taycan is making a not–so–veiled reference to Kanal İstanbul, the other "passage" that is being charted along this route. Affectionately described by the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan as his "crazy project" during his 2011 election campaign, Kanal İstanbul is a mega-infrastructure project that would dredge up a 40-km-wide and 150-meter-deep waterway between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. This passageway would create a second, artificial canal between the two seas thus transforming the western half of İstanbul into an island. The project would swallow most of what is left of the forests north of the city, destroy one of the few freshwater deposits left in the city, displace tens of thousands

of people often from poorer and racialized backgrounds, and destroy the unique ecology of the Bosporus Sea while opening a new frontier of expansion for İstanbul. Since the walking route deliberately follows the proposed route of the canal, most of that too would be under water. Its cost originally estimated to be around $40 billion. As I am writing this in April of 2023, the bridges, roads, water, and electricity infrastructure to sustain such a project are being built, though there is some chance the project might never come to fruition, provided the government loses the upcoming elections in May.[2]

Erdoğan's 2011 speech first announcing his "crazy project" also contained a broader set of goals for Turkey's economic and political future, which he described as "Vision 2023", corresponding to the centenary of the Turkish Republic founded in 1923. Even today, it is commonplace for Erdoğan to remind his supporters of "Vision 2023", and the set of economic goals referred to by this phrase, that all coalesce around the idea of growth. During his speech, Erdoğan promised that by 2023, Turkey would become one of the 10 largest economies in the world, increasing its trade volume to 1 trillion dollars and bringing unemployment down to 5%. That same year, newspapers would announce proudly how the Turkish economy had rebounded from the 2008 recession growing by 9.2%, one of the fastest GDP growth rates in the world. Such growth was to find its material foundation in the construction industry and in particular the construction of large–scale infrastructure projects. Thus, shortly after his 2011 speech Erdoğan announced a series of mega–infrastructures, many of them clustered tightly around a specific geography north of İstanbul – a third bridge across the Bosporus, a new mega-airport adjacent to the bridge, and the infamous canal. All three mega-infrastructure projects would later be featured alongside references to the Vision 2023 goals, in electoral campaign posters, both during the general elections and later for Erdogan's successful bid for the presidency.

[2] Against the expectations of mainstream journalists, the Justice and Development Party were indeed able to win the elections and hold onto power both in the parliament and the presidency. The Kanal project on the other hand has again been delayed due to financing difficulties, it's specter still haunting the route of *Between Two Seas.*

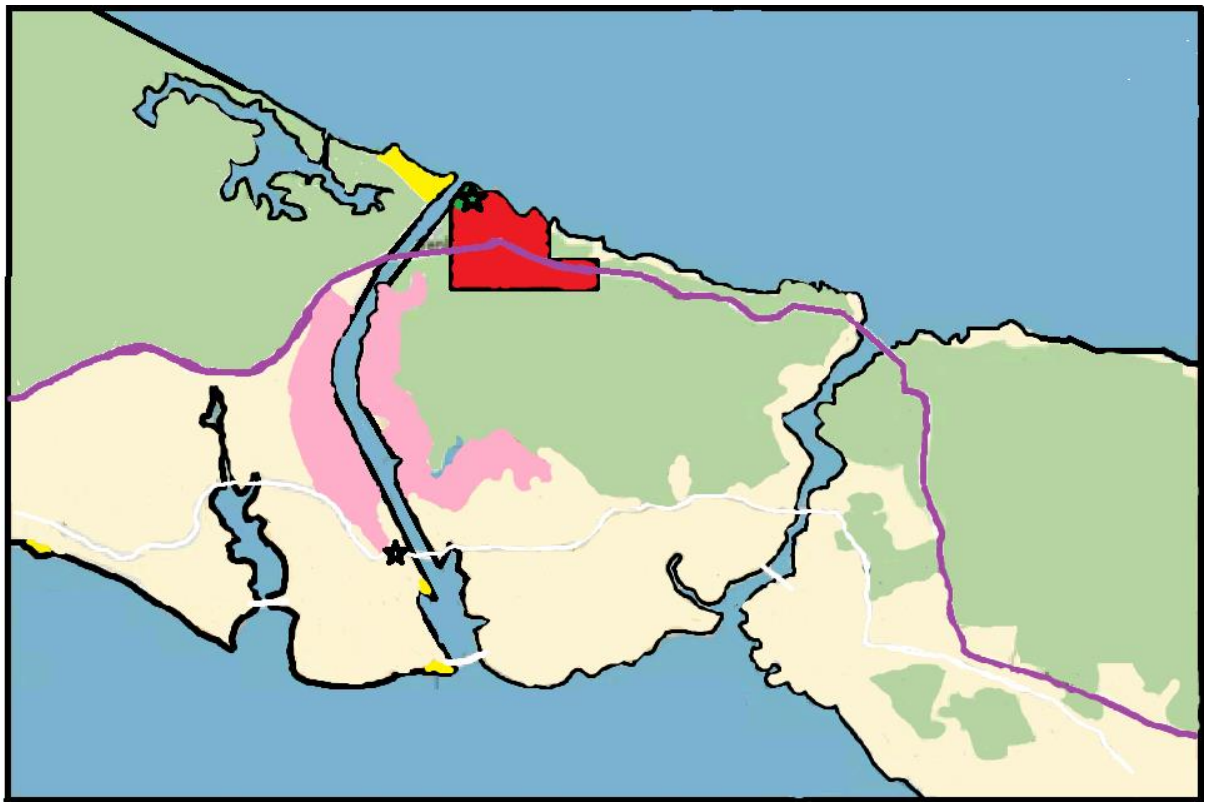


Figure 7. Route for *Kanal İstanbul*. Marked in Red is the site of *İstanbul Airport.* Passing through it in purple is the newly built *North Marmara Motorway*. In pink are new construction projects planned across the path of *Kanal İstanbul*. Marked with yellow are new ports planned across the project. Marked with stars are the village of Yeniköy and the Trans European Motorway which are mentioned later on in this thesis. Image produced by author.

As another election looms, perhaps the particular regime of megaprojects instigated by the Justice and Development Party is over. Even so, the *North Marmara Motorway* and the *İstanbul Airport* have both been constructed. The third bridge, passing over the *North Marmara Motorway* is controversially named after the Ottoman Sultan Selim I, known for his persecution of Alevis in the 16th century. The bridge was constructed to be one of the tallest in the world and has been operational since 2016. The *İstanbul Airport* has also been partially completed with further plans (still in place, as of April 2023) to expand the airport by 2028 thus transforming it into one of the world's largest airports. This obsession with size is also

noteworthy. Alongside satisfying the collective affective hopes and investment in "GDP growth" as an economic phenomenon, these mega-infrastructure projects also embody a corresponding affective investment in "size" and grandeur. The canal is itself described as a "gigantic" and "era defining" undertaking that besides the actual dredging of the waterway promises bridges, logistics ports, new free trade and industrial zones, the construction of artificial islands and most importantly new waterfront property.

Studying the three infrastructure projects outlined above, Hande Paker writes that such projects "are part of a neoliberal growth agenda pushed by the state" (Paker 2017, 104). Mega-construction projects gesture to the interplay between developmentalism, populism and authoritarianism that has come to define neoliberal politics in Turkey. Paker draws on a wealth of Gramscian approaches in Turkish studies, that see both Turkey's growth agenda and the materialization of this growth agenda through construction projects and extraction, as powerful tools with which the state has built hegemony, exercising coercion and consent (Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel 2017; Adaman and Akbulut 2021; Akbulut, Adaman, and Arsel 2018; Madra and Yılmaz 2019; Madra 2018). While a fetish of "growth oriented developmentalism" has always been a key aspect of Turkish modernity, these approaches argue, it is under the Justice and Development Party's rule that construction and extraction became the key modes through which this fetish was operationalized and became increasingly effective (Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel 2017, 158). The politics of environment and urbanization are a fruitful place to begin to understand this (Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel 2017, 246).

Having walked this geography multiple times, what exists on the ground today is not this fantasy of growth and development but rather the strange underbelly of this fantasy, the wasteland that accompanies that dream, its debris filled husk. The novelist Ursula Le Guin had observed how utopian imagination, like capitalism and industrialism remains trapped in a one-way future consisting of only growth (After Oil Collective 2022). Taycan's references to Mad

Max rather evoke the image of a de-industrial dystopia that nonetheless hasn't succeeded in overthrowing growth. Growth and economic development, as a fantasy, continues to rule the political and economic horizons of many in Turkey, even as financial crises, economic stagnation, and coronavirus has intensified underlying inequalities.

With poverty and inequality worsening over the past couple of years, the construction of the airport and the canal seem less like the fulfillment of a dream and more like desperate, last-ditch efforts by the government, to jump start a growth model that has become increasingly unlivable. This has become painfully apparent as Turkey has become mired in crises (of inflation and cost of living though critically not of economic growth) both due to changing international circumstances and Erdogan's own mismanagement. Since 2011, when the "crazy project" was first announced, the Turkish lira lost a whopping 81% of its value against the American dollar. Even the construction industry, once the darling of the government has seen deep crises in recent years, with millions of unoccupied homes and offices as well as zombie construction agencies, unable to pay their debts, waiting to go bankrupt. As the construction industry went into recession in 2018, the conditions for construction labor worsened.

While it is difficult to predict elections results, especially in an environment where state violence is rampant, it seems possible that this particular sequence of developmentalism, neoliberalism and authoritarianism instigated by the last 21 years of the JDP's term in power may be approaching its ending. Yet the transformations and changes İstanbul's peripheries have encountered remain, forming an archive that helps us investigate and understand this era. What new perspectives can examining this archive generate about the layered power formations and histories that constituted the JDP regime over the last two decades?

The Periphery as Archive

In the past 10 years or so, *Between Two Seas* has "evolved into its own thing", Taycan says. Indeed, there have been over 40 walks organized officially through the *Between Two Seas*

Facebook group since 2013. There have also been half a dozen similar political walks and hiking projects situated in İstanbul. In a broad sense, *Between Two Seas* can be located in a dense history of İstanbul based artists, researchers and activists that have focused on political ecology and urban justice (Türeli and Al 2018). Engaging with this history, the walking route has transformed from a tangible object to a kind of open invitation for other people to participate in the city's peripheries. Taycan explains,

> "*Between Two Seas* is a participatory public work and mostly intangible; there's no commodity value, which is very important to me… I have given an open invitation for people…It's not just about following one particular trail" (interview in Hattam 2020)

In this thesis, I think alongside *Between Two Seas,* while also situating this project amidst an archive of artwork, activism and research interrogating the histories and political struggles that concretize around İstanbul's peripheries. I draw on interviews I conducted with artists, activists, and construction waste workers. I draw on films and documentaries, paintings and photography, manifestos, and essays. I talk to activists who have organized direct action and other forms of intervention in this geography. I analyze mapping efforts and counter visual tactics employed by groups along this route. I study photographs from these walks that participants have taken. I contextualize these materials with cultural histories of the specific sites that are scattered around the *Between Two Seas* trail, drawing on academic work, archival records and documentaries that focus on İstanbul's western periphery. I add to these walks along the city's peripheries with collective walking efforts I have organized together with artists and film makers along an updated version of the *Between Two Seas* map, as well as hikes I've been on across the peripheries of the city with groups such as *Hiking İstanbul.*

I have thus far described the collection of artistic practices, activist interventions and ethnographic work that coalesce around the peripheries of İstanbul as an "archive." The concept of an "archive" is useful in helping me chart an interconnected series of artistic and activist interventions, across a wide historical and geographic range. Yet working with the periphery, I

found most descriptions of the archive in media studies inadequate for thinking through my work. Within media history for example, archives presume preservation, curation, and accumulation. Even when the language of archives address explicitly ecological and geological objects, as for example Shannon Mattern's study of geo-archives (Mattern 2017), they nonetheless presume as a starting point the material accumulation of stuff.

Yet the relative lack of institutional preservation and memory across İstanbul's peripheries requires a different kind of conception of the archive. Things collect and coalesce in the peripheries. Some of this coalescing even makes it to magazines, maps, exhibition pamphlets, manifestos, and artwork all of which I have curated and preserved over the course of writing my thesis. Yet so many of my objects are precisely not archivable in this manner. The walks I have conducted along the city's peripheries, despite bringing to light deep histories of İstanbul, are not easy to translate into collectible objects. Most walks include their own detours, their own distractions and resting stops that are crucial for my thesis but don't neatly conform into an archival logic. Moreover, most of the artists I have talked to for this project are in no way interested in preserving or maintaining the originals of the artwork they have undertaken, almost always encouraging me to freely distribute their work.

More helpful in conceiving such interventions across İstanbul's peripheries as constitutive of an archive is the "10 Theses on the Archive" published by an online video archiving effort Pad.ma, that brings together artists from Beirut, Bangalore, Berlin, and Mumbai. Pad.ma explain,

> The Direction of Archiving will be Outward, not Inward: We tend to think of archiving as the inward movement of collecting things: finding bits and pieces, bringing together, guarding them in a safe and stable place. The model of this type of archiving is the fortress, or the burning library… Can we think the archive differently? (*reprinted in* Artıkişler Collective 2016)

Pad.ma argue for a notion of the archive not as an inward movement of things, the collection and preservation of stuff behind a fortress but rather as an outward movement of practices,

stories, and media. This helps nicely describe the archive of artwork and activist struggles I am drawing on here. This archive is not only stored in magazines and bookshelves, but is also repeated, disseminated, and felt in collective practices, such as walking, storytelling and protesting. This model of archiving is not at all free of its own pitfalls – capture by institutions, being overcome by property relations and copy rights, dissipation, and loss off interest are a few (Artıkişler Collective 2016). It remains to be seen whether hikers still gather along the *Between Two Seas* route years from now. Nonetheless, it is helpful to note that what I study is not the inward collection of images and artwork but rather their outward proliferation across collectives, social movements, and ordinary people.

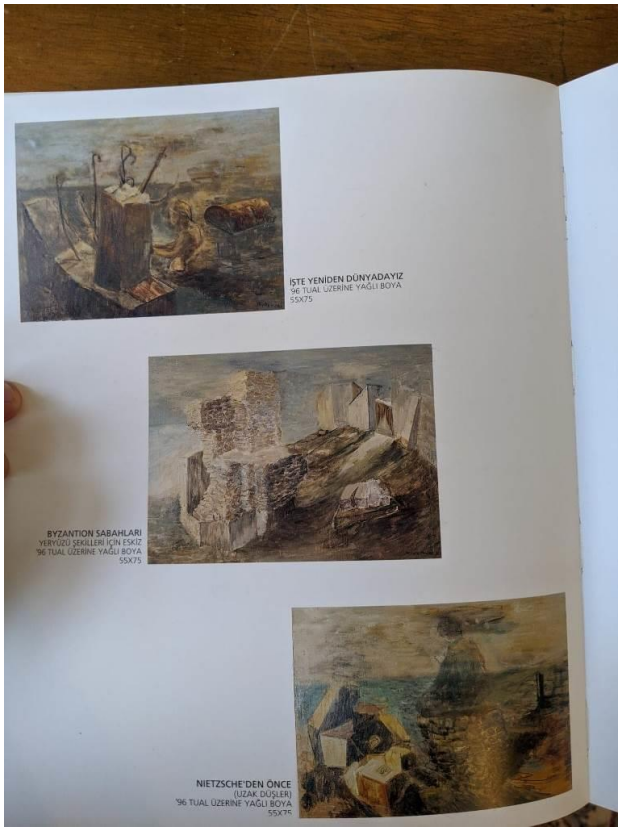
My archive is particularly attentive to works by contemporary artists that deal with both the environmental and the social margins of İstanbul, constituting the milieu of relations that sustains and reproduces the city. Alongside *Between Two Seas*, this includes photographers such as Bekir Dindar whose work "Yol Geçecek" (*A Road Will Pass)* (2018) which photographs the construction of the *North Marmara Motorway* mentioned above. Dindar's work informs my thinking about economic growth and infrastructural development in the city's peripheries. Other contemporary photography includes work by Taycan (2015), as well as the work of Nar Photos. Particularly of interest is the photo series *Milyon Dolarlık Manzara* (Million Dollar View), also published as a book by İletişim Press, which document the changing topography of İstanbul's urban peripheries (Bilgin 2015). I also study multiple forms of video, especially short films, documentaries, and installations. This includes Zeynep Dilan Süren's short film *The Great İstanbul Depression* (2020), Elif Kendir-Beraha, Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Mahmut Demire's *Calx Ruderalis* (Pera Müzesi 2021b), which explores the afterlives of construction rubble, the art collective *ArtıkİşlerŠ* documentary and video archive *The Dictionary of Waste* (Şen 2019), Gulia Frati's documentary on urban sound and street vendors *Echoes of İstanbul* (2017), as well as Elizabeth Lo's documentary about the dogs of

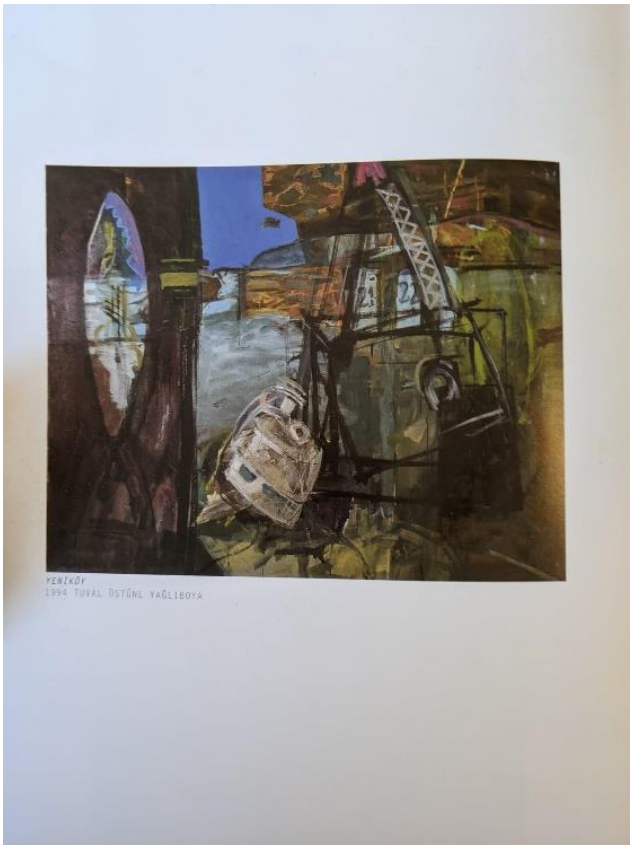
İstanbul, *Stray* (2021).

I also compliment these more contemporary projects with artistic interventions emerging in the late 90s and early 00s. One important group in this regard is *Hafriyat*,[3] an art collective emerging in the late 90s – early 00s that explore images of urban transformation alongside those of construction. A series of manifestos written by the collective anticipate some of the themes that would later become salient in contemporary work. *Hafriyat* explain that they address a new social reality that has taken shape in Turkey's urban spaces, one characterized by material acts of extraction tearing these spaces apart (Pancar et al. 2003). Therefore, *Hafriyat* are also interested in the material afterlives of Turkey's construction industry. Emerging from *Hafriyat's* work is the work of *ExtraMücadele* (ExtraStruggle) who continues to produce cartoons and sculptures around themes of construction and urban transformation today. Last, *ArtıkİşlerSurplusWorks's* video archive, which I mentioned above, actually stretches to the 2000s and their ongoing work has proven especially useful in further exploring the ways in which the margins of the wage relation are racialized in İstanbul, ("Atık Sözlüğü – 1. Fasikül" 2019; Artıkişler Collective 2016) forming an additional understanding of the "peripheries" of the city that is intimately connected to waste work. The collective's various meditations on archiving, waste and artwork have proved crucial for the thesis.

[3] Literally meaning excavation. The term *hafriyatçılık* is used within political ecological literature to describe *extractivism.* In Chapter 2, I spend more time meditating on the specificity and materialities of *hafriyat*.

Figures 8-9. Selections from *Million Dollar View*. Top to Bottom. A group of men enjoying a picnic near *Kayaşehir*. An intense discussion underneath a wall that reads "LAND FOR SALE" followed by a phone number, also near Kayaşehir (Photo Credit: Mehmet Kaçmaz). A construction site, with a Justice and Development Party flag at the back (Photo Credit: Eren Aytuğ). Images reproduced by author.





Figures 10-11. Selections from the Hafriyat Collective: Left to right. “Yeniköy” 1997, Antonio Cosetino. “Byzantine Mornings” 1996, Mustafa Pancar. Cosetino’s Yeniköy, depicting a construction equipment knocking down a building is foreboding for the transformation that would later await this village. Image produced by author.

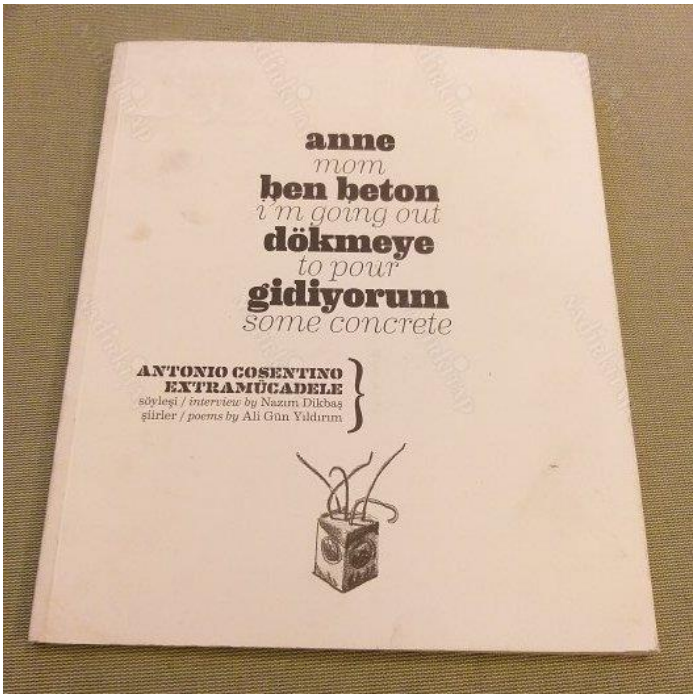


Figure 12. Cover art for an exhibition book published by two *Hafriyat* affiliated artists. *Anne Ben Beton Dökmeye Gidiyorum (Mom I'm Going to Pour Out Some Concrete)* (Cosentino and Extramücadele 2015). Image produced by author.

There are also the more research-oriented walks organized around İstanbul's peripheries. In their 2014 book, *İstanbul 2023*, (a reference to the *Vision 2023* project) anthropologist Yoann Morvan and architect Sinan Logie carry out several strolls around İstanbul's peripheries, to both study and photograph some of the effect of the city's rapid expansion (Morvan and Logie 2017). Similarly, *Mekanda Adalet Derneği* (MAD) (İstanbul Center for Spatial Justice) have curated several walking routes, research efforts, mapping projects along the peripheries of the city. *MAD's* workshops and maps of the city have proven crucial at several points in the thesis. *MAD* have also funded an oral history project by Cihan Uzunçaşılı Baysal (2020), that studied several villages across this geography a crucial source that I draw on for Chapter 2.

Activist groups such as *Kuzey Ormanları Savunması* (KOS), waste workers associations or *the Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul Platformu,* (YKYİ)[4] have also been influential in

[4] *Kuzey Ormanları Savunması* and *Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul Platformu* translate to "Northern Forests Defense" and "Either the Canal or İstanbulm Platform", respectively. The former is a group of environmentalist activists

thinking through the limits of the city, since they have not only been direct participants in much of the artwork I engage with, but have observed such artistic intervention carefully, finding new avenues of political intervention at the same time. *KOS* activists are often prevented from organizing large scale walks across this route, particularly by the gendarme. Yet they have nonetheless carried out weekly visits to villages located alongside the Northern Forests, especially around places that will be affected by *Kanal İstanbul* in an attempt to both learn from the locals and keep an eye out for opportunities for building political momentum against construction and extraction. They have also published and compiled multiple reports I draw on, to chart the ecological transformations along this urban periphery ("Kuzey Ormanları Tehdit ve Tahrip Raporu" 2021; "Ekosistem, İklim ve Kentsel Büyüme Perspektifinden İstanbul ve Kuzey Ormanları" 2020). There have also been multiple important workers struggles along this route such as the 2018 strike of tens of thousands of construction workers at the newly built İstanbul Airport (3. Havalimanı İşçileri Dayanışma Platformu et al. 2020), which I draw on for my thesis alongside interviews with truck drivers.

Perhaps all this is another way to understand İstanbul's urban periphery, as an archive of political organization, aesthetic practice, and academic research around ecological transformation. Just like *Between Two Seas,* this archive exists primarily in the collective labor and care of artists and activists that use it to generate their own interventions. Without this labor, the archive I am attempting to draw on for my thesis, ceases to exist. In other words, the proliferation of this multitude of artistic and activist projects, has created an effect of *commoning,* that studies, walks alongside, helps organize, elaborate and de-territorialize İstanbul's urban periphery.

organized around direct action and working explicitly against the mega-projects planned across the diverse ecosystem due north of İstanbul (from Istrancalar to Sapanca) composed of forests, fresh-water basins and farming areas, home to diverse number of animals and plants. The latter represents a coalition of different environmental organizations and professional groups, organizing against the Kanal İstanbul project.

As Turkey's extractive industries have redoubled their efforts under the JDP's 20 years in power, there has been a renewed interest in artistic work that deals with the political ecological consequences of extraction and construction in Turkey. Against the confluence of powers that form Turkey's neoliberal authoritarian regime, a series of artistic practices, political campaigns and worker's struggles have coalesced around the city's peripheries. As Ayşe Güngör notes (Güngör 2022), part of the renewed artistic interest in ecology, is inspired by the rise of "socially engaged art" that has become influential in the İstanbul art scene throughout the early 2000s and 2010s. Especially through the rise of the İstanbul Biennale, first founded in 1987, the themes of urban culture and urban ecology have become salient themes in the artwork that characterizes the contemporary era. Describing the rise of "eco-art practices," Güngör points to how there has been an effort in Turkey, by a growing number of artists, "to think broadly on how art can serve ecological activism and foster environmental awareness" (*Ayşe Güngör: Roots in Resistance: Vegetal Life in the Contemporary Eco-Art Practices from Turkey* 2021).

Yet such aesthetic representation is not inherently liberatory. First, institutions like the İstanbul Biennale have been wholly complicit in Turkey's extractivist industries as they are embedded within İstanbul's financialization; funded by conglomerates like Eczacıbaşı and Koç Holding both of which have direct investments in mining, extraction, and construction industries; and directly participate in the city's gentrification through collaborating in urban transformation projects in places such as Haliç Port (Çaylı 2020). There is thus a direct contradiction between the mainstream İstanbul-based art scene's supposed self-presentation as a signifier of cosmopolitan modernity and urban radicalism and the political economic conditions that structure events like the Biennale (Harutyunyan, Özgün, and Goodfield 2011). Second, as Eray Çaylı has shown in his work on the aesthetics of extractivism in Turkey's

Kurdistan, aestheticization is deeply ambivalent and can easily participate in logics of quantifiability and racialization that undergird contemporary capitalism (Çaylı 2021b; 2021a).

Such interventions are important in qualifying and situating the particular archive I am drawing on in this thesis. First, the archive I am drawing on is situated within a political moment characterized by the rise and strengthening of what has been described as neoliberal authoritarianism. As such, this political moment combines more particular histories of state violence and nationalism with the post-2008 global political economic conditions that has driven countries like Turkey into an intensified extractivism. My archive is definitely not intended to be comprehensive account of artwork in Turkey, nor a bird's eye view of İstanbul's transforming peripheries. Rather, I draw on a selected number of works that explicitly thematizes the material and affective character of construction in İstanbul. Second, the artistic and academic interventions I am working with respond to and are in conversation with social movements. It is difficult to overstate the importance that moments of active political agonism like the 2013 Gezi Park protests have had in shaping the artwork and activism that constitutes this archive. Nearly every artist I have spoken to has referenced the protests as an important point of departure for their work. Yet beyond Gezi, groups like *ArtıkİşlerHafriyat* and *Mekanda Adalet* have invested in interviewing, learning from, and organizing with existing advocacy groups, communities and social movements whether they are farmers, landowners, hikers or waste collectors. Last the series of artwork, scholarship and activism I draw on for this archive constitutes a genealogy that begins with contemporary İstanbul but disaggregates the city, following the lines of migration, exploitation and state violence that have constituted this geography. Thus, while my focus is on contemporary art, *ArtıkİşlerHafriyat's* work will take us across garbage sites in the outskirts of İstanbul in the 1980s, *Between Two Seas* will take us to ruins of the Ottoman Empire and the early 20th century, movies like *The Great İstanbul*

Depression will take us to the memory of the İzmit earthquake in 1999. It helps therefore to spell out the historical horizon of this study.

Historical Horizons: Authoritarianism, Neoliberalism and Developmentalism

This thesis is neither a history of contemporary art in Turkey nor a history of ecological transformations across İstanbul's peripheries. It is a series of theoretical reflections that builds on and thinks alongside the particular archive I describe above. There are, however, several historical periodizations that I have attended to in helping further contextualize this archive and that form the background of my theoretical investigations. I conceive of these historical horizons as forming the layered power formations that characterized the JDP era – authoritarianism, neoliberalism and developmentalism. My approach here is genealogical, in the sense that I am more interested in the continuities and discontinuities that continue to shape contemporary Turkish politics, paying attention to how different power formations become embedded within one another than articulating a historical rupture.

First, is the 15-year period between the 2008/2009 financial crisis and the 2023 elections in Turkey. The majority of the artwork and activism I focus on emerges from this period and responds to the particularities of this historical moment. Coming into power in 2002, the Justice and Development party's political economic fundamentals has always been based on developmentalism, promoting economic growth through construction, energy and infrastructure investments (Adaman and Akbulut 2021, 282). In the early 2000s, during an era of globally available cheap credit, the JDP's policy of developmentalism and infrastructure construction worked alongside a neoliberal consensus, creating new avenues for public and private indebtedness. It also created government programs that extended basic welfare under the quasi-religious ideology of "service" to the nation (*hizmet)* (Ozselcuk 2015; Madra 2018).

Yet in the wake of the 2008/2009 financial crisis, in Turkey as in other peripheral economies, such capital-intensive investments became increasingly difficult to sustain as

capital inflows and foreign credit became less available. Under such conditions some complimentary changes have followed. First the scale of violence, exploitation and expropriation required to sustain economic growth has increased. As credit becomes more expensive and capital inflows harder to come by, there has been a ratcheting up of extractivist violence across the developing world (Arboleda 2020). Second, the willingness of the JDP regime to resort to repressive state apparatuses has also scaled up, with unprecedented number of academics, activists, artists, journalists, politicians jailed, several military operations launched by the Turkish Armed Forces especially against the movement for Kurdish political autonomy both inside and outside Turkey's borders. In this configuration corporations operating between the state and private industry became more central to Turkey's regime of accumulation and economic growth. Scholars describe this as a shift in the regime from a Gramscian moment of neoliberal populism to a Schmittian one of sovereignty, corporatism and authoritarianism (Madra and Yılmaz 2019). Last, this period has also witnessed a transformation of the modes of subjectivation that accompany economic growth. Especially after 2008, palingenetic fantasies of imperial and national resurgence and sovereignty have become increasingly powerful in the developing world. Authoritarian governments like Bolsonaro's Brazil and Modi's India wrapped up large scale infrastructural investment in fantasies of sovereignty and nationalist resurgence. In Turkey, this same dynamic manifested as the rise of neo-Ottomanism as an aesthetic, ideological and material regime that has shaped infrastructural investment (Bargu 2021). Moreover, such a repressive atmosphere was also accompanied by a rising neoconservatism and increasing violence both against women and LGBTQ communities, as I will explore in Chapter 1. This intensifying of extraction, state violence and authoritarianism from 2008 to 2023 informs the first historical horizon of this thesis.

As Cihan Tugal notes, the JDP era represents a strange contradiction where on the one hand the neoliberal world order that undergird the party's rise to power no longer coheres into a functioning system at least within Turkey, while on the other hand, there hasn't emerged a clear alternative to this interregnum (Tuğal 2022). While the 2008-2023 period represents the crises, contradictions, and ultimate exhaustion of neoliberal populism, it is nonetheless shaped by the underlying context of neoliberal governmentality and its specific arrangement of state violence, capitalist exploitation, and expropriation in Turkey. Thus, a second historical sequence that is of relevance for my thesis is the period beginning with the 1980 military coup and running to present day. Many of the underlying political and economic dynamics that are present today find their origins in the 80s and 90s – Turkey's integration to global financial markets, the embrace and proliferation of private debt as an instrument of neoliberal subjectivity and the confrontation between the demands for political autonomy of Kurdish people and the Turkish state. It is in this historical sequence from the 1980s to today that we also see the birth of the alliance between neoconservatism and neoliberalism not only in Turkey but also in places like the US (Cooper 2017). Thus, the thesis will often return to this period to help elucidate the historical context for the artistic, theoretical, and political interventions along the city's peripheries.

While the forces of economic growth, capitalist expansion and urban sprawl are all objects of study in this thesis, as Bengi Akbulut and Fikret Adaman note, the fetishization of economic growth and development have a much broader history in Turkish politics, a history that has evolved hand in hand with processes of modernization (Akbulut and Adaman 2014). Not only have ideas of economic growth and development been crucial in how modernity has been imagined in Turkey but also this imagination of modernity as economic growth has suppressed the emergence of class conflict and social difference as sites of real political struggle. Intellectual historians have noted how the promise of economic growth has often been

crucial to the imagination of modernity as the emergence from conditions of privation, scarcity and dependency (Charbonnier 2021). There is a need then to study the broader histories of modernization and state making in Turkey as embedded within discourses of economic growth (Akbulut 2019). While this is not the project I undertake in this thesis, I am nonetheless informed by broader histories of Turkish modernization in a third historical sequence that spans the last century, between 1923 the founding of the Turkish Republic and the present day.

A last note on periodization is that I take 2023 as an end point of my analysis. Not only because this is when I plan to graduate, but also because some of the historical developments I theorize, the cultural politics economic growth in the shape of construction projects, have hit a brick wall in Turkey, on February 6th, in the shape of a massive series of earthquakes that have taken the lives of over 50 thousand people in North Kurdistan, Syria, and Turkey and dispossessed millions. It remains to be seen what the earthquake means politically either in the short term – whether it will herald a new regime or merely be an inconvenient but ultimately manageable stumbling block – or the long term. Yet the thesis will nonetheless end by reflecting on the nascent forms of organizing in the aftermath of the earthquake and what they tell us about the affective politics of ecological limitation.

A Conceptual Framework: Affective Ecologies of Limitation

Part of what makes the urban peripheries of İstanbul and the archive of activism and artwork that assembles around it so interesting to study is the ability to materialize and thus to better understand the contradiction between the endless accumulation inherent to capitalism and the physical limits of urban space. How does one come to encounter the limits of a city? How do we come to know them at all? As sociologist Sezai Ozan Zeybek writes, urban geographies of İstanbul often inadvertently begin by assuming the physical borders of the city determines the borders of the event they are studying.

"Yet İstanbul neither begins nor ends in İstanbul. It conquers other places. Millions of waste objects, alongside some of the fruits of its wealth spill over to other places. İstanbul hollows

out other geographies, creates fallout zones" (trans.) (Zeybek 2014; also see, Gandy 2012). If this is true, how can we know where the city's limits really lie? And how does one make sense of the claim that artists are seeking to represent the "peripheries" of İstanbul? Writing about *Between Two Seas,* İpek Türeli and Meltem Al hint towards how walking constitutes a worldview that directly contrasts with the top-down epistemology of Kanal İstanbul, which treats this geography as a blank-slate (Türeli and Al 2018). How does the act of walking allow one to encounter an ecological limit? What kind of knowledge is at stake here? What kind of commons is possible through the periphery? And what notion of ecology is at play?

Similar questions are echoed in many of the artwork forming around the peripheries of İstanbul, through the feeling of boundlessness that accompanies the work – a feeling that is equally daunting to environmental activists and social movements. Irem Azem's 2011 documentary *Ecumenopolis,* which described the violence of urban transformation had described İstanbul as "the city without limits". In our interview, Taycan conveyed this feeling in Turkish through the expression "uçsuz bucaksız şehir" – literally a city without edges or nooks – in relation to his attempts of taking pictures of the city. In his photography work, Taycan explains how at first, he was inspired by medieval triptych and diptych paintings, so ubiquitous in Byzantine art, to try to take a panoramic view of the city in triptych format. Yet this panoramic view proved quite impossible to attain – thanks in part to the disaggregation and sheer size of the city. Instead, he explains how his project has evolved *"Towards the City"* as one of Taycan's recent show is called.[5] Discussing one of his photographs from his project *Shell,* featured as part of this exhibition, Taycan reflects on how piles of construction rubble and demolition waste (*hafriyat)*, dumped by different trucks travelling from different parts of the city, accumulate to form a funhouse mirror of the panoramic view he had been in search of. One finally encounters the limits of the city – not in a transcendent view of it from above but

[5] This title is a nod to the city's ancient Greek name. The most cited etymological source of the word "İstanbul" comes from the Ancient Greek phrase "εις την πόλιν" (eis ten polin) or "towards the city" (Berberian 2011)

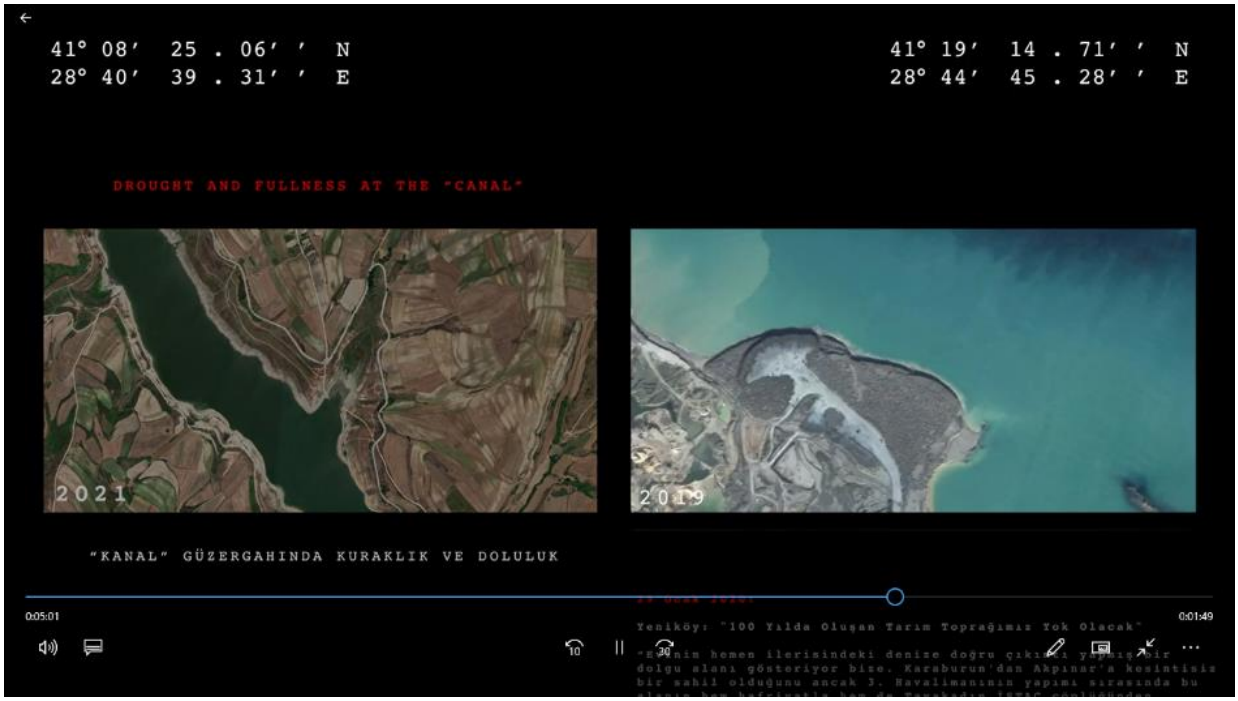
rather an encounter within of multiple layers of rubble piled up on one another.



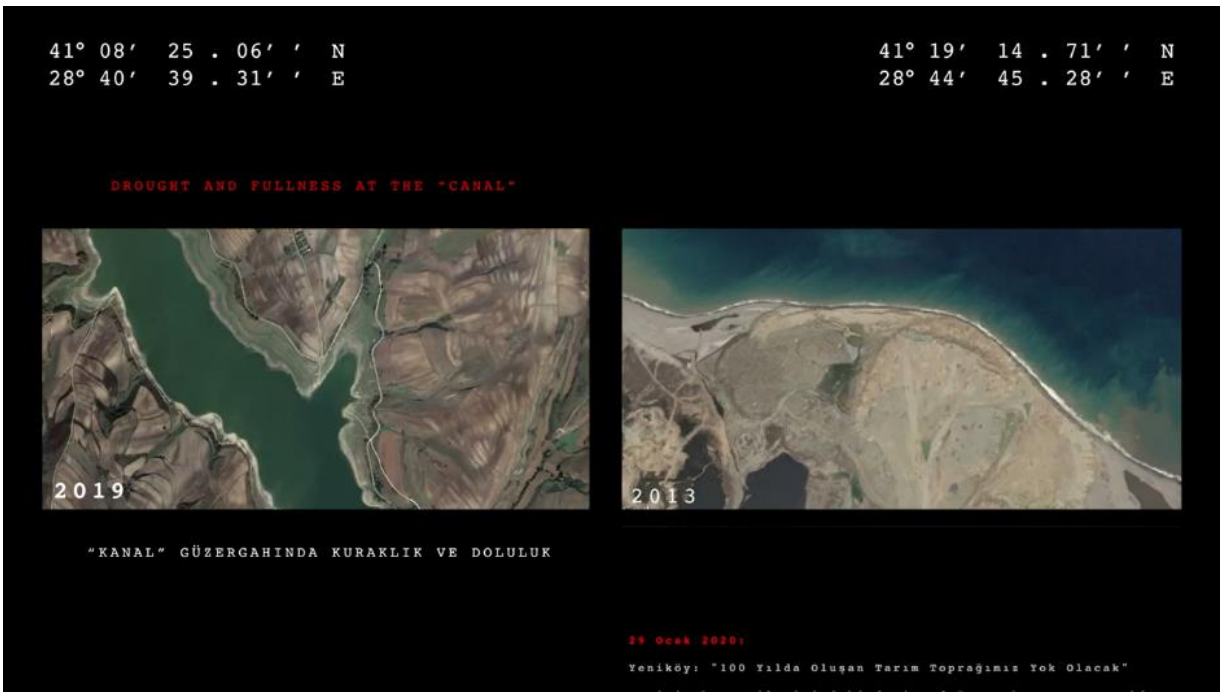



Figures 13-14. A Panoramic View in Rubble (Taycan 2015). Images courtesy of Taycan.

In her video-essay *This is Not a Line,* photographer Gökçen Erkılıç contrasts previous aerial photographs of İstanbul with the city's rapidly changing coastlines today. Relying on satellite imagery of the city's coastline over the last 20 years Erkılıç maps out the transformation of the city's contours. The photos of the coastline roll in a nonlinear fashion in her video-essay to intensify the feeling of absurdity that accompanies them – first a building appears on a neatly arched outpost that arches outward from the coast, then the coast has receded almost swallowed by the Bosporus, then the outpost appears again only this time as a heap of sand. The contradiction between unlimited accumulation and a limited nature emerges in such artwork as both a political problem and a problem of representing a city that is rapidly reconfiguring its own borders both across space and time.



Figures 15-16. *Stills from Gökçen Erkılıç's "This is Not a Line" an experimental documentary depicting the fast pace of change across İstanbul's shore as a result of land reclamation projects that reshape the coast.* (Pera Müzesi 2021a). Images reproduced courtesy of Erkılıç.



This artwork is suggestive because it provides us with a glimpse of an emergent *affective ecology of limitation*. By affective ecology I have in mind how certain modes of desire are organized, made to cohere, and held in place in relation to specific regimes of production, distribution, and consumption. Affective ecologies of limitation describe the economic, political, material, and technical conditions under which certain environments can be sensed, desired, and be acted on *as finite*, its borders drawn, and its contours outlined. They attend to the conditions under which a historical experience of limitation becomes a visceral one (Berlant 2010). Such affective ecologies describe the "structures of feeling" (Williams 1978) behind discourses of environmental limitation, the economic, cultural, and social imaginaries that produce a limited environment, city, or planet.

Rather than see İstanbul's peripheries as simply the ruins of urban capitalism, I seek an aesthetics that emerges from this geography, that orients its subjects towards a political ecology and economy beyond capitalism. To study contemporary Turkey and generate thoughts on anything other than authoritarianism and neoliberalism may seem perplexing. Yet this approach that investigates the present for emergent tendencies and the incipient sources of a revolutionary politics to come, that seeks to identify points of breakage, intervention and escape in the system, and even glimpses of an alternative politics, are all parts of the cultural studies heritage I draw on (Jameson 1991, 52; Berlant 2011). What is more, this understanding of the limit as an aesthetic and affective experience rather than moral and analytical injunction has important implications for various radical political debates around eco-Marxism and degrowth. But before I elaborate this concept further and situate it within the scope of my thesis project, it helps to provide a brief survey of the concept of environmental limitation as it exists within contemporary humanities.

A Brief Review: Discourses of Environmental Limitation in the Humanities

In coming to terms with the unfolding climate catastrophe, scholars in the humanities have often proposed that encountering or accepting the notion of "limits" is helpful in shaping contemporary environmental struggles. For example, in his book *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene,* Roy Scranton writes,

> "the argument of this book is that we have failed to prevent unmanageable global warming… but that humanity can survive and adapt to the new world… if we accept human limits and the transience of fundamental human truths" (Scranton 2015).

The idea of accepting or living with limits has been a call echoed in the work of many contemporary theorists. From a different angle, Donna Haraway has argued for a "humanity with more earthly integrity" in a way that,

> "invites the priority of our pulling back and scaling down, of welcoming limitations of our numbers, economies, and habitats, for the sake of a higher, more inclusive freedom and quality of life" (Haraway 2016, 50).

Similarly, in his book *Finite Media,* media theorist Sean Cubitt announces that he will be operating, "from the premise that the Earth has finite resources, and that mediation depends upon them and their limits" and that accepting this premise will help transform contemporary notions of mediation (Cubitt 2017, 7). Beyond the confines of academic writing the idea that there is a fundamental contradiction between infinite capitalist accumulation and a finite planet has been a rallying call for activists. "There is no Planet B!" "You can't have infinite growth on a finite planet" are common sentiments among activists both in Turkey and abroad while the framework of "planetary boundaries" has gained steam in activist groups like Extinction Rebellion.

Such discourses tend to conceive environmental limitation in two different ways – either as a kind of moral injunction to be imposed on human conduct, or an ecological reality that must be reckoned with and encountered. In both cases limits are a set of constraints imposed on our political horizons externally. That is, whether they are overcome by the forces of capitalist expansion, faced through an existential encounter, or imposed on us by moral law,

limits are understood as an external imperative that shapes and controls subsequent conduct. They are much like what Raymond Williams describes while outlining different theories of causality within Marxist theory – "an external cause, which totally predicts and prefigures, indeed totally controls subsequent activity" (Williams 1980, 32). Beyond the bounds of political struggle – an unnegotiable fact of politics. At its worst the search for limits presupposes that environmental politics are located somewhere out there, separate from political struggle, "like a stern authority hemming us in" (Hickel 2021, 22). As Jason Moore writes, in his *Capitalism and the Web of Life*, such "dualist conception of limits stops our investigation of capitalism before they can even begin" (Moore 2015, 219).

This search for external limitation has multiple intellectual sources within the mutual intellectual histories of ecology, economics and politics that help contextualize its meaning. The discourse of environmental limitation, in its modern version, emerges most clearly in the 19th century as a reaction against modern accounts of human agency, mastery and freedom. Such notions of freedom and self-governance were guiding ideals of the Enlightenment and were in Western intellectual history coupled with an image of affluence and property. This was freedom and agency as "the ability to escape the vagaries of fortune and lack that (supposedly) humiliate human existence" (Charbonnier 2021, 11). Within the social and intellectual histories of the West, the search for limits could be understood as a reaction against this narrative of autonomy and affluence, as an external check on it that discover its conditions of possibility. If the Enlightenment is often associated with narratives of freedom and progress, in the 19th century limitation emerges as a reactionary ideal representing the conditions humans find themselves thrown into. [6]

[6] In mathematics, the notion of a limit emerges in geometric applications of calculus and is used to describe the value a curve (y=(fx)) "approaches" or "tends" towards as its input changes (x). In the 19th century, as calculus becomes formalized, this account of limits as a continuous motion of "tending towards" is replaced with a more rigorous "limit concept" that is also discrete and axiomatic (D. W. Smith 2003, 418; Deleuze 2004, 177). The language of limits as a "tending towards" or "approaching" a value nonetheless survives in common parlance (Smith 2003). It also survives in Marxist accounts of history that attempt to map out the multiple "tendencies" of

The French philosopher Michel Foucault has famously argued that the subject of modernity was caught up in multiple "analytics of finitude" (Foucault 1994, 317–74). Discourses of environmental limitation seem equally caught up in a strange bind between the autonomy of self-governance and the heteronomy of limitation. While the full extent of Foucault's argument is beyond our scope here, what is interesting is that the analytics of finitude was expressed among other places, in figures of classical political economy like Ricardo and Malthus, who transposed the analytics of human finitude to economic ideas like population, labor and scarcity (Foucault 1994, 287). Implicit in both Ricardo's notion of labor and Malthus's understanding of scarcity was an "anthropology", a sense of the finitude of human life as an external limit that shaped productive activity. Yet this *anthropological finitude* was somewhat peculiar as it both limited but also enticed productive activity. This was a notion of limitation that is peculiar to capitalism, one of unrelenting productivism, of constant scarcity provoking unlimited growth (Kallis 2019). [7] Rather than communicate ideas of limitation and

given social formations (Negri 1992; Harvey 2007b). Even in the context of social theory though limits can have multiple meanings (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 175–76). They can be used to describe the inauguration of a historical process, as the unfolding or beginning of a given tendency. They can be thought of as a kind of final determination, an eschatology, or a "last instance" that a process tends towards. Or, as I will be using the term in this thesis, they can express a threshold that mediates, constrains, and structures a social process, forming its boundaries and keeping it in check, thus imparting both sense of *finitude* and one of *individuation.* This echoes a biological sense of limits rather than a mathematical one, that is also crucial to Gilbert Simondon's theory of individuation. As Simondon puts it, "The living lives at the limit of itself, on its limit… The characteristic polarity of life is at the level of the membrane. It is here that life exists in an essential manner, as an aspect of a dynamic topology which itself maintains the metastability by which it exists" (Simondon 2020, 251–53). The limits of the living being are a dynamic theater of individuation that constantly forms and reforms the relation between inside and outside.

[7] See especially Giorgos Kallis's book *Limits* (2019). Malthus's understanding of scarcity is especially instructive. Malthus's "principle of scarcity" relied on the familiar yet discredited idea that because the rate of population growth has the potential to exceed the rate of agricultural output, in the long run scarcity is a constant fact of human life. Yet as Kallis notes, what is interesting in Malthus's work is to extent to which he is not only a prophet of doom but equally an apostle of economic growth. For Malthus, the inequality and poverty created by the condition of scarcity, of too many people and not enough sustenance, is good – as it provides "the foundation of industry" leading "not to despair but to activity" (Kallis 2019, 19-20). The poverty caused by scarcity, in other words, would lead to higher productivity, as people would have to work harder not to *starve.* This peculiar understanding of limitation is echoed again in economics in the 1930s, as the very foundations of modern economics as a scholarly discipline are being established. Studying Lionel Robbins's work, Kallis argues that economics substitutes Malthus' image of exponential population growth with a new principle of unlimited human wants. Yet much like Malthus underlying this concern with scarce resources and infinite human wants is another narrative – that of economic growth. If the major economic problem was one of scarcity, the solution is the optimal allocation of economic resources to facilitate growth.

finitude notions such as scarcity eventually became crucial to the functioning of capitalism, acting as a mechanism of discipline.

A secondary, perhaps stronger notion of external limitation also exists in ecology through the image of *planetary finitude*. By planetary finitude, I have in mind an understanding of the world not only as a singular system but also as a finite one with a limited deposit of matter and energy. This is an image of the world-as-system that also emerges in the 19th century but becomes popular in the 1970s through a confluence of intellectual trends and material conditions (Walker 2020).[8] The rise of ecology under the influence of disciplines such as cybernetics and thermodynamics, is crucial to note here. Thus, the 1970s witnessed the publication of several texts on ecological limits to economic activity that are still influential today, especially in disciplines such as ecological economics – *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (1971) by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Limits to Growth* (1972) by Donella Meadows and *Steady-State Economics* (1977) by Herman Daly. Alongside these intellectual trends were the political economic transformations of the 1970s and the counter-revolutionary emergence of post-industrial capitalism (Virno 2006). These political economic transformations include the exhaustion of the social arrangement described as Fordism that undergird the post-war era – decreasing marginal productivity levels and subsequent declining rates of profit in manufacturing; abandoning of the gold standard and the rise of financialization (Nelson 2015); the gains made in the US by feminist, civil rights and gay liberation activists against the Fordist family wage system (Cooper 2017); the political economy of decolonization manifested as Western anxieties over access to cheap energy as well as alarmist projections of population growth in the Global South (Murphy 2017, 44).

[8] The very contradiction between infinite growth and a finite planet is formulated in this era. Tellingly, in a 1973 testimony to the US Congress on the Energy Reorganization Act, the American economist Kenneth Boulding warns: "Anyone who believes that exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist" ("Energy Reorganization Act of 1973, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, Ninety-Third Congress" 1973, 248).

It is in this context that "the planet" first emerges as an object of concern and limitation in contemporary discourse. Through this confluence of events and circumstances "the ecological limits of the spaceship Earth seemed closer than ever and the dream of prosperity compromised" (Charbonnier 2021, 187). Perhaps this context of intellectual and political transformation is why the ecological limits discourse of the 1970s is thought to be co-opted by an emergent neoliberal logic. The *Limits to Growth* report is especially important here as the report was commissioned by the Club of Rome – a group of industrialists and business leaders – while simultaneously helping popularize the notion of planetary limits, selling over 10 million copies to date (Edwards 2013). Constructing a world of finite resources and substance, the report models growth through five main variables of population, the level of agricultural and industrial production, resource stocks and pollution – with population growth and industrialization especially acting as feedback loops that affect the other variables (Meadows 1977, 32)

Much like the anthropological account of limitation based in ideas of human finitude, the political impact of such a planetary concept of limits were farm from liberatory. In the West, the limits to growth became the justification for bringing in environmental processes under the management of the economy. Intellectually, the *planetary limits* discourse was subject to harsh critique both by more mainstream economists (such as Robert Stolow) and more radical political projects of eco-socialism and anticolonial resistance (Walker 2020, 18–19; Nelson 2015; Hare 1970). Yet this discourse also became a way for an international capitalist elite to coopt emergent environmental struggles on the one hand, while discovering and intervening in environmental processes directly on the other (Nelson 2015, 467). The Limits to Growth report inaugurated an era where capital would fold in social and ecological reproductive processes that ordinarily fell outside of economic calculus back into the concerns of production (Nelson 2015, 470). Ecological feedback loops, scarce resources, population growth became not only

causes for concern but rather direct intervention through ecosystems management, environmental risk assessments and human development measures that would manage these variables and in turn boost capitalist accumulation (Charbonnier 2021, 191; Nelson 2015, 469; Murphy 2017).

Affective Ecologies

While environmental politics has moved on from the 1970s, such a vision of external limits to human activity either hardwired into planetary systems or implicit in human essence is still popular both in public imagination and academic discourse (Kallis 2019, 3). Yet this popularity seems equally politically ambiguous today. When ecological discourses of limitation construe terms like "resource stocks" and "planetary boundaries" as relating to substantive and material stuff, existing in limited quantities on the earth – rather than particular ways of assembling extractive relations – this prevents analysis from pointing to the historical conditions under which specific natures, societies and their respective limits are produced. As Jason Moore argues:

> "It is easy enough to talk about limits to growth as if they were imposed by Nature. But the reality is thornier… The limits of capitalist civilization include biophysical realities but are not reducible to them…. There are limits to how much new work capitalism can squeeze out of new working classes, forests, aquifers, oilfields, and everything else. Nature is finite. Capital is premised on the infinite. *Yet both are historical in a very specific sense*" (Moore 2015, 86–87).

This historicity is especially important in the context of the shifting limits and peripheries of capitalism. This problem is especially visible in the shifting limits of a city like İstanbul, which as we see in Chapter 2 are not only constantly subject to change but also internalized to the concerns of production. There is, as David Harvey observes paraphrasing Marx, a perpetual struggle within the historical geography of capitalism "to convert seemingly absolute limits into barriers that can be circumvented" (Harvey 2010, 47). Under capitalism limits always move from at first seeming absolute, to then being made relative and internal to the concerns of capitalist reproduction (Saito 2023, 29).

The critique of limits also has important consequences for our accounts of political subjectivity especially in relation to ecological struggle and radical politics. For example, as Jasper Bernes notes, there is a tendency within contemporary eco-Marxist writing to adopt the language of moral exhortation, beginning from the moral urgency of climate catastrophe and ecological collapse and plotting out normative limits to production *ought* to be implemented to prevent the worst (Bernes 2018, 365).[9] Given the scale of human misery already taking place due to various forms of ecological collapse this language of moral exhortation is understandable. And yet, as histories of revolutionary struggle tells us, such moral exhortation works only for a limited number of people and easily dissipates as exhaustion replaces it (Bernes 2018, 356). Even when confronted with compelling moral imperatives the problem of articulating a collective radical subject who can confront the sources ecological collapse still remains.

One can extend this logic to think through the problem of limitation. Since capitalism cannot recognize or abide by an absolute limit, the conscious articulation of ecological limits requires a revolutionary politics (Saito 2023, 18). Yet as the *Salvage Collective* note, arguments around environmental limitation often face the problem that we do not fully know what a post-capitalist economy may look like in advance. Especially because we do not know what capabilities, drives and desires will be operational in such a society:

> *"eco*socialists we take the existence of limits seriously, as eco*socialists* we take seriously the fact that we cannot yet know them. Indeed, it is an urgent task to usher in a society in which we might" (Allinson et al. 2021).

The difficulty of parsing out where the limits to production ought to exist lies in the fact that the limits of an ecology are not personal, nor even social, but transindividual, involving a techno-psycho-social understanding of collectivity. We are not yet the subjects of a society

[9] While Bernes references the writing of Andreas Malm (2018), a recent volume by Verso even goes so far as to recommend a mandatory calorie quota of 2500 calories per person, as part of a scheme to lessen humanity's impact on the environment (Vettese and Pendergrass 2022), a standard that seems arbitrary to say the least!

under which practices of collective ecological limitation are discoverable. This is why existing discourses of ecological limitation must remain tied to an experimental, provisional and prefigurative mode of action that explore alternative modes of political subjectivity and political strategy.

Similar insights are already present in the degrowth literature. Degrowth is broadly defined as the call for a democratic transition to a society based on a smaller throughput of energy and resources and a vision for ecological justice that isn't based on expanding capitalist accumulation (Kallis 2018). Degrowth scholars argue that achieving such a society requires an expanded definition of class struggle that focuses beyond the contradiction between labor and capital and instead emphasizes ecological and social reproduction, "the defense of the community, its territory and its environment against capitalist accumulation" (Akbulut et al. 2019). Such an understanding of degrowth also emphasizes the theme of "limitation" advocating for the transition to a society that not only produces less but also differently, outside of the contours of capitalist social belonging (Dyer-Witherford, Hansen, and Leonardi 2023).This aspect of the argument is often articulated in provisional terms, as a "hypothesis" "trajectory" or a "vision or imaginary of an alternative world" centered around more general principles of ending exploitation, instituting an economy of care and public expenditure (Kallis 2018; D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014). Yet increasingly, degrowth scholars also point to the importance of state-society relations (Akbulut 2019), social movements (Treu, Schmelzer, and Burkhart 2020), existing ecological struggles as building grounds for articulating an anti-capitalist and degrowth politics (Schmelzer, Vansintjan, and Vetter 2022). The problem of degrowth is increasingly understood as less of a moral exhortation against capitalist states in the West and more through the language of political subjectivation and political strategy (Barca 2019). Thus, the degrowth literature will be an important interlocutor in outlining this particular account of limitation.

Such a perspective has important consequences of how I conceive of the archive of artistic and political interventions across the peripheries of İstanbul. As we have seen above with Taycan and Erkılıç's work, the ever-shifting borders of urban space in İstanbul can become an aesthetic, epistemological and political problem. Yet through this theoretical detour a different kind of question emerges, not only *where* the limits of the city lie but also *what kind of environmental politics of limitation emerges from the peripheries of urban space in the first place?* How are collective desires, hopes and fantasies of economic growth, material expansion and environmental struggle made into sites of political action and aesthetic representation? What kind of political and affective horizon emerges from this peripheral space? What understanding of limits can be articulated here? And what does this horizon demand of economic growth on the one hand and the expansion of urban space in return?

In the thesis, I put forward the concept *affective ecologies of limitation* to explore such questions. While I have already spent some time exploring what limitation means in this context, it is also useful to specify what I mean by the term affective ecology. In its simplest formulation affect is about how an extensive change is registered intensively.[10] Yet in thinking through affect, I am drawn more specifically to a materialist tradition that understands affect as a way of investigating the mutual imbrication of political economy and political subjectivity, outlining the conditions under which a certain historical moment or social formation "appears as a visceral moment" (Berlant 2011, 16), where a certain distribution of the sensible appears alongside a certain distribution of the relations and forces of production. Affect, as I mobilize the term in this thesis, is irreducibly qualitative, and yet also concerned with how social

[10] Consider the difference between a political gathering that brings together ten people and one that brings together ten thousand. It is not that one is a thousand times more "effective" than the other. Rather the *feeling* is different in each. Each affords its own specific modes of comradery, possibility and spontaneity that are qualitatively different. It is possible to do different kinds of things within each gathering. Affect is an attempt to describe such qualitative differences.

production is inscribed into modes of desire and subjectivity.[11] I draw on a tradition of thinking on affect that stretches from the work of Gilbert Simondon (Simondon 2020; Combes 2012), Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari 1980; 1987), to the work of Jason Read (Read 2016) and Lauren Berlant (Berlant 2011; 2016). I argue that affect,

> "provides metrics for understanding how we pace and space our encounters with things, how we manage the too closeness of the world and also the desire to have an impact on it that has some relation to its impact on us" (Berlant 2011, 12).

In affect it is possible to locate a structure of feeling, a "mutuality in the atmosphere of the common historical experience of class antagonism" (Berlant 2016, 397). Affect allows us to study how multiple modes of desire are saturated within material conditions of production, distribution and circulation, how residual, dominant, and emerging forms of feeling and making sense of the world permeate different social formations in ways that are both infrastructural (in the sense of running underneath and alongside subjective experience) and intimate.

This permeation of modes of desire and subjectivity into social formations renders the political economic and cultural as mutually constitutive fields over which different power regimes unfold (Anderson 2014). In this tradition, affect describes how the political economy and culture, social production, and desire act as "absent causes" of one another that structure each other's unfolding (Read 2016, 88). Yet as Kai Bosworth notes, affect also describes how these two fields are held together in a particular distribution, indicating that the concept of affect is inseparable from themes of causation, determination that short circuit traditional accounts of base and superstructure (Bosworth 2022, 64). As Deleuze and Guattari write,

[11] There has been a tendency in affect theory to associate affect with the social and emotion with the individuated. Affect is understood as forming collectivities that are simultaneously beneath and above the level of subjectivity (Massumi 2014). Affect points to a form of collectivity that is immediately mutual in the way Berlant describes yet neither interpersonal nor individualized (Combes 2012). Yet as Jason Read argues (Read 2017, 111) it is perhaps better to see affect and emotion not as two opposed entities but rather as two different phases of a collective psycho-social individuation the latter tending towards the individuated perspective the former more laden with pre-individual potential. In this sense, while I am aware of the distinction between affect and emotion, I am less inclined to explore it as an opposition.

"affects or drives form part of the infrastructure itself" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 63) meaning that affects and drives form part of the causal relations that hold together and reproduce social forms.

My use of the term *ecology* builds on this mutual imbrication between political economy and culture yet situates it within a broader environmental framework. The concept of ecology here is used to track how social production and desiring production are also simultaneously inserted into the production of nature. Beyond gesturing towards the environmental stakes of social production and desiring production, "ecology" can also be more specifically thought of as an understanding of nature as constitutively formed by forms of loss, waste, and expenditure. As we will discuss in detail in Chapter 2, what distinguishes "ecology" as I am using in this thesis from a more general term such as "environment" is the ability to hold space for expenditure (Bataille 1991; Neyrat 2019; N. Clark and Yusoff 2018). The concept of an "affective ecology" is especially useful in helping track how the production of culture, political economy and environments are embedded within one another (Felix Guattari 2008). Of course, there is nothing *inherently* liberatory about the concept of an affective ecology. As Thomas Patrick Pringle notes, ecology and economy are already brought together by fields of knowledge such as "ecosystems" or "resilience theory" that so often form the groundwork of neoliberal ideology and colonial domination (Pringle 2021). Yet the concept of an *affective* ecology is nonetheless helpful, as it holds space for a causal logic that is in the final instance, qualitative and aesthetic, that while aware of the operations of the infrastructures of contemporary capitalism does not need to borrow its causal schemas from scientific paradigms such as thermodynamics, information theory and systems theory (Felix Guattari 2008, 36). The notions of expenditure, loss and waste explored in the thesis then are not bounded by the thermodynamic or scientific understandings of these same terms.

Finally, then, affective ecologies of limitation describe the way in which limitation is inscribed within affect – the cultural, political economic and environmental formations within which images of finitude and limitation are registered as sensible and visceral. An affective ecology of limitation addresses how questions of political economy and subjectivity shape the ways in which certain environments are produced, distributed, and consumed *as finite*, and how this image of finitude shapes political economic understandings of ecology, materialism, labor, and technicity in return. In the remainder of this thesis, I draw on the archive I've discussed above to sketch out different affective ecologies of limitation. In doing so, I hope to help push ecological discourse around limits from an image of external determination, where the outlines of the earth and the political meaning of limitation are already known in advance, to one of immanent determination, where limitation is understood alongside a pre-figurative and revolutionary politics that seeks for the possibility of discovering the earth, its limits, its contours, its relations anew.

Chapter Outline

Each remaining chapter can be thought of as an attempt to elaborate on and explore new aspects of the affective ecology of limitation. Chapter 1, *The Consummative Mood of Authoritarianism,* studies the cultural politics of economic growth in Turkey, developing the concept of "consummation" to track how the desire for economic growth also produces authoritarian subjectivity. Chapter 2, *The Materialism of Disaster*, returns to *Between Two Seas* to develop an account of materiality that is attentive to waste, loss, and expenditure. This chapter further argues that such an account of materiality is helpful in thinking through disaster and ecological collapse. Chapter 3, *The Remaindered*, focuses on the work of *SurplusWorks* to investigate waste work in İstanbul. Building on *SurplusWorks's* video archive, I argue that informal forms of labor such as waste work form another kind of urban periphery that is helpful

to think through for political ecology. Chapter 4, *Thinking Through the Periphery* the concept of the periphery and its representations in the archive I draw on. In this chapter, I outline three different ways the periphery can be understood – as a space of subordination by an unbounded urbanization; as a space of metabolic interaction between town and country; and as a space of technical alienation. Last, in lieu of a conclusion, I draw on the research in this thesis to think through the February 6th earthquake as an event that both culminates and complicates the themes I have invoked throughout the thesis.

Chapter 1

The Consummative Mood of Authoritarianism:

Notes on the Production of Reactionary Sentiment in Turkey

"Yaptım, olacak!"
(I did it, and it'll exist!)
Ali Ağaoğlu – Turkish Businessperson

"Walking sounds good." Yusuf took a long drag on his cigarette and looked off into the distance towards the Küçükçekmece Lake just beyond the reeds. He seemed suspicious of my research. Was I one of those pesky meddlers, those activists? Earlier he was teasing me about not having any kids despite being married for over a year, "Does it say so in our holy book?". It also didn't help that I was there with a group of filmmaker friends who were rather visibly tired from the journey for which our brief chat from the night before had ill prepared them.[12] Perhaps this is why he was mainly focused on me. He fell silent for a second. The silence was briefly interrupted as his phone rang to a familiar tune. I seemed to spark his curiosity. He declined the call and continued. "Walking is great. It's like with Erdoğan and this *Kanal* project. The *Reis* (the captain) ought to walk first, so that the *millet* (the nation) can follow."[13]

We had stopped by Yusuf's Garden on our way from the Sazlıdere waterway which flows from the Sazlıdere dam into the Küçükçekmece Lake. We had just emerged from a rather rough patch of walking. The waterway that flows from the dam collects all the refuse from nearby towns, factories and villages and carries this refuse all the way to Küçükçekmece Lake. While the water from the dam is treated and used as drinking water, there is nonetheless a foul stench that has collected around the waterway which flows from the dam. Little bubbles emerge

[12] The crew (Ayris, Çağrı, Edze and Yavuz of the İstanbul Experimental Film Festival) were there to explore incorporating parts of the walk into their documentary. I was very grateful they decided to join!
[13] *"Reis yürüsün ki arkasından da millet yürsün." Reis (chief) is used endearingly by Erdoğan's followers, to refer to him.*

from the water as if the summer heat was boiling the concoction inside into a soup of sorts. Following the water, we walked underneath the Trans European Motorway *(TEM)* carefully avoiding the pools of motor oil and grease that dripped from it above, while also making sure not to intrude on the living quarters of a family who seemed to inhabit this underpass. Originally established by the UN Economic Commission for Europe in 1977, the *TEM* is a massive network of highways built with the explicit purpose of fostering neoliberal ideals such as "growth" and "competitiveness" in Southern and Eastern Europe.[14] This section of the *TEM* also known as the E80 highway, stretches from Lisbon in Portugal to the town of Gürbulak near the Turkish-Iranian border.

The *TEM* was not the only major motorway we had crossed during our strolls. Two days before, near the village of *Tayakadın*, we had passed by the *North Marmara Motorway*, a so called "megaproject" that was completed under the Justice and Development Party's time in power and that laid the foundations for the city's northern expansion. The *North Marmara Motorway* first began construction in 2013 and like the *TEM*, it required the construction of a new bridge across the Bosporus. It is a legacy of rightwing politics in Turkey and its embrace of neo-Ottomanist aesthetics since the 1980s, that both bridges are named after Ottoman sultans, the Second Bridge (connected to the *TEM*) named after Mehmet the Conqueror *"Fatih Sultan Mehmet Köprüsü"* while the Third Bridge (connected to *North Marmara Motorway)* named after the Selim the Resolute *"Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsü*".[15]

Even here, where these bridges transform into highways that lead one to the outskirts of the city, the poetics and grandeur of this neo-Ottomanist aesthetic seem to resonate with

[14] "Trans-European North-South Motorway Project", *General Directorate of Highways*, Republic of Turkey. https://www.kgm.gov.tr/Sayfalar/KGM/SiteEng/Root/Gdh/InternationalProjects/TEM.aspx; "Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) Project", UN Economic Commission for Europe, Warsaw Poland, 2005, https://unece.org/DAM/trans/main/temtermp/docs/TEMconsolidated.pdf.

[15] This latter name was especially controversial since Selim led the massacre of some 40 thousand Alevis in the 16th century.

Yusuf whose phone rang once again (I recognize it this time!) to the tune of a famous Ottoman military march, *Plevne Marşı.* Yusuf declines the call again and explains how the concentration of transport infrastructure along this geography made it a hub for logistics. There are some 12 different logistics corporations that have operation centers in the town of Hadımköy just across the Sazlıdere waterway, he explains. Yusuf's own operation is managed through this small garden and a nearby parking space, remaining comparatively modest. Perhaps the logistical significance of this area is also why the *TEM* became the site of several occupation attempts by workers organized around nearby construction sites in Halkalı and Bağcılar, wishing to impede the flow of trucks and draw attention to their own working conditions (Muhim 2014).

Figure 17.: Underneath the Trans-European Motorway. Photo by author.

After inquiring a little further about why I was taking this route, Yusuf starts explaining how despite the pandemic having slowed things down, he nonetheless had relatives that worked for the government who would award him contracts that the drivers working for him can perform. In 2021, when I met Yusuf, the newly built İstanbul Airport mainly handled commercial flights while the old Atatürk Airport nearby the Küçükçekmece lake still handled freight traffic. When I noted how freight traffic too would soon be relocated to the newly built airport further North of Yusuf's headquarters, intimating that this could affect his business, he replied

> "We'll be fine. You know, one shouldn't be so scared of change, especially a young man like you." He later added, "You see this water over here? This is where the Kanal will pass. (Buradan *Kanal* geçecek). Now you may wonder why I'm pointing this out. Think of the scale and vision (vizyon) of this project. Think of how all this area will develop once the Kanal is built. Therefore, a young man like you shouldn't be scared."

I had heard this phrase "this is where the Kanal will pass" countless times during my walks across the path of the *Kanal*. I found it confusing since the *Kanal* had been discussed since 2011 with very little actual construction taking place until a few years ago. Dredging a new waterway requires not only the removal of earth and the building of new bridges and roads that would cross the waterway, but also requires the relocation of water and electricity lines that connects the city to its peripheries. While some of this construction has begun in 2021, there is a chance the project might not come to fruition at all, should the government lose the upcoming elections. This added politicization has no doubt brought other researchers, artists, reporters like me to these villages. Hence Yusuf, like many of the people I encountered on my walks, is not surprised by my presence, and can easily offer a stock response before I have the chance to utter a word about the *Kanal* – *"This is where the Kanal will pass."* Yet Yusuf's statement seemed like more than this stock response. Thinking over our conversation, he seemed to have an image of what I ought to be and where I ought to stand in relation to the infrastructural efforts taking place in the city's peripheries. This imagined subject hinted at in our conversation

was a "finisher" (*iş bitirici*), who gets the deed done no matter the cost, who isn't afraid of investment even when the returns are not very clear, who has no time to listen to others.

How can we understand the subject Yusuf seems to be hinting at? And what does this subject tell us about Turkish politics? Scholars of Turkish studies have described the current regime through various descriptors, including corporatism, neoliberal authoritarianism, neoliberal statism, Erdoğanism, populism and more (Bargu 2018; Erensü and Alemdaroğlu 2018; Tansel 2019; Yeşil 2016). These descriptors try to capture a confluence of phenomena that collectively mark a threshold and a transformation of Turkey's governing coalition as well as its broader political regime. These include transformations in the visibility and intensity of violence deployed by the Turkish state – especially through policing and military force that suppresses women and LBTQ+ peoples and have declared outright warfare on Kurdish political resistance; the endurance of popular support for the JDP both electorally and in the form of political movements – albeit decreasingly so ; centralization of power within the JDP through the persona of Erdoğan himself; the government's mixed attempts to secure some autonomy from the economic and the military infrastructures of "the West" – crystallized in the JDP's hesitancy towards institutions like the IMF, World Bank and NATO.

Analyzing these macropolitical changes in a more analytical register, Yahya Madra and Sedat Yilmaz (2019) have described this as a transformation from a neoliberal populist regime (what they describe as the "Gramscian" moment of Turkish politics) to a form of corporatist nationalism (the "Schmittian" moment). As Madra and Yilmaz (2019) argue, the neoliberal populist regime developed during the early years of the JDP under a context of rising economic growth was put to the test through a number of changes, such as the global rise of extractivism and a more authoritarian statecraft that has come to hand in hand with it (Arboleda 2020, 6; Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut 2019) as well as the refusal of the Turkish state to come to terms with the Kurdish movement for democratic self–governance. All this resulted in strengthening

racist, nationalist and antimigrant sentiment in Turkey, while shoring up an autocratic government with some amount of electoral support. In such a context, the conditions that sustained neoliberal populism instead created the possibility of corporatist nationalism. This corporatist nationalism is defined by the rise of construction, energy and war industries being built around corporatist networks and family ties that stretch to the Erdoğan family personally. It is also defined by a retrenchment of nationalism bolstered by a state of permanent war declared against Kurdish political resistance as a whole (Madra and Yilmaz 2019).

While this macropolitical story is now documented by several scholars, what is perhaps less studied yet equally curious is the micropolitical changes that accompany it at the level of bodies, affects and subjectivity. In this chapter, I reflect on my interactions with Yusuf, my walks along the peripheries of İstanbul, as well as on existing scholarship about right-wing political culture in Turkey, to outline a *consummative mood* of authoritarianism as a key affective infrastructure through which the JDP's rather incoherent neoliberal authoritarian regime is reproduced. This consummative mood is the fetishization of efficacy, delivery, the ability to "get the job done." I place this *consummative mood* in conversation with other affective articulations of kinship, anticipation, masculinity, and enjoyment, outlining the political terrain of right-wing sentiment in Turkish politics over the past 20 years.

In other places in the developing world, construction has provided a similar promise of economic and by extension nationalist resurgence. This alliance between construction, sovereignty and economic growth has also fueled the rise of right-wing movements such as the Hinduttva movement behind Indian prime minister Narendra Modi or the obsession of Bolsonarismo with building megaprojects that crisscross the Amazon. In these contexts, things like GDP growth rates or the value of currency, take on a kind of signification beyond their numerical value, becoming wrapped up in narratives of civilizational resurgence and decline. Therefore, I reflect on the themes of construction, economic growth and sovereignty that are

studied throughout the chapter, as concrete assemblages of the *consummative mood* that extend beyond the contours of Turkish politics. Consummation as the fetishization of efficacy, of realization of value, sustains a collective fantasy of autonomy and historical agency that is shared by sovereignty and economic growth. Building on these insights I posit that a confrontation with authoritarianism, both in Turkey and in the Global South more generally, requires a stronger understanding of the ways in which regimes of economic growth can produce a reactionary mood. Whereas growth promises sovereignty, agency, and freedom its lived content in the Global South is dependency, impoverishment, and servitude. In the contemporary conjuncture of global capitalism, developmentalism in the Global South, the desire for economic growth, creates the conditions of possibility for far-right politics. Indeed, the state legitimates itself and recreates its conditions of possibility (Akbulut 2019) precisely through channeling the consummative enjoyment of economic growth. This means that confronting the far-right requires abolishing not only capitalism but also its more specific ideological articulation as a regime of growth. It requires what I will call in the rest of this thesis a degrowth communism.

Unpacking the Concept: Consummation and the Appetite for Construction

In a short article, published originally in 2011, the Turkish intellectual historian Tanıl Bora describes an "appetite for construction" (*inşaat şehveti*) (T. Bora 2016) that has characterized Turkish conservatism in the modern era. According to Bora, the conservative subject of construction is associated with affects like opportunism, pragmatism, and optimism. For Bora, rightwing politics construes construction as a type of action that arrests any opposition, quelling discussion, delay and critique (T. Bora 2016). Interestingly, Bora also notes (2016) that this association between rightwing politics and construction is rather new. In the early 20th century construction and architecture embodied liberal ideals of modernity and progress, that would have been inimical to Turkish conservatism. Yet especially after it has

been subsumed under neoliberalism, the neoconservative ethos seemed more at peace with capitalist modernity and its appetite for construction.

What explains Bora's choice of the concept of appetite? What does the existence of such an appetite signal about the mutual imbrications of political economy and political subjectivity within the activity of construction? An immediate fact of the activity of construction is its capital-intensive nature. For Marxist geographers like David Harvey (Harvey 2013; 2007a; Labban 2019), it is commonplace to point out how the construction of large-scale infrastructure is often undertaken to soak up overabundant resources and excess capital. Rather than mobilizing social excess towards some ethical good or a higher aesthetic or moral principle, capitalism mobilizes excess resources to address its crises and jumpstart production. Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism "represses the distinction between production and antiproduction" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 335) subordinating social excess to the realization of value for capital. Construction then is not only an act of production it is also an act of consumption in so far as it ties up capital, labor, and matter in its service.

How do we understand this overlap at the level of affect? Such immediate identity of production and consumption is noted by Marx in the *Grundrisse* – where he observes how production determines "not only the object but also the manner of consumption; not only objectively but also subjectively. Production creates the consumer" (Marx 1993, 92). One helpful concept that Deleuze and Guattari extract from this passage is "the production of consumption" or what they otherwise call, *consummation.* More specifically, the term consummation describes the surplus enjoyment that one continuously extracts from social life, the registration and conclusion of cycles of social production and reproduction at a qualitative level, as affect and intensity (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 16–18). The subject, "consumes and consummates each of the states through which it passes and is born of each of them anew, continuously emerging from them as a part made up of parts" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 41).

Thus, consummation can be understood as the enjoyment one extracts from seeing cycles of production come to fruition, what Deleuze and Guattari call "the pleasure in the eye" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 185).

Consummation is the joy of watching your favorite football team finally win a trophy; the warmth of seeing your friends perform a set on stage after weeks of rehearsal; the satisfaction of pouring oneself a drink after a long day of work, or the sweet feeling of being satiated after a long meal. Consummation ties up and concludes cycles of social production and reproduction and relates them to a process of subject-formation. The feeling is especially intense when one is both the subject of production and that of consumption – the feast that follows an arduous harvest say. Yet, especially under capitalism, such enjoyment is ignorant of the processes that produces it. The feeling of satiation we derive from a large meal, to paraphrase Marx, offers little insight to the actual conditions that subtend the global food system (Marx 1992, 290). For this reason, in Deleuze and Guattari's work, consummation is an afterthought, a residue of the relations of production and antiproduction, a final "so that's what it was!" or "so that's me!" one might exclaim after consumption has come to pass (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 17). And the commodity form is built on this structural ignorance where moments of exchange and consumption – governed by the real abstractions of labor power and capital – are untethered from belief, emotion, and the production of social life. Hence, the prevailing "mood" of capitalism for Deleuze and Guattari is one of cynicism (Read 2008, 142). In this sense, consummation captures an element of capitalism that Marx first observed as the abstract imperative of limitless accumulation and limitless production, for their own cynical sake – "Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets" (Marx 1992, 742).

More specifically, the concept of consummation is useful in investigating the relation between neoliberalism, rightwing politics, and construction. If neoliberal construction requires

the constant absorption of value through extensive infrastructure projects, the mixing of production and antiproduction as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, one can talk of Bora's "appetite for construction" as a more general *consummative mood* – a desire to not only realize value, but also to get things done, to conclude the deal, to "shake on it." In this sense, the *consummative mood* builds on one of the most common sensorial qualities of large-scale infrastructure – its monumentality, conspicuousness and visibility (Leigh Star 1999; Larkin 2008; Nixon 2011). The *consummative mood* presents infrastructure as apparent, obvious, and inarguable. "So, there it is!". In fact, as I will show below, this aspect of consummation that presents infrastructure as obvious and apparent operates even as construction of infrastructure remains incomplete, always reworked, never quite finished. As Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta and Hannah Appel note, countries in the Global South often use infrastructure to renegotiate their terms of integration into global systems of financial dependence, fashioning projects that will attract foreign capital (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018, 6-7). In such circumstances, the affective mood of *consummation* helps fasten the promissory logic of infrastructure, to a concrete sense of place. "So, *this* is where the *Kanal* will pass." In this last sense, the *consummative mood* pertains not only to the actual feeling of satiation but also the anticipation of it, a will to bring social production towards the realization of value, to build the building, to finish the job.

It is important to distinguish between consummation as Deleuze and Guattari use it, a general way of describing the production of consumption and subjectivity, from what I'm calling the *consummative mood of* right-wing politics. The *consummative mood* describes the abstract machine that accompanies the assemblage of construction, appetite, and authoritarianism in Turkey. Indeed, whereas Marx, Deleuze and Guattari thought capitalist accumulation was unavowable, axiomatic, ultimately for its own sake, the *consummative mood* nonetheless studies a residual enjoyment that attends consumption and the conversion of such

enjoyment into a sense of sovereignty and historical agency.[16] The consummative relation works as a variation on the myth of fascist efficiency (Chuang 2021, 3), as the fetishization of efficacy, delivery, completion as a singular political goal, regardless of the consequences. One example of this fetishization is how the characterization of construction as a form of "pragmatism" derives from the fact that the sheer consumption of resources during the construction of a megaproject can cause its defenders to retroactively invent reasons for why the particular course of action was "necessary" and "efficient" all along. "I've done it and it'll exist" (*yaptım olacak*) as Ali Ağaoğlu's, a famous real estate developer once claimed in a 2014 advertisement for his luxury real estate project in İstanbul.

As such, the *consummative mood* of right-wing politics helps orient subjectivity solely around the act of squandering – in its most fascist form it transforms glorious expenditure into a line of pure destruction. "While his opponents are still bickering, Erdoğan is focused on developing the country", Yusuf claims. "Maybe there were some irregularities, sure," he adds when I mention the workers who lost their lives during the construction, "But did you see the new airport when you flew over? Do you know how many trucks they assembled when the project was being built? Is this not service to the people, the nation?" (*millete hizmet)*.[17] It is through such a destructive imaginary that consummation becomes attached to an increasingly authoritarian regime.

I have been describing consummation as a kind of "mood". While concepts such as "mood", "emotion" and "affect" have more precise definitions in Deleuze and Guattari's writings on which I'm drawing, as I've explained in the introduction to this thesis, I somewhat

[16] As Jason Read notes, this is one of the important departures between the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Whereas in the critical project of *Anti-Oedipus* the overwhelming affect or mood of capitalism is described as "cynicism with a strange piety", in the more positive project of *A Thousand Plateaus* affects have a broader range of usage and a more complicated relation to capitalist axiomatics (Read 2016).

[17] As we will explore below in Chapter 3, it is perhaps for this reason that the *hafriyat* truck became such a crucial image of the JDP regime – at once an agent of ecological destruction and a symbol of political mobilization.

depart from their attention to such distinctions in an attempt to search for a more complex series of relations between capitalism, infrastructure, and affect (Read 2016). Ultimately though, my focus in this chapter is on how the reactionary subject of rightwing politics manifests between the registers of desiring production and social production (Read 2016, 124). A consummative "mood", as Zafer Yılmaz notes, describes not an individual psyche but rather the production of a "socio-political atmosphere, which both conditions shared socio-political emotions and creates trans-individual sensitiveness" one that traverses technological, political economic, social and affective dynamics (Yilmaz 2017, 248). In a similar fashion, I am interested in how the *consummative mood* emerges transindividually (Simondon 2020) in between processes of subjectivation and the infrastructural conditions which subtend such processes.

This link between the *consummative mood* and infrastructure will help focus on the operations of authoritarianism and neoliberalism in Turkish politics at a micropolitical level. As I've outlined in the previous chapter, in mobilizing the term "micropolitics," I want to hint at an irreducibly bodily and felt series within networks of political causation, one that is nonetheless parallel to and in conversation with a macropolitical series of political parties, social movements and revolutions. More specifically, the consummative mood carries elements of what Deleuze and Guattari called "microfascism," a fascism that manifests in desires, bodies, and practices alongside crystallizing in minds, ideologies, institutions, and the state. As different authors note, such microfascism a) precedes the state, or rather is in excess of state formations, b) is articulated along the lines of culture, everyday practices, and bodies, and c) is about the production of political subjectivity (Bratich 2022; Genesko 2017). In this sense, one can understand the *consummative mood* as an abstract tendency of subject formation within contemporary capitalism that is actualized in this instance within the historical context of Turkish politics and organized into macropolitical and authoritarian arrangements of cultural, technical, and political economic structures. Therefore, through this analysis, I pay close

attention to the relations between the production of mood on the one hand and the registration of such a mood in political subjectivity on the other.

In the rest of the chapter, I turn my attention towards the affective dimensions of consummative mood, analyzing how it interacts with concrete articulations of feelings such as fear, intimacy, supremacy, and anticipation. I will be paying particular attention to how the consummative mood, as the fetishization of efficacy and delivery, interacts with themes of sovereignty on the one hand and economic growth on the other. This is not only because sovereignty and economic growth are the two ways in which infrastructure has been predominantly imagined under the JDP regime, but also because at the heart of both are collective fantasies of "autonomy, freedom, and historical agency" (Benedicto 2021, 725; Neferti Xina M. Tadiar 2004; Charbonnier 2021). By sovereignty, I have in mind what Jack Bratich calls the creation of an auto-genetic subject, an essentially masculinist sense of agency that fashions itself out of nothing, continuously re-founding its capacity to make reality and impose order. For Bratich, such sovereignty is not only at the heart of "micro-fascism," but also it pre-exists the nation (Bratich 2022, 18), and in Turkey, is instead explicitly articulated in a palingenetic fantasy of resurgence and imperial plunder.

By economic growth, I have in mind the capitalist imperative towards limitless accumulation, grafted onto the ideological construct of a "national economy" and lived through social institutions as well as bio-chemical processes (Schmelzer, Vansintjan, and Vetter 2022). This is especially crucial to understand in the Global South where the content of such growth is nonetheless increased dependency and heteronomy, both financially and in terms of material systems of expertise and control. It is in this dichotomy between autonomy and agency on the one hand and dependency and heteronomy on the other, that the reactionary character of growth becomes more clearly articulated. The *consummative mood* transforms the enjoyment inherent in the feeling of being satiated, the pleasure of consumption, into an experience of sovereignty,

often characterized through an ideology of economic growth. Through economic growth, it becomes possible to assign the enjoyment one extracts from consummation, from seeing cycles of social production being realized, to a collective subject and further to enshrine this collective subject with a sense of sovereignty and power. It is through this association between growth, sovereignty, and the desire for consummation that authoritarianism becomes an intimate and popular structure of domination in Turkey.

Pilaf not Plans: Megaprojects in Political Discourse

Before I explore this conjuncture, I begin with a general account of consummation and the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects within Turkish political discourse, both expanding on Bora's insights and setting the scene. The *consummative mood* and its association with infrastructure has a history in right wing political figures in Turkey that far predates that of Erdoğan. One early yet striking example is Süleyman Demirel, one of the most well-known figures of right-wing politics in Turkey. During the 1965 general elections, "we need pilaf not planning" (*bize plan değil pilav lazım*) became a campaign motto of Demirel's right wing *Adalet Partisi* (Justice Party) which defeated the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP -Republican People's Party) that year. Against the CHP's efforts to improve and coordinate economic planning (though crucially not democratize it), the leader of the *AP*, Demirel would claim "A plan is not a dam. It is not a bridge. It is not a road, or a port, or a silo, or a factory" (Bicakci 2002, 187).

Demirel's statements prefigure the fetishization of consummation within contemporary Turkish politics. His targeting of deliberation and planning are at first presented as pragmatic and focused on the immediate provisioning of resources to those in need – *pilaf not plans*. Yet in practice, this pragmatism in fact turns out to be about the construction of infrastructure. After

his victory, Demirel would come to be known as the "king of dams" for his penchant for constructing hydroelectricity infrastructure. As Akbulut, Adaman and Arsel note, Demirel's project of dam construction was part of a larger project of modernization and societal transformation, that had a central role for economic growth but was also broadly about the achievement of "prosperity" (Akbulut, Adaman, and Arsel 2018, 101–2). Evoking the pragmatism of construction against the deliberation of planning, Demirel is an early example of how the construction of infrastructure ties together the desire for prosperity and development with a *consummative mood* that fetishizes getting things done, "delivering."

It is also useful to remember that this obsession with constructing large-scale infrastructure traverses party lines. The term "mega proje" used to describe *Kanal İstanbul* seems to have entered Turkish political discourse around the 1990s. The 1990s were a time of financial liberalization in Turkey when "speculative foreign capital flows encouraged by high real interest rates caused havoc in domestic asset markets, which culminated in the collapse of the financial system and the emergence of a severe economic crisis in 1994" (Aydın 2013, 99). The idea for a second waterway between Marmara and the Black Sea also stretches back to this era, specifically to Bülent Ecevit the leader of the Democratic Left Party (DSP). In January 1994, before the municipal elections that year, Ecevit had proposed what newspapers at the time described as a "mega-project", that would not only dredge open a canal, but also would include the construction of free zones and logistics ports located around it, much like the contemporary project being proposed (*Hürriyet* 2011).[18]. The promise of such megaprojects became significant during the election, so much so that İlhan Kesici, the mayoral candidate of the center right ANAVATAN party released his own set of "mega proje" promises which included the building of a 60 thousand person capacity stadium as well as a Third Bridge across

[18] It is interesting to note that a cursory search of the Islamic Magazine Project database published by *İLEM* reveals that many influential Islamic magazines such as *Yörünge* were at the time are critical of the Ecevit and DSP, describing the mega project as a "Mega Lie". See - https://idp.org.tr/.

the Bosporus another idea that stretches back to this era (*Hürriyet* 2011). Ultimately, both Ecevit's candidate Zülfü Livaneli and Kesici lost to none other than Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who used his mayorship of İstanbul as a launchpad for his later political career.

Figure 18. Ecevit's Mega-Project (*Hürriyet* 2011).

Both the *consummative mood* and the megaprojects being proposed by the JDP ought to be understood as contiguous with developmentalist imaginaries of Turkish politics. What is distinct about the JDP era however, is that this same obsession with mega projects and its attendant *consummative mood* were being interpreted through a religious framework of "service" (*hizmet*). As Ceren Özselçuk observes, the notion that the state exists to provide people with "service" (often understood as the construction of infrastructure) became an important touchstone of the JDP's ideology (Ozselcuk 2015). Even today, addressing opposition to the Kanal İstanbul project Erdoğan claims,

> "In a short timeframe, we transformed our cities into construction sites…. On these strong foundations, we kept growing our ambitions. Aspiring to grow the Turkish economy to one of the 10 largest economies of the world, we turned our attention to larger projects, larger investment plans… All these glorious monuments that serve our people, we constructed all of them despite the opposition and their lack of vision... Our people can plainly see who works tirelessly to build us new monuments and services (eser ve hizmet)" (*Diken* 2021).

As Özelçuk observes, on the one hand this affective regime of "service" constructs citizens as individualized consumers who evaluate the benefits that accrue to them personally as a result of construction – better transport services, newer and bigger hospitals, newer roads etc. On the other hand, the ideology of service also promises to serve the Turkish "national will" *(milli irade)* such that even when such individualized benefits are harder to pinpoint, the aesthetics of service nonetheless subsists (Ozselcuk 2015). That Erdoğan's speech brings together themes of monumentality with the quasi-religious notion of "service" is not surprising. The Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre contrasts the specificity of monumental space, its ability to reorganize and coordinate human interaction at the affective level to the homogenous matrix of capitalist space. Whereas buildings effect a more brutal condensation of capitalist relations, monuments Lefebvre argues, are like a form of poetry. They give us specific ways of living and being around them that aren't reducible to capitalist relations, to speak in hushed tones and to approach them in specific modes of acoustic, gestural, and ritual movement (Lefebvre 1992, 220–26). Yet Turkey's megaprojects have a curious monumental character. The specific poetry they recite, their affective signature, lies also in the ability to make capitalist expansion desirable, tying capitalist expansion directly to the experience of the national will.

One can note an erotic quality to the construction of this "national will." In short essay, Bora notes a somewhat "pornographic" obsession with pronouncing big numbers on the part of right-wing Turkish politicians like Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turgut Özal and Süleyman Demirel. To this end, the website advertising the Third Bridge is full of such spectacular claims and large numbers that are often repeated in Erdogan's speeches. The Third Bridge is

> "with its 59-meter width, the world's largest, and with 1408 meter coverage the longest bridge with a railway and surpassing 322 meters, the bridge with the tallest tower in the world. The size of the structure is linked to the promise of Turkey becoming one of the ten largest economies in the world" (Hoyng and Es 2020, 1738).

Such an obsession with size is often described as an aesthetic regime of "gigantism", that is not only puerile in the obvious sense ("size" a phallic concern) but also represents an ubiquitous

element of historical fascism that contemporary capitalism has only elevated (Sartwell 2011, 43). Yet in addition to conveying this obsession with size, such numbers act as phantasmagrams, as Michelle Murphy calls them (Murphy 2017), less conveying knowledge about the object they address and more helping one imagine these objects as *beyond* measurement. Perhaps this is why such numbers are repeated one after the other, as though their significance were self-evident, without any additional numerical or cultural context that would make them meaningful and sensible – "so and so many *billions* of dollars" worth, such and such "*thousands of* kilometers of double highways constructed," such and such "millions of square kilometers of construction." In fact, this tendency has even been satirized in a 2014 parody song, whose chorus consist of Erdogan reciting such numbers.

> "642 billion liras, 3 quadrillion, 326 million liras, 357 trillion, 860 trillion liras, 837 trillion liras worth of, 866 trillion liras worth of, a total number of 776 trillion liras of, BUT nationalism, the most important element is nationalism, nationalism, this is nationalism…" ("MC Recep" 2014).

There is an "autogenetic" character to the enjoyment one extracts from pronouncing such numbers, the desire to present infrastructure as self-sufficient and obvious, as though such bridges and roads sprung out of the ground already formed, as the effect of a "national will" (Caprotti 2005). In other words, the satisfaction such numbers produce is echoed in the very fact that they are a mouthful to pronounce.

In Turkey's consummative framework, megaproject construction becomes the expression of a "national will" while simultaneously figuring as an indictment against the supposed inaction of the opposition. This is perhaps why the JDP so often accuses the forces and people that oppose such infrastructure projects not only with a "lack of vision" or laziness but also with charges of "terrorism." Beyond the suppression of party-political opposition, the brunt of which is targeted at the Kurdish and human rights organizations, the consummative mood demands the silencing of autonomous forms of planning, provisioning, and deliberation. Activists I've spoken to from the Northern Forests Defense (*Kuzey Ormanları Savunması* or

KOS) for example often explain the tactics of criminalization, fear, and violence through which the police, the gendarme and the sometimes even local village councils intimidate both the members of *KOS* and the people living in this area.[19] Construction then appears not only as evidence of having consummated social production, enacted a national will but also an indictment against the opposition, its inability and its potentially criminal nature.

Neo-Ottomanism and Popularization of Sovereignty

As I noted, megaprojects such as the *Third Bridge* or the *İstanbul Airport* are tied to the *consummative mood* as objects that become the expression of the national will. Yet such megaprojects are also speculative and participatory affairs. Before they are even complete, they circulate "through a plentitude of infrastructural screens: billboards, facades, staged ceremonies, promotional video simulations and televised updates" (Hoyng and Es 2020, 1738). Such screens present another mode of consuming and participating in infrastructure, one that is obsessed with mythical and allegorical fantasies of imperial power. The construction of the *Third Bridge,* for example, was tied to an advertisement video, released in 2018, that celebrated the 565th "conquest" of İstanbul. The video is a narrative of "conquest by construction" that intercuts images of İstanbul's bridges with scenes from the popular narrative around the "conquest" of Constantinople.

[19] Interview with *KOS* activists April 2020. On criminalization of environmental movements in Turkey, also see (Kurtiç 2022).

Figures 19-22. Stills from a 2018 advertising campaign, released by the office of the Presidency, celebrating the 565th anniversary of İstanbul's conquest. Ottoman soldiers preparing logistics for the Battle of İstanbul, an inexplicably giant horseman, scaling the Bosporus bridge; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan greeting supporters; Mehmet the Conqueror entering the gates of Constantinople. Images produced by author.

While this advertisement may seem ridiculous, this fantasy of imperial power goes far beyond propaganda material and is embraced by the supporters of the regime as a rubric through which infrastructure construction is interpreted. Yusuf's ringtone of the Ottoman military march is a good reminder in this regard. Alongside such high budget videos, the Third Bridge was also circulated as a media object through a dedicated website as well as news coverage, memes, ringtones, and videos shared online.

Figure 23. Image from the Third Bridge website. "What the Project Will Bring: With this project, Turkey will get closer to its aim of becoming one of the top 10 largest economies in the world and the Third Bridge will become one of the symbols of modern Turkey". Image produced by author.

This promotional material is often in the style of neo-Ottomanism. Neo-Ottomanism can be described as an alt-right ideological formation, articulated from the Global South, and characterized by militarism, nationalism, and an attitude of supremacy (Bargu 2021). This aesthetics makes enthusiastic yet vague references to the "glory days" of the Ottoman Empire, to celebrate infrastructural achievements today. This celebration of the Ottoman Empire is phrased in reactionary terms through a constant comparison with a monolithic image of "the West." Neo-Ottomanism then becomes a way to evoke feelings of pride, supremacy, and call forth a collective subject of historical agency. As Nagehan Tokdoğan writes,

> Is this feeling of pride, not mutual? Does the sense of national self-confidence that (neo-Ottomanism) seeks to cultivate also not serve to overcome the century long sense of defeat that the Turkish subject feels? Concepts like development, civilization, economic

> welfare, re-emergence, carry with them a kind of emotional enjoyment. What kind of real fantasies, desires, wishes, do these concepts serve? (Tokdoğan 2018, 203).

It is partly through such feelings and fantasies that someone like Yusuf becomes recruited to the cause of infrastructural development. What makes neo-Ottomanism particularly interesting, as Bargu notes, is that it goes further than just narratives of victimization and nostalgia (Bargu 2021, 324). Rather, it mobilizes a selective image of imperial power to justify the extraction of resources, the accumulation of wealth, the distribution of material rewards to allies, the unequal portioning of the spoils of economic growth, while also shoring up popular support for military interventions, particularly against Kurdish political resistance, conducted both inside and outside Turkey's borders (Bargu 2021, 325). Neo-Ottomanism then is a dream of "inverted nostalgia" that converts the feelings of sentimentality towards the past into a desire to occupy and plunder the future, to recreate imperial splendor (Bargu 2021, 324)

One way to mobilize such feelings and desires towards the exercise of a political project of sovereignty is through the consumption of media such as online videos, news broadcasts and memes. In its monarchical and juridical articulation, sovereignty is often described as the power over life and death, to "let live and make die," the right to produce death. Inspired mainly by the works of Michel Foucault, this articulation is often expanded on and challenged from the perspective of discipline, biopolitics and necro-politics, offering new articulations of sovereignty, alongside colonialism, capitalism and race (Mbembé 2003; Bargu 2014; Foucault 1978). Yet one element of sovereignty such discussions miss, as Bobby Benedicto notes, is how practices such as imitation are essential to the functioning of a seemingly juridical concept,

> "if the figure of the sovereign continues to capture our imagination, it is because we are bound to it in an imitative structure. At once identical to us (he takes our place) and more than us (beyond our reach), the figure of the sovereign enables us to participate in sovereignty, to share or borrow it" (Benedicto 2021, 727)

Such popular sovereignty is ultimately never complete. This is especially true in the context of construction where financial markets, exchange rates, contractors, engineers, construction workers and technical systems have a lot more agency and influence over the ultimate future of a project. Yet precisely for this reason, the sovereign body represents an unfulfillable promise of political subjectivity – one that is "in excess of itself" (Benedicto 2021, 725).

Viewed from this lens the Neo-Ottomanist aesthetics of construction allows for one to participate in the desire for conquest and plunder through consumption. From the screens to megaprojects, consumption presents sovereignty as something intimate, shareable, and felt even when it appears in excess of its actualizations. In this light, Yusuf's claim that the "chief ought to walk so that we can follow" is not only a structure of submission to Erdoğan, but equally a project of constructing sovereignty, of partaking in infrastructure, quite literally in Yusuf's case through partaking in, utilizing and contributing to the making of megaprojects, that will in turn promise to further strengthen this sense of sovereignty.

A Road Will Pass: Consuming the Peripheries

While I have thus far analyzed the consummative mood as a general phenomenon, it is important to interrogate how this mood manifests in urban space. Indeed, economic growth is often experienced in İstanbul as the physical expansion of urban space, the increasing occupation of the peripheries by the city (C. U. Baysal 2020a). In my walks across İstanbul's peripheries there was often a strange feeling present, that the city is creeping towards you, the slow creep of urban space itself slowly consuming its own peripheries, transforming the very lands you are walking on. Bekir Dindar's photography series, "A Road Will Pass" presents an interesting example in how this physical expansion is imaged within the periphery (Dindar 2018). Dindar's series captures scenes from the construction of the Third Bridge described above. The title of the series alludes to the phrase, "this is where a road will pass" (*buradan yol geçecek)* a phrase which echoes the stock response I had heard from Yusuf, "this is where

the Kanal will pass" (*buradan Kanal geçecek*). Such phrases conjure up many of the anxieties, power relations and promises of infrastructural development in Turkey. This is partly because roads, bridge and dams are part and parcel of how ideals of development and modernization are imagined in Turkey (Adalet 2018). Yet this locution, a road will pass, has a more diffuse character than ideologies of modernization and economic growth. Its declarative mode captures something of the *consummative mood* that attends to infrastructural development in the peripheries, "this where a road *will* pass". The statement then is a mixture of indeterminacy and secrecy on the one hand and the desire for an agency that renders infrastructure determinate.

Such phrases present a broader communicative logic that subtends infrastructural development especially in peripheral spaces that exist on the edges of the city (Kostem 2023). This communicative logic carries a promissory element that is both familiar and as Appel, Anand and Gupta note, multivalent (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018, 7), at times communicating a threat, at times promising development, at other times offering economic advancement, often shifting between the three and for different subjects. It may function as an arbitrary justification for prohibition and expulsion. Throughout my walks I have heard many stories of people being barred from what used to be their environmental commons, on the excuse that a road or some other infrastructure project was scheduled to be built here. The presence of a simple fence is often enough to evoke such expulsion. In fact, such arbitrary expulsion (Yasak) and the threat of violence that follows with it is the primary role of state intervention in the peripheral geographies I travelled through. In interviews with activists, I often heard how after visiting a particular village several times the *muhtar* of the village – an elected elder figure who handles administrative duties as well as wielding respect – would

report the activists to the gendarme.[20] The gendarme would then proceed to block the path of the activists on the excuse that some active construction work was taking place and their passage posed a security concern. Indeed, my own path across the city's peripheries had to change several times precisely due to such encounters and obstructions.

Figure 24 - From Bekir Dindar's photography series "A Road Will Pass" documenting the construction of another megaproject in this geography, the Third Bosporus Bridge and its accompanying Northern Marmara Motorway that opens the city to further infrastructural development (Dindar 2018).

[20] Despite their limited legal roles as administrative clerks, Erdoğan considers village *muhtars* a crucial ideological component of his regime, holding over 50 meetings with them over the course of his 7 years of his presidency.

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Figure 25. The gendarme rerouting our hike. Photo courtesy of Nick Hobs.

Figure 26. The cover of comic book magazine *Gırgır* responding to the construction of a new highway that will cut across the Middle Eastern Technical University's forests, a project launched under the Justice and Development Party but later reaffirmed as the main opposition party took control of the city's municipality. Then Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek

(since retired) tells *Snow White* "Shht!! Lady! You can't sleep here; a road will pass" (*Gırgır* 2013).

Yet the phrase "a road will pass" can also be used to mobilize dreams of infrastructural development, state intervention and the distribution of the spoils of economic growth – the hope that the passage of a road or the construction of a megaproject nearby might lead to affluence, that the project might render one's assets more valuable, or alternatively, lead to better resources and provisioning for a community. In such cases, the *consummative mood* is picked up by spectators that demand the completion of infrastructure and partake in its realization of their own accord. As noted above, the *Kanal İstanbul* project was originally launched into public consciousness as a speculative election promise in 2013 and only became a more concrete plan recently. In this sense, it has long haunted this geography with the path that the *Kanal* would take remaining a mystery until 2018, which became the source of intense speculation, rumors, and several defrauding schemes. At the height of this speculation there were as many as 10 different real estate agencies (or so I'm told) in Tayakadın, a village located on the Northern section of the *Kanal İstanbul* project, of around 3000 people. Similarly noting how, during the last 9 years, land prices in sites located near the projected routes for *Kanal İstanbul* saw up to ten-fold increase, Rolien Hyong and Murat Es write

> "Against the promise of collective welfare, megaprojects simulate private gain through individual and corporate speculation on land and real estate prices. Entreprenurial citizens are supposedly profiting as landowners or they can join the speculative game with the hope of getting rich through investment in a small plot of land" (Hoyng and Es 2020, 1739).

Such voluntary recruitment to the cause of infrastructural speculation is key to the way developmentalism allies itself with popular rightwing culture. The *consummative mood* is an iterative process then, linking together the persona of Erdoğan, local municipal figures like *muhtars*, individual landowners, influential local families and neoliberal subjects hoping to become real estate developers, part of the investor – family business owner – contractor complex.

Figure 27. From Bekir Dindar's photography series titled "A Road Will Pass" documenting the construction of another megaproject in this same geography, the Third Bosporus Bridge and its accompanying North Marmara Motorway that opens the city to further infrastructural development. Photo courtesy of Dindar.

Figure 28. A caricature by famous caricaturist Yiğit Özgür depicting an encounter between a wiseman and some bystanders. The wiseman explains to his disciple: "The road to wisdom is long. This is the road we are building today". Bystanders: "A road will pass. Let's make sure to buy some land here" (Özgür 2015).

It is important to reflect on the temporality of this statement "where a road *will pass".* This increased emphasis on the futurity of infrastructure in the Global South can mislead one about the complex temporalities of "completion" and "progress" associated with construction. As Gupta argues "the conventional view of infrastructure projects as beginning with planning and ending with inauguration misses the dynamic nature of infrastructural time" (Gupta 2018, 76). Walking the peripheries of the city one instead experiences the constant juxtaposing of futurity with the presence of decay and ruination (A. Gupta 2018, 76) as already definitive of what constitutes construction. One might argue that it is difficult to pinpoint what "completion" even means in the context of infrastructure. Not only is it commonplace for the construction of such projects to be delayed on purpose, as contractors and companies try to secure more favorable terms (Arıcan 2020a), but also such large projects will forever be repurposed, and subject to maintenance, renewal and expansion even after they are declared officially "complete". The very feelings infrastructure projects evoke are ambivalent and are reinvented as people's relations with and expectations of them are reconfigured (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018, 26; Carse and Kneas 2019; Hoyng and Es 2020). The anticipation and desire for completion, the desire to say, "there it is", to render determinate the complexities of infrastructure, is even more real than the completion of the physical structure itself.

Above I had noted the inverted nostalgia apparent within the ideology of neo-Ottomanism, the desire to occupy and plunder the future (Bargu 2021, 324). Similarly, the desire to render the future determinate, to exclaim "there it is!" can be thought alongside the desire for conquest. Indeed, the prevailing mood of JDP's megaprojects is precisely a sense of cynicism and opportunism coupled with displays of overt and often over the top sentimentality (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 219; Virno 2006, 17). The desire for sovereignty and imperial plunder for example, sits alongside the extraction of material benefits for oneself either as the

recipient of better "service" from the state, or as an entrepreneur looking to profit from rising property prices. In the JDP's megaprojects one can witness the intermixture on the one hand of unrestrained sentimentalism towards the Ottoman Empire, towards resurgence and towards imperial domination, while on the other the most cynical schemes of outright economic plunder, forced expulsions and seizure of property and of brutal exploitation.

It is at this level that destruction becomes programmed into everyday capitalist relations. One can note here the way president Erdoğan so often claims that it is in the essence (*fitrat*) of contemporary construction or mining that accidents and deaths ought to occur, naturalizing the high number of worker deaths that characterize Turkey's extractive industries. As Rob Nixon (Nixon 2011, 151) notes, if monumental architecture like megadams, bridges and waterways are part of a developmental imaginary, one of "catching up" with the West, they are often built through excluding "unimagined communities" who are physically displaced by state violence and ecological devastation. It is not for nothing that Dindar's series describes the construction of the North Marmara Motorway as a "corridor of massacre" (Dindar 2018) which yet again contributes to displacement and forced migration from the city's peripheries. As we will see in the coming chapters, construction of the *Northern Marmara Motorway* and the *İstanbul Airport* required the uprooting of 3 million trees, the devastation of multiple habitats including wallows and lakelets, and the disruption of the migratory paths of around 700 thousand birds that migrate between Africa and Europe via the Northern Forests. Not to mention the waves of displacement that such ecological disruption requires. As we will elaborate in Chapter 2, *The Materialism of Disaster,* Bora's concept of "appetite for construction" doubles as a desire towards ecological destruction, a regime of capitalist catastrophe.

Masculinity, Intimacy and Sovereignty: The *Pavyon* and the Family

Last, the concept of consummation inevitably communicates ideas of sexuality and intimacy. While this is true in English, it is perhaps even more so in Turkish.[21] The word consummation enters Turkish through French as "*konsomasyon."* This loanword is explicitly used in the context of *pavyon* culture – the Turkish equivalent to a strip club. In this context, k*onsomasyon* (often shortened as *kons)* is the general name sex workers use to describe the practice of flirting with and hustling Johns. While Johns buy drinks and food for the table (which are often assigned inflated prices) they also present the *konsomatris* (sex workers) with lavish gifts like watches and phones. According to Osman Özarslan's ethnography of night life in a small Anatolian town (Özarslan 2016), such expenditures are closely associated with performances of hegemony, generating games of competition and one-upmanship between waiters, club owners and clientele. A distinct convention of the *pavyon*, as Özarslan notes, is how the exchange of money between the *konsomatris* and the Johns within the walls of the *pavyon* is generally frowned upon (Özarslan 2016, 80). Rather the *konsomatris* receive a cut of the money spent at the table from the owner of the *pavyon.* Such disavowal of exchange works to obfuscate the underlying purchase of a service.[22] Even when the money paid to the club is referred to, it is done so not as money "spent" (*para harcamak*) but rather as money "squandered" (*para ezmek*) (Özarslan 2016, 82).

Adding to the association between consummation and hegemony is the fact that it is not unusual for potential business partners to visit the *pavyon* together. In these cases, the gifts and

[21] Hence the English language phrase "consummating a marriage" and various English common law ideas about marriage rituals.

[22] Outside of the *pavyon*, the *konsomatris* may agree to have sex with the Johns in exchange for cash but the more common scenario is for them to hustle the clients without consummating the encounter. In either case, in describing the code of conduct one must follow at a *pavyon*, one of Ozarslan's interviewees explains, "you show money either to a pimp or a prostitute" (Özarslan 2016, 80). The subtext of such a claim is the fantasy that the konsomatris are not *really* sex workers and that the interaction is not *actually* the purchase of a service. Of course, Ozarslan's ethnography presents a limited view of the complexities and workings of the *pavyon* told from the very limited perspective of Johns.

splendor one is able to demonstrate at the *pavyon* might determine one's standing with partners or government officials; indeed, it might even determine whether one's bid winds up being awarded a contract in a construction project. Or alternatively, in her ethnographic work, Demet Dinler explains how garbage collectors can sometimes spend their hard earnt money at *pavyon*s, specifically to ameliorate feelings of alienation and denigration they feel when navigating urban space searching for paper to recycle (Dinler 2014, 102). In such cases, the work of the *konsomatris*, as well as those of the waiters and club owners that serve the garbage collectors, function as an emotional labor of "obedience and compassion" (Dinler 2014, 103). In either case, *konsomasyon* seems to sustain and reproduce games of masculinity. The performance of consummation is intractable from motifs of masculinity, hegemony, and sovereignty. So much so that the *pavyon* itself has also become a metaphor for political power and influence within cultural representation.[23] What does the fact that we encounter the *pavyon* at so many places where urban life is produced tell us about the relation between masculinity, construction, and *consummation?*

Perhaps an important comparison here is with the institution of the family, which plays a special role in far-right politics in Turkey. Above, I had noted Yusuf's disappointment that I hadn't any children. This language of familial bonds and intimacies is also operative in other aspects of megaproject construction. Consider the following interview Bengi Akbulut and Fikret Adaman conduct with a street vendor from İstanbul, who was asked about what he thinks of the newly built İstanbul Airport,

> "I have never been on a plane and … not likely that I ever will. But I am very very proud of Erdoğan's [Third Airport] project. True, we sacrificed some of our forests, but … look … it's the biggest in the world, no?" "Erdoğan is like an elder brother to me … a core member of the family who takes care of you … and thanks to him I'm respected in this country … I'm taken seriously … and thanks to him that people like myself became real citizens of this country" (Adaman and Akbulut 2020, 278).

[23] In his 2017 song *The Taste of My City* ("Şehrimin Tadı"), Ezhel (2017) raps about Turkey's capital and his hometown of Ankara. Pointing to the unemployment and immiseration that Ankara's youth face, *Ezhel* explains "this entire town is a *pavyon*/ and we have no money."

This language of sacrifice and familial bonds is a theme that I myself have witnessed in my encounters with Justice and Development Party supporters as we will see in Chapter 2. Moreover, this sense that "ecological sacrifice" is the price one has to pay on the way to national glory is especially pertinent amidst Erdoğan's fans. How does such kinship become imagined? How is the construction of an airport related to one's ability to imagine Erdoğan as an elder brother?

One can begin by noting the role "family-businesses" play in Turkish politics, especially in the realm of construction. The power base of the political Islamist movement in Turkey emerged in the 1990s from organizations such as MÜSİAD (the Independent Industrialists and Businesspersons Association) (Buğra and Savaş 2014, 78–79), representing some11.000 businesspeople from such small and medium enterprises often owned by families (Gürdal 2022, 160).[24] During the 1990s, as Ayşe Buğra observes, Islamic forms of finance were less codified and were subject to less oversight by the Turkish Capital Markets Board (*Sermaye Piyasaları Kurumu*). This meant that forms of trust, including familial relations, played a much bigger role for the businessmen of MÜSİAD (Buğra and Savaş 2014, 193). The more successful of these businesspeople came to be described as the "Anatolian Tigers" of the Turkish economy for their close association with export-led economic growth (Buğra 2014).[25]

[24] This association was originally setup as a conservative rival to TÜSİAD (Turkish Industrialists and Businesspersons Association) and the contrast is important to understand. TÜSİAD has around 4500 members many of which are geographically concentrated in and around İstanbul. It represents the bulk of Turkey's trade with Europe and North America and at least in the 1990s represented larger, more corporate, and conglomerate forms of capital. Around the time Erdoğan became mayor of İstanbul, MÜSİAD had come to present an alternative as the voice of small-to-medium-sized-enterprises (SMEs), often owned by conservative business owners. In fact, MÜSİAD was an important vehicle through which political Islam and capitalism first came to accept one another in the early 90s, with the association releasing a booklet titled "Homo Islamicus" in 1994, echoing the ideals of the neoliberal figure of homo economicus.

[25] The reference is to the notion of the Asian Tigers countries like China, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore which came to occupy a more central role in the world economy during the 1990s and 2000s thank to their export-led economic growth. For more on the relation between Asian Tigers and the transformation of global political economy, see (Arboleda 2020).

In her recent work, Melinda Cooper (2022) explains how the small family business has increasingly become a fantasy of alt-right political formations in the United States, looking to challenge the more corporate and anonymous forms of capital that are represented by the mainstream of the Democratic and Republican parties. Subtending this political fiction of the independent small family business is an economic association around industries such as construction, which rely on dense networks of family-owned businesses and subcontractors. Studying such associations, Cooper traces how "the interests of the smallest spousal production units are tethered to the fortunes of extensive business dynasties," in ways that nonetheless does not extend to the informal worker or the independent contractor (Cooper 2022).

Similarly, rather than representing the interests of idyllic family businesses the companies of MÜSİAD have grown massively over the JDP's 20 years in power (Gürdal 2022). Dynasties of wealth and corporatist power have come to form the basis of Turkey's political economic regime with the construction industry representing a key site for the accumulation of such dynastic wealth (Madra and Yılmaz 2019). Yet such dynasties are also tied to an extensive network of smaller, often family-owned subcontractors and petite bourgeois a group that has historically allied itself with right wing and fascist movements (Sotiris 2016). Such familial networks, present a political economic as well as a desiring assemblage, extending from dynasties such as Kuzu İnşaat; Cengiz İnşaat; Torunlar GYO; Varyap all of which are crucial political economic actors in Turkey's megaprojects (Yesilbag 2016, 188); to smaller business units like that of Yusuf; tying both to a familial mode of imagining political authority and legitimacy. If Erdoğan appears as a member of the family, it is doubtless in part due to such familial ties subtending the Turkish economy. Similar to Cooper's observations in the US, in Turkey the interests of informal workers making the bulk of the construction industry, particularly if they are already excluded from citizenship through their asylum seeker status, are opposed to and excluded from this familial network. As we will see in Chapter 3, this is

perhaps why the construction industry is responsible for one of the highest number of deaths in the Turkish economy.

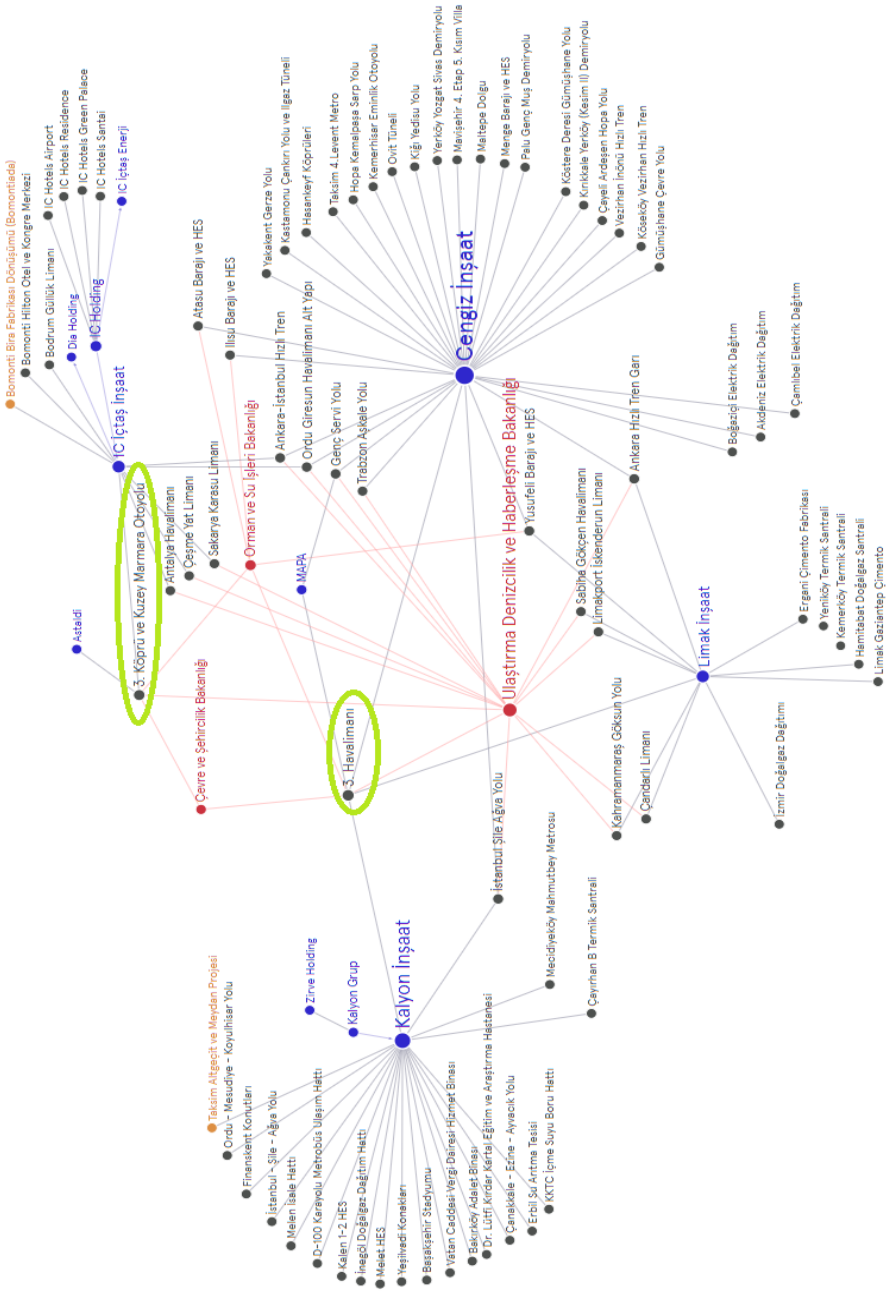


Figure 29. The network of family-owned businesses behind the İstanbul Airport and the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, both of which are circled. Image from the mapping initiative Mülksüzleştirme Ağları (Networks of Dispossession) - https://mulksuzlestirme.org/

How do we understand these two apparatuses, the family and the *pavyon*, both in terms of their relation to sexuality and in terms of their relation to *consummation?* Feminist and queer

theorists have for a long time mobilized the analytics of sexuality and intimacy not as a turn away from structures of domination but rather to relocate their conditions of possibility within the constructions of gender, belonging, and the nuclear family (Wilson 2016, 259). Consummative mood, as the enjoyment extracted from concluding cycles of social production, similarly bears such a relation with sexuality, allowing us to chart the intimate sources of domination. In particular, sexuality informs our understanding of the relation between consummation, reproduction, and sovereignty. Comparing the small family business with the *pavyon* allows us to chart how the relation between consummation and masculinity exists across multiple scales at which urban space is produced – from the expenditure of construction the consumption of such and such millions of dollars, the risky investments of the small family businesses like that of Yusuf, to the intimate consummative acts of a waste worker in a *pavyon.*

Such acts of consummation are reminiscent of what Jack Bratich, borrowing from Judith Butler calls "autogenetic sovereignty" – the fantasy of a subject that creates itself *ex nihilo* (Bratich 2022). Such autogenetic sovereignty ultimately functions, as Butler notes, as a masculinist disavowal of material dependency and relationality (Butler 2013). One can observe such autogenetic sovereignty at work in relation to figures of self-made millionaires – "I did it and it'll exist" as the construction magnate Ali Ağaoglu declared. Yet as Bratich notes the autogenetic subject has a much deeper meaning than the image of the self-made man (Bratich 2022). In this sense, there is a special role the desire for consummation, to finish things, to bring cycles of social production to a close has with autogenesis. At the moment in which exchange occurs, the money is spent, the resources are consumed, it becomes possible to assert sovereignty precisely in such autogenetic terms. One can recall here how Marxist feminist authors have for a long time noted the reproductive character of sex work and housework, as two forms of labor that reproduce the peculiar commodity of labor power (Fortunati 1989; Gonzalez 2013). While forms of unpaid work are always implied in capitalism's circuit of

reproduction, the specific history of patriarchy means that this unpaid work is often gendered as women's work. The autogenetic masculine subject exists in relation to this patriarchal history as its expression at the level of subjectivation.

It is helpful to repeat that the nuclear family and even the *pavyon* exist as apparatuses for the reproduction of such masculinity. Yet both also existed under the JDP alongside a strengthening conservatism. Turkish politics has witnessed the re-entrenchment of social conservatism under the JDP regime, the country's embrace of a new politics of morality that cannot as Evren Savcı notes "be reduced to the logic of neoliberalism or to that of Islam alone" (Evren 2021, 21–22). This has been born out not only by state policies which has sought to ban pride marches, crack down on NGOs, tightening of abortion access, and outright attacks on women and queer people, but also by conservative interest groups and think tanks who have since organized public demonstrations in defense of the nuclear family against the increasing political salience of queer resistance. The effect of this moralization of politics, Savcı explains (2021, 23), is the widening of marginalization and the over-coding of neoliberal binaries of deserving/undeserving, or one might add, productive/unproductive as so-called Islamic values.[26]

Conclusion: Consummation, Sovereignty, and Economic Growth

I've hinted above that an important feature of Turkey's current regime has been a "megaproject driven growth-path" and the crises and limitations this growth path has encountered in the past 10 years, especially as the availability of cheap money has become harder to sustain due to both internal and external economic factors (Tuğal 2022, 2). Under the Justice and Development Party's reign, economic growth has benefited from historically low interest rates, an arrangement that especially benefits the export-oriented businesspeople of

[26] There is a need to explore further the crises and alliances between neoliberalism and neoconservatism as they appear in Turkish politics in a comparative register, especially with similar work in the US (Cooper 2017).

MÜSİAD. Yet the lived content of this economic growth has turned out to be increased dependency on factors and institutions beyond the sphere of democratic control, the value of the dollar, credit ratings, the movements of foreign capital. As the low interest rate context that undergirds construction activity has become harder to maintain, economic fortunes for the vast majority of people living in Turkey crumpled. Consider that since 2008 financial crisis the Turkish lira has lost 80% of its value against the dollar, while yearly consumer price inflation has climbed to 48% as of January 2022 according to official numbers and as high as 114% according to independent research groups.[27] Such inflation deeply affects people's livelihoods in uneven ways, as capital is borrowed in dollars whereas wages are paid in Turkish liras. Such dynamics have created both a wave of strike actions among delivery workers, miners and construction workers, as well as a wave of student protests against the increasing cost of rent. In this sense, growth has come at the expense of increasing immiseration and poverty.

Compared to the earlier decade between 1990-2000, the JDP's reign has been one of historically low interest rates. In fact, Erdoğan has been extremely hesitant in raising interest rates, intervening directly in central bank policy in a move that directly defies monetarist principles. Ümit Akçay explains, this is partially because low interest rates are crucial for the construction sector, which depends on cheap loans. When the Turkish Central Bank temporarily raised interest rates in lockstep with the US Federal Reserve in 2018, this created a crisis for the construction sector, leading to thousands of contractors declaring bankruptcy, rising unemployment and the Justice and Development Party losing two major municipal elections in Ankara and İstanbul (Akçay 2021, 90). Yet the decision to double down on low interest has had disastrous effects in Turkey, which has included the country's sovereign credit

[27] Paul Benjamin Osterlund, 'As Turkey's Inflation Rate Climbs, Workers Strike for Pay Hikes,' *Al Jazeera*, February 15, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/2/15/as-turkeys-inflation-rate-climbs-workers-strike-for-pay-hikes.

ratings plummeting while the value of the Turkish lira fell by a remarkable 80% against the dollar over the last five years alone.

There is then a contradiction at work here. On the one hand economic growth promises sovereignty. On the other, especially in the Global South, it produces dependency. The object of one's desire, "the economy," becomes the obstacle to one's flourishing (Berlant 2011). One way to think about this contradiction is through the concept of consummation. If consummation describes an abstract desire for accumulation, a desire to anticipate and realize value, economic growth concretizes this imperative, tying it up with a sense of collective and national sovereignty that manifests across ideological, social, and biophysical terms (Schmelzer, Vansintjan, and Vetter 2022, 37). Indeed, ideas about sovereignty, autonomy and freedom have been crucial to how economic growth has been imagined, particularly in Western thought. As Pierre Charbonnier argues, a "society based on growth permeate(s) and guide(s) the meaning we give to liberty" (Charbonnier 2021, 4). The notion of autonomy presented in contemporary political thought, is conceived through a related rationality of "affluence", one of emerging from conditions of material dependency and overcoming of "needs" (Charbonnier 2021, 24-25). This rationality becomes pertinent during the 19th century and later in the aftermath of the Second World War (Charobnnier 2021, 26), as ideas about self-governance and autonomy are being reinterrogated through movements of decolonization. In the post-WWII Global North, the promise of economic growth becomes a counter-revolutionary compromise that limits the horizons of emancipatory struggles, after all economic growth would benefit everyone, including the working class, the argument goes. Yet this promise is itself founded on displacing class conflict in the Global North onto increased violence deployed in sites of extraction in the Global South (Schmelzer, Vetter and Vansintjan 2022).

Yet whereas in the Global North economic growth exists as a displacement of contradictions, in countries like Turkey, the distribution of the spoils of economic growth are

more uneven and less clear. And the ideology of "economic growth" is often presented as one of catching up with, overcoming and rivalling "the West". In Turkey then growth exists more fully as a tool of political legitimation. The Turkish state has continuously legitimated itself through economic growth, coopted oppositional issues and suppressed class conflict (Akbulut 2019). In this chapter, I have attempted to interrogate the desiring economy of such legitimation, how it necessarily traverses the state's control and opens onto a broader microfascism that exists both in neoliberal and neoconservative articulations. In this sense, there is an isomorphy between how economic growth is imagined and how sovereignty is imagined that is crucial to understanding the construction of popular autocracy. The consummative joy extracted from economic growth is tied to the construction of an intimate, shareable, and popular sovereignty. Such sovereignty not only accounts for historical feelings of inferiority and *ressentiment* that Turkish modernity bears in relation to its Western counterpart (Tokdoğan 2018; Yilmaz 2017), as an overcoming of the conditions of economic dependency enforced on peripheral geographies like Turkey by global capital, but also easily transforms into feelings of supremacy, enmity and domination. Indeed, alongside Turkey's on-going occupation of Northern Syria and Rojava, as the Turkish economy began to falter after 2016, the Justice and Development Party began embracing a rhetoric of "economic warfare" arguing that the Turkish economy was being held back by a conspiracy of globalist forces, afraid of an economically dominant Turkey. Such is the soil where the consummative mood transforms into a form of fascism, a pure line of destruction.

The JDP's last 6 years in government has been marked by political instability and an incoherent regime that, as Cihan Tuğal notes, that at times works alongside neoliberal institutions, at times butting heads with them (Tuğal 2022). In its most advanced form, the *consummative mood* can shed its ideological alliance to the neoliberal order and more openly express its reactionary character, as a project of sovereignty. Remember that the JDP's

economic policy has flown in the face of neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, causing direct investment to flee the country over the past 6 years. Much like micro-fascism, at the level of a regime the *consummative mood* can prove too unruly for international capital, which as Felix Guattari might remind us (Félix Guattari 2008, 173), prefers the orderly and predictable totalitarianism of controlled investment; the re-establishment of austerity, the raising of interest rates, the further suppression of wages. The *consummative mood* then appears as a runoff tendency of capitalism, produced within its dynamics, and invoked by state apparatuses, but continuously remaining in excess of their capture. This is perhaps why the desire for consummation finds common cause in the alt-right ideology of neo-Ottomanism, bleeding from capitalism into the micro-fascism, while not yet cohering into a fully realized fascist regime.

The intricate relation between the popular imagination of economic growth and that of sovereignty is important to note. Indeed, building on the example of Turkey, authors like Akbulut have noted how questioning the narrative of economic growth necessarily requires one to question the configuration of state-society relations and the articulation of political subjectivity implied therein (Akbulut 2019, 515). This means that overcoming Turkey's neoliberal authoritarianism requires a more thorough confrontation with the ideology of economic growth and the ways in which it mobilizes the desire for consummation. Such a confrontation requires a conversation between the economic analyses of the degrowth literature and the political project of anti-fascism. Ultimately, it requires an alternative political project, one of degrowth communism.

Chapter 2. The Shores of Yeniköy:

Between Two Seas and The Materialism of Disaster

You cannot miss them. They are everywhere. Little pieces of construction rubble and waste first greet you as you approach Yeniköy from the south, passing first the newly constructed airport and then the dust covered buildings of the village itself. As you pass the town towards the shoreline, a more densely distributed frontier of rubble forms – concrete pieces, metal bars, pieces of plastic shredded and hardened with the waves, even the odd beaten-down hard hat. "This is the Black Sea. It is harsh, obstinate. It'll swallow up this pile of trash and fling it back at our faces", one of the inhabitants tells me as we walk across the shore. I spot a protruding area I had read about before (Pişkin 2020). İSTAÇ, a state-owned corporation charged with handling dumpsites for construction waste, is said to have transformed this area into a landfill for rubble extracted during the ongoing construction of the İstanbul Airport (3. Havalimanı İşçileri Dayanışma Platformu et al. 2020). In the calmer waters of the Marmara Sea, south of İstanbul near the Prince Islands, construction rubble dumped illegally on the shore has smoothened and withered overtime. While the waste has proved poisonous to the coral reefs that used to populate the shores of the islands, the pieces of rock and rubble dumped onto the shores have also slowly transformed into pebbles of various unique colors and shapes. In their short video essay, Elif Kendir-Beraha, Aslıhan Demirtaş and Ali Mahmut Demire (Pera Müzesi 2021b) propose a taxonomic classification for this pebble-ized form of rubble, *Calx Ruderalis Subspecies İstanbulensis,* "Calx for pebble, Ruderalis for rubble in Latin". Made from "zombified remnants of old buildings" the artists describe the process of pebblization as the creation of "monstrous" bodies (Pera Müzesi 2021b). Now, on the shores of Yeniköy I find myself wondering how the choppy waters of the Black Sea will shape this new layer of construction rubble, whether the rubble will harden, intensify and sediment itself into the geological and social histories that already shape İstanbul's coastlines.

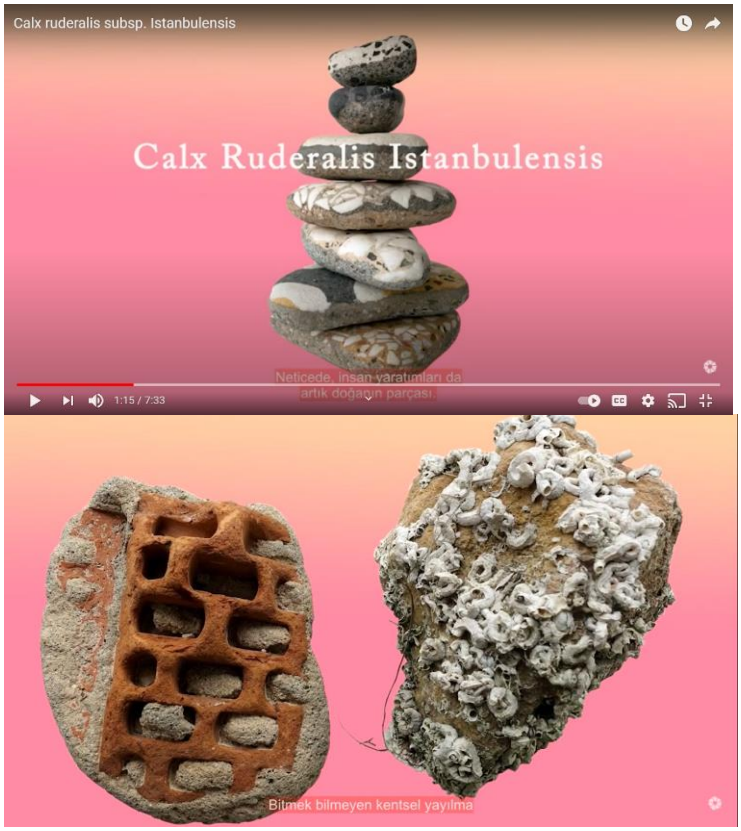


Figure 30. Images from *Calx Ruderalis İstanbulensis* (Pera Müzesi 2021b).

I am here as part of an artwork, a walking path called *Between Two Seas*, designed by maker/facilitator Serkan Taycan. Described simultaneously as an art project, a hiking route, and a call to intervention, *Between Two Seas* was first publicly presented at the 2013 İstanbul Biennale. The path lies on the "peripheries" of the city, to the West of the most populous neighborhoods beginning from the village of Yeniköy and following South to the major residential areas of Küçükçekmece and Halkalı. So much of this geography is shaped by the ruins of construction and extraction that has determined Turkey's neoliberal developmentalism. Yet Taycan describes the walking route as "perhaps the most auspicious 'project' that will open a 'passage' between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea" (Taycan 2014). Here, he is making a not–so–veiled reference to *Kanal İstanbul*, the other "passage" that

is being charted along this route, discussed in the previous section. Affectionately described by the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan as his "crazy project" during the 2011 election campaign, Kanal İstanbul is a mega-infrastructure project that would dredge up a 40-km-wide and 150-meter-deep waterway between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. This passageway would create a second, artificial canal between the two seas thus transforming the western half of İstanbul into an island. The project would swallow most of what is left of the forests north of the city, destroy one of the few freshwater deposits left in the city, displace tens of thousands of people often from poorer and racialized backgrounds, destroy the unique ecology of the Bosporus Sea, while opening a new frontier of expansion for İstanbul. Since the walking route deliberately follows the proposed route of the canal, most of that too would be under water. Today, dredging work seems looming even if temporarily delayed by the advent of the COVID crisis. This ruined and wastelanded geography that haunts and accompanies İstanbul will soon be underwater.

Taycan who helped designed the walking route in 2013 jokes about how he finalized the walking route prior to the official path of the Kanal İstanbul project being announced in 2018, claiming, "The government stole the route from me!" In this path we encounter not only a series of megaprojects that the government announced in 2011 but also the resources and excesses of the city, dumping sites for construction waste, graveyards, old stone quarries, and lignite mines, water buffalos, old garbage patches, dogs rounded up in trucks from urban neighborhoods and jailed in confinement centers, treasure hunters looting the remains of the city's past lives and all forms of informal work that fall on the outskirts of the wage relation. Taycan explains how *Between Two Seas* provides a peripheral perspective on urban space, pairing the walking route with a series of photography exhibits.

The village of Yeniköy lies at the northern most entrance of the proposed canal, a few kilometers off the *Yedikumlar* shore, located between the Terkos lake, which provides an important source of fresh water in İstanbul as well as the newly built *İstanbul Airport*. Sentiment towards megaprojects seem to have shifted over the past 5 years. A previous ethnography of the same area describes a widespread support for the construction of the airport, with the inhabitants of the town believing such project were important for the development of the country and would create opportunities for employment (*istihdam sağlamak*) (Keskin 2015, 115 also Adaman and Akbulut 2020). Certainly, outside of the peripheries, the supporters of the *JDP* still take pride in the Airport along the lines of an affective ecology of consummation I've outlined in Chapter 1. While it's been difficult to find supporters of the JDP when I carried out my walks with a larger group, in a couple of the solitary walks I have conducted my interlocutors hesitantly explained their support for the construction project. Emir, an unregistered taxi driver who helped drive me to *Yeniköy* when I missed the morning bus one day, explained to me why he felt conflicted about the airport.

> "Now I'm not a JDP supporter. But you're an educated man, you tell me. True, maybe some of the villagers there lost some land as you said. But surely, they were recompensated. And aren't you proud? They say it's the biggest airport in the world! How can anyone who loves their country not be proud of that? Think of what that means for the economy. No matter what you think, at least these guys get the job done (*adamlar işi biliyor*)."

Emir's characterization of the airport construction is perfectly in line with the consummative aesthetics of construction and the way this aesthetics helps ground the fetish character of economic growth that I've outlined in the previous section. The association of construction with "getting the job done", the pride Emir feels in the idea that the İstanbul Airport is the "biggest" and the sense that the size of the construction project is in line with economic progress even if this progress isn't directly experienced by Emir himself.

Yet from Yeniköy, things seem different. In fact, at the face of fledgling economic growth and high inflation the very narrative of the JDP's pragmatism and competence has been put under question. Villagers opposing the canal explain,

> "Most of us don't want it. When the airport was being built, I was one of the people who most supported it. We were compensated for it after all. Yet now our entire village might be swallowed. These are the lands our grandparents sought refuge in. Our ancestors are buried here".
>
> "They already stabbed us in the back with the Airport. And now they want to kill us with this *Kanal* (Pişkin 2020)".

No doubt the villagers' experience with rubble and debris during the construction of the *İstanbul Airport* in 2018 has affected how they view the *Kanal* İstanbul project. And the ancestral story of refuge, land and work creates a completely different context. Perhaps earlier the promise of economic growth and national greatness had gripped this village too. Yet today the material debris that slips from underneath this complex has become harder to ignore. In his *Continent in Dust*, Jerry Zee proposes to study the economic development of China as a meteorological and geophysical phenomenon, the literal rise of China up into the air as continental dust (Zee 2022). This chapter similarly studies the economic development of Turkey as a material phenomenon – as the literal accumulation of debris.

Taking my cue from this shift from a narrative of economic growth to one of disaster and refuge, I study the shores of Yeniköy as a disaster landscape, produced over multiple generations of loss, migration, war, and extraction. Rather than understanding disaster as located in a single moment of destruction however, Yeniköy presents an opportunity to interrogate the materialism of disaster, as one intensifying and inciting ongoing processes of destruction – construed here as an *event*. In the following pages I first shift the narrative of the past 20 years of economic growth and construction from one of progress to an ongoing disaster that builds on and intensifies existing forms of violence. I then outline disaster capitalism as an unstable regime of polarization and escape that allows for disasters to playout rather than

intervening in them directly. Last, I outline a materialism of disaster that is able to account for destruction and loss as constitutive parts of an ecology rather than as something to be suppressed or overcome. Fueled by state violence, neoliberal development, and the imperative of infinite economic growth capitalist disaster presents a logic of polarization and escape – one where extraction and destruction are accompanied by incompatible excess.

Strolling Yeniköy: A Sedimental History of Disaster

The village of Yeniköy numbers around 1143 people today. Since its founding, there has been what Yoann Morvan and Sinan Logie describe as "a plate tectonics of migratory strata" (2013, 46) in the greater Arnavutköy area (which includes Yeniköy). Since the area is immediately adjacent to a former imperial capital, this makes the area a site of intense demographic and geological changes. Prior to the 20th century, Arnavutköy was inhabited by multiple ethnic and religious groups, most prominently Orthodox Christians of Greek origin often described as Rum. During this time Yeniköy's surroundings would source İstanbul with both food - meat, buffalo milk, clotted cream – as well as fuel like charcoal and firewood. In the 19th century, this relation of providing resources to the city seems to have intensified. This was partly due to the region experiencing increasing migration from the multiple wars that had ensued in the 18th and 19th century between the Ottoman and Russian empires. It was also due to the establishment of a gunpowder factory near the Küçükçekmece lake further south in 1796, which seems to have solidified this relation of industrial extraction. As the Azadlu factory was established, Yeniköy was granted exemption from imperial taxes in exchange for providing firewood, milk, charcoal, and labor. According to some this factory was forebearer of the early emergence of industrial relations in the Ottoman Empire (Şakul 2016, 92) – an example of the multiple factories around the Küçükçekmece lake. So much so, that in the 1840s this area came to be described by a Scottish traveler as the 'Turkish Birmingham' to indicates its significance in the Ottoman industrial revolution (E. C. Clark 1974, 68).

Figure 31. What remains today of the Şamlar Bendi, a damn that once helped power the Azadlu factory. Day 3 of the Between Two Seas map. Photo Courtesy of Nick Hobbs.

In the early 20th century the area once again encounters demographic change. This comes first in the shape of the Gallipoli War 1915-196 which still weights heavy in both Turkish nationalist imaginaries and in the collective memory of the area. While erased from mainstream narratives of martyrdom and sacrifice, the late 19th and early 20th centuries of the Ottoman Empire's collapse are marked by a populationist strategy that focused both on Turkification (Ünlü 2016) and on campaigns of extermination, the most horrific of which is the Armenian Genocide (Suny 2017). A continuation of this populationist strategy on the outskirts of İstanbul was the 1923 population exchange agreement between the newly forming nation-states of Greece and Turkey, an agreement which witnessed the forced displacement of 1.5 million people collectively. As the population exchange agreement operated on the basis of religion rather than ethnicity, many different peoples of non-Christian origin were relocated

to Turkey including Albanian, Patriyot and Pomak people. The town's older inhabitants explain how their parents escaped war and poverty.

> "They witnessed so much war… We were 500 people all from one village. At least 150-200 of us died during the journey. They waited for a ship in Thessoloniki for 2-3 months. Hunger and poverty! Then the British ships came, cargoships that is… This was all a terrible disaster… I had listened to all of this from our ancestors, from my grandfather and grandmother" (C. U. Baysal 2020b).

The villagers located in Yeniköy were originally offered farming land in Adana,[28] but they preferred the outskirts of İstanbul as it provided both plentiful forests available for chopping down and using as fuel as well as grasslands for grazing, a geography that was somewhat familiar to their villages of origin across the Aegean.

For many inhabitants of İstanbul's peripheries this is a familiar enough story.[29] All across the greater region, there are stories of resettlement in the aftermath of the Republic's founding in 1923 and the population exchange of 1932.[30] In fact, people who have been here for longer are described by a special name, *Gacal*, to mark their unique history. As the demographics of these villages have changed yet again over the past 20 years, with younger generations leaving for the city center, thanks to the destructive effect the construction of the new airport has had on the village, a deep sense of belonging seems to have emerged among the older generation still inhabiting villages like Yeniköy.

Outside of Yeniköy there are also Roma, Kurdish and Syrian peoples living in the broader path I walked, particularly in more diverse neighborhoods such as Tayakadın. A security officer I met near Halkalı, guarding a large plot of land bought by a mysterious investor, explained to me how he was forced out of his Kurdish village in Van in the 1990s and

[28] It is important to note the layered nature of the regime of displacement, labor and land at stake here. Adana was the site of a pogrom a few years prior in 1909, when some 25,000 Armenians were killed by Ottoman Muslims living there.

[29] I have heard a similar story from my own grandfather, who as a child was displaced from a small village nearby the city of Katerini in Greece during the population exchange agreement.

[30] A last wave of resettlement takes place in 1955, after the 5-6 September pogroms against the Greek and Armenian inhabitants of İstanbul, although these events are more heavily focused around Beyoglu where I was living during this research.

subsequently first moved to the city center and then to İstanbul. This is also a familiar story for many Kurdish families who were forced to flee their homes in response to the Turkish military's campaign of forced expulsion in its ongoing war against the PKK (the Kurdish Workers' Party), an armed guerilla movement advocating increased political autonomy throughout Kurdistan (van Etten et al. 2008). The guard explained how he worked first in a construction company building the houses in what is now known as Taşkent. After sustaining injuries that left him unable to work at a construction site, he became a security guard.

These various relations of identity are immediately linked to various relations of labor and land. The villagers of Yeniköy alongside with those of Tayakadın explain how after their resettlement they worked together pooling their resources to purchase 9 thousand acres worth of land, on a 20-year payment plan.

> "My mother told me, for 20 years they bought nothing. Not even shoes to wear. Because for 20 years they worked to pay off their installments. Those who had money owned 4 shares, those who had less 3, 2 even half a share. They divide it up amongst themselves, putting up fences. All of it including the forest was shared under a single deed" (Baysal 2020).

This relationship to land and especially to the forest is transformed however, as the city begins more heavily to rely on coal as an electricity source. Under a 1945 conservation law, most of the forest area sold to the villagers was repossessed by the state. In the following years, this area was leased back to private mining companies like *Milten Holding* that spearheaded the search for lignite mines in the region. Once the lignite mines were developed, the coal generated from these mines continued to power the *Silahtarağa Power Plant,* the sole power station in İstanbul until 1950 (Şakul 2016).

Villagers explain how the newly opened lignite mines completely transformed the landscape of Yeniköy.[31] Yeniköy is located just below the *Yedikumlar* Beach. The name

[31] The construction industry has mined most of this sand. Sand now is either imported from the rivers in the Thrace region further west of *İstanbul* or much more commonly mined from the seabed and treated to remove salt, seashells, and particulates. (Phone interview with EK a retired owner of local sand mining company, April 2021)

Yedikumlar (Sevensands) refers to an area stretching out from Kilyos to Karaburun, so named after the sand dunes that used populate this shore. In the 2014 version of Taycan's map, the area surrounding the town is described as a landscape riddled with holes, almost like a scene out of a movie,

> "Walk towards the hill. The lignite mines are still on your left. From this point on, the path will pass through the old mine site for about 3 kilometers. Follow the path that continues downhill over the side of the mine site. Descend onto the defunct mine site. The view that you will encounter with plants growing on the colorful hill formed by the old remains of the mine on the right resembles a scene out of the movie "Mad Max"" (Taycan 2014).

When I first walked Taycan's map I was curious to see what was left of this postindustrial landscape. The lignite mines described by the map became operational during World War I. Lignite is a specific stratification of coal, the youngest in terms of geological time, less compressed by sedimentation. It is therefore graded as the lowest quality of coal, harder to transport, able to generate the least amount of heat and the most toxic forms of waste. Yet the production of coal from these mines didn't pick up speed until World War I, when the higher-calorie coal imported from the town of Zonguldak (near the Black Sea) became less accessible as the city's supply lines fell under threat (Şakul 2016; Kömürlü 2020). Lignite was a way to supplement the city's coal with something that was possible to mine cheaply and quickly. The relative youth of lignite in terms of geologic time, meant that the holes generated by their mining were shallow, running only 5-15 meters deep and requiring low-skilled forms of labor, operated by privates at the Ottoman military during World War I (by a "peons battalion" *amele taburu* -constituted heavily by non-Muslim recruits) and later taken over by the town's inhabitants. The mining of lignite also transformed the shoreline as it required the flooding and dredging of the seashore itself. Although today lignite holds a more marginal position in social life, for a long time the smell of lignite was the smell of working-class sociality in a way that cut across the rural and urban divide – lignite not only powered factories but also warmed the

shanty houses constructed by newcomers on the outskirts of the city. In his celebrated 1972 novel, *The Disconnected (Tutunamayanlar)* Oğuz Atay likens the smell of lignite to "the smell of alla Turca" as such (Atay 1993).[32]

As the city switched over from coal to imported natural gas and the lignite pits were slowly abandoned, completely shutting down by the 1990s, they were flooded by freshwater, becoming part of the wallows and lakelets that populate the area.[33] These newly formed lakelets soon became a refuge for cranes, catfish, carp, and flora. They also became a refuge for the water-buffalo, perhaps the best symbol of İstanbul's de-industrialization. Migrating from India to Cairo, Baghdad and later to Anatolia, water buffalos were prized in İstanbul for their milk during the late Ottoman and early Republican period. Even until a few decades ago, the villagers explain, it was not unusual for families to own multiple animals including goats and sometimes even water-buffalo. Reports put the official water buffalo population in Turkey to around 1 million around 1970s. For the villagers in Yeniköy owning buffalo required the provisioning of commonly held grazing lands, as well as access to the wallows that would help the buffalos cool in the hot summer months. Conversely, the provision of buffalo milk was crucial in İstanbul's food culture with clotted cream and rice pudding made from buffalo milk being a staple of festivals such as Ramadan and sourced some of the most iconic desert shops in İstanbul such as Beyoğlu's famous *Saray Muhallebicisi,* first opened in 1935.

However, with the introduction of intensive farming techniques and an official effort to de-agrarianize Turkey throughout the 1980s, the number of water buffalos in the country

[32] Alafranga and alaturka were originally musical terms that distinguished between "Western" and "Turkish" conceptions of rhythm and stlye (as in Mozart's famous *Rondo Alla Turca).* Throughout the 19th century and later in the early 20th century, alaturka became a more popular word in Ottoman and Turkish societies and transformed into general descriptive for anything that carried the ethos of indigeneity against Western styles and customs. Thus alaturka and alafranga became ways to distinguish not only musical styles but also notions of rhythm, ways of keeping time, even different types of bathroom (Gürel 2008; Wishnitzer 2015).

[33] This involved an ammendment to the Wetland Protection Regulation (*Sulak Alanların Korunması Yönetmeliği*) on April 4, 2014 a mere three months before the construction of the project began.

dwindled to a mere 80 thousand in 2008.[34] As the mines in Yeniköy were shutdown, buffalo "found refuge in the ruins of the flooded lignite pits, using them as wallows while they roamed through the landscape" alongside migratory birds (Cooking Sections 2020). More than an object of conservation, the lakes and wallows found here were an example of how the abandoned sites of industrial extraction can slip from underneath the cycles neoliberal accumulation.

Figure 32. The remains of opencast mine workings covered by construction trucks. Photo courtesy of Nick Hobbs.

[34] The number has risen back up to around 100 thousand, with around 14 thousand of these being located in İstanbul. However, as per a decision by the governorship buffalo herding in the province of İstanbul is planned to be phased out, a direct result of the Kanal İstanbul construciton project.

Figure 33. Images of the wallows before construction began. Photo courtesy of Nick Hobbs.

Yet the slow creep of concrete and rubble have also reached the lakes. One of the main construction companies that operates around this area is *Milten Holding*, the same company that ran the lignite mines. As *Milten* have built close ties with the Justice and Development Party, I am told, they have expanded into the construction sector, taking part in the construction of the *İstanbul Airport*, planning a yacht port, luxury residences, a shopping mall on the shores of the *Yedikumlar* area, as well as planning to take part in the construction of *Kanal İstanbul* (Kuzey Ormanları Savunması 2015). Today companies like *Milten* have filled the lakes they have previously dug up, with construction rubble and excavation brought from the construction site of the *İstanbul Airport*. Activists from *Kuzey Ormanları Savunması (KOS)* (2015) explain how some 70 lakelets have been destroyed over the course of construction. The water in these lakes was first used for utility and irrigation during the construction phase of the airport. Later, the remaining ditches were used to dump the rubble and earth excavated during construction. Dumping rubble and soil onto these lakes was thought to both deal with the problem of excavation and construction waste and reinforce the otherwise marshy foundations of the land on which the airport runway was constructed. One of the activists I have interview from *KOS*

explains how much she was hung up on the destruction of these lakes. “Isn’t it sad how, after all this destruction, and extraction they still have to destroy the very last vestiges of wilderness?”[35] When I ask Taycan how he feels about the lakes being destroyed he asks me back, “Yes, it’s sad of course. You know, I wonder what it would be like to insist that those lakes weren’t covered up with rubble and excavation? I wonder if that couldn’t be a form of degrowth?”[36]

Figure 34. Buffalos facing the Türk Telekom Stadium built between 2007-2011. Still from Gulia Frati’s *Echoes of İstanbul* 2015.

A trace of these lakes (and of Taycan’s question) survives in the art installation *Kalıcı Gölet* (Lasting Pond) by the group *Cooking Sections*. The work engages with buffalo herders in the Arnavutköy area collecting mud and clay dug along a wallow located near the Tayakadın village on Taycan’s path. The extracted clay is then used to make 1000 rice pudding *(sütlaç*) and yoghurt pots in collaboration with potter and archeologist Başak Gökalsın. The resulting

[35] Online interview with Seda Elhan of KOS.
[36] Online Interview with Serkan Taycan, March 2021.

pots are then arranged irregularly alongside a platform and displayed. Walking around *Lasting Pond* I am struck by the incline of the installation, calling to mind the uneven geography of the walking route. I also notice the irregular structure of the individual pots made out of different types of clay with different hues of brown, and their various shapes and sizes. More than anything else though, looking at the pots I cannot help but think of a giant Ramadan table, a festivity located inexplicably in the middle of this wallow amidst the earth and the muck. Such festivities of sharing are practices of abundance, of insisting that there is always more room at the table. Unsurprisingly, the limitless expansion of urban space and the desire for endless economic growth target and foreclose such gestures of abundance and commoning.

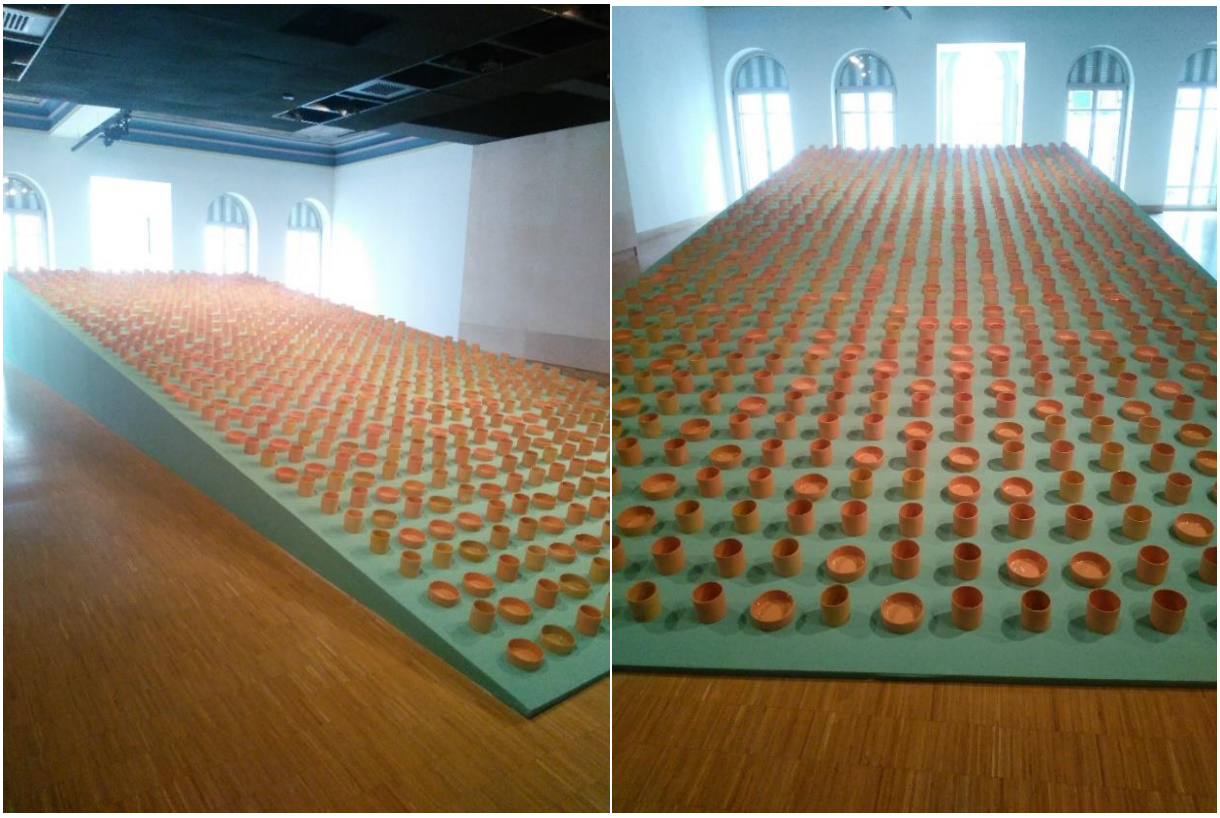


Figure 35. “Lasting Pond”, Cooking Sections 2020. Photo by author.

Three Approaches to Disaster: Event, Regime and Matter

Disaster as Event

For most of the inhabitants in Yeniköy the construction of the airport represents a disaster. As one inhabitant explains "This is such a violent and total disaster. I mean, who are you people? Leave this place alone! This is a village of 180 years; people have lived here for 180 years!" (C. U. Baysal 2020a). This was quite literally the disappearing of their village. What is perhaps most intriguing is the weird temporality of this disaster. How it repeats and intensifies past acts of violence, while also triggering new sedimental movements elsewhere. After all this is not the first time Yeniköy's inhabitants have encountered the state, capital or their extractivist workings upon this shore. Far from it, perhaps the most common experience for the multiple inhabitants of Yeniköy is that of seeking refuge from a disaster. Yet the construction of the airport seems to be a sort of inflection point. There is some irony, in the fact that the very lakelets that formed in the afterlives of İstanbul's industrialization, perhaps the very pits formed to extract sand, rock and coal, are once again filled with construction rubble.

As the video on *calx ruderalis* might indicate, such rubble is not new. Rather it is the result of a wave of destruction that has faced İstanbul over the past 30 years. Historians of architecture and urban space mark the 1980s as the beginning of neoliberal urban transformation in Turkey, with significant changes to financialization and urban development dating back to this era (Sert 2019). Yet this generic and more global story is reinforced in Turkey in through the 1999 earthquake centered around the towns of Gölcük and İzmit and leading to a significant amount of damage in the nearby city of İstanbul. The earthquake became crucial as a tool of legitimation for urban transformation projects once the Justice Development Party came to power in the 2002 elections. The well-founded fear of a new earthquake and the poor conditions of İstanbul's buildings were used to suppress the political struggles around urban transformation in this era. Scholars have described this post 2000s

period as the "mega-rubble era" (*mega-hafriyat dönemi*) in relation to the official legislative and financial program of urban transformation and mega-infrastructure construction that the JDP has been pursuing since the early 2000s and the amount of materials extracted and rubble produced as a result (Sert 2019, 72; Öztürk 2019).[37]

As an expression of this period, in June 2011, the ruling JDP promised to destroy and rebuild nearly half of the city's then 3 million buildings (Bilgin 2015). The announcement was framed as an effort to renew the city's building stock, as response to the threat of an earthquake that is expected to occur beneath İstanbul in the near future.[38] That same year, Erdogan announced the string of megaprojects associated with *Vision 2023,* which sought to grow the Turkish economy to one of the 10 largest economies of the world. As İmre Azem puts it in his short film *La Mekan* (Azem 2015) "all this destruction needed a justification". This justification was disaster itself, as the JDP used the looming threat of an earthquake to bolster its agenda of urban transformation. Rather than strengthening existing buildings, leading repair efforts and addressing the broader economic forces driving rapid urbanization (financialization, deagrarianization, gentrification), the government seized the opportunity to prop up the city's speculative property market by knocking down old buildings and constructing new ones. Aided by the JDP, the construction industry enacted a comprehensive program of destruction and dispossession, knocking down existing buildings, constructing newer and larger residences, and transforming the city's peripheries in the process. Meanwhile, the construction of the *İstanbul Airport* and the North Marmara Motorway (the other so called "megaproject connected with the city's expansion) irreversibly transformed the northern half of the city. In

[37] In this, İstanbul is not alone. Construction and demolition waste (CDW) is thought to contribute up to 40% of the worlds carbon dioxide emissions and the production of cement and concrete to help fuel speculative construction has become a world-wide problem (Miller 2021). And yet the JDP's ideological and political economic investment in construction-based growth has made the phenomena especially acute in İstanbul.

[38] This threat felt even more urgent with the memory of the 1999 earthquake. Burcu, who graciously hosted me at her place at the time, had personally experienced and survived the destruction of İzmit. She explained how living in İstanbul was a source of anxiety because she didn't trust the pace at which new buildings were being constructed and was suspicious of whether they would survive a new earthquake.

other words, the JDP and its program of urban transformation and infrastructure construction actualized the disaster foreshadowed by the earthquake itself, but in slow-motion. This regime of destruction was spread unevenly targeting Roma and Kurdish majority neighborhoods such as Sulukule and Sarıgöl in the case of urban transformation (Durmaz 2015; 2018) and ecological peripheries such as the Northern Forests in the case of megaprojects. Arguably, the Kanal project will only worsen this regime of disaster, as it is being built on alluvial soil, a fact acknowledged by the Environmental Impact Assessment carried out by the government itself, which as opposition groups often point out will be especially unstable when İstanbul is inevitably hit by another earthquake.

Concepts such as "disaster" (felaket), "destruction" (yıkım), "murder" (cinayet) have become the dominant lens with which to understand megaprojects and the destruction they unfold in Turkey. It is not uncommon to find politicians, scientists and activists describing the *Kanal* as a "disaster" project, a planned and scheduled catastrophe.[39] Perhaps this is because from the displacement of millions of Kurdish people in the 1990s, providing surplus construction labor, to the founding of megaprojects and the ecological destruction they outline, what characterizes Turkish politics is an accumulation of disasters, the outcomes of which became increasingly visible during my time in İstanbul. During my time there, Turkey was home to several such catastrophic events including an especially intense series of forest fires as well as the explosion of mucilage on the Marmara Sea.

The latter is especially interesting for this chapter. In her work on land reclamation projects across İstanbul's shores, Esra Sert describes how in part due to the imperative of dumping construction rubble as quickly as possible, land reclamation projects are often presented by politicians and urban authorities as a practical solution that both disposes of rubble and creates new grounds for construction. And yet these disposal and reclamation projects can

[39] Interview with activist from *Kuzey Ormanları Savunması.*

be poisonous for the Marmara Sea, especially as building materials in Turkey are thought to be on the cheaper side and hence contain more chemicals and less concrete (Sert 2019, 77-78). This helps contribute to the buildup of chemicals that now constitute the Marmara. Mucilage (or "sea snot") is a slimy, sticky, gray and foamy layer of phytoplankton that sometimes covers the Marmara. In fact, as biologists point out, in 2007 a similar (yet more limited) blooming of phytoplankton had been ignored by the media at the time. Yet the increasingly warmer temperatures of the summer months in İstanbul and the buildup of chemicals – especially phosphates – in the Marmara Sea (from construction rubble and the surrounding factories that dump their waste into rivers and waterways that lead to the Marmara) helped create the ideal conditions for an unprecedented explosion of phytoplankton in Marmara during the spring and summer months of 2021. This thick slimy living layer visible from the surface ran tens of meters deep, choking out the oxygen in the already under oxygenated Marmara Sea and blocking out the sunlight for multiple species living underneath. In his book as well as in interviews, marine biologist Levent Artüz describes the decision to let waste be dumped into the Marmara Sea as a "catastrophe" equivalent to the "murder of the Marmara Sea". The booming of the phytoplankton he adds "is just the rotting of the corpse" (Genç 2021).

How do we understand such disasters? The cultural mode through which mainstream media in Turkey and abroad seem to comprehend phenomena such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental destruction, is through their crystallization in spectacle-like disaster-events from hurricanes to earthquakes and floods – the spectacular images of phytoplankton covering the Marmara. Popular discourses of ecological destruction, from climate change to biodiversity loss to the Anthropocene, often imagine disaster as a single and cataclysmic event to be mourned, averted, or overcome by a unified humanity. Yet, such disasters never seem to come as single events, but rather seem to unfold onto one another as if they constituted a long procession of the catastrophic results of colonialism and capitalism.

Critical scholarship on environmental disaster notes how these popular discourses present an eschatological tendency (Rothe 2020). Eschatology is about a singular moment of collapse and subsequent salvation that is nonetheless perpetually postponed – a rupture that never arrives. Yet as Heron (Heron 2020) points out this eschatological vision is exactly the wrong way to think about environmental destruction. The likely outcome of environmental disaster is not a cataclysmic collapse of contemporary capitalism followed by revolutionary struggle, but rather the slow intensification of existing avenues of inequality from retrenching borders to renewed colonial plunder. Overcoming such an eschatological view of disaster is integral to *Between Two Seas.* As one participant of the walks explains,

> "(…Having walked the Between Two Seas route) I realized that the *Kanal İstanbul* project is not at all as crazy as the media make it out to be. If by "crazy" we mean a fantasy obsessed with achieving the impossible, the *Kanal İstanbul* project has nothing to do with craziness… (I)n terms of its content and the type of changes it will trigger, the project is not that different from what *İstanbul* and its peripheries are already experiencing" (Ö. Ünsal 2016, 135).

An eschatology of disaster would only help reinforce the purported "craziness" that the *Kanal* project wants to cultivate. Imagining the construction of the *Kanal* as a "crazy" rupture from the city's past ignore the destruction that economic growth has already unleashed in Turkey.

But there is another understanding of the metaphysical dimensions of disaster that Japanese thinker and activist Sabu Kohso points to in his book *Radiation and Revolution*. Kohso points out that the peculiar Christian character of eschatology aside, "apocalypse" as a broader phenomenon is neither peculiar to contemporary capitalism nor to Western culture. People everywhere have imagined an end or a rebirth of the Earth across many different cultures – sometimes connecting this to millenarian or even revolutionary movements, at other times as an understanding and encounter with death. What seems rather unique to popular conceptions of apocalypse is the way the end of the world is understood, imagined and registered as so many crises in the reproduction of capitalism, its constant expansion and exhaustion (Kohso 2020, 4).

This points to a contemporary contradiction. On the one hand the internal crises of capital and the way they intersect with disaster events appear to be quite visible – it is possible to see even in the artwork that cases of ecological destruction are on the forefront of cultural life. Images of burning forests, of the Bosporus covered in mucilage, of construction waste piling up in the city's peripheries are everywhere in circulation. Yet on the other hand the precise relation between capital and disaster is more obscure. To understand the relation between capital and catastrophe it is not enough to document and evidence such actual cases of destruction. Instead, one must look for this relation at the order of the event.

Without the event, such documenting and evidencing only leads to so many different disparate occurrences, the crises du jour, that each need to be addressed urgently, that need to be discussed and discovered and which get reinterpreted as individual crises. Yet perhaps capitalism is always already disaster, even when it physically has distributed the violence that underpins it elsewhere. This is not to legitimize capitalist catastrophe as inevitable. Rather, by distinguishing historical disasters from the eventfulness behind them, one can emphasize the structural effect that is repeated within a "singular" catastrophe. This structural effect cannot be contained to the singular catastrophe but rather is the result of multiple political experiments and struggles that runs through the series of historical moments.[40] In other words, even when a process of accumulation hasn't yet resulted in a catastrophe, disaster is already there, present as the event that runs through and reproduces capitalism's field of operation, as a forced expulsion, a genocide, an ecological catastrophe that continues to shape the present. This is the logic that allows us to think together the multiple forms of ecological destruction, expulsion and genocide that took place on the peripheries of İstanbul. Against the flurry of reporting and investigation of endless individualized disasters, the logic of the event would insist that every

[40] Here I am directly building on the work of Ulus Baker's 1995 essay "How does one resist media?" (Baker 1995).

act of accumulation is already disastrous, that every worker, as we shall see in the next chapter, is a virtual pauper, that every construction project builds on and intensifies a previous disaster. Since disaster capitalism actualizes itself in historical catastrophes but is not contained within them, this framing would also emphasize the possibility of political experimentation within disaster, both as experiments of revolutionary self-organization and abundance that take shape in their wake (Solnit 2010; Out of the Woods 2020) and the attempts to channel the conditions of disaster for further capitalist accumulation (Heron 2020).

Viewed this way, there is no authoritarian turn in Turkish politics nor a democratic backsliding as some popular narratives like to put it, but rather the slow accumulation and intensification of a regime of disasters. Viewed also from this perspective, disaster acts as a revelation, where the eventfulness underlying our present – the disastrous agenda of economic growth and capitalist accumulation – becomes clear. "Revelation here is the moment at which we are to discover what forces make us and what potencies we have, to accept limit and engage in survival" (Kohso 2020, 11-13). Understood as a confrontation with earthly limits and a rediscovery of the forces that already make our present disaster then is a deeply earthly and human affair. The temporality of disaster is weird, precisely because at the moment of ruination it asks of us to nevertheless return back to the Earth, to the eventfulness that produced and continue to produce the disaster. Disasters ask us to hold together both the event and its material consequences, both ruination and the resulting ruins (Out of the Woods Collective 2020, 13).

Taycan's walking route is important because it asks participants to enter such an apocalyptic landscape, a disaster zone (perhaps this is why the Mad Max reference seems so apt for Taycan) that accompanies and shadows the city itself. This language is ideologically loaded. As Brian Rosa notes, in Europe such urban peripheries are described as "wastelands" and "disaster zones" in an attempt to portray them as under-productive, in need of infrastructural intervention and development (Rosa 2015; 2021). Yet as I seek to show, there

is another understanding of "disaster" implied by Taycan's work, one that works against such productivist imaginaries. Witnessing the accumulation of mega-projects in this area by strolling across its geography brings attention not only to these individual acts of destruction but rather the eventfulness of disaster – how the area is always marked for a new and imminent urban transformation project while also carrying the marks of previous disasters. It asks us to pay attention to the uneven distribution of disaster across the city's peripheries and histories even before the *Kanal* came into prominence as a serious proposal.[41] Economic growth has already involved the tearing down of entire neighborhoods and the subsequent dispossession of their people, the mining of rock, sand and silt across the city's peripheries, the endless stream of megaprojects, the devastation of the Marmara Sea, not to mention the shipping and mining disasters that took place outside of İstanbul like the Soma mining disaster of 2013 that claimed hundreds of lives.[42] The construction of *Kanal* İstanbul promises to combine the existing inequalities of racial domination, exploitation and ecological destruction that have already accumulated around this geography, and to slowly resonate and intensify these catastrophes.

Disaster as Regime

For Kohso this rediscovery of the Earth, this embracing of planetary limitation also requires the decomposition of the World – defined as "the totalizing movement of capitalist nation states" (Kohso 2020, 9). Yet such decomposition neither happens on its own account nor automatically generates a revolutionary politics. In a short provocative piece, Kai Heron argues that contemporary ecological politics is defined by a condition he describes as "capitalist catastrophism". This condition, he argues is less a stable regime and more the result of what

[41] Indeed, refusing to make *Between Two Seas* solely a "response" to the Kanal, Taycan cheekily insists that it was the Justice and Development Party who stole the idea for the Kanal's path from his walking route. He is right, in that the path of the *Kanal* had not yet been announced at the time Taycan published *Between Two Seas.*

[42] Even many of the inhabitants of Yeniköy express how these lands were granted to them by the State as a refuge from another catastrophe, that of the 1923 population exchange agreement between the nation-states of Greece and Turkey, which forcibly displaced millions of Greek and Turkish peoples. Since then, the Western peripheries of İstanbul have served as a home to many forced expulsions including to entire villages of Kurdish people forcibly displaced from towns such as Van or Diyarbakır by the Turkish state during the 1980s.

happens when the neoliberal order maintained by capitalist realism begins to "fray at the edges" (Heron 2020). One might say that capitalist catastrophism is what happens when the disasters unleashed by capital accumulation outstrips capital*ism*'s ability to control or administer them.

In other words, we are dealing not with a coherent mode of production but rather the collapse of one. Something like this seems true in Turkey.[43] The government has responded to unfolding ecological crises at each turn with either outright violence and suppression (by police actively suppressing protestors after the string of worker deaths at the *İstanbul Airport*), or the unveiling of an even bigger construction project. Such responses demonstrate an inability to govern the agents that contributed to disaster, an inability for example to divest from mega-projects, or give up the false promise of GDP growth. What we see in Turkey's then is less the result of a coherent mode of production and more the slow erosion of the ecological conditions subtending global neoliberalism and the exhaustion of the authoritarian mechanisms of containment and discipline that reproduce and channel this collapse in Turkey (see also Benlisoy 2021; Tugal 2021). We stand, it seems at an extended interregnum, with multiple tendencies of transformation and avenues of deterritorialization and reterritorialization the traces of which are all strangely immanent to the JDP regime and even to Erdogan himself – Erdogan the Bonapartist, Erdogan the Muslim social democrat, Erdogan the neoliberal, Erdogan the fascist (Tuğal 2021).

It is helpful to note the governing logic of capitalist catastrophism, in the example of Kanal İstanbul. Marxist scholars have characterized post-industrialism in part as an intensification of real subsumption. Real subsumption refers to capital's ability to not only impose demands on pre-existing technical and social organizations of labor but also intervene in and directly reorganize processes of the social reproduction of labor with the goal of

[43] As Cihan Tuğal notes (Tuğal 2021), while Turkey is definitely entrenched in a global neoliberal system, especially through relations of financialization, the construction of megaprojects often bear a weak relation with neoliberal demands, indicating that this might not be a coherent regime.

intensifying accumulation (Read 2003). Extending this formulation beyond its traditional application to labor, several authors such as Neil Smith (N. Smith 2008) have used the concept of subsumption to discuss how capital more consciously and strategically organizes its broader environment. Whereas capitalism has always produced its own particular natures and particular natures have always shaped capitalism (Moore 2015), for Neil Smith (N. Smith 2008, 27–31) the real subsumption of nature marks a qualitative shift in this mutual construction, where both the production of specific natures for capital and the circulation of specific natures within capital are more thoroughly coordinated as accumulation strategies.

It is possible to see how this accumulation strategy works within the construction of Kanal İstanbul itself. As an investment, the project appears as "sensible" to the extent to which it secures the smooth flow of both tanker ships and capital through its channel – both oil and demand for newly constructed environment as "waterfront property", with newly built houses and business centers adjacent to the water. Kanal İstanbul then, is a regime of extraction and circulation, of construction and logistics, a monstrous dream of capital's becoming-environmental. It's an attempt to remake the passageway between the Marmara and Black Seas in the image of uninterrupted flow that a postindustrial regime of energy relies on.

A major motivation for constructing the Kanal is that the waters of the Bosporus, being too shallow and too choppy, are considered unreliable for intense shipping traffic. As such, even liberal commentators have discussed how the constant flow of containerships and oil tankers through the Bosporus creates risks for waterfront property. An official report released by the Ministry of Information in 2020 mentions "security" and "environmental risks" as some of the major motivations behind the construction of the canal.[44] With numerous tanker ships

[44] The report claims that the canal can accommodate the safe passage of around 25 thousand ships per year, whereas even today the number stands at around 48 thousand ships, which the report projects will climb up to 78 thousand 2050. This is a level of shipping congestion, the report notes, that is four times busier than the Panama Canal and three times busier than the Suez Canal. This traffic is in part driven by the morphological features of the Bosporus Sea, relatively newly formed in geological time, and much shallower in comparison to the Black Sea and Mediterranean Seas which it neighbors. The congestion is comprised of fishing activity, the presence of

traveling through the Bosporus, the pro-government newspaper *Sabah* and *Haber7* have even published a story in 2021, with the title "These Images Tell Everything – Why the Kanal İstanbul Project is Necessary" that compiles all of the shipping accidents and oil spills that have occurred over the last 50 years on the uneven waters of the Bosporus (*Haber7* 2021).

Yet the story of rubble on the Yeniköy shore complicates this totalizing account of capitalism. Rather than the opposition between the bird's eye view of Kanal İstanbul and the map of *Between Two Seas*, we encounter an image of capitalism that constantly switches its tactics, adapting to, abiding by and allowing ever unfolding crises. The real subsumption of nature then involves something deeper than the creation of specific environments for capital (dredging of a new seaway for tanker ships) or the circulation of specific natures within capital (the commodification of new waterfront property). It involves the becoming-environmental of power relations, of embracing the instability of disaster. This is perhaps why the official reason for constructing the Kanal İstanbul project is constantly transforming in a continued horizon of disaster from the construction of new earthquake safe buildings to a use for construction debris, to accidents caused by tanker ships. More recently, the government has even suggested that constructing a second waterway in İstanbul could help disperse the buildup of mucilage in the Marmara by opening a second channel into the Black Sea – a course of action that would prove disastrous for both seas in the long term. Rather than an attempt to avoid or even pre-empt disasters, we have a regime that allows them to unfold capitalizing on their emerging dynamics. Rather than a tightening coil of control, capitalist catastrophism appears to operate from a logic of what Turkish-Cypriot theorist Ulus Baker described as "indirect action", that allows disaster to take place while capitalizing on its unforeseeable consequences (Baker 2012).[45]

containerships, but most importantly the transport of crude oil extracted from around the Caspian Sea by countries such as Russia and Azerbaijan. Report available on, https://www.kanalİstanbul.gov.tr/.

[45] Baker (2012) writes: "In Eastern civilizations the very idea of violence is different, direct action is shunned and indirect action is praised. The best tax collector is not the man who collects the most tax but rather he who inflicts the least pain while doing so, the best commander not the best fighter, but rather the one who has the fewest battles in his reign… This is a condition directly opposed to the problem of virtue in the West… The emphasis here is on

Another helpful example in this regard is the İstanbul Airport that destroyed the lakelets on the Yeniköy shore. As we will encounter, the İstanbul Airport was constructed adjacent to the *North Marmara Motorway* as well as the proposed path of *Kanal İstanbul,* to help enact the city's logistical expansion in this area, a theme we will encounter further on Chapter 4. Yet as a report by the *KOS* argues, this area was particularly unsuitable for an airport construction ("Yaşam, Doğa, Çevre, İnsan ve Hukuk Karşısında: 3. Havalimanı Projesi" 2015), meaning that from its inception, the project had to simultaneously avert and prevent, as well as enact and carry out multiple forms of disaster. First, one can recount the nearly 800 thousand birds that use the forests and lakes in this area every year to migrate from North Africa to Europe. The report by *KOS* notes that the 70 wallows and lakelets that are present in this area have become part of the ecosystem and are used by migratory birds. Apart from the habitat loss from the destruction of these lakelets, the birds that migrate through this area also face the possibility of being crushed by airplane engines, a particular problem for soaring birds (animals that can maintain flight without the use of their wings) such as herons, storks, and birds of prey. While the strikes are harmful for the birds, to prevent bird strikes from effecting plane landings the Airport has, from its early days, conducted surveys of existing bird populations, established a "Wildlife Management" plan under its *Directorate of Environment and Sustainability* as well as purchasing several radar systems that help formulate 3D maps of the trajectories of birds and airplanes.

Second, one can also note how the softer, muddy, and uneven geology of lakelets and wallows left behind by earlier decades of sand and coal mining here meant that the grounds were unsuitable for planes to land on. In 2014, *the Turkish Geological Engineers Association*

being "indirect" – to remove the obstacles in front of the course of events… Most importantly, nature appears here less as a thing to be used, but rather a being that will express itself in its own way, in its own course." Baker clarifies this is somewhat analogous to contemporary liberalism. Yet while liberalism advocates an economy of state intervention, achieving the most amount of effect with the least possible level of intervention, the logic of indirect action is concerned not with efficiency but with "reducing the possible contact between state and subjects."

released a report that the loosened and fractured strata of the ruins left behind by open pit mines and the muddy and wet and soaked strata of the old wallows created a poor foundation for the landing of large aircraft. ("Jeoloji Mühendisleri Odası, İstanbul Şubesi'nin 3.Havaalanı Ile Ilgili Hazırlamış Olduğu Rapor" 2014) To prevent the runway from collapsing the construction had to also drain the underground water 60-70 meters below ground and fill the 1.3 million^2 area that the airport covers with hundreds of millions of *hafriyat* and filler. Even today the *Association* has repeatedly warned that the *hafriyat* left here may not have settled and may in the near future collapse under the pressure caused by aircrafts (Ozdilek 2019).

The validity of this last set of claims, about an impending disaster that may be caused by the collapse of a runway appears to be uncertain. It may or may not come to pass in the near future. Part of the uncertainty here, is that the most extensive geological or ornithological surveys are often carried out by the same political economic forces responsible for the construction, meaning it is often easy to get lost in corporate propaganda while attempting to dig deeper. Yet such uncertainty also reveals an important reality about the speculative nature of such megaprojects. As Hoyng and Es note (2020), contemporary megaprojects such as the *İstanbul Airport* deliberately assemble such a complex and unpredictable array of socio-geological forces that one could argue that they enact their own regimes of destruction that are actively unfolding, speculatively imagined, and waiting to happen. By their very nature, megaprojects like the İstanbul airport set up forms of speculation that are cut across epistemology and political economy. In the complex temporality of destruction that megaprojects enact, some forms of destruction are prevented (the crashing of airplanes), others are speculated (the collapse of the runways), others are ongoing (the loss of habitat and the destruction of the wallows).

This complex temporality of destruction is what also characterizes disaster. Looking at it from *Between Two Seas*, it seems as though the definitive ecological experience of our era

will be one of combined, mutually reinforcing, and uneven disasters (Heron 2020; Benlisoy 2021; Out of the Woods 2020). As Foti Benlisoy notes, this understanding of disaster as a regime is very important in Turkey because it flips the script on traditional depictions of the ruling *Justice and Development Party's* time in power. Whereas liberal commentators often depict the JDP's term in power as a case of "democratic backsliding", where the government engages in insufficient yet nonetheless important democratic reforms between 2002-2012, which are then slowly switched out for increasing authoritarianism and accompanying "populism", a word often used to denote, among other things a sense of political "incompetence", a certain inability to govern. Yet viewed from Yenikoy we instead witness a slow accumulation of disaster, which eventually is embraced as a mode of (non)governing in itself. Disaster, more than anything else, has become the most immediate result of the agenda of economic growth. Such disasters combine economic stagnation, ecological collapse, and political inefficacy (as has been the case with Turkey's stagnating construction sector in the last 5 years); multiple, unpredictable and uneven forms of ecological collapse including warming seas, loss of biodiversity, forest fires, lack of fresh water, sea-snot; and the inability of the JDP to contain and govern disasters.

Given this fact, what does political ecology look like, when the primary ecological experience is one of destruction? How does one embrace the decomposition of the World while also rediscovering the Earth? What does a materialism of disaster look like?

The Materialism of Disaster

There are two competing accounts of materialism that dominate political ecology and the environmental humanities. The first is a more familiar and well critiqued story of eco-modernism and mastery. In this narrative, Yeniköy and Küçükçekmece are part of a long history of extraction that started with the Industrial Revolution and intensified since World War II. Indeed, the global mass of nonorganic materials extracted from the earth has seen a drastic

increase first over the industrial revolution, and then again in the second half of the 20th century from around 15 billion tons extracted in the 1950s to 50 billion by 2000 to around 100 billion tons today (Hickel 2021, 99). In developing contexts like Turkey, this jump is even more drastic, with the total mass of materials extracted in Turkey rising from under 0.2 billion tons in the 1970s to around 0.5 billion tons in 2000 to over 1.5 billion tons today.[46] This means that the amount of material extracted from the earth has doubled and tripled in the last 20 years for the world and for Turkey respectively. Eco-modernism, a specific subspecies of the narrative of mastery, celebrates this increase in the extraction of energy and materials as an achievement of human agency over the natural world. In fact, as the *Salvage Collective* remind us, until recently "hockey stick charts" of intensifying material extraction "that now grace environmental literature were the basis of capitalist triumphalism" (Allinson et al. 2021). Still today, negative consequences arising from this extraction are characterized as accidental outcomes that can be assuaged without fundamentally altering capitalism. As Stefania Barca notes studying the mainstream discourses around the term "Anthropocene", the narrative of mastery is comparable to a story of original sin (Barca 2020, 20). On the one hand extraction is supposedly the material foundation of improving lives, better life expectancy, increasing levels of education. Yet on the other hand it also represents the other aspect of modernity, the unfortunate and yet inevitable side-effects of economic growth, that can nonetheless be rectified through more "efficient", more "ecological" management of the environment (Hickel 2021, 99). This story of extraction is so powerful because it builds on and casually relates what Pierre Charbonnier describes as two "guiding ideals" of modernity – those of affluence and autonomy, freedom understood as the freedom and agency understood as the ability to accumulate things (Charbonnier 2021, 11).

[46] Numbers from www.materialflows.net.

This narrative of a homogenized "humanity" dominating a homogenized "nature", has routinely been critiqued in the humanities. Most recently, in her book the *Forces of Reproduction,* Stefania Barca critiques this master narrative, noting how it naturalizes economic growth as the only possible trajectory of history. Drawing on the work of feminist philosopher Val Plumwood, Barca notes how the narrative of mastery presents nature as something to be managed and how nature appears as a sphere of conquest for man's mastery through economic growth. Geological and biophysical processes enter this story as problems for domination, the way construction waste enters into stories of urban transformation only as a problem to be managed. Under this narrative, "modern economic growth is history, obliterating the social and ecological costs associated with fossil capital, it backgrounds the agency of the non-master subjects, and considers their sacrifice as inevitable and necessary to global historical progress" (Barca 2020, 20). Barca unpacks the homogenizing effect of this narrative of human domination over nature, how it attributes to humanity writ-large the distributed causes and effects of current ecological crises; how it obfuscates the role of slavery, patriarchy, and colonialism as constitutive of what modernity is rather than being its unfortunate side effect (Barca 2020, 22). On the shores of Yeniköy the story of extraction was also one of violence, extermination, and displacement.

The second metaphor for describing materiality within political ecology is that of an analytic of mixture – double internality (Moore 2015), hybrids (Mitchell 2002; Latour 2012; N. Smith 2008), cyborgs (D. Haraway 1988; Swyngedouw 2005), naturecultures (Haraway 1998; Latour 2003; Swyngedouw 2005), medianatures (Parikka 2015). Against the eco-modernist belief that celebrates human mastery over nature, such theories of mixture instead begin by claiming that "Our world is made up of technical bodies, hybrids that are neither wholly objects nor ideas, more than just things but not disembodied spirits, not properly divisible into nature and culture, or reality and representation" (Mitchell 2002, 154). Yet this

analytic of mixture also manifests in the form of an implicit historical claim that contemporary capitalism is somehow *more* hybrid now than before, or at least that it has become more difficult to hide the reality of hybrids (Latour 2012, 131; Moore 2015, 5–6). By combining these thinkers under the framework of "mixture" I inevitably reduce the complexities separating their various approaches.[47] Yet the broader intellectual disposition subtending their work can be characterized as a generalized emphasis on the connective and mixed, where previously held dualisms are revealed to be illusory or insufficient to contemporary problems and hence outlived their usefulness. Instead, ecology is understood as a space of intra-connectivity, where both individuals and their milieus are constituted through relations.

Such a position has also recently been embraced by proponents of degrowth. In his book *Less is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World* Jason Hickel writes that besides colonialism and exploitation, capitalism also required

> "getting people to see nature, for the first time, as something fundamentally distinct from humans; something not only inferior and subordinate, but devoid of the animating spirit we ascribe to people. It required splitting the world in two. It required, in a word, separation (Hickel 2021, 219)".

Against this separation Hickel insists that the principle at the heart of ecological science can be "boiled down into a single phrase everything is connected, act accordingly" (Hickel 2021, 228). After all, what is political ecology, if not an attempt to highlight how the subject of politics is situated in and produced by the multiple histories of its hybrid and connective environment? What is more ecological than to seek out the ways in which everything is connected?

[47] There are for example crucial differences in the attention to issues of power and inequality between Haraway's cyber feminist, Moore's eco-socialist and Latour's liberal projects (Swyngedouw 2005). Latour's work is interesting here, as it has recently functioned as an apologia for eco-modernism. Latour has openly endorsed the Breakthrough Institute alongside Ted Nordhaus, Michael Shellenberger and Stewart Brand notorious for their Ecomodernist Manifesto, as well as their support for geoengineering projects. This creates a strange confluence in Latour's work, between mixture and mastery. For a similar point, see (Neyrat 2019, 92-96).

Yet like the analytics of mastery, the historical coordinates for the analytic of mixture are fuzzy.[48] And despite its sharp and justified critiques of mastery, mixture too has its philosophical limitations in the sense that it necessarily presupposes and takes as a point of departure the bifurcation to which mixture acts as an antidote – in effect, not so much providing an alternative metaphysics but rather suspending a dualist one.[49] In the absence of metaphysics we are left with the frenzy of mixture, that risks resigning itself to merely listing the multitude of actants that determine an environment. In this frenzy, the hybrid world of mixture risks appearing increasingly like a restricted economy that is cyclical, only ever (re)producing existing power formations. If one isn't careful, one risks being left with not a cogent critique of capitalism or Western civilization but rather with a mystical lament that echoes the opening lines of the 13th century Sufi poet Rumi's master piece the Mathnawi, " Listen to the *nay* (reed), how it complains of separations".

More urgently than any historical or philosophical shortcomings of these analytics though, is the fact that both tend to render invisible moments of excess and surplus, withdrawal and loss, incommensurability, and transformation, that are all integral to how ecologies operate, especially as they are thrown into disaster. The narrative of mastery locates disaster in the past as a sin to be atoned for. The narrative of mixture locates disaster as an element in the ongoing production of the present, but for that reason often risks losing sight of what slips underneath

[48] Metaphors of mixture often display an awkward, generalized, and monolithic image of intellectual history of the bifurcation to which mixture is supposedly the antidote. One controversial example within the realm of political ecology is the work of Jason Moore (20015), for whom contemporary capitalism can be understood as one giant era of "Cartesian dualism". Yet to characterize the history of Western thought as a giant era of Cartesianism is not only clunky intellectual history it also requires a stretching of the concept of dualism that seems untenable.

[49] As urban political ecologist Erik Swyngedouw, otherwise known for pursuing the cyborg concept within urban studies cautions, metaphors like cyborgs and hybrids can risk "suggest(ing) a process of 'dirty' mixing, an ambiguous fusion of things that can be ontologically separated and purified" (Swyngedouw 2005, 113). On a similar note, advising his readers to go beyond this analytic of mixture, Eduardo Kohn muses, "The hyphen in Latour's "natures-cultures" is the new pineal gland in the little Cartesian heads that this analytic unwittingly engenders at all scales" (Kohn 2013, 128). In other words, mixture first implies then denies ontological differences. In doing so, it leaves us not so much with an ontogenetic account of heterogeneity but rather the suspension of a dualist metaphysics. For similar critiques of this analytics of mixture, see, (Massumi 2015, 34–35; Malm 2018).

this production. Insisting on the mutually constitutive character of our ecologies, how they are produced by human and nonhuman forces, we lose sight of how ecologies contain moments of loss and exuberance that exceeds, transforms, and can potentially destroy any nature-cultural formation. In his *Mirror of Production*, Baudrillard notes how a *productivist* political economy that valorizes an expansion of society's material capacity to produce more as an inherent *good* seems to have been projected onto psychoanalytic and semiotic theories of his time (Baudrillard 1975, 60–61). Perhaps the same can be said today of a *productivist* tendency in political ecology. As Kohei Saito argues in his book *Degrowth Communism* it makes sense to be suspicious of such ontologies of hybridity under contemporary circumstances of intense ecological transformation and destruction, to the extent that it risks reproducing capital's totalizing logic (Saito 2023, 116–17).

An alternative account of political ecology would seek for a tendency "in nature that pits itself against nature, a tendency that is at once natural and antinatural, without, however, consisting, a transcendent entity" (Neyrat 2019, 152). One way to conceive such a tendency is through the concept of *antiproduction*. Taking their inspiration from Marx's 1844 Manuscripts, as well as the work of Georges Bataille, Deleuze and Guattari use the term antiproduction to name an element of incommensurable surplus that accompanies any given distribution of the relations and forces of production. My use of the term antiproductive ecology aims to build on but also depart from Deleuze and Guattari's account from an ecological perspective. As an ecological concept, antiproduction hopes to name the field of polarization from which geophysical and biochemical phenomena help determine and distribute social production. This would be a sense of ecology that *seeks to identify how environmental processes are capable of being organized by forms of polarization and excess that incite transformation.* This sense of incompatibility and transformation not transcendent, isn't added to natural processes by the intervention of an outside force such as "society". Rather it acts as the transcendent*al*

conditioning, the sense of loss and waste that produces, spaces, and distributes a particular ecology (Neyrat 2019, 154). What is at stake here isn't a reactionary romanticism that fetishizes destruction, nor a theory of the *death instinct*, but rather an attention to how production and destruction transform one another and act as each other's organizing principles.

An antiproductive approach to materialism begins with the question of polarization and mediation. Here it is helpful to place Deleuze and Guattari in conversation with the work of Gilbert Simondon an important point of departure for early Deleuze as well as the rest of this thesis. Rather than think of matter in substantialist terms, Gilbert Simondon's philosophy asks us to think of polarization as "the most elementary condition of relation" (Simondon 2020, 92). Polarization here refers to what Simondon describes as an "inter-elementary" incompatibility, an energetic and somewhat cosmic discontinuity between two states – what I've tried to describe through the concept of antiproduction. The biochemical incompatibility between the sun's thermal rays and the rich compost of the soil for example – which is then mediated and put into communication via the form of the plant (Simondon 2020, 384). The incompatibility between two phases or energetic states of matter – liquid and solid within a germinating crystal. This is the first thing that is surprising about a Simondonian approach to mediation and materialism. Scholars who work with the analytics of "elemental media" for example, underline how the framework is not supposed to "ground" a discipline that is otherwise in flux but rather "open up, destabilize and saturate existing ways of environmental thinking" (Starosielski 2019). Yet from a Simondonian perspective, one might add that it is impossible to speak of a single element whether stable or unstable, grounded or in flux. Rather mediation always brings into communication multiple elements that impose incompatible demands. In İstanbul as in other coastal cities, the sea is often understood as *the* most crucial element of flow, of global shipping and logistical capital. Yet without ports, without dredging, concrete

and sand, global shipping would be impossible. Every flow requires its friction, every current its grounding.

The second insight that we get from a Simondonian approach to materialism is that most matter that humans interact with exists not in the form of pure substance but rather in the form of oxidized or ionized compounds and mixtures. Elements – briefly recalling the chemical sense of this word – are often too fickle, too unstable, too prone to incitement in their elemental form. Rather they are the site of combustion, destruction, escape and molecular transformation. We often encounter the element as an outcome of work, energy, and waste. Humans inhale air which their lungs transform into oxygen, exhaling the waste. They mine coal or oil (compounds and mixtures) which they burn activating the carbon and emitting carbon dioxide. In this way, mining sand from the sea involves not extracting silica ready-made from the ground, but transforming sand (the heterogenous mixture of tiny, crushed seashells, minerals and rocks) into construction sand (rich in silica – an oxidized compound of silicone), a process that requires energy and labor. This is what Simondon calls an "intra-elementary process". An intra-elementary process is the intensification of a particular aspect of matter by a process of homogenization – in the case of sand the aspect of plasticity by removing all the intervening forms of matter, minerals, and crushed shells. The elemental character of sand – its silicon like properties – are the result of such homogenization (Simondon 2020, 23-24). A media materialism then, requires at least three aspects which collectively form a transindividual relation. The inter-elemental incompatibility between at least two states of energy and the intra-elemental difference that brings them into communication. As Simondon notes, "the technical operation is a mediation between an inter-elementary ensemble and an intra-elementary ensemble" (Simondon 2020, 25) – the intra-elementary plasticity of silica its ability to form concrete as well as silicone is what allows it to place into communication two inter-elementary phases those of motion and rest materialized in the form of land and water.

This is helpful in theorizing disaster on the shores of Yeniköy because it accounts for the sense of polarization and escape that I had indicated above. Material differences mediated by capital tend to escape its grasp and slip under in new formations. Think again of the problem of sea snot in the Marmara Sea. Here we have runaway processes that begin as one sort of problem but feedback into other avenues of destruction and disaster. The problem of rubble, the excess product of construction transforms into one of landfill, which is then dumped by the government into the Marmara Sea. This dumping feeds into the problem of mucilage buildup across İstanbul's coastal geographies. Rubble is produced neither in the moment of "production" nor in that of "consumption" but rather in the interval between the two, as the errant movement that distributes production and consumption, triggering other mechanisms of intervention and capture. Construction rubble moves between the polarization of geophysical and social realities, from sand to concrete to rubble and back to landfill. What such continuous transformation represents is not so much a co-production of capitalism and nature (as Moore 2015 might claim), but how environments even when produced and assembled by capital, contain moments of destruction and excess beyond capital's containment, that moves between the polarization of nature and society.

In fact, this focus on what slips from underneath extraction is visible in the very concept used to describe extraction in Turkish – *hafriyat. Hafriyat* is a composite concept that can refer to multiple forms of material. The word *hafriyat* literally describes excavated materials from the Arabic root *hafr-*, to dig. Among scholars of political ecology, the word is also used as a translation of the English word "extraction" or *hafriyatçılık* for extractionism. Interestingly though, since the Turkish *hafriyat* is etymologically linked to the action of digging, it seems more resistant to the conceptual slippage "extraction" is subject to in English. The regulative framework (*Hafriyat Toprağı, İnşaat ve Yıkıntı Atıkların Kontrolü Yönetmeliği* 2004) that governs the movement of *hafriyat* trucks across İstanbul uses the word to cover a) soil, often excavated through the

process of construction b) glass, wood, rubble, and other forms of construction waste c) asphalt, pebbles and earth extracted from infrastructure construction efforts. This creates confusion as Deniz Öztürk notes (2019), since the practical considerations for how soil is stored, transported, and monetized are entirely different than how construction waste maybe stored, processed for valuable metals, and disposed of – the former (soil) is often reused to create parks and green spaces and requires careful handling to ensure the organisms living inside it don't die. The concept of *Hafriyat* then, denotes not a specific *type* of materiality, but rather the flow of materials before and after construction work has taken place – *the resources and residues of construction.*

Hafriyat, is what moves between the polarized intervals of "productive" construction work, as one building is being knocked down and another is being assembled. This overlap between extraction and waste is echoed in how artists have taken up *hafriyat,* as a form of reckoning with the realities of neoliberal urbanization. Most significantly, the *Hafriyat* collective, a group of artists operating out of İstanbul between the late 1990s and early 2000s used the concept as a reaction against the European images of urban space that dominated the İstanbul art scene at the time, as well as a way to understand the fast-changing pace of urban transformation that surrounded them. As Mustafa Pancar, one of the founding painters of the collective explains "Our material reality wasn't one of ordered buildings and town squares, so it seemed stupid to depict stuff like that. So instead, we painted workers and excavation trucks".[50] At times romanticizing the "urban flaneur", *Hafriyat* collective's manifesto nevertheless reinforces the sense of overlap between excavation and waste that the concept of *hafriyat* already points towards. "This is an absolute action of *hafriyat*: to turn over Earth itself... The images that might seep into the cracks might find their expression sometimes as a

[50] Interview with Mustafa Pancar, March 2021.

waste-dump, sometimes as steel bars sprouting from concrete at a construction site" (Pancar et al. 2003).

Figure 36. Mustafa, *Hafriyat*, 1996. Image reproduced with permission form Pancar.

This relation of polarization and escape between capital and disaster is illuminated through the concept of *hafriyat,* as it presents an approach to political ecology that is *disjunctively relational.* Rather than assert the mixture of social and natural processes, disjunction seeks to track how the former emerges out of the latter *ontogenetically* in a continuum. Nature and society are disjunctively related, *in the sense that culture is an expression of nature's tendency towards polarization and incompatibility with itself, that has nonetheless come to distinguish itself through its unique chronologies and topologies of becoming*. Something like construction waste is interesting since it is what traverses this disjunctive relation between nature and society as well as production and consumption. *Antiproductive ecology* is deeply interested in such forms of mediation, because they are

indicative of how *every social formation requires the distribution of ecological forces* which exceeds its grasp. What we decide to do with rubble, what we do with mucilage, where we bury construction waste are crucial questions that help guide us through the ruins of growth. This interval from which geological forces incite social relations is important to hold onto, *since it highlights the fundamentally parasitic nature of capitalist extraction, how production seeks to organize and capture ecological processes that continuously threaten to run from underneath its feet, in disastrous ways* – in the continuous alterations that took place on the İstanbul shoreline, mining sand here, dredging ports there, building new infrastructure here, which results in more debris there.

Conceiving of the terms nature and society ontogenetically would prevents us from understanding nature as a kind of "super-individual" that already contains and inheres in all other processes, that precludes a space for loss. Rather insisting on the disjunctive relation between nature and society, we might say that there are as many relations between the two, as there are "natures" out of which different "societies" can come to emerge. Cutting against the cyclical and holistic descriptions of nature found in mainstream ecological and economic theories the geological and bio-chemical processes I've described above are examples of how excess, loss and subsequent transformation are constitutive of political ecology, especially as they are thrown into disaster. When encountering disaster then, the vision of a pre-technical, pre-infrastructural, pre-extractive metabolism – or that of a future more rational more harmonic relation between "nature" and "society" seems useless. On the contrary, it is capitalism that tries to metabolize everything into its becoming-environmental and the blunt, obstinate, clumsy figure of rubble that insists on remaining as anti-metabolic – persists in its movement of escape. Simply denouncing rubble trucks as dangerous or demanding they are banned from the city then ignores the multiple layers of disaster that they are embroiled in.

Let's reflect again on coal and sand, the materials that emerge in this account of Yeniköy's history. Both are the byproducts of a planetary consumption of biological and geological forces. What is lignite but a relatively recent (at least in geological time) byproduct of the planet's slow rumination of life processes? Lignite is biological material that has since been removed from processes of living, and that is then sedimented (compressed, contracted, intensified, and transformed by geological forces). It is excreted as coal and stored underneath the earth's crust. What is sand but a byproduct of a planetary rumination of quartz, through winds, waves, and the water cycle? What is mucilage but a demonstration of the disastrous and relentless productivity of life?

Thus, perhaps the materialism of disaster itself ought to focus beyond the moment of extraction to what is mediated by capital and what slips underneath such mediation. The rubble of *Calx Ruderalis* and the clay pots of *Lasting Pond* are such gestures. They force encounters with the detritus of construction, the excrements and resources of the city that draw our attention to something beyond extraction. As Amanda Boetzkes has shown, the power of such artwork emerges from its capacity to open a space beyond capitalism's restricted economy, where debris and rubble are constantly piled up hidden and subsequently subsumed (Boetzkes 2016). One can note for example how, by their very nature the pots of *Lasting Pond* required an act of extraction, the clay that was removed from the wallows by digging the earth. Yet the work neither ignores this site of multiple extractions (the pots are still assembled in the shape of a lake after all) nor dramatizes its extractive act. Rather it reminds us of the multiple lives that could be assembled and mediated alongside extraction, the Ramadan gathering that awaits, beyond the horizon of endless growth. Rather than fill up the holes left behind by industrial growth such projects ask us to search for what creatures and communities are assembled there. Rather than piling up construction waste and debris such artworks demand us to insert rubble into our politics and our thought, into our discourse and our action.

In İstanbul, capitalism materialized through urban construction, digs up and burns coal to power the city, it fashions concrete behemoths from sand, it intervenes in and renders productive the very waste products of planetary biochemical processes. And in this last sense, the focus on *antiproduction* extends beyond ecology and towards the critique of capitalism. If *productivism* is an understanding of politics that valorizes economic expansion as an inherent good an *antiproductive ecology* hopes to create a space from which to investigate alternatives to this obsession with growth. Iyko Day writes in relation to the transformation of Indigenous lands by the Canadian and American settler projects into wastelands, that "the opposite of wastelanding is not development" but rather "indebtedness, connection and a reappropriation of historical time" (Day 2022, 53). Similarly, if construction waste has rendered the path of the *Between Two Seas* into a destruction zone, the opposite of such destruction is perhaps not development but rather a "disaster communism" (OotW 2021; Benlisoy 2021)?

Chapter 3

The Remaindered and the Commons:

Urban Politics Beyond the Gezi Park Protests

It is May of 2013. Two women, both of them waste workers, are having a conversation with Güliz Sağlam of the *ArtıkİşIer (Surplus Works)* artist collective, in the now famous Gezi Park at the then active occupation camp. Gezi Park is located near Taksim square in Beyoğlu, one of the densest parts of İstanbul, arguably the political and cultural centre of the city. The women explain how they have – for a long time– worked around the park. Waste workers are a common sight in Beyoğlu as the district produces a lot of recyclable waste – mainly in the form of paper, plastic, aluminum, scrap metals – that is picked, pressed, washed (in the case of plastic) and resold to recycling companies as well as factories. The women in the video explain how they were here when the police attacked the Gezi Park protestors, how they dodged gas cannisters and how one of them even got hit by a cannister, requiring stitches. They add that the protestors assisted them after a passer-by assaulted and accused them of selling their scraps to "terrorists". They insist that they are known here and that they're not "looters". They bid the protestors good luck and continue their journey around the park.

Figure 37: Waste Workers at Gezi Park (ArtıkİşIer 2014).

Much ink has been spilled over the wave of protests that are known as the "Gezi resistance". In fact, it is near impossible to write about political ecology and construction in

Turkey without mentioning Gezi Park. On May 27, 2013, a handful of protestors met in Gezi Park near İstanbul's famous Taksim Square, ignited by the hastily launched demolition of the park in violation of local planning ordinances. When the dozen or so protestors occupied the park in defiance of its demolition, they were met with brutal police violence and tear gas. Against this display of force, within a manner of days, the numbers of protestors quickly grew into hundreds of thousands gathering together in Taksim and millions of people protesting across Turkey. As the outpouring continued, the police were forced to withdraw from the square and the protestors established an autonomous occupation camp complete with public libraries, barricades, hospitals, kitchens (Arat 2013; Ertür 2016; Özdüzen 2019). The camp and its surrounding barricades were built as Başak Ertür notes, thanks in part to the availability of scrap construction materials lying about the Gezi Park square – "barricades built with pavement stones, scaffolding materials, and corrugated metal sheets from nearby construction sites…built with the debris of İstanbul's construction boom" (Ertür 2016, 98-100).

Gezi belonged to a generation of protests centered around acts of public occupation. From Syntagma to Tahrir Square, to Zuccotti Park, Gezi belonged to a global promise and experimentation with civic participation and spontaneous commoning. In the years following the protests, many had hoped that the "spirit of Gezi" would stretch beyond the 10 days of the occupation camp materializing in increased activism and resistance against the alliance between neoliberal and authoritarian governance in Turkey (Atak and della Porta 2016; Örs and Turan 2015). Gezi was also a turning point for political ecological movements in Turkey, providing not only material tactics of self-determination and self-organization throughout the occupation camp (Akbulut 2014, 239) but also a political imaginary of space making that resonated across the urban rural divide (Erensü and Karaman 2017).

Yet today the legacy of this imaginary seems complex. On the specific question of rapid urbanization, the governing AKP has not wholly rejected the protests but rather sought to

absorb and depoliticize them through promoting a politics of urban greenery (Erensü, İne, and Adanalı 2022). Meanwhile, in the last 10 years, the alliance between neoliberalism and neoconservatism has grown stronger, not only buttressing the AKP's hegemony but even influencing oppositional parties. Beyond the question of what Gezi achieved or failed to achieve, the very terrain of struggle Gezi had outlined, the contradiction this global moment had seemingly captured, the sites of accumulation and resistance it focused on need to be rethought. Afterall, during the height of Gezi Park protests, capitalist expansion in Turkey was justified through the promise of material prosperity and economic growth (Akbulut 2014). The governing AKP's agenda was hailed in liberal circles for its ability to generate economic expansion even if such expansion ultimately spelled disaster for many. Today, in the wake of yet another economic crisis both in Turkey and abroad, capitalism and the ideology of growth is increasingly reproduced less through promises of material prosperity and more through fears of ecological collapse and economic immiseration. Amidst increasing cost of living, sky rocketing rent, and multiple electoral challenges to the AKP's power, a new form of urban politics seems urgent.

In a context of economic stagnation and ecological collapse, a renewed attention, not only to spontaneous acts of commoning, but also to the differential ways in which immiseration is distributed is crucial for the assembling of urban politics. In this spirit, this chapter proposes to approach the urban politics of İstanbul from a different figure – that of the waste workers present at Gezi Park. Studying the lives of a whole host of informal workers that ordinarily navigate the streets of Beyoğlu, waste collectors, street vendors, truckers, sex workers, delivery drivers, provides an alternative window into urban politics. What would a critique of capitalist expansion that emerges from such a study teach us about urban politics? In her work, Neferti Tadiar describes the "remaindered lives" (Neferti X. M. Tadiar 2022, xiv–xv) that subsist in the shadow of the relentless proliferation of urban space, as people living increasingly informal

lives are forced to constantly improvise their own social reproduction in conditions of material privation. Focusing on such remaindered lives would give us a different path through the well-worn story of the Gezi Park and its commons, one that situates itself on the limits of social reproduction and identifies within this space the emergence of new forms of collectivity. Far from producing mere devastation, waste, ruination, and ecological collapse brings about their own infrastructural politics – ones that open to a different mode of collectivity (Simone 2021; 2022; Stoler 2008; Neferti X. M. Tadiar 2022) that is in conversation with but distinct from the mass protests and occupations encapsulated in Gezi Park.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the cultural representations of remaindered life in İstanbul – studying the conjunction of informality, waste, and violence. To do so, I draw on artwork, film, and photography to provide three sketches of remaindered life in İstanbul. First, I study the work of the *ArtıkİşIer* collective studying the struggles of informal waste workers in İstanbul. Then, I turn my attention to the work of truck drives (*hafriyat kamyonu*), focusing on the cultural representations of construction waste and the violence it perpetuates through the photography of artist Bekir Dindar and the documentary *Stray* by director Elizabeth Lo. Last, I discuss the short film *The Great İstanbul Depression* placing it in conversation with contemporary fears of an imminent earthquake in İstanbul. Within this empirical setting, I locate a theory of urban politics from a Marxist perspective, one that tries to connect the becoming waste of the urban environment (Labban 2019), the remaindered lives that live in the shadow of material destruction and debris, with the conditions of informal work that takes place in the margins of social reproduction. Thus, I think together the remainders of urban construction with the remaindered lives that reproduce themselves outside of traditional waged work (Denning 2010; Hansen 2015). Last, I argue that this confluence of waste, informality and violence is crucial to articulating a transindividual (Simondon 2020; Simone 2021; 2022) account of urban politics, one which conceives urban politics not as a surplus of popular

energies that might spontaneously erupt in protest but rather as the composition and organization of otherwise incommensurable and concrete modes of life (Hansen 2015; Toscano 2012).

ArtıkİşlerandInformalWork

For over a decade, the previously mentioned artist collective known as *ArtıkİşlerArtıkİşler* has been working to create an archive of videos that emerge from "spaces of garbage, ruins and waste" (Şen, Çelikaslan, and Tan 2014). They do so through centering "methodologies of waste, destruction, forensics, and biopolitics through video documentary making" (Artıkişler Collective 2016). One very striking feature of the *ArtıkİşlerArtıkİşler* is the multiple meanings given to the word *artık* within their oeuvre. In their English language material, the collective translates this word sometimes as "surplus" (ArtıkİşlerArtıkİşler = surplus works), sometimes as "waste" (İstanbul'un artığı = İstanbul's waste), sometimes as "residual" (artık mekan = residual space). The multiple translations reflect the ambiguity of the word in Turkish. But they also capture the sense of being on the limits or margins of reproductive processes – a marginalization that is reinforced through the racialization of waste work, which is undertaken by Kurdish, Roma and increasingly Afghani peoples in İstanbul. To reflect this sense of being residual, in their *Dictionary of Waste* ("Atık Sözlüğü – 1. Fasikül" 2019) (a small dictionary published in 2016) the collective defines "artık" as the sum of what is remaindered out of the value relation. ("*değer çıkarılırken geride bırakılan her şeyin toplamı").* What is this remaindered relation to value?

The field of investigation laid out by *ArtıkİşlerArtıkİşler* is one that begins in the city center (Beyoğlu) and follows waste collectors in a series of peripheral displacements. This is most obvious in their documentary, also named Dictionary of Waste (Şen 2019), which begins as the narrative of someone heading out from a house in Beyoğlu towards Ümraniye, located in the eastern half of İstanbul, in search of the former Hekimbaşı dumpster, the site of a long-

forgotten disaster. In 1993, prior to the city's current waste and recycling regime, the Ümraniye dumpster was the site of a massive disaster when methane from a 40-meter pile of solid waste further compressed by an additional 5-meter layer of construction waste became explosive. The blast displaced 1,200,000 cubic meters of solid waste burying and killing 39 people living nearby homes. Many of these people were newcomers in İstanbul who inhabited self-built homes, without legal ownership. As we discussed in Chapter 2, this flow of migration from rural areas of Turkey to the urban peripheries of İstanbul is characteristic of deagrarianization and neoliberalism, a transition that can be put in the context of a global movement of the rural poor who were displaced by "brutal and irresistible forces, claiming a right to the city, even if that meant only a hovel in its periphery" (Davis 2006, 55). As the *Surplus Works* collective point out, this migration to İstanbul is also shaped by a campaign of violence and forced displacement of 3-5 million Kurdish people from Northern Kurdistan by the Turkish military, which evacuated and burned down entire villages and orchards to deprive the insurgent Kurdish group PKK of a basis of support (van Etten et al. 2008).[51]

The houses built by these newcomers to such urban centers are often described as *gecekondu* housing (literally meaning "built overnight"). As the area in the immediate vicinity of the dumping site in Ümraniye had reasonably good roads that waste trucks could navigate while also being outside the city center proper, it proved attractive for newcomers looking for places to settle (Kocasoy and Curi 1995). The municipality tended to condone such *gecekondu* housing at the time since it helped shelter a cheap workforce that would work in İstanbul's factories and construction companies. If necessary this same work force could simply be

[51] The early 90s were a period of acute struggle between the Turkish State and the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) an armed insurgent group fighting for autonomy in Northern Kurdistan. Whereas the PKK had emerged originally from radical student movements in urban centers like Ankara and İstanbul in the 1970s, the 1990s marked a time in which the PKK had transitioned to rural areas, finding significant support amongst peasants and agricultural workers in Northern Kurdistan (O'Connor and Oikonomakis 2015). The majority of the 3-5 million people displaced by the Turkish state's colonial campaign ended up in İstanbul. It is worthwhile noting that this campaign of displacement is often glossed over in the story of İstanbul's urbanization.

disposed of – since they had no legal claim to the land – and their homes seized by a new development project, thus imposing a kind of informality that could easily be adapted to the demands of capital (Bilgin 2015).

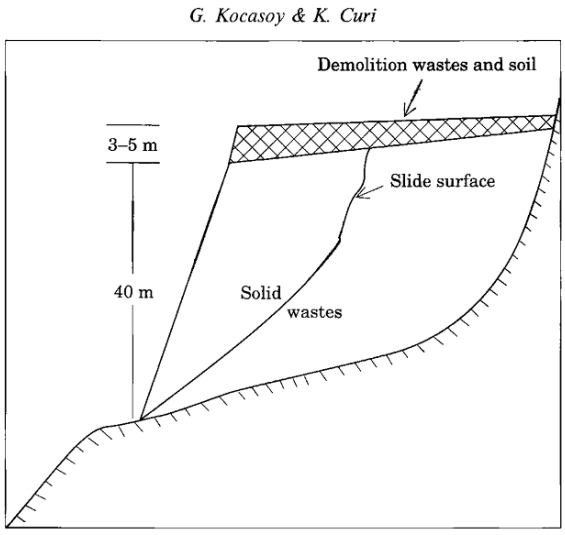


Figure 38: A schematic of the explosion (Kocasoy and Curi 1995, 312).


Çöplük faciası

► Ümraniye çöpliüü bomba gibi patladı; evler, insanlar çöp dağının altında kaldı

► Facia, sorumsuzluğun son örneği... Yıllar süren uyarıları kimse dikkate almadı

Figure 39: 'Ümraniye Disaster' headline from the day of the explosion. Image reproduced from the Geçmiş Gazete archive. http://cdn.gecmisgazete.com/.

Figure 40: A Monument for the People Who Lost Their Lives (ArtıkİşIer 2014).

Sources at the time recount the political impact of the explosion on the 1994 İstanbul mayoral elections, when a young candidate from the conservative Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) named Recep Tayyip Erdoğan won. The Welfare Party took over the management of the city from the Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti - SHP) which witnessed a significant decline in votes in İstanbul amidst a series of strikes by garbage collectors in 1993 and 1994 as well as the fallout of the disaster in Ümraniye (Akıncı 1999). Progovernment news outlets today use the 1993 explosion as an example of Erdoğan's effective governance; soon after he assumed the mayorship the two major dumpsters in Halkalı and Ümraniye were closed. Behind the football pitches built to replace the dumpster site, in a lonely off-road are two monuments for the people who lost their lives that day. In a video dedicated to this monument *Surplus Works* speak to a man who had lost friends to the explosion that day, who expresses how sad it makes him to see the monuments built to commemorate the dead, crumbling apart.

This legacy of disaster and displacement is a prelude to the immiseration and harassment that waste workers face today. Today, the overwhelming majority of İstanbul's

solid waste is not dumped but processed in waste disposal facilities (estimates are around 80-85%) that help create engineered landfills, while the remainder is either recycled (around 5-20%), composted or burned. Most of this recycling work involves informal pickers sorting through the trash. In this sense, such waste work is by no means unique to İstanbul. The fast pace of urban sprawl, the geopolitics of waste and recycling (distributed away from cities like London and New York towards poorer cities), combined with the availability of cheap and informal types of labor has made waste collectors a common figure in the Global South. In Turkey, waste workers (sometimes called pullers, *çekçekci* or collectors, *toplayıcı*) travel the urban centers of İstanbul and Ankara, carrying a *çekçek* (a simple metal cart with wheels and a large plastic sack in the middle). There are around 500,000 people working as waste collectors in Turkey around 100,000 of which are in İstanbul.

Being from minority backgrounds – mainly Roma, Kurdish, and Afghani – informal workers often explain the intensity of exclusion and discrimination they face. This is doubly true of waste work. As Demet Dinler notes, waste collectors face a combination of hypervisibility and invisibility in urban middle class neighborhoods – on the one hand ignored and made invisible as they journey across the city, on the other hand made hyper-visible in moments of closer encounter with urbanites (Dinler 2014). The videos of the *ArtıkİşIer* archive similarly depict waste workers taking their carts through the busiest areas of İstanbul, *İstiklal* and *Taksim Square*, working through trash cans and garbage patches, searching for recyclables, with little to no acknowledgment or response from passersby. Yet as *ArtıkİşIer* explain such relative invisibility is immediately suspended as waste workers become targeted for police violence. In one of the videos, a younger waste worker named Cihan takes the camera in his own hands to record the surroundings of his work, his cart, the place he sleeps as well as the word "Amed" – the Kurdish name for Diyarbakir – graffitied onto the wall. Cihan's videos of the warehouse where he sleeps, his bed and his pushcart appear then as a documentation of the

simultaneously intimate and dependent nature of work for waste pickers. In her book chapter on ArtıkİşlerÂ's documentary practices, Ayşe Güngör notes that in several documentary projects by the collective, one can see the camera being picked up by one of the interviewees who proceeds to record and interview the people around them including the filmmakers themselves (2022, 118). Güngör observes (Güngör 2022, 119) such a tendency brings ArtıkİşlerÂ's work closer to techniques in visual anthropology, and explains that this act transforms the camera from being narrowly the instrument of documentation to also insert it within the dynamics of everyday life.

Figures 41-44. "Cihan'ın Gördüğü" (What Cihan Saw), stills form (ArtıkİşlerÂ 2014)

Waste work is unmistakably a form of exploitation that pays collectors a fraction of what factories and recycling companies make. Yet while waste work pays very poorly most waste workers can save thanks in part to their ability to live inside the warehouses where they work, avoiding rent and utilities. In this sense, waste work has a curious relation to wages. First, one does not get paid by the hour but by piece work, the amount of waste one is able to sell to

factories. While, as Marx notes, piece wages are themselves merely a transformation of wages paid by time (Marx 1992, 692), the practicalities of waste work means that one has more autonomy over the dividing up of the working day – including breaks for composing poems, shooting videos, and pitching ideas for new essays amidst strolling the city. Alongside their temporal autonomy, waste workers also have some autonomy over the means of production – bin bags and pushcarts can easily be purchased and even maintained by workers themselves, even if trash compactors and storages facilities require fixed capital. Last, and perhaps most significantly, the place of work itself is hard to police as it is spread across urban space – while the *zabıta* (municipal police) can raid warehouses and keep watch over busy streets they can't monitor individual informal workers as they navigate the city. Yet neither are waste collectors completely autonomous, acting independently of economic compulsion. On the contrary, Demet Dinler highlights the radical dependency and lack of control informal work has in relation to both abstract forces like the price collectors can get for recuperated metals and paper, and to concrete relations of discipline like the control the owner of a warehouse exercises over the places waste workers get to live and sleep (Dinler 2016, 32).

In this sense, the political economy of waste work is akin to that of other informal workers that navigate the streets of İstanbul. In her documentary *Echoes of İstanbul*, Guilia Frati (2017) films informal workers in neighbourhoods like Sarıgöl, Sulukule and Tarlabaşı, that are earmarked for gentrification. Following the lives of informal workers who make and sell quilts, pastries, curtains, stuffed mussels, and sweet corn over the course of 5 years, Frati demonstrates how such work finds itself increasingly unsustainable. In addition to being harassed by the municipal police, their carts and goods being confiscated, informal workers find themselves running up against the very political economic, infrastructural, and sensorial aspects of urban transformation. Their ability to roam amidst the collapsing debris of their neighbourhoods, walk whatever street they wish, and to "cry out" as they enter a neighborhood

to announce their presence is made difficult in the context of high-rise apartments and gated communities. Finding it impossible to reproduce their lives in the context of such transformation Frati's documentary shows some informal workers organizing against the destruction of their neighbourhoods by joining advocacy groups while gradually being forced out, returning to their villages, taking up factory jobs and being pushed deeper into indebtedness.

Figure 45-48.: Stills from *Echoes of İstanbul*, Frati 2016.

There are specific cultural meanings imputed onto informal work. In this sense, the association of waste work with dirt, garbage, and refuse, that which is considered morally deplorable and objectionable is not necessarily surprising (Denning 2010). Sociologists have noted for example that strangers of all kinds, including ethnic minorities, have in different societies been associated with what are considered "dirty jobs", involving the handling and processing of what are considered dirty or impure objects – the handling of money, the carrying out of artisanal work that took place in closed rooms filled with polluted air, or the reproductive

work of cleaning and caring for others (Karakayali 2006, 323). Yet such observations also note that under capitalism this more general association of dirt with racialization and otherness enters a more specific relation, where what is impure, evil, and even racially inferior is more specifically understood through the paradigm of value. In place of what is pure and impure, evil and good, clean and dirty, one can put what is valorized and remaindered. The concept of "dirt" is transposed onto the bodies of workers who carry out such work, associating them with "disposability" (Marciniak 2008; Neferti X. M. Tadiar 2013). This is not to say that the association of dirt and otherness, and more specifically racialization, disappears. Rather, to paraphrase Stuart Hall's famous formulation, the association of racialization and dirt becomes the modality through which a remaindered relation to value is lived. Race in this sense both reproduces the working class in a stratified and internally antagonistic form and becomes the condition through which waste workers themselves understand their proletarianization, as Cihan's videos themselves hint (Hall 1978, 346–47). Only through such a framework can one make sense of the racialization of informal waste work, as opposed to trash collectors who work for the municipality, who are not racialized in the same way, and can even take strike actions and occupy public discourse. More so than garbage or literal dirt then (Millar 2020), what is racialized and deemed morally and sensorially objectionable is this remaindered relation to value itself.

Such racialization works hand in hand with policing and criminalization. In October of 2021, some 36 waste collection centres were raided by police, on orders from the İstanbul municipality (Duvar 2021). As collectors tend to live inside their warehouses this led to the unexpected arrest and potential deportation of hundreds of unregistered waste workers. Speaking about their reasoning behind the incident, government officials claimed waste workers "unjustly profited" from urban waste (haksız kazanç), contributed to environmental

pollution, employed underage and unregistered workers, and upset the public peace (huzuru bozmak) (Özkan 2021).

Against moralizing impulses that either romanticize or criminalize waste work, *Surplus Works* tries to map out the points of continuity between waste work and their own lives. They speculate about how the paper that waste workers collect gets recycled into the paper *Surplus Works* use to publish their magazine and booklets (Şen, Çelikaslan, and Tan 2014). They reflect on the points of affinity between low-paying, informal and exhausting translation and copy-editing work that young people in cultural industries rely on to make ends meet and the lives of waste workers. In the same spirit, one can point to how a significant amount of the paper collected by waste workers today comes in the form of cardboard packaging. From provisioning stores and bars to sustaining online shopping, cardboard boxes are perhaps the media from that most encapsulates the logistics of urban life in İstanbul, especially during Coronavirus lockdowns. For waste pickers this residue of logistical capitalism represents a reliable source of income in a neighborhood like Beyoğlu.

The *Surplus Works* archive also documents the intellectual practices that waste collectors undertake. Kathleen Millar explains in relation to waste pickers in Brazil, that waste picking involves contradictory forms of emotional experience. On the one hand waste pickers in Brazil sustain an ontology of the dump as "a world of burial that one must enter into physically… to do the work of reclaiming the discarded" and on the other studying the "transformative inner dispositions" of workers themselves (Millar 2014, 65; 45). In the videos taken by *Surplus Works,* one can see this space of autonomy, as waste workers talk about love, philosophy, politics, their shared histories of dispossession and displacement, and world politics. Demet Dinler's book, *İşçinin Varlık Problemi* (Dinler 2014) develops a similar attention to the artistic and creative practices that waste workers undertake, publishing magazines, composing poems and songs. Perhaps the most well-known such example is *Katık*

an Ankara based magazine published by waste workers. Such poems and essays are full of novel insights into capitalism, class, and waste work. For Dinler (2014), the magazine invites waste workers to investigate their own subjectivity, masculinity, and desires in relation to neoliberalism.

Today, there is a renewed effort to extinguish waste work altogether. Since 2004, the İstanbul municipality has also been undertaking a concerted effort to promote recycling. Over the past 5 years, this initiative has found new support thanks in part to Emine Erdoğan, the wife of president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the shape of the "Zero Waste" program launched in coordination with the Ministry for the Environment. The project aims to cut down on the amount of unrecycled waste produced by large cities such as İstanbul and funnel such waste back into the "productive economy" ("Sıfır Atık Nedir? - Sıfır Atık" 2020). Alongside this rhetoric, the program has encouraged the establishment of several new plastic and paper collection centers, equipped with optic readers that can automate the waste selection process.[52]

With this rhetoric of *zero waste*, there has also been an increasing call even amidst pro-government sources, to celebrate waste workers and their role in recycling as unnamed heroes of environmentalism and demanding their integration into municipal and governmental waste disposal systems (Kurtar 2022). Yet not all collectors are interested in the supposedly "environmental" character of their work. In interviews for example, Ali Mendillioğlu, a well-known advocate for waste workers explains that the perceived environmental effects of recycling are illusory without a more thorough overhaul of processes of production (Yol TV 2021). This is of course not to say that there aren't environmental stakes involved in how

[52] Outside of the experiences of waste collectors, the recycling industry also imports plastic waste from European countries and processes them in Turkey. Focused around the cities of Adana and İstanbul, this industry has been terrible for the physical health and wellbeing of various groups of minoritized worker, as well as the communities in which such plastics are processed. The health effects of the plastic recycling industry include asthma, trouble breathing and cancer, leading some to describe this global waste regime as "waste colonialism" (Michaelson 2021; Shennum 2022).

İstanbul's solid waste is disposed. Today, most of İstanbul's solid waste is stored or incinerated and a small percentage is recycled. There are attempts to build several waste storage and incineration sites across the previously mentioned Northern Forests, both in towns surrounding İstanbul like Kocaeli and Sakarya and inside İstanbul itself, all of which are often harmful to the ecologies of the Northern Forest not to mention contribute to climate catastrophe in the case of incineration ("Kuzey Ormanları Tehdit ve Tahrip Raporu" 2021, 35–37). Rather, constructing a better relation with waste requires an overturning of the material and technical infrastructures that create urban capitalism, a redistribution of the means of producing urban space, implicating a whole chain of changes that stretch from the use of cardboard boxes and packaging in contemporary logistics and marketing driven production to smaller roads and larger sidewalks that can accommodate big communal recycling bins. In this sense, the framework of "Zero Waste" seems more like a distraction. As Jennifer Gabrys notes such rhetoric of zero waste creates a fantasy of "natural harmony" that evades the historically produced character of environments and waste. Instead, Gabrys urges her readers to attend to the concept of waste and remainder, as "remainders direct us not toward the recovery of wholeness but toward new possibilities for working with the scatter of the world" (Gabrys 2011, 151). Following these insights, one might claim provocatively that the environmental politics of waste work lies less in what percentage of a city's waste is recycled, but rather in what kind of collectivity one is able to assemble around remainders.

Resources and Residues of the City: The *Hafriyat* Truck

The *hafriyat kamyonu* (excavation truck) has become a ubiquitous facet of urban life in İstanbul over the past 20 years. Excavation trucks with yellow dumpers carrying construction waste are everywhere in İstanbul and have been featured in government led propaganda, celebrations, and even employed as part of wedding ceremonies (Öztürk 2019). As noted in Chapiter 2, *hafriyat* is a composite concept that can refer to construction waste to soil, to a

mixture of metals. The word describes the result of excavation, from the Arabic root *haf-* to dig. As explained above, the concept of *hafriyat* then, denotes not a specific type of materiality, but rather the movement that takes place in the intervals of construction work, placing the built environment in relation to the resources and residues of urbanization, the *lithosphere* of mining and the *detritusphere* of waste as Labban (2019) puts it. Building on this ambivalence, as noted above, the *Hafriyat* collective, a group of artists operating in İstanbul between the late 1990s and early 2000s have also used the concept to investigate the materialities of urban life. "This is an absolute action of *hafriyat*: to turn over Earth itself... The images that might seep into the cracks might find their expression sometimes as a waste-dump, sometimes as steel bars sprouting from concrete at a construction site" (Hafriyat 2003).

Figure 49. A convoy of *hafriyat* trucks adorned with the Turkish flag assembled to commemorate the overcoming of the 15th of July coup attempt. (*TRT Haber* 2016).

The *hafriyat kamoynu* is a crucial infrastructure of capitalism in Turkey, as it mediates cultural anxieties around urban transformation, increasing regulative interventions of the government and the economic pressures of a construction fuelled growth model. One can conceive of the *hafriyat* industry as the tail end of a growth model that begins with debt and ends with debris, leading to an industry of intense competition and boom-bust cycles. In the figure of the *hafriyat kamyonu*, it has become possible to find the anxieties and contradictions

of the encounter between growth, extraction and authoritarianism that defines neoliberalism in Turkey – its absurdly triumphant nationalist celebrations, its reliance on intensifying forms of competition and exploitation, its combination of regulative oversight and informality, the drive towards accumulation in the face of destruction and death.

İstanbul extracted around 9 million kg of construction waste per day in 2019, an unknown amount of which was still disposed of illegally (Öztürk 2019). As this throughput of waste has increased, stories of *hafriyat* trucks speeding by city streets to get to government assigned dump sites have made it to national news, as a mixture of excavated materials and construction waste can fall on nearby drivers and pedestrians, or in the peripheries on the city on wildlife, often resulting in their death.[53] It is important to note in this regard that the *Kanal İstanbul* project will require, according to the estimates of environmental activists, around 10 thousand *hafriyat* trucks making daily trips between İstanbul and its various peripheries ("Northern Forests Advocacy Guide" 2021). Moreover, the dumping of construction waste and excavated earth onto the floodplains, forests, beaches, and seas that surround İstanbul, prove toxic to the multiple flora and fauna that inhabit these environments. Perhaps it is for this reason that the *hafriyat* truck has become both the symbol and the material infrastructure against which environmental activism in the region has organized featuring heavily in multiple organizational literature and documents. In every sense the *hafriyat* truck is the harbinger of devastating megaprojects such as the *Kanal*, the *İstanbul Airport* and the *Northern Marmara Motorway*, all of which have brought an intensification of logistical infrastructure into the forests that surround İstanbul's north. Such projects have destroyed millions of trees (the *İstanbul Airport* alone destroyed 6500 hectares of trees), segmented the Northern Forests (an area of forestland

[53] The officially recorded number of deaths by *hafriyat* trucks that year stood around 253 (Ozturk 2020). The increasing visibility around *hafriyat* truck related deaths is thanks in part to the efforts of the Dere family, who have begun independently compiling data about *hafriyat* trucks since losing their daughter Şule İdil Dere in a hafriyat truck related accident in 2016. In their own reports, released in cooperation with *KOS*, the number of deaths stand much higher at around 500 per year (*Kuzey Ormanlari Savunmasi* 2017).

stretching from Kırklareli in Thrace region all along the Black Sea and Marmara coasts to Sakarya and Düzce, traversing the municipal borders of İstanbul), destroyed and harmed the more than 80 lakes, ponds and wetlands that exist in this geography and disrupted the migratory paths of the hundreds of thousands of birds that pass through the forests ("Kuzey Ormanları Tehdit ve Tahrip Raporu" 2021; "Ekosistem, İklim ve Kentsel Büyüme Perspektifinden İstanbul ve Kuzey Ormanları" 2020). In interviews, environmental activists describe *hafriyat* trucks as a menacing presence in traffic, an intruder in urban space, a symbol of ecological destruction, describing the overall impact of the trucks as a kind of hafriyat "terror" *(hafriyat terörü)*, emphasizing the sense of cruelty (*gaddarlık*) with which trucks are compelled to navigate urban space.[54] In fact, several NGOs and environmental groups like the *Northern Forests Defence, Don Kisot Cycling Collective* and *Gaia Magazine* have picked up the phrase *hafriyat* terror, mobilizing it to describe the destruction this movement of debris inflict on human and non-human lives.

[54] Interview with Seda Elhan of Northern Forests Defence.

Figures 50-51. Images of *Hafriyat* Trucks from the Northern Forests Defence 2021 Environmental Impact Report and the Norther Forests Defence Advocacy Guide. The banner in Image 9 reads, "*Hafriyat* Truck Terror Annihilates Nature, Humans and İstanbul. Let's Put an End to it." Image 10 is from a protest against the Third Bridge.("Kuzey Ormanları Tehdit ve Tahrip Raporu" 2021; "Northern Forests Advocacy Guide" 2021).

As a result of their ubiquity in urban space, *hafriyat* trucks have also become an object of artistic and political attempts to represent the city. In May of 2017 for example, the İstanbul

municipality gathered a convoy of 1453 *hafriyat* trucks adorned with Turkish flags and slogans near the construction site of the then unfinished *İstanbul Airport*, as a celebration of the infrastructure project as well as a commemoration of the 464th "conquest" of İstanbul by the Ottoman Empire in 1453 (Aslanhan 2017). More interestingly, beyond official propaganda efforts the humble *hafriyat* truck even makes its appearance on TV-shows, such as the much beloved family sit-com *Çocuklar Duymasın* (Don't Let the Children Hear). On a 2017 episode, Haluk, the patriarch figure of the family sit-com chastises his family and friends for complaining about *hafriyat* trucks:

> "If it weren't for those trucks, could you live in such an apartment? Climate controlled, earthquake resistant, newly built… How do we accomplish urban transformation without those *hafriyat* trucks? And what about the construction industry? How do we grow without construction? Do you know how many families would be rendered unemployed if it weren't for the construction industry?!"

The sit-com is revelatory only in the sense that it reinforces the contradictory social anxieties that are projected onto *hafriyat* drivers; the result of an estrangement from the technical and material conditions that subtend everyday urban life. Within the space of a 3-minute sit-com exchange, they are treated as an unfortunate nuisance of Turkey's construction-based economy, a potentially menacing vehicle that ought to be avoided as well as the real heroes of economic growth. Yet we never quite learn what happens to *hafriyat* drivers once they leave the confines of such narratives.

One can also note the many artistic representations of construction vehicles including the *hafriyat* truck in artistic practice around İstanbul. Perhaps the limit case for such representation is inserting the construction vehicle and even debris itself into the sterile environment of the gallery space.

Figure 52. Alper Aydın. D8M, 2016. Image reproduced with permission from Aydın.

Such depictions often repeat and reperform the "terror" that such vehicles represent, often presented in rather direct and brutalist terms. One can also locate in this lineage Serkan Taycan's photography, (2015) which depicts how *hafriyat* trucks "turn the city-inside out" carrying the city's debris filled entrails to its peripheries. Or in *Cavity* (Oyuk) Bekir Dindar, an İstanbul based photographer documents the giant stone quarries around the city's Western peripheries describing them as extractive "cavities" that form as urban buildings continues to rise (Dindar 2016). In this sense, Dindar's photography seems to be part of a visual language around extraction and waste in Turkey. Yet what is interesting in Dindar's photography is the image of the precarious *hafriyat* truck navigating the giant chasms left behind by stone quarries. In this work one catches a glimpse of the others side of the excavation work; with compositions that highlight a sense of verticality, positioned at the tip of a chasm, combined with an

acknowledgement of the vulnerability and precarity that the trucks face, navigating such a geography as though they were tiny ants navigating a trail.

Figure 53-55. Oyuk/Cavity (Dindar 2016). Images reproduced with permission from Dindar.

While the *hafriyat* truck seems so menacing to pedestrians (perhaps rightly so) Taycan's and Dindar's photographs incite us to ask the vulnerabilities faced by the *hafriyat* drivers. This sense is heightened by Dindar's attempts to photograph the drivers themselves. Dindar explains how he spent weeks in a stone quarry in the western peripheries of İstanbul, attempting to gain the confidence of drivers. After a week of asking, he was able to position himself at the ticketing office where drivers came to weigh the materials they transported that day and get paid their earnings.[55] Ironically, in the space of the photograph, the architectural frame through which construction work becomes legible to capital, where the labor of construction drivers gets assigned a specific price, is the very means through which the audience encounters truck drivers concretely.

[55] Interview with the artist April 2021.

What discussions of "*hafriyat* terror" leave out is the sense of precarity and intense competition most *hafriyat* drivers are subject to – the conditions under which a feeling like terror is constructed. The *hafriyat* trucks has been subject to an increasing amount of regulative oversight in İstanbul. This oversight came as a response to the increasing significance construction has had in Turkey's economy since the Justice and Development Party's rise to power in 2002. Deniz Öztürk notes how municipal bodies like İSTAÇ and İSBAK not only regulate the placement of dumpsites they also track and trace excavation trucks monitoring their speed as well as the paths they are allowed to take through a platform that connects to GPS monitors affixed to their trucks (Öztürk 2019). All this paints a picture of construction fuelled growth that not only has to do with the desire for accumulation on the part of construction companies but also the imperatives of competition and survival at the face of stagnating economic prospects on the part of truck drivers and smaller *hafriyat* companies. The *hafriyat* industry being downstream from construction and requiring significant amounts of fixed capital for entry, many of the smaller *hafriyat* firms formed that first entered the industry during the early years of Turkey's construction boom have now gone bankrupt.[56] Drivers, especially those working for subcontractors, often note how they are unable to get paid for 3-4 months in a row during even the best of times.[57] In the face of such regulation and competition, most companies make money through methods other than carrying *hafriyat* to officially designated disposal sites – either sorting through the *hafriyat* for valuable metals and minerals or dumping it illegally. The "hafriyat terror" then, while registered in concrete feelings, is produced impersonally, amidst the abstractions of the market that reproduce the threat of constant unemployment.

[56] Interview with *hafriyat* truck drivers, April 2021.
[57] Interview with *hafriyat* drivers, April-May 2021.

Attending to vulnerabilities of *hafriyat* work, it is important to note the violence of the construction industry more generally. As of September 2018, there were around 2 million workers formally employed as part of the industry. Nearly 35.8% more worked informally, a significant number of which are refugees, migrants, and other racialized minorities. In the last 15 years, even among the insured workers, 1 out of every 3 workers has been subject to workplace accidents (3. Havalimanı İşçileri Dayanışma Platformu et al. 2020). And the yearly number of workers who have lost their lives stand at 336 in 2019, making construction the second deadliest industry in the country (3. Havalimanı İşçileri Dayanışma Platformu et al. 2020). These conditions of precarity have fuelled some significant strike action such as the briefly lived 2018 strikes during the construction of İstanbul Airport, which saw the participation from more than half of the 37 thousand people working for over 500 different subcontractors across the *İstanbul Airport* site (*Evrensel* 2019). The strikes were initially followed with the construction companies feigning compliance with the workers' demands, quickly followed by the nighttime raiding of workers' sleeping quarters by specialist police forces and the detaining of around 2000 workers, as well as the seizure of their phones and social media accounts. While the iron fist with which the police and construction companies responded to the strike seemed to dissipate the popular energy, the organizers of the strike claim that it led to a visible increase in the number of strikes in other workplaces later in 2019 (Bayraktar et.al. 128-129).

In this context, one should also mention that *hafriyat* drivers themselves staged a quieter protest in 2018, after the İstanbul Municipality threatened to decrease the size of the *hafriyat* trucks that could enter the city. Assembled in front of the municipality, the drivers cited the fines they were being charged for the excess construction waste their trucks were carrying (fines that are often born by the drivers themselves) and pleading President Erdoğan for help. Organized by the *İstanbul European Side Hafriyat Association (İSHAFDER)* the protestors

announced that they have shut down their engines and have pulled their trucks from the construction site of the İstanbul Airport. They further threatened to descend upon the municipality with 15 thousand trucks effectively shutting down the roads that lead to the building should their demands be ignored. It is hard to discern the make up of the protestors and to what extent they were constituted by drivers or company owners. Suffice it to say, company owners claim that shortly after these protests the regulations in question were removed (Öztürk 2019, 87). Such incidents remind one of the sheer physical size, sturdiness, smell, and noise of the *hafriyat* truck in relation to all the other vehicles, pedestrians and animals that move through the city, no doubt part of the reason why they appear as so terrorizing.[58] Yet the incident also points to a site of ambivalence that residually haunts the protests. What other composition of proletarian struggle, technical competence (the ability to operate the truck) and ecological destruction could assemble around the *hafriyat* truck? What else can a *hafriyat* truck block?

Dogs, Death, and Debris: Stray

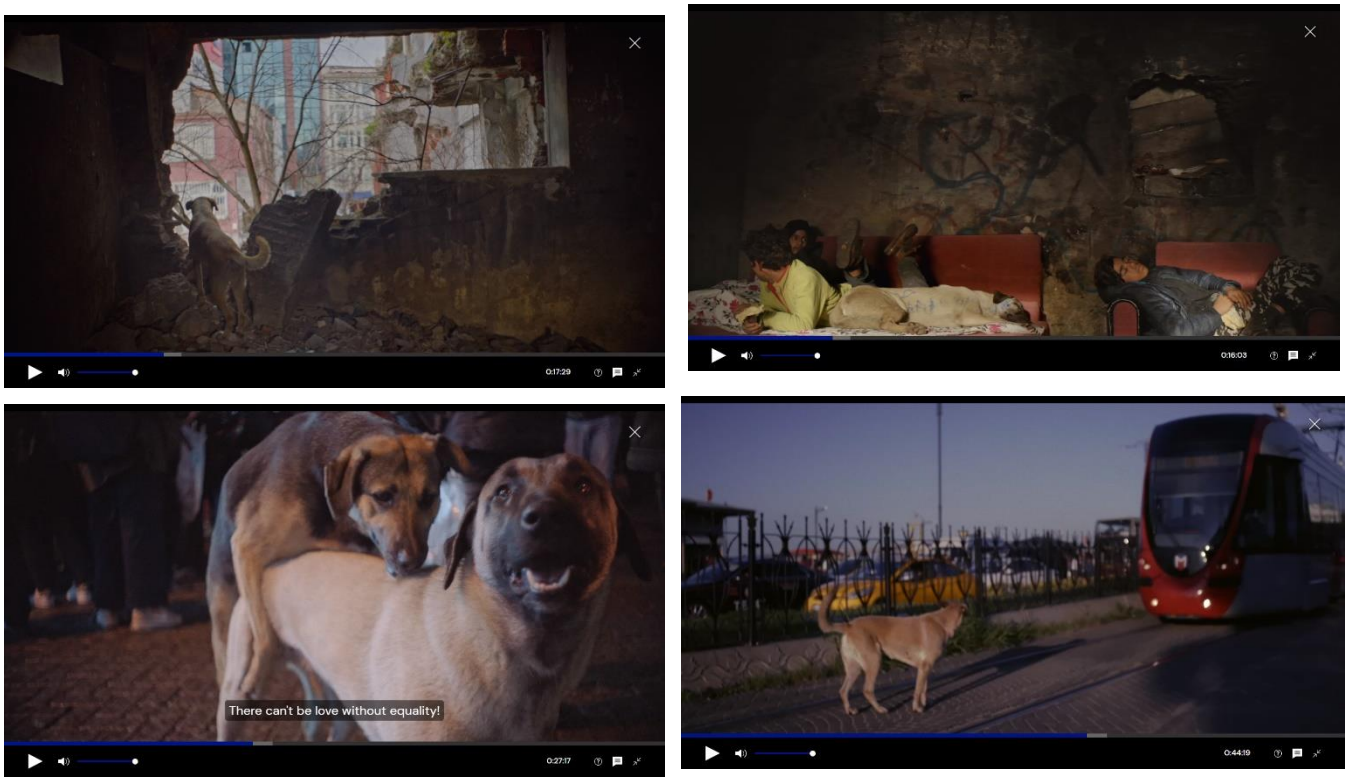
Tracking the story of debris across İstanbul is powerful, precisely because it connects the resources and residues of the city, putting into contact the strikes in the İstanbul Airport, the destruction of the Northern Forests, and the more distinctly urban terror of being struck by debris. And perhaps the most powerful demonstration of this, is how the remaindered space of construction waste extends beyond human life. One striking depiction in this regard is the documentary *Stray* by director Elizabeth Lo (2021). The documentary *Stray* centers a dog named Zeytin. Lo explains that she originally came across Zeytin in an underground tunnel in

[58] A typical *hafriyat* truck used at a construction site, I have been told by a driver working at the *İstanbul Airport*, might weigh anywhere between 20-50 tons unloaded, can be 2-4 meters tall and 7-10 meters long. The size and sturdiness of *hafriyat* trucks was demonstrated most recently in the 15 July, 2016 coup attempt, when *İSHAFDER* called its members to block critical infrastructures such as roads that lead in and out of military bases, thus blocking the progression of tanks and other military vehicles. By comparison cars were notably crushed by the tanks that navigated the streets of urban İstanbul.

2018 and quickly discovered that the dog was accompanying Jamil and Halil, two young refugee boys from Syria. In the documentary, Zeytin roams the streets of Beyoğlu, encountering waste collectors, fishermen, protestors, police officers and waiters (who chase her out of cafes). She ultimately returns to an abandoned and crumbling construction site where the Syrian boys sleep. After being discovered by security guards the boys and the dogs that accompany them are evicted out of the construction site and instead must roam the streets, sleeping on the sidewalk. Returning to the construction site the boys express their desire to adopt a puppy from the *şantiye* guards, who are taking care of several puppies of their own. The boys proceed to steal one of the puppies named *Kartal* from the guards (encouraged by one of the guards who agrees to feign ignorance). Rejoicing that they now have a puppy to look after they celebrate that night, Zeytin following after them. We learn that the boys have been arrested and that *Kartal* has also been taken by the police.

Yet more relevant than the narrative of the film, is its focus on the movement of the dogs themselves. This is partially an effect of how the film was shot, following the dogs around as they bark, fight, make up and roam urban space for 12-hours at a time (Thompson 2021). The angle of the camera itself is also noteworthy, as the camera was located on Lo's legs and stabilized by a rig, to focus the camera on the dogs themselves. Most importantly though, what *Stray* captures, despite its name and perhaps beyond the designs of its director (Thompson 2021), is the multiplicity of relations between humans, animals and the built environment that exists in İstanbul. Such a multiplicity of relations, trouble the narrative of unified story of 'domestication', even when such processes are described as mutually constitutive and deeply emotive relations between humans and dogs (Haraway 2003). Rather, one might say the very distinction between stray and domestic, can be placed in relation to a field of polarization where the lone dog roaming the urban streets and the domesticated house dog constitute only the very extreme ends of a range of relations of belonging and care humans and dogs create in urban

space (Yıldırım 2019b). In the film Zeytin roams public parks, underground stations, busy streets, and only then decides to rejoin Jamil and Halil, accompanying them to an abandoned construction site for sleep. In this sense, one can note the varieties of relations Zeytin builds with the built environment around her, hinting at a typology of human-dog relations. Throughout the film one can observe dogs frequenting specific restaurants and cafes for scraps, roaming specific neighborhoods and streets like *İstiklal*, inhabiting transport infrastructures like taxi stops and metro stations, living in *şantiye* (construction site) often accompanying security guards, frequenting waste collectors for scraps, roaming across urban space from one neighborhood to another and getting in fights with other dogs. Of course, no one dog fulfills anyone of these categories completely and a single day in the life of Zeytin involves shifting through several such roles. In occupying such infrastructural spaces, dogs exist as a surplus of publicity that accompanies and subtends political performances. In an ultimate mockery of publicity, Zeytin can even be seen having sex with another dog, in the middle of a group of feminist activists protesting violence against women, surrounded by police forces.



Figures 56-59. Stills from the film *Stray* (Lo 2021).

Yet the dogs depicted in *Stray*, living in the city's center, constitute a small portion of the total dogs in İstanbul. In Chapter 2, I had described Serkan Taycan's walking route and artwork *Between Two Seas.* Walking the peripheries of İstanbul, it is very common to have dogs accompany you for the journey. Some regular participants of these walks describe them as "day-dogs", since a pack of 2-3 dogs might accompany you in some variation for the entire day. Out on the peripheries of the city, where *hafriyat* trucks roam, dogs also seek shelter with security guards that watch over construction sites. In one of my walks, at a former agricultural field near the Küçükçekmece lake, I met Hamdi, a security guard. Hamdi worked for a subcontractor that *TOKI* (the Housing Development Administration of Turkey) hired to police one of the fenced off plots of land adjacent to the expected route of the Kanal. When we crossed the fenced, and approached Hamdi's cabin, a whole alarm system of 20 or so dogs that surrounded the cabin barked at our tiny crew. This alarm system was immediately put to rest

when Hamdi approached us and began chatting. Hamdi's story was interesting because prior to being a guard, he had worked as a construction worker in a project at Kayaşehir near the Sazlıdere dam in the 1990s, which he left after sustaining an injury. Prior to that, some 35 years ago, he was relocated to İstanbul after his village in Van was forcibly evacuated by the state. Now he cared for the dogs that surrounded his cabin. "We tried to look after as many of them as we were able," Hamdi explained. "Yet many of them are crushed under the business of the road".

As Ozan Zeybek notes, the dogs of this geography are often brought to the peripheries by a host of local municipal and gubernatorial authorities, snatched from neighborhoods earmarked for urban transformation, loaded onto trucks by the hundreds, drugged and dumped near construction sites (Zeybek 2014). In her ethnographic work in İstanbul between 2012-2017 Mine Yıldırım recounts over 500 cases of dogs being drugged, loaded up into trucks and being dumped deliberately near *hafriyat* dumpsites (Yıldırım 2019a; 2019b). Why this proximity of dumpsites for *hafriyat* and dogs? While the relation maybe mysterious at first, Yıldırım's interviewees make clear how such cases of abandonment are a form of silent extermination. A construction worker working on the Kuzey Marmara Highway, a megaproject that targets the city's northern and western expansion explains that the foundation of the road is full of dead dogs.

> "I consider this a form of workplace accident… We don't deliberately hit them. But they're used to human contact. So, they get stuck under pallets, hit by cranes, they chase after *hafriyat* trucks and are crushed underneath them… This entire place is a grave, a mass grave. Worker's die here, they fall, they get crushed, they get electrocuted. And so do dogs…" (Yıldırım 2019a, 96)

What we see through following the journey of waste and construction debris is how the peripheries of the city become the meeting ground for the various excesses that both produce and are excluded from urbanization. In these positive articulations, there is a kind of unruly

generosity, of multispecies acts of mutual subsistence that governs the relations between construction workers and dogs (N. Clark 2007). The precarious workers that exist in the margins of waged work, not paid fully or at all, often forced to work in dangerous conditions, the dogs that are adopted into neighborhoods and nuclear families and then later made excess to their Oedipal structure once their presence becomes inconvenient, the construction work that shapes the city and the *hafriyat* that both produces and is excluded from urban space. Perhaps the ecological challenge of construction waste, like the ecological challenge of urban waste is not to eliminate or overcome waste, but rather to understand the mutual imbrication of nonhuman destruction and economic precarity and explore possibilities of resistance and revolt.

The Great İstanbul Depression: Unemployment and the City in Ruins

A crucial factor shaping social life in İstanbul in the past 5 years has been unemployment and the skyrocketing cost of living. One interesting study of these dynamics is the short film *The Great İstanbul Depression* by director Zeynep Dilan Süren (2020). The film follows the story of two young women, Ayşe and Didem, both struggling to make ends meet. Living in the shadow of shopping malls, construction sound and high-rises, Didem finds herself trapped in her home. Behind on rent payments and having given up on finding jobs, Didem considers using her makeup skills to become a *YouTube* personality while her parents, themselves facing financial hardship, demand she moves back to her hometown. Ayşe on the other hand can be seen getting ready for multiple job interviews, minimum wage jobs as Didem notes dismissively, all of which turn out to be unsuccessful. As the short film progresses, a growing sense of resentment towards the outside world seems to spread, represented by the introduction of a neighbour living across the street, another young woman who has a job and a pet dog.

Ayşe and Didem represent a surplus workforce, remaindered out of cycles of exploitation. They are precisely the young, formerly middleclass, downwardly mobile, alienated and urbanite subject the Gezi Park protests had most spoken to (Tuğal 2013). Yet the film captures the several layers of informality and desperation they have been thrown into through a context of economic stagnation. Didem tries to create makeup videos to upload to her YouTube channel. Ayşe runs from interview to interview, in hopes of being offered a minimum wage job. And in the background is the overwhelming fear that they might not make it in the city.

In their work on white collar unemployment, (A. Bora et al. 2016, 20–23) describe unemployment as characteristic of the wider trends of precaritization that defines the post Fordist economy. They note how the cultural belief that a university degree is a safe path towards a secure job no longer holds true, especially for most ordinary students who are excluded from clientelist networks and therefore potentially face unemployment and downward mobility (A. Bora et al. 2016, 22). They note the feelings of despair and fear that the prospects of unemployment and downward mobility creates in university students, driving them towards a state of depression (A. Bora et al. 2016, 23). Ayşe and Didem both being recent university graduates can be understood as part of this aspiring white-collar class. Moreover, for both Ayşe and Didem this social relation also manifests in a more privatized narrative of depression. As Mark Fisher notes, whereas "sadness apprehends itself as a contingent and temporary state of affairs", depression presents itself as necessary and interminable (Fisher 2011). In the film's case, this feeling of interminability helps reinforce and naturalize the economic hardships the character's face while reinforcing a sense of helplessness.

Yet in the film, the experience of unemployment is bound up not only with a sense of emotional distress but also the potential destruction of the city itself. The title of the film *Büyük İstanbul Depresyonu* (The Great İstanbul Depression) is a play on the phrase *Büyük İstanbul*

Depremi (the Great İstanbul Earthquake). İstanbul is a city that has been periodically hit by earthquakes. Most recently in 1999 when the nearby town of Izmit was hit by a 7.6 magnitude earthquake, resulting in the death of tens of thousands of people, the reverberations also reached İstanbul knocking down the poorly built houses of neighbourhoods like Avcılar. Earthquake scientists warn that another earthquake of a similar magnitude is very likely to take place in İstanbul in the next 70 years (Arslan and Jurich 2022). Many residents of İstanbul rightfully fear the destruction such an earthquake could unleash especially in the context of the city's rapid urbanization.

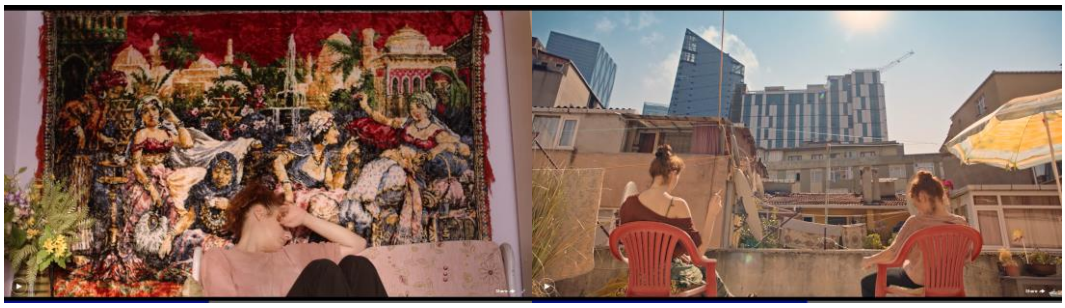


Figure 60-61. Stills from *The Great İstanbul Depression*, (Süren 2020).

In the film, Didem's state of depression and desire to exit the city manifests as a "fantasy" of destruction. When Ayşe comes home one day from yet another unsuccessful job interview Didem shares with her this fantasy. Didem explains how she dreams of the great İstanbul earthquake coming to pass in the fashion of a complete destruction of urban space. In the fantasy Ayşe and Didem survive, roaming the ruins of İstanbul, defending themselves against looters and violent men that overtake the city. Notably, everyone who went to work seems to have vanished in the disaster. Not having to go to work has saved Ayşe and Didem's lives. After a month-long journey amidst the debris, Ayşe and Didem find their parents in a shelter, returning with them to their hometown to live a simple life.

Didem's fantasy is worth reflecting on. As Eray Çaylı notes, the observation that an earthquake would spell disaster, especially for the city's poor and racialized inhabitants living in lower quality housing, has become somewhat mainstream in Turkey (Çaylı 2022). A real earthquake would not be an undifferentiated disaster but rather an uneven crisis most heavily registered in the lives of the urban poor. Yet living with such a virtual disaster, suspended for now yet lurking in the corners of everyday life, has profound impacts especially in the poorly built neighbourhoods Ayşe and Didem inhabit. The fear of this future earthquake manifests as a sense of being stuck in the city, living a disaster one knows is going to take place yet cannot escape. What is interesting about the scene then is that Didem can only imagine being freed from the obligation to work and to pay rent in the context of such a disaster – a secondary sense of being trapped by the realities of unemployment and urban life. Perhaps Ayşe and Didem's desires and passions are so bound up with urban space, that even and especially as they live in the shadow of the city proper, the way to exit cannot be through a conscious choice but must instead be mediated through some catastrophe. In this sense, Didem's fantasy could also be read as a failure to imagine disaster otherwise. After the great destruction has taken place, Didem describes a capitalist realist ruin, recounting how the two sisters would be beset by attackers that they will have to overcome. And yet perhaps the conditions of informality, ruin, and unemployment they face is neither so unique nor so catastrophic. Perhaps the general condition of ruination, joblessness, and informality they dread is already here – only to be exacerbated by the earthquake. Could the experience of being remaindered instead yield to an alternative mode of urban politics? What else could emerge from the ruins of İstanbul?

Informality and the Becoming Waste of the Urban Environment

In their "Dictionary of Waste", *Surplus Works* defines "capitalism" referring to *Katık's* famous tagline "Don't chuck capitalism to the waste bin of history. It isn't worth a dime" ("Atık Sözlüğü – 1. Fasikül" 2019). Indeed, it is impossible to chuck capitalism to the waste bin of

history because capital dreams of an all-subsuming system where every relation, even that of waste, is subject to its law of value.[59] To further unpack the relation between value, urban waste, and informal work, it is helpful to take a detour through Marxist thought. Following Marx, we can define capitalism as the constant meeting of two flows, those of free labor (or the capacity for labor untethered from specific social relations) and free capital (or undifferentiated wealth untethered from concrete forms of property). As Michael Denning notes, such a definition is important for understanding informal work, because it places the emphasis not on exploitation of a particular laborer but rather on the social process through which these two flows encounter one another. What matters is not wage-labor itself but rather how the relation between free labor and free capital is *reproduced* – all the domination, expropriation, and subsumption that goes into *re*producing labor as "free". As Denning states,

> "the fetishism of the wage may well be the source of capitalist ideologies of freedom and equality, but the employment contract is not the founding moment. For capitalism begins not with the offer of work, but with *the imperative to earn a living.* Dispossession and expropriation, followed by the enforcement of money, taxes and rent: such is the idyll of "free labor"" (Denning 2010, 80).

The word "free" here indicates that labor is untethered from any mode of subsistence, "free from both the constraints and guarantees of a particular form of life" (Read 2003, 62). It indicates the freedom to do whatever one pleases with one's labor – provided one sells it.

Above I had noted how activities like waste work are more informally organized than traditional waged labor. Such discussions of informal work tend to dwell on this question of whether and at what point it qualifies as wage labor (Birkbeck 1978; Dinler 2016). Yet viewed

[59] I'm building on a *relational* understanding of value here. This account of value involves not only a rejection of the neoclassical tradition which equates value narrowly with price, but also the substantialist understanding of value which equates value with labor. Rather, the value relation traverses moments of production, distribution, and consumption. Value is not only "realized" in exchange but also perversely already presumed in production, insofar as all production presupposes profit under capitalism. Value then names the "inner coherence of capitalism… the one element that presupposes all the others, the ring that binds together the other rings of money and wages, profit and price, property and the police, the state and the banking system, world markets and international conflict. The concept of value is as much a descriptive concept as a revolutionary hieroglyphic, a critical heuristic designed to focus those who would overthrow capitalism" (Bernes 2021, 3). The remaindered then would name the substrate of this vicious circle, that it works on and disciplines. The remaindered forms the associated milieu from which the revolutionary antagonism with capital may emerge.

from the compulsion to sell one's labor, the basic alienation from the means of subsistence, the question is less relevant. Rather, studying the margins of the wage relation, one can demonstrate how the abstract force of markets that defines waged work is equally relevant for understanding forms of work that take place outside it. In the Global South, where informal and unwaged forms of work have historically been more prevalent, this compulsion manifests as a threat not only to the laborer's physical subsistence but also to her entire social existence, her mode of life. What unites informal work is how one doesn't simply get "fired" from waste picking, operating a pushcart, or selling mussels – rather one's entire mode of life is foreclosed upon. As Vinay Gidwani observes, that one can subsist on the remainders of capitalist valorisation appears as a problem for capital, one that is policed and harassed (Gidwani 2013, 779). The relative autonomy enjoyed by informal workers becomes more reason for the constant criminalization, surveillance, and harassment they face reinforcing their inability to reproduce their lives. Autonomy comes hand in hand with a more radical dependency.

One way to understand this dependency is to investigate its relation to waged work. For Marx, "free" labor has a *dual* character – it is both abstract and concrete. It is abstract in that what capitalism exploits and captures is abstract activity, indifferent to its means and object. Abstract labor emerges as the common denominator between different commodities, the comparison and equalization of diverse activities through the medium of exchange. Moreover, abstract labor acts as what Jason Read describes as a "*norm* of productivity" imposed on concrete forms of labor that disciplines and conditions them (Read 2020, 85). Such norms are readily apparent in the range of waged work that covers the becoming waste of İstanbul. The GPS tracker installed onto a *hafriyat* truck, the standardization of a driver's labor through a fixed price, the foremen that surveil and monitor the concrete cooperation of construction workers, are subtle reminders that while capitalists' discipline and capture the actions of concrete bodies, the real object being produced in this process is labor power in the abstract.

Yet this norm of productivity is simultaneously a cultural phenomenon, the idea of an abstract humanity as productive capacity, a generalized demand to be productive that Ayşe and Didem also feel even though they are unemployed. As such, it can be experienced as a form of alienation – the demand to be infinitely productive, to exceed every limit, and adapt to the every demand of capital can alienate one from the experience of being a finite body, a specific mode of life (Read 2020, 89).

Concrete labor, on the other hand, describes the experience of undertaking a particular kind of work, involving concrete set of skills, technical conditions, and social relations. As such it generates its own norms and capacity for alienation (Read 2020, 90). Through concrete work one's subjectivity can be realized as one's unique place and belonging in the social distribution and hierarchy of labor. Yet this inclusion can also be alienating, constraining one's social existence to one's profession as a construction worker, truck driver, or waste collector. This is the experience of being a cog in the machine, of being a machine-body, of being fragmented and alienated from the fruits of labor. Moreover, this norm has material effects where one's body and social standing becomes reduced to isolable functions and gestures, even producing specific forms of injury, the way the phrase "back breaking work" is all too real for waste collectors (Artıkişler Collective 2016).

What makes informal work noteworthy is how it fails to be neither wholly abstract nor wholly concrete and in this failure experience both forms of alienation even more thoroughly. Read notes for example how for Hegel, because waged work makes individuals universal and interchangeable (abstract) it is the cornerstone on which notions of citizenship and political participation is founded (Read 2020, 88). From such a vantage point, the margins of the wage relation appear as a political problem, a threat to the citizenry, a backwards social component that refuses to be productive, that doesn't contribute. Hence, the various attempts to bring waste collection under the control of larger companies, with brand new collection centers and optical

readers, all promising improvements in efficiency. On the other hand, neither does waste work have a secure footing in the social hierarchy of work, since it is associated with trash, that which is excluded from social belonging. Collectors are simultaneously described as too abstract and too concrete, too visible, and yet somehow also fading into the background of urban life.

In this double alienation, one can also glimpse the racialization of informality. Moishe Postone observes that antisemitism functions as biologizing and naturalizing the abstract and concrete dimensions of capitalism, through a racializing division that assigns abstraction and concreteness to Jews and Aryans respectively (Postone 1980, 112). Similarly, the racialization of informal work helps naturalize its marginal relation to waged work. Through its inability to be held up to the abstract norms of "productivity", informal workers become associated with the "thievery" and "unjust profiteering". In their exclusion from the social division of labor, informal work becomes associated with criminality and moral contempt. All these negative moral judgements are naturalized through racialization of waste workers in İstanbul, carried out by Kurdish, Syrian and Afghani migrants. As Gupta explains, studying the intersection of caste with waste work in India, through racialization, minority groups become "locked into" waste work, forced to occupy the margins of both the wage relation and of public space (P. Gupta 2022, 250).

As Denning explains, the proletariat then are defined not through their exploitation but rather through their status as a "virtual pauper", being constantly threatened by unemployment, informality, and poverty (Denning 2010). What does pauperization mean in relation to such an analysis of labor? Pauperization is related to capital's search for lowering the cost of social reproduction of labor power by bringing down wages, hence increasing relative surplus value (Hansen 2015). The employment of informalized Syrian workers in the construction sector for example helps bring down wages for the whole industry. This search for relative surplus value also manifests as a secular tendency towards the growth of surplus populations, remaindered

lives that have been made superfluous to the production process. Thus, the growth of proletarianization takes place hand in hand with the expansion of reserve proletarians (unemployed) and of the mass of unemployable proletarians (Hansen 2015). This means that the expansion of capitalism is dependent on an ever-mounting pressure on the social reproduction of labor power, through a growing mass of proletarians that have no relation to capital but nonetheless drive down wages. Conceived as this abstract tendency then, every worker is a virtual pauper, waiting to be made superfluous to capitalist accumulation.

More concretely, however, this opens a wider vista for the subjects of urban politics that includes both formal and informal work, both employed and unemployed lives which reproduce the fabric of urban struggle (Bayat 2009; Simone 2021; 2022). In collecting waste, writing poems, roaming the streets, informal work acts as a kind of infrastructure that reproduces not only the fabric of urban life but the possibility of resistance. As Bue Hansen observes any practice of class formation "must start not only with this virtual poverty, but with the real strategies of life and survival through which proletarians live this problem" (Hansen 2015). How can we understand the mutual imbrication of pauperization with waste, disaster, and death in İstanbul's urban ecology? What concrete struggles of reproduction emerge from here? And what alternative image of proletarian struggle and ecological justice emerges in this conjunction?

The Becoming Waste of the Urban Environment

One key feature of informal work studied above is the conjunction of informality with scenes of urban destruction. How do we understand this conjunction of informal work and the becoming waste of the built environment? Regardless of its sociohistorical form urbanization has always involved both the making and unmaking, both the production and the destruction of the built environment. Yet as Mazen Labban notes (2019), the notion of urban waste has a

specific meaning under capitalism. Waste appears as the mismatch between use form and value form, the physical and economic lives of an object. Therefore, it is possible for example, for a commodity to become waste – its value plummet to nothing – without having been physically consumed. This means that waste is already presumed as part of the valorization process before production begins. In İstanbul, as in other megacities, it is possible to find such zombie buildings that are slowly rotting away, that have never been inhabited. As Alize Arıcan (Arıcan 2020a) has shown construction in İstanbul is often abandoned, delayed, and suspended when it is profitable to do so – the limit case being the wasting of construction projects that have never been complete.

From a Marxist perspective, the becoming waste of urban space can be understood in two complimentary terms – depreciation and overproduction. Overproduction describes the constant crises of accumulation capital faces the tendency of capital to create economic surpluses – idle money, commodity gluts, underutilized production capacities, but also unemployment – that need to be absorbed back into the valorization process (Labban 2019, 38). The constant building and unbuilding of urban space is perhaps the most ubiquitous way such surplus is absorbed – the creation of speculative real estate, the construction of shopping malls and department stores, the proliferation of advertising are all avenues through which this surplus can be absorbed into urban space (Harvey 1982; 1989). Yet this building and unbuilding creates its own forms of waste that not only generates construction debris as older buildings are replaced by newer shopping malls but also the detritus of paper and packaging that adorns consumer products (Labban 2019, 39). Depreciation on the other hand describes the wear and tear fixed capital can endure and can also be understood alongside the "moral depreciation" fixed capital can experience as new technologies and productive forces replace it (N. Smith 2017). If we understand the built environment as a complex composite of productive and reproductive forces, a type of fixed capital in its own right, the building and unbuilding of urban

space also causes forms of depreciation and devaluation – as urbanization progresses the building of a new port or the development of a new urban area or even the construction of a new canal that may cause the relative location of a building to lose its competitive advantage (Labban 2019, 41).

It is possible therefore, to conceive of the destruction of urban life through the proliferation of construction waste and the harassment and immiseration of waste work as two sides of a tendency of capital to create remaindered lives. Neighborhoods like Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı for example, featured in Frati's documentary and the Surplus Works archive, where street vendors, waste workers and the unemployed meet, is in part the product of such gradual wasting, where decades of forced migration and capital strike have meant that the buildings in the neighborhood have depreciated in value while the material infrastructure of the neighborhood deteriorates from lack of maintenance. This in turn has coincided with the flourishing of all kinds of remaindered lives, involving both informal work like street vending, sex work, drug trade and structures of care, involving solidarity and support groups and advocacy networks (see for example, Arıcan 2020b). One can notice a similar association following the movement of debris out of the city, to encounter modes of peripheral belonging that brought attention to the precarity of human and nonhuman life in the shadow of a viciously competitive construction industry. Waste work provides a contrast to this gradual wasting of urban infrastructure since it also subsists on the remainders of urban consumption, which are immediately and voluntarily surrendered, forming a kind of residual commons or an excess of commons. Yet they are subject to different rhythms, whereas urban infrastructures are inhabited even as they slowly decay into debris, subject to the rhythms of fixed capital, packaging and paper can be collected immediately by waste workers upon being discarded, waste work itself being the residues of consumer goods and labor (Gidwani 2013).

This conjunction of debris, informality and work helps us reframe questions around urban waste, broadening its scope from the question of what to do with material waste, how to dispose of it or recycle it, to the remaindered collectivities that assembles in the shadow of surplus value. What unites informal work with debris then, is this process of becoming remaindered to the law of surplus value, even if under different rhythms (Tadiar 2022, xii). The destruction of urban ecologies through the production and disposal of waste and the immiseration of urban lives through the tyranny of the wage appear as two complimentary sides of this remaindering. Yet for an analysis of urban politics, this contradiction between the reproduction of urban life and that of capital ought to be complemented by an account of resistance and urban struggle. How can this imbrication of debris, death and work help accentuate an alternative understanding of urban politics?

Conclusion: Towards a Remaindered Politics of Urban Space

A popular framework for understanding Gezi Park protests has been as an eruption of popular energy, an emergent practice of "collective commoning" that built an alternative socio-economic order that brought together "seemingly separated struggles" (Akbulut 2014, 228). Even in accounts of Gezi that highlight dissensus and disagreement, there is a tendency to return to both the sudden and the unifying character of the resistance, its ability to "magically" bring together "a very large and diverse body of people around common demands, values and symbols" (Aytekin 2017, 207). Despite emphasizing commoning as an active project to be achieved (Varvarousis, Asara, and Akbulut 2021), such accounts are still residually marked by a focus on the "spontaneous coming together of the separated" (Hansen 2015) a framework that became dominant for understanding not only Gezi but a generation of protest movements stretching from the Arab Spring to Occupy.

Above I have attempted to sketch an alternative vision of urban politics through the concept of the *remaindered*. In concluding the chapter, I further reflect on this remaindered

space both exploring its analytical complementarity with the commons and emphasizing the pragmatic differences in its political horizons and practices. Particularly relevant here is the work of Neferti Tadiar and Abdoumaliq Simone. Drawing on the work of French philosopher Gilbert Simondon and the revolutionary socialist Rosa Luxemburg, Tadiar (2022, 282) describes the "thresholds" of urban space as an associated milieu of urban capitalism, that on the one hand renders human lives valorisable, reproduces it as exploitable, but on the other hand also generates a repertoire of strategies of survival and belonging for the urban poor that is necessarily more distributed and fluid in character. Building on Tadiar's work, Simone describes such strategies of survival and reproduction as the "urban surround". Crucially, Simone describes the surrounds as an "infrastructural effect", one that is complimentary to urban modes of capture, and not only brings together and coheres certain dispositions and modes of urban life but also provides and channels lines of flight that provide a trajectory for people and things to get away (Simone 2022, 7).

A remaindered politics can be thought along these lines as an "associated milieu" of urban capitalism, a *transindividual* and *infrastructural* relation that transverses its interiors and exteriors, surrounding and transgressing its technical structures and logistics. The term "infrastructural" here indicates multiple meanings. On the one hand it imparts a sense of stability and coherence over time, material infrastructures and fixed capital after all are what hold together other relations, and need to be actively maintained and reproduced (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018; Barney 2018; Simone 2022, 11). Last, infrastructure also indicates how tactics of survival, subsistence and fugitivity at the margins of urban space cohere, hold together, and are maintained, updated, and recreated. Darin Barney notes the dialectical nature of infrastructure not only materializing and reifying prevailing power relations but in doing so also opening the space for political action. Barney adds, "as the class struggle composes itself, it is likely that infrastructure will be a key medium of that composition" (Barney 2018). The

remaindered offers a particular perspective on this composition as also beginning from a premise of infrastructural decomposition and decay. Debris and informality in other words, promise to be constitutive of urban politics in İstanbul.

The term transindividual is borrowed from the work of Gilbert Simondon to distinguish relations between constituted terms, say individual and society, with a relation of relations – understanding both individual and society in the process of their co-individuation. What is unique about Simondon's philosophy for an account of urban politics is that it begins with difference, asking us to think of polarization "as the most elementary condition of relation" (Simondon 2020, 92). Polarization here refers to what Simondon describes as an incompatibility, an energetic discontinuity between two or more states, two scales of reality (Simondon 2020, 18). Such an account then would begin not from what is held in common but rather the basic inequality and incompatibility between different urban modes of subsistence. In this context, transindividual would describe the bringing into communication this disparate series, bringing together the intra-individuation of affects and emotions with the inter-individuation of social belonging, an interior and exterior milieu of becoming, through the articulation of a new affect or sensibility. It would allow us to conceptualize remainders as a space of organization that traverses the city's centers and peripheries, bringing into communication dogs and *hafriyat trucks*, the struggles of delivery drivers who perform the labor and logistics of urban life and the paper collectors that live off the residues of this economy.

Crucially, however, the transindividual emerges not from the already individuated aspects of urban life, not as we enter exchange relations say or function as part of a social hierarchy of labor, but rather from within the simultaneously collective and pre-individual potential to become otherwise (Combes 2012, 38). The transindividual provides an image of social life that is in distinction to civil society and even a distinct political sphere (Toscano

2012), since it brings together not individuated forms of labor and living but rather emerges from confronting feelings of anxiety, exclusion even solitude (Simondon 2020, 316–20). One can understand transindividuality then as a notion of collectivity that is simultaneously intimate yet common, felt in the collective capacity to reproduce life even amidst exclusion, precarity and immiseration, reproducing the conditions of possibility for political action. Therefore, understanding the margins of social reproduction, where strategies of survival and resistance are reproduced amidst conditions of informality and criminalization is important. This transindividual sense of collectivity is not an alternative to acts of commoning; spontaneous or otherwise. Rather, it plays a supplementary role, surrounding events like Gezi, even recreating their conditions of possibility. The remaindered is a field of polarization, of concrete modes of subsistence and reproduction that may or may not emerge as a revolutionary assemblage. Against the ethnically Turkish and relatively privileged collective subject of Gezi, one could say that the remaindered spaces of İstanbul present an *undercommons* (Harney and Moten 2013) of experimentation and subsistence. In this sense, though the remaindered lives described above are immiserated, violently suppressed and policed, and though their individual modes of subsistence are often unable to cohere into a larger counter-hegemonic force, nonetheless they contain the organizational germs and building blocks for confronting capitalism and the State.

One could remember in this context, that all modes of informal resistance that are excluded from the realm of official civil society, from youth organizations to waste collectors, from sex workers to queer activists, to the urban unemployed played a critical role in the Gezi resistance (Özbay and Savcı 2018).[60] Perhaps it is not for nothing that Erdoğan described the Gezi Park protestors famously as "marauders" (çapulcu), a description that was humorously adopted and endorsed by the protestors, since like marauders a greater number of İstanbul's

[60] On a similar note, Cenk Özbay and Evren Savcı (2018) note the Gezi Park protests also allow us to think queer through commons and commons through queer, bringing attention to bathhouses, parks, and relatively cheap adult movie theaters of districts like Beyoglu as kinds of queer commons on the one hand, and noting the role LGBTQ people had in sustaining the Gezi occupation camp on the other.

residents now live in the ruins of the productive economy. Informed by this account of the transindividual, the notion of a remaindered politics helps us focus on how these modes of collective resistance inhere and relate to questions of production even in the absence of a wider scale political confrontation. In contemporary Turkey, such a remaindered politics of urban space brings into focus multiple struggles for ecological justice, like the fight against debris as well as the organization against the destruction of the *Northern Forests* through new megaprojects, helping outline their broader lines of continuity with struggles for social reproduction and informality. One could count among these student struggles against the lack of urban housing and the strategy of occupying urban parks as symbolic places of residence, the constant fight between the state apparatus and the variety of LGBTQ groups about the right to occupy public space, the struggles of waste workers against criminalization, struggles of migrants and racialized peoples against police harassment and gentrification, multiple strike actions by construction workers and delivery drivers who produce the infrastructure and logistics of urban space. A remaindered politics calls attention to modes of subsistence and autonomy within these struggles for reproduction and how they might serve as a prelude to a more open insurrection.

Last, it is important to note how this formulation runs against the grain of some contemporary Marxist thinking. In his book *Climate Change as Class War* for example, Matt Huber argues for example that a "working class interest in ecology will emerge not from the experience of environmental threats, but from a profound separation from nature and the means of subsistence" (Huber 2022, 188). For Huber, this means that focusing on such existing concrete modes of subsistence misses the point. What unites the proletariat as a class and gives them their collective power is their alienation, which means they have a united material interest in decommodifying the means of reproduction. Thus, for Huber, the subject of ecological struggle ought to be wage laborers rather than "environmentalists" or "frontline communities"

effected by environmental degradation (Huber 2022, 195). And yet as critics of Huber note, such class interests are often not given but need to be articulated through the messy work of politics (Levien 2023). And it is in this work of articulating ecological struggle with class struggle that exploring concrete modes of subsistence that fall on the edges of the wage relation, like those of İstanbul's waste collectors, becomes instructive. Because it is here that capital's attacks on people's means of subsistence are most concretely linked to its attacks on struggles of ecological reproduction. In other words, in such concrete modes of subsistence, it is possible to see alliances between what (Akbulut et al. 2019) characterize as environmental justice oriented approaches to politics focused around the defense of the community and its environment on the one hand and Marxist approaches focused around the conflict between capital and labor.

In Chapter 2, I had claimed that ecological disaster is part and parcel to capitalism, that capitalist production continuously recreates disaster as its evental condition and that the material context of İstanbul's urban expansion and the artistic work that emerges from studying this expansion helps provides clues of an alternative aesthetic of limitation. In this chapter, I brought together this ecological destruction with the remaindered lives that emerge in the peripheries of the city. Thus, I have claimed that an important starting point for investigating the mutual imbrication of proletarian and ecological struggle is to understand and attend to the concrete modes of subsistence and strategies of survival through which remaindered life reproduces itself.

Chapter 4

Thinking Through the Periphery:

Urbanization, Metabolism and Technical Alienation

I'm making what is now my third trip near the Küçükçekmece lake near the Western peripheries of İstanbul. I am with a small group of hikers. We are waiting to cross a small ditch between a series of self-built homes and a field belonging to İstanbul University's Veterinary School. Ayşe, a resident from the village nearby, is crossing back from the field with two plastic bags full of wild mustard she and her friends have collected from the edges of the farm for their *börek*. The ditch serves both as an obstacle and a reminder of the ever-looming construction efforts in the area. While Ayşe and her friends make it easily across a narrow plank placed across the ditch, many from our hiking group struggle to follow in their steps. Ayşe's friends take their phones out to document our clumsy attempts to cross, snickering at our incompetence and promising that our videos will go viral in their various *Whatsapp* groups. In the meantime, we have a moment to chat.

"As you see this entire place will be underneath the *Kanal*" she offers, without me asking. She adds, "So are you taking these people on a stroll?". In fact, she asks *"Sen bunları mı dolandırıyorsun?",* a well-crafted double entendre. "Dolandırmak" literally means to take someone on a stroll, to take them the long route, but could also be used to mean to indicate swindling them, ("take them for a ride") as tour guides might do to unsuspecting foreigners, of which there are two in our small hiking group. Ayşe's comments points to the relative ignorance of urban dwellers in navigating this peripheral space. Indeed, walking the peripheries is a continuous lesson in the modes of knowledge, technicity and mediation required to navigate this space – where to cross a ditch, how to navigate the landscape, how to use GPS to map out

your route, where phone reception might not work as well. It takes repeated efforts to learn such things.

Figure 62. Crossing the ditch, Photo Courtesy of Nick Hobbs.

My encounter with Ayşe captures many of the elements that make up peripheral space. This notion of the "periphery" (*çeper*) is ubiquitous in the archive I have drawn on both as an actual word people use to describe this geography and as an aesthetic language through which it comes to be represented. As Merve Ünsal explains, in an essay introducing Serkan Taycan's photography, the periphery (çeper) is construed as a geography that is on the precipice of being swallowed by the city's expansion (M. Ünsal 2014, 7). As geographer Brian Rosa describes it, urban peripheries are

> "residual spaces of various scales without clearly defined purposes, often re-appropriated by a variety of formal and informal uses (light industry, warehousing, recreation, squatting, etc.).Though they seem separate from the urban fabric, they serve an essential function to cities; these are spaces that were conceived for flows of materials, people and of capital, tending to pay little mind to the impact they have at the ground level" (Rosa 2022).

The peripheries of İstanbul that I have explored throughout this thesis fit this definition well. They *feel* distinct from the city in a way that is immediately recognizable in the visual representations of this geography – open fields with the city in the background, self-built informal housing juxtaposed to newly built apartments, farming and extraction sites crisscrossed with electricity lines. Additionally, the periphery also serves to facilitate the movement towards the city, like the Kanal that threatens to soon subsume this field or the *North Marmara Motorwa*y that we encountered in Chapter 1. Finally, while facilitating movement towards the city, the periphery also exists as a space of metabolic interaction with it, where spaces of extraction and waste, agriculture and mass housing, town and country are superimposed on one another, like the old lignite mines that we encountered in Chapter 2.

In this chapter, I think further about the concept of the periphery and its representations in the archive I draw on, outlining three different ways it can be understood – as a space of subordination by an unbounded urbanization; as a space of metabolic interaction between town and country; and as a space of technical alienation. In order to do so, I first draw on accounts of "planetary urbanization," to explicate the ways in which the peripheries of İstanbul have been transformed by urban construction (Brenner 2015; 2014). Then, I draw on Marxist theories of "metabolism" (Foster 2000; Moore 2015; Bernes 2018; Saito 2023) to map out the ecological regime underlying İstanbul's expansion. Here, I focus on the ways in which this metabolism is mediated on the peripheries of the city through agriculture, logistics and construction. Last, I contrast this Marxist theory of metabolism with Simondon's concept of technical alienation (Simondon 2016; Combes 2012). In doing so, I explore the ways in which urban subjects are alienated not only from the means of their own subsistence but also from the technical foundations of their own ecological reproduction. Describing this condition as one of "eco-technical alienation," I end by asking what such alienation implies for various radical proposals around the abolishment of town and country.

The Periphery and Planetary Urbanization

In her oral history of the *Kanal İstanbul* route, Cihan Uzunçarşılı Baysal describes how these geographies are an example of urban space's colonization of its environments, "From infrastructure to energy, from mining to construction equipment, from excavation to debris, and countless other resources and needs, the city colonizes its rural environment" (trans.) (C. U. Baysal 2020a). Baysal is explicitly referring here to the idea of planetary urbanization, a concept she borrows from Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre describes how infrastructural investment, extractive processes and logistical projects have helped spread urban space across the face of the earth. This results, according to Lefebvre, in an ever-expanding planetarization of urban space (Lefebvre 2014, 205). Authors like Niel Brenner explicate Lefebvre's reflections arguing that this process of planetary urbanization involves both an "implosion" that is intensification of urban space and an "explosion" and expansion of the city outwards. Crucially, Brenner argues that this consolidated and planetarized articulation of urban space is unique in that it blurs "long entrenched sociospatial boundaries – not only between city and countryside….but also between urban, regional, national and global scales themselves" (Brenner 2015, 18).

As Efe Baysal argues, the concept of planetary urbanization is especially valuable in understanding the construction of mega projects in the peripheries of İstanbul (E. Baysal 2017). On the one hand such megaprojects participate in the "explosion" of urbanization and the transformation of the city's peripheries into a logistical space which sustains the movement of energy and materials towards the city. Such transformation means that rural modes of subsistence has been phased out in multiple villages along the Western peripheries of İstanbul, especially as the parceling up of land by megaprojects have made it difficult to graze animals ("Northern Forests Advocacy Guide" 2021). On the other hand, such megaprojects also represent an attempt to subsume the peripheries as new frontiers of development. When

describing the construction of projects such as Kanal İstanbul or the İstanbul Airport, it is commonplace for government officials to claim that they are not merely building a new airport or a new waterway but rather constructing a completely new city complete with hospitals, hotels, congress centers and so on (E. Baysal 2017). This multiplying force of urban infrastructure (Easterling 2016), constantly reproducing mini cities within cities is the other side of Lefebvre's argument, the "implosion" and intensification of urban space.

This dialectic of implosion and explosion is captured in the visual archive that attends the peripheries. Consider Taycan's 2012 work *Shell* which is composed of a series of photographs of İstanbul's peripheries, formed through months of travelling to new housing construction sites and quarries on the periphery of the city (Ünsal 2013, 317). Slowly walking and photographing the city's outskirts, Taycan encounters waste disposal areas, graveyards and landfill areas that have since been converted into housing projects. Portraying these housing projects and construction sites in triptychs and diptychs that overlap and mix in discontinuous ways, creates the feeling of a disjunctive unity that helps convey the seemingly unbounded scale of urbanization. Such discontinuity, he explains, is consciously curated to "represent the landscape in all its inconsistencies" (Taycan 2014). By walking along the peripheries of the city, Taycan adds, he sought to "trace the expansion of the city in reverse direction".[61] Through these photographs, Taycan wants to create the feeling not only of the viewer approaching the city but also the city approaching the viewer.

[61] Interview with Taycan April 2021.

Figures 63-65.: Images from *Shell*, Taycan (2015). Photos reproduced with permission from artist.

Thus, the housing projects and quarries located on the peripheries of the city appear in *Shell* as the horizon of urban expansion. Yet the effect of this aesthetics is ambivalent. Thinking through the large open fields Taycan chooses to depict, there is a stark lack of people infrastructure and mediation in *Shell*, save for the foreboding buildings that seem perpetually present in the background. On the one hand, this contrast sits uncomfortably close to the very regime it seeks to critique. It repeats a visual dichotomy between vast stretches of meadows and marshlands and the ever-looming city. Such an aesthetic is reminiscent of the "frontier vision" of unproductive landscapes contrasted with the imaginary magic of development that is so crucial to the aesthetics of extractivism (Tollefson 2021; Tsing 2003). Yet the practice of combining discontinuous images taken from different parts of the city imparts another feeling of unboundedness and limitlessness, that stretches and expands to every corner, a city that is ever-growing, the city without limits. Despite representing photographs of Taycan approaching the city, one also feels surrounded by urban space, as though the city reemerges from every possible horizon, a horrific yet immanent view of the extractive vision.

Figures 66.: Image from *Shell*, Taycan (2015). Photos reproduced with permission from artist.

Shell also plays with the sense of dread that planetary urbanization invokes by depicting the quarries through which this housing is constructed. In Chapter 3, I have noted how Dindar's photography studies the tiny *hafriyat* trucks navigating giant chasms left behind by quarries. A similar visual imagery exists in *Shell* of photographs taken from the stone quarries in Gazi neighborhood. Taycan likens his photographs of these quarries to *Inferno*, one of 92 paintings by Italian painter Boticelli that attempt to illustrate Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The reference aside, the sheer verticality of Taycan's image reinforces this sinking feeling, as though one were descending to hell. Scenes like the stone quarry depicted in *Shell* evoke another aspect of planetary urbanization, how in the peripheries the resources and residues of the city, spaces of extraction and waste are superimposed on one another. The process of planetary urbanization, in other words, transforms spaces such as İstanbul's peripheries into a hybrid that both supplies the city and is constantly on the verge of being swallowed by it. As we will explore in the next

section, the periphery is therefore a geography of complex metabolic exchange.

Periphery and the Metabolic Rift: Labor, Nature, and Society

In previous chapters, I had noted how the expansion of the city through construction involves moving the city "inside out." The *Between Two Seas* map elaborates on this movement.

> "There are many excavation trucks with yellow dumpers driving back and forth. The excavation dumpsites and the former mine beds and stonequarries north of the city are here. Some of the biggest construction projects in İstanbul continue in this area. The trucks carry millions of cubic metres of excavation waste from these sites and all over İstanbul to waste dumps, turning the city inside out. İstanbul meets its own inverted layers on its outskirts. And then, an entirely different İstanbul rises upon these fragments. It is truly frightening" (Taycan 2014).

One characteristic feature of the concept of the periphery then, quite tangible in the archive I draw on, has been the overlaying of spaces of production and consumption. Throughout the thesis we have encountered garbage and construction waste disposal sites, fields of urban agriculture and old lignite mines all concentrated and superimposed onto one another on the peripheries of İstanbul. As we noted in Chapter 3, the town of Halkali, a major residential area on the *Between Two Seas* route was home to the biggest garbage dump in the European side of the city until 1994, when it was closed down and converted into housing units by the Mass Housing Development Administration, TOKI.

One helpful way to think about this aspect of the periphery is through the Marxist concept of "metabolism." The term "metabolism" (Stoffwechsel) was in wide circulation at the time of Marx's writing and was first used to describe biochemical processes (such as respiration) through which organisms and cells convert matter into energy (Foster 2000, 159). Metabolism describes the complex biochemical interactions through which living beings draw upon inorganic materials and energy from their environment while also producing waste. The term was popularized by the German scientist Justus Von Liebig whose critical work on soil degradation and capitalist agriculture (what he called "robbery agriculture") was important for

Marx (Foster 2000, 160). In Capital Volume 1, influenced by Liebig's work, Marx wrote extensively about how advances in capitalist production went hand in hand with the degradation of soil and the exploitation of workers (Marx 1992, 638). More recently, authors like John Bellamy Foster (Foster 2000) and Paul Burkett (2014) developed the term "metabolic rift" to account for the increasingly destructive relation and chasm between processes of ecological reproduction on the one hand and capitalist agriculture on the other.

This intellectual genealogy is by now well accounted for in a rapidly growing literature around the concept of the metabolic rift (Foster 2000; Moore 2015; Saito 2023; Wark 2016). Yet to understand how the expansion of urban construction, the advent of contemporary logistics and the destruction of communal farms in İstanbul fit into this story it helps being a little bit more specific by what Marx meant by the term metabolism. Marx uses the term metabolism to describe how labor mediates the relation between human beings and nature.

> "Labor is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulated and controls the metabolism between himself and nature" (Marx 1992, 283).

In Marx, metabolism describes how humans interact with and (re)produce their environments. Labor mediates between the organic body of human beings and their inorganic body; composed of rocks, minerals, plants, grains, excrement and all the molecular relations through which social existence is reproduced (Butler 2019). Yet this general account of metabolism is overlayed, as Saito notes, with a second order mediation of the historically specific system of labor and production (Saito 2023, 20). Under capitalism, the labor process is subordinated to the endless generation of surplus value. Therefore, capitalist metabolism entails an alienation not only from labor itself but also from nature – the human ability to consciously organize labor and through this organize and remake one's environment has to now be subject to a second order mediation by abstract the forces of labor and capital (Saito 2023, 24).

This theoretical excursus becomes more concrete when we start exploring its articulation both in Marx's time and across İstanbul's peripheries. In Marx's time, the rift or gap between cyclical processes of ecological reproduction and capitalist production was most apparent in the transition from agrarian to industrial society. Capitalism required the concentration of the work force in urban space. Such a concentration

> "disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and earth, it prevents the return to the soil of the constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing, hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil" (Marx 1992, 637).

In Marxist work the idea of metabolism is intimately connected to the spatial rift between town and country. During Marx's lifetime, the concentration of the work force in the cities came hand in hand with an increase in the demand for food, leading to more intense techniques of agricultural production and competition in rural space. While this intensification increased the productivity of labor in the countryside, it also lead to further ex-peasants who lost their rights to the land and were driven to large cities to participate in factory work (Bernes 2018, 399). This mutually reinforcing dynamic had multiple ecological effects. In the countryside it lead to the increasing adaptation of large-scale agriculture and techniques such as cropping without fallowing which further contributed to the displacement of nutrients from the soil such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (Foster 2000, 150). Whereas in the city, the same dynamics lead to the accumulation of waste leading to the outbreak of disease and death (Foster 2000, 151). In this sense, the metabolic rift was not just about the fact that the excrement produced by human consumption did not return back to the soil. Rather at stake was how a reorganization of the relations of production under industrial capitalism, simultaneously prompted a reorganization of nature, creating two complimentary spatial and technical arrangements – rural and urban.

During Marx's time and for much of the 20th century, the abolition of this rift between town and country, the redistribution of agricultural production into local communities, the disaggregation of industrial production throughout the countryside, and subsequently the repairing of the metabolic rift between ecological cycles and social production was an important horizon of revolutionary politics (Bernes 2018). Yet in the peripheries of contemporary İstanbul, as in many places around the world, the distinction between town and country already appears blurred, though crucially not through revolutionary struggle. It is important to point out the ubiquity of infrastructure and mediation in the peripheries from Ayşe's *Whatsapp* groups to the GPS system I used to navigate my route. More than a mixture of urban and rural forms, such peripheral areas also contain the multiple interactions, mediations and sites of struggle between them (Qviström 2012, 427). From being undeveloped or abandoned wastelands, the urban peripheries of İstanbul have also experienced rapid

development and migration creating new population centers and cities within cities that are at odds with the modes of subsistence surrounding them.[62]

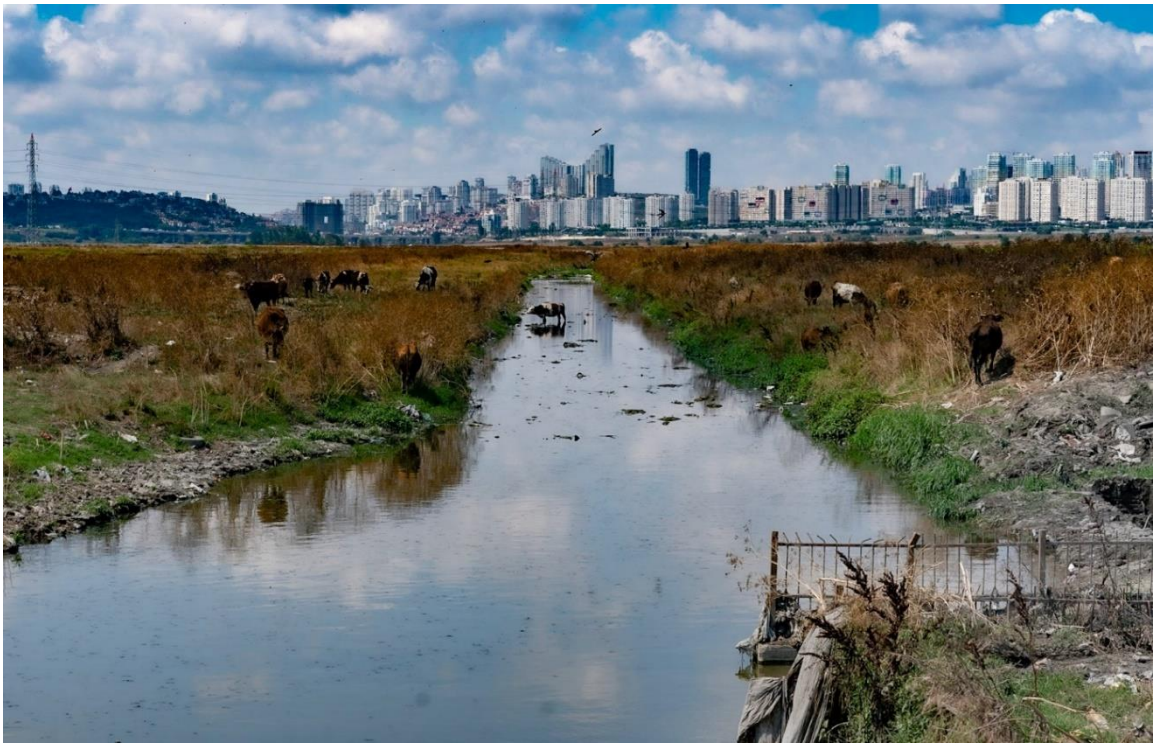


Figure 67. Between İstanbul University's veterinary farm and the Faculty of Agriculture. The growing Başakşehir in the background. Photo courtesy of Hobbs.

Developments in contemporary agriculture, logistics and urbanization have created increasingly hybrid spaces in the peripheries of İstanbul. In Chapter 2, I had noted the decline of agricultural work and the migration happening away from the peripheries in towns like Yeniköy, immediately adjacent to the *İstanbul Airport*. This migration was in part a consequence of the disruptive effects of megaprojects. Yet such towns had already experienced a declining number of people engaged in agriculture and farming, as a result of the globalization of İstanbul's food systems and supply chains. Throughout the *Between Two Seas* route, one

[62] Consider that, right next to the field I am crossing is Kayaşehir, one of the largest housing projects constructed by the Mass Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) in the neighborhood of Başakşehir. While villages like that of Ayşe's have been shrinking in size, places like Başakşehir have experienced rapid growth from just about 5000 people inhabiting the area in 2010 to near 30 thousand people in 2011 after the project was constructed, to over 100 thousand people today.

encounters many urban and peripheral forms of agriculture such as *bahçe*s (urban gardens) *bostans* (orchards) and *bağs* (vineyards), since succumbed to new infrastructure projects (Taycan 2014).[63] This globalization of İstanbul's food systems was a conscious result of government policies such as the removal of agricultural subsidies, the wide use of synthetic fertilizers,[64] dissolution of farmers' cooperatives, the weakening of agricultural labor in the face of global supply chains, and the subsequent adoption of practices like "contract farming" and certification that rendered the production processes more reliant on the technologies and standards enforced by larger companies (Keyder and Yenal 2011, 70). Moreover, the sprawl of urban space and the increase of urban populations created rising land prices which further squeezed out agricultural production from the peripheries (Turkkan 2021, 183).[65] As we've encountered in Chapter 3, these changing conditions of labor in the peripheries was also accompanied by a precaritization and immiseration of workers in the city, especially in the post 1990s, that formed the material basis of Turkey's "construction boom."

Yet these relations of production also imply a broader metabolism of urban construction, more specifically a "metabolic flow of iron and cement" (Sert 2020, 280). For Esra Sert, in the post 1990s period, İstanbul's urban metabolism is constituted by the movement of iron and cement into the city and the movement of construction debris and waste out of the city, the latter either dumped illegally onto the city's peripheries or transformed into land reclamation projects that redesign the city's waterfront. It is this interaction between the construction of buildings and megaprojects on the one hand (what Sert calls "towers") and land reclamation projects that transforms the city's coastline on the other (what she calls "voids")

[63] As *ArtıkİşlerCollective* note, the destruction of such urban gardens – some of which are hundreds years old – has been an ongoing site of struggle for urban politics in İstanbul (Artıkişler Collective 2016, 161–65).
[64] The Haber-Bosch, process which converts nitrogen into ammonia using natural gas is especially important here. While this obviates the need to return to natural fertilizers, as Bernes notes, it also widens the rift between processes of ecological reproduction and social production, introducing the carbon cycle as an additional widening gap in the midst of agricultural production(Bernes 2018, 346).
[65] Important to note here that there also exists countervailing tendency, of multiple "back to land" initiatives, often led by urban dwellers attempting to reinstate local food production systems around the peripheries of the city. See for example, (Mekanda Adalet 2023).

that constitutes the city's metabolism (Sert 2020, 288–90). We had already encountered such transformations of the city's waterfront in the introduction, while briefly exploring Gokcen Erkilic's *This is Not a Line*, which attempted to document the fast-moving pace of land reclamation projects and shifting waterlines of the city, through combining aerial photograph with video footage (Pera Müzesi 2021a).

Yet the sheer volume of materials produced in this construction boom has its own, perhaps even more salient metabolic effects. Between 2018 and 2022, Turkey has produced on average above 80 million metric tons of cement per year, fifth in the world behind China, India, Vietnam and the United States.[66] The production of such large volumes of cement involve the use of materials like construction sand, limestone and water, all of which insert city into planetary metabolic relations (Sert 2020, 275).[67] A key component of cement production is fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are used to fire up the kilns in which limestone will be processed and transformed into a substance known clinker. Once cooled off, clinker can then be mixed with various other substances and ground into cement. This process produces a significant amount of carbon emissions coming from both the consumption of fossil fuels in firing up the kiln and from the chemical reaction of the limestone to the heat (Forty 2016, 53). Worldwide, the cement industry accounts for 8% of yearly global carbon emissions. In this sense, İstanbul's urban construction is implicated in the planetary metabolism of carbon. This is the way in which a metabolism created by the fantasy of limitless growth, one of precarious work forces, cheap credit, cheap construction materials, decreasing agricultural work, finds itself increasingly at odds with the cycle of planetary carbon.

[66] As reported by, https://www.statista.com/statistics/267364/world-cement-production-by-country/

[67] In many rapidly urbanizing spaces, the mining of sand has similarly created an increasing gap between cyclical processes of erosion and decay through which sand on shorelines, riverbeds, and sand dunes are replenished and the relentless pace of construction. Across the world, the increasingly vast quantities of construction sand extracted out of silica mines and riverbeds has transformed shorelines. The dredging of vast quantities of sand often means a transformation of the flow and intensity of rivers which on the one hand shifts the shoreline and on the other transforms the lives of local communities trying to sustain themselves through fishing. These dynamics of sand extraction and coastal erosion on the one hand and construction and land reclamation on the other are characteristic of contemporary large urban spaces like İstanbul (Köstem 2021).

Periphery and Technical Alienation

In thinking through the metabolic rifts that contemporary capitalism brings about, Jasper Bernes writes that eco-Marxist debates need a theory of technology that can reckon with path dependency (Bernes 2018, 335). Rather than focusing on the merits or drawbacks of discrete technological objects for avoiding environmental collapse (electronic vehicles: good or bad?), Bernes diverts our attention to the aggregate character of complex technical ensembles, how they fit together and cohere in ways that strongly determines and influences their future use (2018, 334). Bernes connects this need with his account of the technical changes that subtends contemporary agriculture and logistics. Just like urban space, which is often conceived of as an assemblage of machines (Mattern 2013), rural space is equally shaped by an arrangement of technical ensembles – such as those underlying contemporary agriculture and logistics – that connect together in complex and recurrent ways. The "garden is also a machine," (Bernes 2018, 37) one that increases the gap between contemporary capitalism and ecological reproduction.

The stories I have thus far presented in this thesis have been accounts of how such path dependencies are baked into İstanbul's urban peripheries. This is why studying three discrete infrastructural projects *Kanal İstanbul*, the *İstanbul Airport* and the *North Marmara Motorway* as I have done for most of this thesis, proves to be so crucial. More than individual technical systems, these infrastructure projects mark a logistical, agricultural, and urban shift in İstanbul that, while dependent on past tendencies, also mark the crossing of a threshold. This is how groups like the Northern Defense Forests describe the cumulative effects of such megaprojects on İstanbul's broader metabolism ("Northern Forests Advocacy Guide" 2021; "Kuzey Ormanları Tehdit ve Tahrip Raporu" 2021; "Ekosistem, İklim ve Kentsel Büyüme Perspektifinden İstanbul ve Kuzey Ormanları" 2020). Consider how these technical systems overlap and reinforce one another. The *North Marmara Motorway* helped ease the movement

of *hafriyat* trucks in and out of the city's peripheries. The grounds of the *İstanbul Airport,* built near the village of Yeniköy, used to feature long abandoned opencast lignite mines that had since been transformed into ecologically diverse lakelets and wallows. The construction of the *North Marmara Motorway* allowed the transportation of thousands of trucks carrying excavation materials to the area which were then used to cover up such lakelets and provide the airport with a more solid foundation. The motorway also provided an alternative route to reach the *İstanbul Airport* for people travelling in and out of the city, while the construction of the airport itself drew newcomers to the area. If constructed, the *Kanal* will create ports for additional shipping traffic along this route while also creating new residential spaces that can absorb the surplus of capital and resources directed to the region.

Moreover, the metabolic effects of ecological destruction are long term – it is difficult to simply rebuild an ecology like the Northern Forests. While they haven't fulfilled their economic promise, collectively these the three projects have begun to transform this geography into a logistical space that manages the flow of people and goods towards the rest of the city. They have destroyed the lakelets and grazing grounds that sustained the small-scale animal farming here. They have partially destroyed the forests north of the city, which many argue will prove disastrous for the city's air quality, further introducing rifts within the city's metabolic interactions with its surroundings. Such transformation also means that rural modes of subsistence have been rendered obsolete in multiple villages along the Western peripheries of İstanbul. Should the *Kanal* project be completed anywhere from 50-70% of the area it subsumes will be agricultural land, a significant portion of which is still being operated on today (Bianet Haber Merkezi 2020; Evrensel 2021). In turn, this destruction will help to reinforce the city's reliance on logistical systems and supply chains to help provision for its basic needs such as food.

These series of mutually reinforcing technical systems also have an alienating effect. In her essay accompanying the *Between Two Seas* booklet, Merve Ünsal argues that through exploring the concept of the periphery, one can understand the city's "growth as a form of alienation" (M. Ünsal 2014). In Taycan's work, this alienation is treated as a side effect of the spatial separation between urban and rural space. Even though the *Between Two Seas* route is physically close to the city; only a few hours away by car, all the beginning and ending points accessible by metro, nonetheless in the urban core, it is easy to ignore the giant stone quarries that Taycan and Dindar document. Perhaps this is why it feels so horrific to confront them in artistic work. Yet the alienation inherent in confronting the peripheries is not merely a psychological dissociation. Neither is it an effect of physical distance. In fact, this sense of dissociation between urban and rural space can be generalized into a broader phenomenon – how technical systems reconfigure one's ability to interact with and shape one's environment. For example, one can place side by side the images and sites of stone quarries or construction waste I've discussed with the sense of helplessness and despair felt in a movie like *The Great İstanbul Depression* discussed in Chapter 3. Much like the sense of dread we have encountered in the face of giant quarries, one can interpret *The Great İstanbul Depression* as a film about the sense of alienation one feels, when confronted with the knowledge that much of İstanbul may be destroyed in a future earthquake – yet not having the technical means to do anything about it.

One way to understand this alienation is through the work of Gilbert Simondon, whose early writings on the philosophy of technology are especially helpful. Simondon conceives of technology as an aspect of human culture, which has thus far been ignored,

> "the machine is the stranger…inside which something human is locked up, misunderstood, materialized, enslaved, and yet which nevertheless remains human all the same" (Simondon 2016, 16).

Technology exists in an `obscure zone` of culture, that is not well understood by existing philosophical concepts (Read 2017, 104). Simondon notes two countervailing tendencies through which technology is understood. On the one hand technical individuals are understood as "pure assemblages of matter, devoid of true signification, and merely presenting a utility" (Simondon 2016, 17). This is the image of man as a tool bearer and technology as mere instruments of his labor. On the other hand, there is the tendency to suppose that technical ensembles are like "robots and that they are animated by hostile intentions towards man, or that they present a permanent danger of aggression and insurrection" (2016, 17). This is the image of labor as subsumed within industrial machinery. Rather than being a tool under human control, machinery now appears as a master that transforms human labor into the "conscious organs" of mechanical production, to put it in Marxist terms (Read 2017, 105). Critiquing both approaches, Simondon points to the overriding cultural tendency to relate to technical individuals either as potential rivals or mere slaves of human intentions.

For Simondon these countervailing cultural understandings of technology, as potential rival or as mere instrument, relates to a broader technical alienation that is pervasive in contemporary society. This mode of alienation describes not only the loss of ownership the worker experiences in the means of production or the fruits of her labor, but more fundamentally an alienation from the essence of technicity itself. This is an alienation, in other words, between technical knowledge and its conditions of use, between the one who commands labor and the one who carries it out Such a distinction has its origins in sociohistorical conditions,

> "It is essentially the operation commanded by the human and executed by the slave. The active character of form, the passive character of matter, respond to conditions of transformation into a social order that assumes hierarchy" (Simondon 2016, 224; 2020).

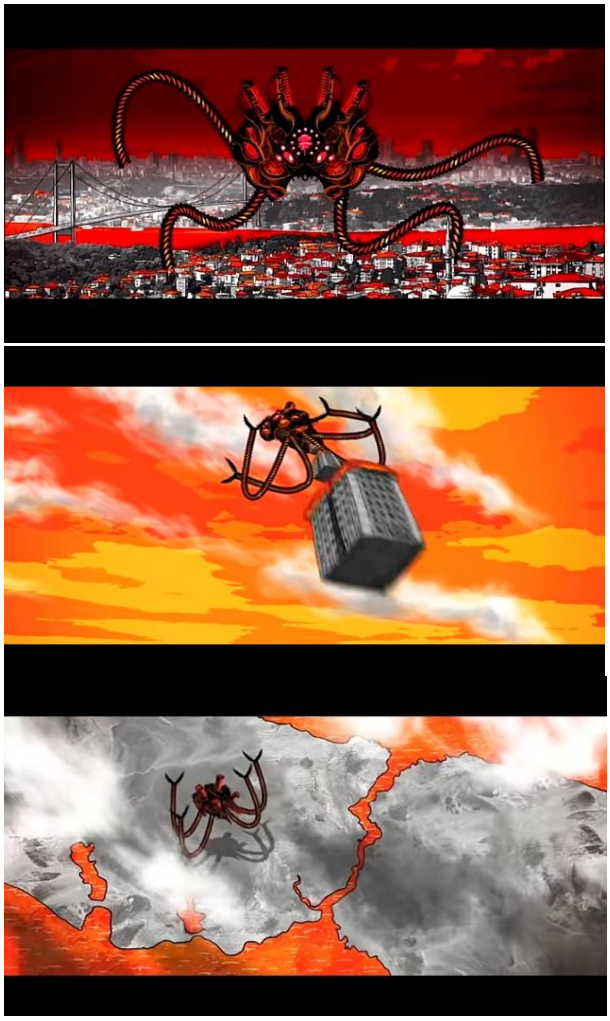
Only the master, alienated from the actual labor process, could conceive of technicity as the instrumental imparting of active forms onto a passive nature. For Simondon, such technical

alienation has its roots deep within Western history, possibly preceding capitalism itself (Combes 2012, 72; Simondon 2016, 248). It is in this alienation, according to Simondon, where one finds the origins of metaphysical distinctions between "form" and "matter." The deep rooted nature of this alienation means that the overcoming it requires not only bringing about the collective ownership of the means of production but also bringing an end to other schemas of reign – including the fantasy of reigning over technical systems themselves.[68]

These two images of technicity are visible in the artwork emerging from the peripheries of İstanbul. On the one hand construction appears as a primal and almost artisanal activity, involving the mastery of elements such as sand, water, and rock. This is the image of construction we saw in the paintings of artists like Mustafa Pancar, who's 1996 work *Hafriyat* was reminiscent of a sandbox. Yet in more recent depictions such as the photographs of Didnar, construction machinery appears as foreign and frightening, part of a series of technical systems that subsume and incorporate humans into their operation. The movement of *hafriyat* throughout the peripheries of İstanbul is regarded as an especially hostile and oppressive presence, often described as "*hafriyat* terror" by the inhabitants of these neighborhoods, since fast moving trucks can be prone to dropping construction waste onto unsuspecting pedestrians and drivers resulting in death. It is perhaps due to this monstrous side of urban construction that İmre Azem's (2011) documentary (which was briefly mentioned in Chapter 2), *Ecumenopolis: the City Without Limits,* about urban transformation in İstanbul, depicts the city being attacked by a cyborg monster that hovers above it. The monster bears the sign of TOKI, the Housing Development and Development

[68] Simondon is completely inimical to the dream of automation. He writes, "The machine is only a means; the end is the conquest of nature, the domestication of natural forces by means of a first act of enslavement: the machine is a slave whose purpose is to make other slaves. Such a dominating and enslaving inspiration can coincide with the quest for mans freedom. But it is difficult to free oneself by transferring slavery onto other beings, men, animals, or machines; to reign over a people of machines that enslave the entire world is still to reign, and every reign presupposes the acceptance of the schemas of enslavement (2016, 141)."

agency, and operates by sucking up construction waste through tis robotic tentacles in the center and dumping new buildings from its back in the periphery. In fact many of these houses would become the projects photographed later by Taycan in *Shell.*



Figures 68-70. Figure 36. Image from İmre Azem's documentary *Ecumenopolis* (2011) depicts İstanbul literally being attacked by a cyborg monster. The monster's head bears the sign of TOKI, the Housing and Development Agency that lead the charge of urban transformation, especially in the Northern Forests.

When Simondon published his early work in 1958, he seems to have had in mind the regime of factory work that alienated workers from the ability to shape, choose and collectively maintain the technical ensembles that they were being asked to work with. Apart from exploiting and immiserating workers, the factory was symbolic of a society with an impoverished technical culture. Yet this line of thought is also insightful when thinking through how technologies shape and transform urban environments. Bringing Simondon's argument in conversation with the concept of metabolism, one could argue that what mediates the

metabolism of both society and nature is a distribution not only of labor but also of technicity. The technical conditions that underlie the expansion of urban space – the intensification and development of logistics, agriculture and construction that have transformed İstanbul's peripheries – have made it increasingly difficult to reshape these environments through collective action.

I have noted above how walking the peripheries of the city is a mediated act, requiring various forms of technics, knowledge, and expertise. In fact, as Türeli and Al argue,

> Specifically, the contribution of artistic projects such as Between Two Seas has been to highlight the lack of knowledge about the periphery of a city undergoing immense transformation, turn that into a collective learning opportunity, and create a community around walking in the periphery (Türeli and Al 2018, 330).

Having done these walks multiple times, I can say that my experiences of them were more ambivalent. On the contrary, the walks could just as easily serve to heighten the sense of alienation between city dwellers and the periphery. Walking the peripheries, one often encountered the effects of airports, highways, dredging projects as so many obstacles that foreclosed and subsumed one's ability to shape one's environment. Construction in the peripheries often operated under conditions of secrecy and arbitrary expulsion. Walking the *Between Two Seas* route sometimes our path was rerouted or blocked by gendarme or a private security guard that told us that the area was no longer accessible on account of ongoing construction activity along the path of the Kanal. The very act of walking could worsen these conditions. Some walks were exhausting, especially in the summer. And all of this doesn't even begin to describe all the accessibility issues inherent in organizing a 4-day walking tour. Many times, I failed to warn my companions to bring sunscreen, make sure they are wearing appropriate clothing, bring enough water. In my walking tours, some fellow walkers also reported leaving with a sense of distance from the inhabitants of the peripheries. This correlates with a narrative I've heard from activists who note the divergent interests and forms of

knowledge between their organizations and the more localized struggles of the people that inhabit the peripheries. [69]

Yet the walks could also be attempts to create new modes of relating to and inhabiting the peripheries specifically through technical mediation. Throughout my walks I had to often rely on printed maps of the *Between Two Seas* route, the wisdom of previous walkers, spotty phone signals and dying batteries. I have wrecked multiple shoes and finished multiple bottles of sunscreen. I have relied on the knowledge of many of the inhabitants of the peripheries, people like Ayşe, who taught me multiple things about the land including how to look for wild mustard, where to spot construction grade sand, where to look for blackberries and where to collect muscles, how to cross a fence. The experience of walking offers moments of encounter with the peripheries that are invaluable, as Türeli and Al write, "walking initiates new forms of knowledge, solidarity and resistance" (Türeli and Al 2018, 332).

This ambivalence between walking as a form of technical mediation that generates solidarity and resistance on the one hand and walking as an encounter with technical ensembles such as megaprojects that generate alienation and foreclosure of political agency on the other is important to think through. What does this uncomfortable ambivalence inherent in walking the peripheries mean for a hope of radical politics?

Conclusion

[69] This insight is not entirely surprising. In their book on the history of environmentalism in Turkey, Erensü et al. (2016, 21) note how the distinctions between rural and urban communities have been a stumbling block for environmental movements in the past. Historically, such movements often found themselves hindered by the divergent demands of building on local struggles on the one hand and articulating a broader class politics on the other (Erensü et al. 2016, 27).

The path dependency of processes of urbanization, their ability shape and inform the horizons of future struggles is significant. As I've explained above, this is true of the scale of ecological destruction that will be undertaken if *Kanal İstanbul* is built. In addition the conditions of alienation created by urban expansion means that it is difficult to maintain and care for urban infrastructure without reproducing the modes of hierarchy and technical alienation they presume. The maintenance, repair and building of roads, airports and dredging projects requires engineers, security officers, experts, the whole technical apparatus of the State. While radical politics must contend with these apparatuses, it is worthwhile speculating what image of urban metabolism might emerge under a different technical culture, one where technical activity is a more ubiquitous feature of collective life.

Simondon's proposed solution for this predicament is the altogether abolition of labor in favor of what he terms "technical activity" (Simondon 2016, 252). Whereas labor inevitably instrumentalizes technology subsuming it within the productive process, the notion of "technical activity" promises to break free of this utilitarian relation. In contrast to the alienated account of technology presented above, Simondon argues that technicity is a "work of organization" (Simondon 2016, 21), that continues life processes by other means. The technical individual organizes and acts upon its milieu and in doing so opens us up to transindividuality – through technicity one can begin to participate in collective life, shaping and interacting with our collective environments (Simondon 2016, 248). This requires a new relation to technical objects, one that includes but goes beyond collective ownership, to the ability to collectively maintain, provision and repair our technical ensembles (Simondon 2016, 252).

In the revolutionary horizon presented by Bernes, communism will require a scaling down of technical ensembles – the ability to break the back of industrial agriculture, create local practices of farming and provisioning, the ability to turn off mechanical production when the sun is out and to take long afternoon naps. So much of the contemporary ecological left

both in İstanbul and abroad is focused on this scaling down – no more megaprojects, technical systems that rely on a smaller throughput of materials and energy, more localized infrastructure and transport systems (Schmelzer, Vansintjan, and Vetter 2022, 242). Yet one might add to this that a revolutionary horizon would equally require a scaling up of technical culture, the generalization of technical activity; the ability to build and maintain technical systems and through that our relation to our environments collectively.

One hint of what such a technical culture may look like, especially in regard to urban peripheries, comes from Latife Tekin's 1983 novel *Berji Kristin*: *Tales from the Garbage Hills* (2000). Tekin's novel is a magical realist story about a community formed around a garbage hill on the outer peripheries of İstanbul. Home to peddlers, simit sellers, migrants and janitors, the neighborhood is called "Flower Hill*"*, in an attempt to attract more people to an otherwise undesirable environment that is surrounded by toxic waste. The novel is based on Tekin's firsthand experiences and interviews with urban squatters who were packed onto the makeshift slums forming on the outskirts of İstanbul. While the novel has no central character, it is ultimately a story of collective self-sufficiency in the face of environmental collapse, rapid urbanization, and exploitation. Built entirely out of scarp materials dumped from the city and the factories nearby, the community is continuously beset by toxic "snow" from the factories nearby, winds that rip apart roofs, destroy buildings and carry away children, not to mention the 37 different attempts to destroy the encampment altogether by government officials. In this sense, Tekin is not the least bit romantic about life as a squatter. The toxic environment of Flower Hill proves near uninhabitable for the residents, the birds mock them, the wind assaults their buildings, the water is poisoned by the nearby paper factory. In this sense, part of what is remarkable about the novel is not the romanticization of an abstract nature but rather the ingenuity and power of auto-construction.

In an era of increasing disasters and ecological collapse on the one hand and rapid urbanization and immiseration on the other, a more generalized condition of technical knowledge and expertise around infrastructure would be critical for radical projects that attempt to create spaces of autonomy and resistance. A broader technical culture around construction would help revolutionaries build and provision more durable forms of shelter as they see fit. Such technical knowledge may seem difficult to attain or hard to put into practice. Yet despite being governed by engineers and experts, construction is also one of the most primal and elementary forms of technical activity – mixing sand, rock, steel, and water. Thinking through the technical assemblage of reinforced concrete (RC) (the process of embedding concrete structures with rebar to improve their durability), Adrian Forty explains,

> "reinforced concrete is one of the new 'technologies of poverty'—in overall quantity consumed, its use by self-builders in poor countries probably exceeds all other applications. In the shanty towns of the world, its use is characterized by ingenuity rather than innovation: new or even relatively old developments in concrete technology are irrelevant, what matters is the way small amounts of reinforced concrete are made to go a long way" (Forty 2016, 40)

Ultimately, the "scaling up" of technical culture I've discussed above would depend on technologies that are themselves, like RC, more open to technical intervention more driven by ingenuity than solely innovation. Such a technical culture would have to rethink the characteristic "opaqueness" of infrastructure, its ability to operate in the background of social relations – questioning the extent to which such opaqueness is not given in what infrastructure is but rather how infrastructural systems are produced as part of perpetuating technical alienation. Such scaling up of technicity might require a more "convivial" social relation to technology, the popularization of tool lending libraries and DIY cafes (Schmelzer, Vansintjan, and Vetter 2022, 230), along with collective construction efforts. What other kind of metabolism can emerge through such generalized technicity? What modes of collectivity and shelter might be possible through them?

Conclusion:

On Disaster, Limitation and Abundance

Let us first briefly summarize our findings. I argued in the introduction that the concept of affective ecologies of limitation would explore how questions of political economy and subjectivity shape the ways in which certain environments are produced, distributed, and consumed *as finite,* and how this image of finitude shapes political economic understandings of ecology, materialism, labor, and technicity in return. Each chapter has worked towards this goal. In Chapter 1, I explored the existing affective ecology of megaproject construction in İstanbul, one that brought together the production of authoritarian sentiment with the fetishization of economic growth. Drawing on my walks on the peripheries of İstanbul, while situating my observations within a historical context, I described this affective ecology as a "consummative mood of authoritarianism." I argued that the desire for limitless economic growth was overlayed with the authoritarian desire for nationalist sovereignty that characterizes Turkish politics. In Chapter 2, I explored how the problematic of economic growth shaped contemporary understandings of materiality within the humanities. I argued that the peripheries of İstanbul constituted a historically layered disaster zone and that to articulate for such disaster one needs a concept of materiality that held critical space for moments of unpredictable excess and loss. To do so, I drew on my walks along the *Between Two Seas* route more specifically as well as drawing on the work of the *Hafriyat* collective. In Chapter 3, I studied the modes of labor and subsistence that exist on the margins of the wage relation. Focusing on the video collective *SurplusWorks* I proposed that focusing on the concrete modes of subsistence that may otherwise fall outside of the purview of Marxist analysis may in fact be crucial for organizing radical politics. In Chapter 4, I reflected on the concept of "the periphery" arguing that the peripheries of İstanbul provide a unique geography from which to explore questions of technicity and metabolic exchange. Thus, rather than outlining a singular concept of the limit,

the thesis has explored multiple meanings of the term limitation as it exists alongside themes of ecology, materialism, labor, and technicity.

On February 6th, 2023, two consecutive earthquakes of 7.8 and 7.7 magnitudes originating in the towns of Maraş and Antep shook cities and villages all across the Turkish-Syrian border, in an area that spans the historic lands of Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria. Officials report that over 50 thousand people lost their lives, tens of thousands of buildings were destroyed, and millions of people lost their homes, although many more lives remain unaccounted for. As I conclude this thesis in the early days of May 2023, 100 million cubic meters of construction waste is being piled onto *hafriyat* trucks and dumped onto waste sites throughout the region in a state endorsed effort to remove the visual reminders of the disaster and quickly rebuild the region. As a news report reminds us, this is the equivalent of "38 enormous heaps, each the size of the Great Pyramid in Giza, Egypt" (*Reuters* 2023). How can the different conceptualizations of the limitation I have outlined in this thesis be further explicated to think through the February 6th catastrophe?

Through the course of this thesis, I have characterized the economic development and collapse of Turkey under the 20-year reign of the Justice and Development Party as an accumulation of ecological disasters. The majority of this thesis, including the focus on disaster, was written prior to the earthquake. It was written, moreover, in a region that is very different to the one affected by the earthquake, a region that is racialized and subject to state violence much more directly than the peripheries of İstanbul. Yet looking at the developments after the earthquake, the cycle of disaster and construction that this thesis has studied seems to remain in place. Therefore, reflecting on the earthquake and its aftermath, as difficult as they have been, nonetheless present an intuitive conclusion to this study. In other words, the earthquake and the state's response during its aftermath collectively represent an event that is

shaped by the forces I've studied throughout this thesis. Thus, they provide an opportunity to summarize my arguments and further explicate my conclusions.

The full consequences of the earthquake are yet to be felt and registered. As I write these words, in early May 2023, there will soon be country-wide elections that will decide the fate of the Justice and Development Party and Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Yet independent of the question of whether the JDP stays in power, there is the broader question of what kind of affective ecology – i.e., what assemblage of desire, political economy, and political ecology – Turkey will face in the future. The February 6th disaster was an event where the forces of developmentalism, neoliberalism and authoritarianism appeared, at least in the short term, as completely inadequate – crashed beneath the material reality of the earthquake. As much as the result of the elections themselves then, what emerges in the ruins of the disaster, whether one can build a radical political project out of these ruins will be crucial in determining this affective ecology. In the beginning of this thesis, I had indicated how three historical sequences – the developmentalism and state violence of the last century, neoliberalism of the last 50 years and corporatist authoritarianism of the past 15 years shaped the historical horizons of this thesis. To what extent does the earthquake punctuate or intensify these forces?

Finally, the earthquake allows us to also return to the other question I have explored throughout this thesis, that of environmental limitation, in a new way. What does it mean to act under conditions of material limitation like the ones presented by an earthquake – where the provisioning of social care and resources is literally in short supply? How is a material limitation, like a limited number of resources, of people, of construction equipment, registered affectively, shaping the political horizons and struggles of the peoples of this region?

The Earthquake and "Disaster as Regime"

The Marxist geography Neil Smith once famously argued that "there's no such thing as a natural disaster" (Smith 2006). Written in response to the 2005 Hurricane Katrina that

devastated New Orleans and its surrounding areas, Smith's text reminds us that the destruction and death that follow a disaster are not preordained by God. Neither are they the outcome of inscrutable natural forces. Disasters are instead shaped by a "social calculus" that determines and distributes their every aspect – from the structural causes that lead to the collapse of some buildings and neighborhoods while leaving others intact, to the level of disaster preparedness in different regions, or the effectiveness of the response and the reconstruction that follows (Smith 2006).

Yet the February 6th earthquake was foretold many times before it materialized. As scholar Eray Çaylı points out in a prescient piece from 2022, the idea that an earthquake is a political event is already well-metabolized by Turkish political discourse (Çaylı 2022). In the past 21 years that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's JDP have been in power, there have been many academics and politicians warning of the poor building stock in the areas affected by the earthquake. Even more damning are the assessments of the Turkish state's own Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), which issued several reports on the history of destructive earthquakes in the region. One 2019 report by AFAD highlights that "the fact that for the past 35 years there have not been any earthquakes to release the tension building in this region, means that the risk posed by a future earthquake is even more grave" (*Evrensel* 2023). In 2013, Erdoğan himself declared that "It is not earthquakes but buildings that kill" (*Bir Gün* 2023) Moreover, earthquakes have an important role in recent political memory. In 1999, an earthquake centered around the Western town of İzmit near İstanbul killed 17 thousand people, rendering half a million more homeless. The İzmit earthquake was interpreted as a sign of the existing political regime's incompetence, which helped fuel the currently governing JDP's rise to power.

And yet, this awareness of the political nature of earthquakes has by itself achieved little. On the contrary, as already noted in Chapter 2, the governing JDP has not been shy about

exploiting the memory of the İzmit earthquake to push through urban renewal projects that in the guise of earthquake-preparedness sought to intensify gentrification and urban transformation throughout major cities. When, in 2011, an earthquake devastated the city of Van, this only served to accelerate JDP's promises to further intensify construction—as Youenn Gourain observes (Gourain 2022). The same happened later in 2020 as earthquakes shook İzmir and Elazığ, with hundreds of acres of land sold off to companies and opened for further development. Even after this most recent earthquake, the JDP has conspired with its allies in the capitalist class promising to rebuild the region within a year, while also using its emergency powers to lift environmental protections for forests and meadows (*Bloomberg.Com* 2023).

A significant difference with the construction efforts we've encountered throughout this thesis, however, is the fact that disaster and construction in this area is much more directly linked with the state's ongoing war against Kurdish political autonomy in the region. For example, in Kurdish majority urban centers, the cycle of destruction and reconstruction has also taken place through military intervention. The city of Amed, also known as Diyarbakir, is the unofficial capital of Northern Kurdistan and is home to over a thousand buildings that were destroyed or heavily damaged during the earthquake. Yet even before the earthquake, poor neighborhoods of Amed like Suriçi were first nearly completely destroyed in 2015, through state of emergency powers employed by the Turkish military as part of its war against Kurdish political resistance, only to be then rebuilt (Çaylı and Doğrul 2021, 83). Between 2018 and 2021, real estate prices in Amed are said to have risen by 128% (Orhangazi 2023), a reflection of the high levels of inflation and transformation experienced in urban areas throughout the region. Now that the earthquake has made parts of the city uninhabitable, a new cycle of construction seems likely to unfold.

Reflecting on the aftermath of this disaster, in a talk shortly following the earthquake, scholar and activist Aslı Odman described Turkish capitalism as moving on the dual rails of debris and the state of emergency (The People's Forum NYC 2023). Perhaps this characterization is most true of the actions of the *hafriyat* industry following the earthquake, which is indicative of how reconstruction efforts may unfold in the region. Above, I had noted the truly staggering amount of construction waste being removed from cities and dumped into waste grounds all around the region effected by the earthquake. In total, there are an estimated 310 thousand buildings that have been damaged by the earthquake. Demolishing these uninhabitable buildings will generate an additional 115 to 210 million cubic meters of construction waste (Gundogdu 2023). Currently, as the elections loom, the government is incentivizing construction companies to remove this debris as swiftly as possible often invoking emergency power to skirt regulations. In Hatay, one of the city's most severely hit by the earthquake, the Hatay Ecological Platform noted how regulations governing the disposal of asbestos had been suspended, to facilitate the swift disposal of debris ("Hatay'da molozlar 22 sahaya dökülüyor" 2023). There has since been numerous reports of construction waste being piled up onto olive groves and water sources throughout the city (Kara-Kaşka 2023). Measures that would ordinarily protect workers against asbestos, lead, copper, and radon seem to have also been suspended. Additionally, after a disaster such as the February 6th earthquake, the resulting construction waste is ordinarily first hosed down with water to prevent the resulting dust from spreading. Short of such measures, the workers dealing with construction waste and inhabitants of the region face a threat of toxic contamination both from direct exposure to construction materials like mercury and radon gas and from the asbestos fibers that are released into the air as the rubble is being moved. Reports warn that such rushed debris removal could result in a widespread toxic contamination, possibly affecting up to 3 million people (*Reuters* 2023).

This rush toward removing debris and reopening the area to the construction industry while simultaneously risking another public health catastrophe is indicative of a theme we've encountered in this thesis. In chapter 2, we explored disasters in Turkey constituted something like a regime, one whereby they are allowed to unfold according to their dynamics, their consequences only becoming opportunities for further capitalist accumulation. Perhaps this same dynamic explains the utter lack of planning and disaster preparedness in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Most devastating for the disaster response was the collapse of transport and communications infrastructure that would help coordinate aid during the earthquake – airports, roads, telecommunications towers. This collapse of infrastructure had terrible consequences. Of the at least 50,000 people who lost their lives trapped under rubble across Kurdistan, Syria, and Turkey, many are thought to have died from hypothermia, hunger, and thirst. In Turkey, survivors of the earthquake reported days of waiting for excavation equipment, water, blankets, phone reception. Remote villages spent days without any contact or aid from the outside, the roads that lead to their village destroyed by the earthquake or cell towers collapsed. The inability of the government to respond to such widespread infrastructural collapse is perhaps indicative of the extent to which disaster has become a feature of Turkey's governing regime.

The Earthquake and the Production of Reactionary Sentiment

In Chapter 1, I had noted how an economy that feeds on construction and produces rubble, has become a well-worn growth model not only in Turkey but also abroad. In this model, fast paced growth is generated through finance and realized by construction – creating an asset economy of financial instruments and real estate. In Turkey, between 1989 and 2021 the construction sector has accounted for anywhere between 10-16% of Turkey's entire GDP (Orhangazi 2023). Such construction also took place in the region effected by the earthquake,

where the JDP has until recently had a considerable electoral base and political control.[70] A part of this construction takes the shape of infrastructure, mainly airports, roads and electricity generation plants that are funded through public-private partnerships programs. Another significant part takes place through private and public investment in residential housing. Now, in this same region, the airports and roads and the newly built houses created by infrastructural investment also lie in rubble.

Such heaps of rubble are not simply the result of "corruption" or the deterioration of state institutions. Nor are disasters the outcome of a cult of personality built around the persona of Erdogan. Rather, as I've argued throughout this thesis, they are the result of a consciously adopted model of economic growth, one whereby ecological catastrophe is tolerated as the price for faster development and economic growth. Fostering GDP growth through megaprojects enables countries like Turkey to renegotiate their participation in systems of financialized development. The construction of a myriad of large-scale infrastructure projects such as canals, bridges, roads, and airports – endearingly called "crazy projects" by Erdoğan – are meant to reroute disaggregated and globalized chains of production and consumption through Turkey. Such construction is in turn underwritten by mass immiseration and proletarianzation. These dynamics are further reinforced through an inflow of cheap labor that successive processes of forced migration have afforded towns like İstanbul and Hatay.

These political economic conditions are also lived as feelings, morals, aspirations, and fears. In chapter 1 we had shown how economic growth in Turkey has coexisted alongside an authoritarian mood, imagined through elaborate infrastructure projects, and often bound up with a civilizational resentment, a desire to "catch up" with and overcome Western powers. The JDP's tenure in power has relied not only on construction-based accumulation and

[70] The JDP won the 2019 municipal elections in both Antep and Maraş, the epicenters of the earthquake. Moreover, the government has routinely dismissed the mayors of towns like Amed based on terror charges and appointed administrators in their stead. As explained above, the JDP also won both the presidency and retained control of parliament in the 2023 elections.

economic growth, but also on a resurgence of reactionary sentiment stretching from political Islam to a renewed sense of conservatism, to an increasingly militaristic nationalism. Mobilizing these reactionary sentiments, JDP has attempted to explain the earthquake to this conservative base as a "plan of fate", an exceptional disaster that is preordained by god, but at the same time perversely holding new opportunities and promises for an even greater Turkey (Ayhan 2023). Moreover, it is interesting to note how the consummative subject reappears in the post-disaster scenario. In the post disaster political landscape, the fetishization of "getting things done" of having "delivered" is bolstered through the moral urgency of over a million people who have been displaced as a result of the earthquake. Erdogan boasts of the "such and such millions of dollars" worth of aid spent in the earthquake region. Shortly after the earthquake, the Turkish Minister of Industry and Technology noted the country's ability to scale up industrial production to meet the demands of people effected by the earthquake, celebrating Turkey's capacity for "economic growth through production." Beyond such statements, the government aims to deploy the country's construction industry to full effect, promising to rebuild over 300 thousand buildings within a year. Yet as the example of construction waste indicates, such rush towards construction is prone to generate further ecological destruction.

The affective landscape that has emerged in the wake of the disaster has also been a fertile ground for nationalist sentiment. In particular, in the lacuna of planning left behind by the earthquake, a whole host of anti-migrant sentiments from hatred to vengeance has gained prominence on national media. Such feelings have been stoked by far-right groups, accusing Syrian migrants and racialized minorities in the region of "stealing" and "looting" supermarkets and local shops, charges that have since been reinforced by mainstream media,

as well as politicians both in government and in opposition, leading the state to promise to "crackdown" on looters.[71]

Planning, Limitation and Abundance

Alongside this reactionary sentiment, autonomous forms of provisioning and mutual aid have flourished in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Many have celebrated the seemingly spontaneous organizational capacity that doctors, miners, construction workers, and translators have mustered under conditions of emergency using messaging apps and social media platforms. As I had noted in Chapter 2, such displays of social solidarity, altruism, sharing, and mutual aid are characteristic of many different societies in post-disaster conditions (Solnit 2010; Out of the Woods 2020). Drawing on the experiences of the Black radical tradition in the US, authors Stefano Harney and Fred Moten explain

> Planning is self-sufficiency at the social level, and it reproduces in its experiment not just what it needs, life, but what it wants, life in diference, in the play of the general antagonism. Planning starts from the solidity, the continuity, and the rest of this social self-suffciency, though it does not end there in having placed all these complex motion. It begins, as this disruption of beginning, with what we might call a militant preservation (Harney and Moten 2013, 75).

One could argue that the grassroots mobilizations that emerge after a disaster is demonstrative of what planning truly means: not only coordinating knowledge but building the capacity to exercise collective power and self-sufficiency. In the context of intensifying disasters, it is important to retain this militant character of planning, of exercising self-sufficiency both against the bourgeois-state and against capital.

Yet while it is true that the post-disaster social mobilization achieved remarkable feats**,** rescuing, and caring for thousands of people, finding, and deploying excavator trucks, and

[71] Radical work often notes how the act of looting is often the most racialized and unpopular tactics of the left adding that this is perhaps because looting is the most direct method of redistribution (Osterweil 2020, 3; Clover 2019). Perhaps similarly, the rising anti-looting rhetoric indicates a fear of self-sufficiency and planning outside the parameters of private property. Perhaps it is a way to register and suppress the outrage of well-stocked supermarkets that exist alongside a disaster zone. In either case, it is difficult to make assessments of these charges without further study.

repairing infrastructure, it is also true that this mobilization could not have happened without any prior organization**.** For the first few days immediately following the disaster, the most organized and effective groups seemed to be ones that had relevant skills and had built self-sufficient institutions – independent miners, doctors and educators associations – what remains of Turkey's civil society including the much persecuted but nonetheless persistent feminist and LGBTQ+ organizations, a handful of socialist and radical democratic political parties such as the People's Democracy Party (HDP) and the Workers Party of Turkey (TİP). Maintaining and growing this organizational capacity will be crucial both during and after the elections, no matter the result.

Last, there is something else that such post-disaster experiences point towards; how practices of self-sufficiency, provisioning and planning are simultaneously practices of abundance. In chapter 2, I had reflected on how the relentless expansion of urban space seemed to foreclose on practices of commoning and abundance. It is important to define this term carefully because it is intimately connected to the affective ecologies of limitation. The word abundance, *ab+undare*, etymologically relates to the concept of a flow, an undulation (After Oil Collective 2022). Yet abundance is not merely about the generation of flows, the continuous recreation of excess, or the overcoming of a limit.[72] On the contrary, so much of dealing with an earthquake is about limitation, the lack of resources, of people, of expertise, of infrastructure. Under such conditions, abundance can be reconceptualized as a practice of collective planning, a way of organizing society that mediates the relation between excess and privation, always towards the practice of self-sufficiency. Abundance then is more than the mere lifting of an artificial scarcity imposed by capitalism and the redistribution of an already existing material plenty (Benanav 2019, 140). Rather practices of abundance institute what I

[72] So much of contemporary capitalism is about transforming both stock *and* flow, countering the latter's tendency towards variability and blockage (logistics as the science of managing the flow of commodities, wages as a system for managing the intermittence of work) (Harney and Moten 2021) and the former's tendency towards expenditure and decay (finance as a system of recapitalizing and reinvesting stocks).

have described in the introduction as an *affective ecology*, an orientation of subjectivity and desire towards the construction of self-sufficiency. Perhaps under conditions of increasing ecological destruction and material precarity, abundance can be rethought along the lines of planning against disaster, the ability to share a hardship, the exercise of what the Out of the Woods Collective define as "disaster communism" (Out of the Woods 2020). The feeling of "plenty" then, will describe less an excess of stuff and more the growing capacity for collective action that allows one to provision care in the face of significant material limitations. If planning is a matter of provisioning and *self*-sufficiency in the face of a material limitation, abundance is the affect that holds together this self-sufficiency, the registration of this capacity for provisioning and care as a feeling.

Of course, this feeling is not by itself the principle of a political organization. As Turkey enters a crucial election period, one cannot shake the feeling that the sense of political possibility and action in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake was far more expansive than what has been possible during this election cycle. Where such political organization around the earthquake has been weaker or obscure, the last two months have shown how social opposition can be co-opted and distracted by reactionary forces or otherwise overshadowed by electoral politics. Yet reflecting on the legacy of the post-earthquake solidarity a crucial question emerges. Planning is a matter of collective action and *self*-sufficiency. Yet if this is the case, the act of composing and defining this collective "self" remains crucial. Who is the subject of planning?

And it is in this sense too that the concept of an affective ecology of limitation is helpful. The histories of state violence and capitalist exploitation we've encountered in Chapter 2 can help provide us with clues as to who this collective self could be. Perhaps this collective self-composition could begin from concrete modes of subsistence already existing in the peripheries of social space, existing under conditions of unemployment, poverty, and racialization, which

we've encountered in Chapter 3. They can be composed alongside the modes of ingenuity and technical relation we've reflected on in Chapter 4. The archive of activism, political struggle, and artwork assembled in this thesis can contribute to composing this collective subject of planning. The question of collective subjectivity remains crucial for any hope of radical politics especially in moments of ecological destruction, one for which there may be no easy answers. Yet as I've sought to show throughout this thesis, the peripheries of İstanbul are one place to begin.

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