

POLITICAL DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE:
TRANSLATING INCOMMENSURABLE WORLDS IN DİYARBAKIR

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Onur Günay, “Political Debt And Development Discourse:

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This thesis attempts to map out the fundamental political actors and their languages that allow them to occupy the same political space in Diyarbakır. Through an analysis on the events of March 2006 and formation of Kurdish middle-class subjectivities, it aims to examine the effects of the state violence and operation of development discourse in Diyarbakır. In the context of new forms of governmentality with their own mentalities, visibilities and strategies, it seeks the methods through which the state violence and development discourse intermingle and work together.

By focusing on the conversations, contestations and translations between distinct actors, such as insurgents, Kurdish middle classes and “the state” in Diyarbakır, it searches for the languages and lexicon that makes the same political space inhabitable for these incommensurable worlds. It looks at the ways these different actors render the political debts commensurate in their own perception of the world. By considering the acts of translation as world-making practices, it argues that in each attempt for the translation there remain differences that resist the complete incorporation of incommensurable life-worlds into other languages. It is these differences that give way for alternative worldings and political subjectivities.

Tez Özeti

Onur Günay, “Politik Borç ve Kalkınma Söylemi: Diyarbakır’da Kıyaslanamaz Dünyaların Birbirine Tercümesi”

Bu tez, Diyarbakır’daki önemli politik aktörlerin ve onların birbirleriyle aynı politik alanı paylaşmalarına izin veren dillerin ayrıntılı bir haritasını çıkarmaya çalışmaktadır. 2006’daki Mart olayları ve Kürt orta sınıflarının öznelliklerinin şekillenmesini çözümleyerek, Diyarbakır ve Kürt bölgesindeki devlet şiddetinin etkileri ve kalkınma söyleminin işleyişini incelemektedir. Bu minvalde, kendilerine ait anlayışları, görünürlükleri ve stratejileri olan yeni yönetimsellik biçimleri bağlamında, devlet şiddeti ve kalkınma söyleminin hangi yöntemlerle içiçe geçtiğini ve birlikte hareket ettiğini araştırmaktadır.

Diyarbakır’da isyancılar, Kürt orta sınıfları ve “devlet” gibi birbirinden farklı aktörler arasındaki diyaloglar, mücadeleler ve tercümelemler üzerinde yoğunlaşarak, aynı politik alanı bu kıyaslanamaz dünyalar için yaşanabilir kılan söz dağarcıklarını ve bu dağarcıkları kapsayan dilleri araştırmaktadır. Farklı aktörlerin nasıl yollarla politik borçları dünyayı kendi dilleri, söylemleri ve kavrayış biçimlerine uygun hale getirdiklerine bakmaktadır. Bu tercüme eylemlerini dünya-kuran pratikler olarak düşünerek, tercüme için her çabada birbiriyle kıyaslanamaz ve uzlaşamaz dünyaların öteki dillere tam olarak dahil edilmeye direnen farklılıkları olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Dünyada alternatif varoluş biçimlerine ve politik öznelliklere alan açan tam da bu farklılıklardır.

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My final words and thanks go to Öykü Tümer for sharing all the moments of life and never leaving me alone. Without her unique and invaluable presence it would have been impossible to write this thesis.

*To the living memories of those who have been
the victims of political or other kinds of
violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist,
or other kinds of exterminations,*

*To Apê Musa, Hrant Dink and Uğur Kaymaz
and the others who are not with us...*

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PRELUDE

“If I am getting to ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain *others* who are not present, nor presently living, either to us, in us, or outside us, it is in the name of the *justice*. Of justice where it is not yet, not yet *there*, where it is no longer, let us understand where it is no longer *present*, and where it will never be, no more than the law, reducible to laws and rights. It is necessary to speak *of the* ghost, indeed *to the* ghost and *with* it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those other who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born. No justice-let us not say no law and once again we are not speaking here of laws- seems plausible or thinkable without the principle of some *responsibility*, beyond all living present, within that which disjoints the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism. Without this *non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*, without that which secretly unhinges it, without this responsibility and this respect for justice concerning those who *are not there*, of those who are no longer or who are not yet *present and living*, what sense would there be to ask the question “where?” “where tomorrow?” “whither?””¹

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of the mourning, & the New International*, Routledge New York, 1994, p.xix

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 22 August 2009, Mehdi Eker -a minister of the Turkish government- announced that the notorious Diyarbakır Military Prison would be abolished and an education complex will be established in its place. Being one of the most important symbols of the 12th September coup d'état and state violence in the Kurdish region, the idea of destroying this prison points to a break in the way the Turkish nation state has conventionally dealt with the past and the cultural differences of other ethnic and religious groups except Turks and Muslims.

In the official history of the Turkish nation state, the past atrocities of the nation state have been officially denied; the memories of disasters are repressed in the institution of domination. Any effort to oppose the official history, to give voice to the stories of the oppressed has been silenced and harshly punished. By this way, “the nation” has learned and remembered to forget. This has become a way to forget and deny the existence of the others and on the other hand to invent a Turkish national past that has been glorified.

It was remarkable that one of the first deeds of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government during the first months of “Kurdish opening,”² has been the project of Diyarbakır Military Prison. During the 12th September coup d'état and the state of emergency between 1980 and 1984, this prison has been used as a “school” by the Turkish army to “tame” Kurdish political activists and common

² The name of this project has changed considerably in its first three months with respect to the changing political conjuncture. Emerged as the “Kurdish opening,” it was changed as “democratic opening” and “national unity project” respectively.

prisoners as well. Both in the memoirs of ex-prisoners and the collective memory of Diyarbakır, this center of torture is regarded as “hell” where there was no place for human dignity and respect. This space where the sovereignty has been re-established by the suspension of law and human rights has also been a “school” -as the military officials used the term- for Kurds who live outside the prison. It has created a culture of state terror through which the fear, threat, anxiety and everyday violence intermingle to “educate” people both in and out of the walls.

In this prison, tortures and execution were encoded as education and the prisoners were regarded as military students. For the Kurds who could not “even” speak proper Turkish, education has been an appropriate apparatus for assimilation and progress, to get rid of their ignorance and rebellious character. The Kurdish language was banned; national anthems and marches were constantly repeated to make the prisoners memorize all of them.

Basic military orders were written on the walls of the prison: “Citizen, speak Turkish, speak a lot,” “How happy is the one who says I’m a Turk.” The correspondences between a primary school Kurdish student and a “military student” of Diyarbakır Military Prison were materialized both in the commands on the walls and certain everyday practices³. Although the means and structure of violence change in schools and the prison, they share a great deal with respect to the policies on language, identity and formation of the state in the Kurdish region.

The government officials proposed to replace Diyarbakır Military Prison with a huge education complex to get rid of the disastrous memories of the past and disturbing experiences lived in this prison. Replacing an old “school” with a huge

³ “The practices began under the name of education. First they prohibited talking among the wards, then they imposed the orderly marches; then by making us memorize the nationalist anthems (also marches!) and addressing of Atatürk and his principles and reforms, they initiated their programmes of suppression.” (my translation) *Serbestî 14*, Diyarbakır No. 5 Military Prison (2003): 61.

education complex, “educating” the children of ex-prisoners who have been “educated,” tortured and executed in this prison and constituting a future for these children within the echoes of their parents’ screams, point to new forms of governmentality with their own visibilities, mentalities and strategies. Rather than considering this proposal as a step towards a redeemed future, “it is important to be critical about the hegemonic perspectives developed by old nationalisms in their new liberal outlooks and develop critical perspectives to the issue.”⁴

Within the context of EU integration process in Turkey, it can be argued that there have been both discontinuities in the visibilities of “the state” and a continuity and even dependence among the distinct rationalities and strategies of government in the Kurdish region. After a long lasting and low-intensified war between the PKK and the Turkish army, the brute manifestation of the state power became to be less visible in the region. This does not mean a replacement of state violence by other technologies of government but rather institution of a more complex relationship between differing strategies and methods of domination.

In the Kurdish region, the state violence generating the distinction between the “developed” and “underdeveloped” worlds is reinscribed and reworked in the development apparatus and discourse. It finds novel ways and visibilities to re-establish its existence through new methods, alliances and strategies. At the same time, development as a new form of governmentality conceals the violence inherent in its own practices and mentality. In short, the state violence and development discourse intermingle and work as the condition of each other.

⁴ Melissa Bilal, *The Lost Lullaby and Other Stories About Being an Armenian in Turkey*, (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004), 16.

This thesis aims to concentrate on the mutually dependent relationship between the state violence and formation of new forms of governmentality. My claim is that the state violence and development discourse are the elements that give the lexicon and languages through which the new regimes of practices are constituted. Throughout the thesis I have strived to make visible the violence inherent in the discourse of development and also the terms of development inherent in the forms of violence in the Kurdish region. I tried to analyze the correspondences between the ways “the others” are silenced, repressed or domesticated with the state violence and development discourse. At the juncture of these different but intertwined forms of government stand the events of March 2006, both giving a chance for an analytical distinction between the two and revealing the mechanisms through which they work together and as the condition of each other.

Field and Methodology

The basic motivation of this thesis emerged from two interrelated issue. On the one hand, I have the motivation to grasp the local dynamics and “spontaneity” of the March events that took place in Diyarbakır and turned the city into a battlefield between the security forces and young people. Hundred thousands of protestors have participated in the March events in an “unforeseen and unimagined” way, so an analysis of the local dynamics and the spontaneity therein can give us clues about the reasons and ways of political mobilization in the Kurdish region. In this thesis, this analysis turns into a (hi)story of debt, a call for considering the hidden scars and

collective memory of the Kurdish people and the materialization of “the state”⁵ in the region. The question of the mobilization of the people in the Kurdish region comes with a history of state, violence, fear, pain and mourning.

To analyze the existence and acts of the Turkish nation state that have rendered “it” as an important political actor in the Kurdish region, I will follow the conceptualization of “the state” as a “historically specific configuration of a range of languages of stateness, some practical, others symbolic and performative, that have been disseminated, translated, interpreted, and combined in widely differing ways and sequences across the globe.”⁶ This gives a chance to understand the historical dynamics, languages through which “the state” comes into being and gets materialized.

On the other hand, I have an interest in the methods and strategies by which the political subjectivities, rage and demands of the actors of March events were disregarded in the discursive space of development. For an elaborate analysis I have focused not only on the efforts of the state officials to exclude the subjectivities, experiences and demands of political actors of March events. With a parallel reading, I also attempted to grasp the ways by which radical political worlds and subjectivities are rendered commensurate in the development discourse by some of the local development actors and Kurdish businessmen. The connections, similarities and interrelatedness between the denials of radical worlds and their incorporation in

⁵ Throughout this thesis, I will conceptualize of “the state” as the effect of a sum of performances, discourses and acts shaped around “stately beings” and “languages of stateness.” In this view, the modern state is not the source of power but the effect of a wider range of dispersed forms of disciplinary power that allow “the state” to appear as a structure that stands apart from, and above society.” Timothy Mitchell, “Society, Economy and the State Effect” in *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 89.

⁶ Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, “Introduction: States of Imagination” in *States of imagination: ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 7.

the narratives of social backwardness and underdevelopment by different actors such as Kurdish middle classes, businessmen and the state officials have the potentiality to reveal the mechanisms and strategies that establish a self-evident knowledge on the development discourse.

Between February 2007 and June 2009 I have conducted in-depth interviews in Diyarbakır with local actors of development, businessmen associations on the one hand and the insurgent children on the other. Although I have met with two groups of children who have participated in the March events, I could not record the interviews due to their anxiety and fear about a tape record. We had conversations in the district of Şehitlik and Bağlar, we could not endure our gatherings for both of the groups in order not to make them more anxious. Throughout the chapter two, I have tried to write with what they told me about their own participation and the state violence they have faced.

During the same period I conducted in-depth interviews with the local development actors and businessmen in the powerful associations who are working in the development projects. I had 12 informants with whom I conducted 18 interviews through two years. Throughout the third chapter, I attempted to analyze the narratives of my informants in relation to the operation of development discourse in Diyarbakır. I have specified the analysis to the narratives of Kurdish middle-classes who are involved in the development projects. It is not because they are the only ones whose subjectivities are shaped within the discursive space of development in the Kurdish region, but rather I have tried to concentrate on the relation between development discourse and formation of Kurdish middle-class subjectivities as an analytical method.

Throughout the thesis, I conceptualize the March events both as a violent contestation of power in the region and a singular breach in the self-evident structure of development discourse in their “unexpectedness.” Hence I think that I was able to investigate the mechanisms that refuse to admit the existence of radical and incommensurate political worlds and subjectivities and repress them by means of violence. On the other hand, this means an examination of the strategies that attempt to incorporate the actors of March events in the narratives of development by detaching them from their agencies and relegating them to the realm of “misguided children” or the “urban poor.” Rather than equate these distinct strategies, my aim became concentrating on the production of effects through the contestations, negotiations and overlaps of these distinct methods and strategies.

Holding the March events as a vantage point, I tried to analyze the narratives of middle-classes about the history of the region. In the chapter four, I have focused on the narratives of the past that are told with respect to the history of underdevelopment. I argue that the translation of past disasters in the history of capital and the interpretation of the Kurdish rebels of the past have similar traits with the domestication of the present’s incommensurate worlds with respect to the liberal hope of progress and a non-violent democratic future. It has been my claim that this translation, incorporation or commensuration can never achieve a full unfolding. In each attempt, the historical differences of the region interrupt in the form of local history, culture and memories. As these differences are embedded in the development discourse, they still contain the potentiality to disrupt the narratives of development and history of the Turkish nation-state.

Defining the insurgents, Kurdish middle-classes and “the state”⁷ as the most important political actors in Diyarbakır, I have focused on their relationships and the languages they use that allow them to occupy the same political space in the Kurdish region. For the March events, I argued that the ways insurgents are repressed by the use of state violence are in relation/cooperation with the methods these radical worlds are excluded from the realm of the political and marginalized within the narratives of development as obstacles to the idea of progress.

On the one hand, state violence and punishment of children in the midst of a lawfare have become the way state officials claim from the insurgents as much as it seems commensurate with the political debt (the harm insurgents give to society in state officials’ terms). On the other hand, insurgents get mobilized through the motivation of the political debt that comes with the terms of mourning, pain and subjection to maltreatment, abuses, injuries, tortures and killings. The feelings that many things are stolen from Kurds by “the state” make the conditions of a violent contestation of the power of the Turkish nation-state on the side of insurgents.

The ways state officials and insurgents translate the political debt carry the terms of the state violence, punishment and potentiality of the resistance. However, the translation of the political indebtedness to the realm of political by the Kurdish middle classes is a much more contested practice. Situating themselves in-between “the state” and the Kurdish people, middle classes consider the political debt of the state as the sum of the Turkish nation-state past atrocities, brutalities and

⁷ Defining “the state” as a political actor, my aim is not to give it a coherent agency by definition but rather open a space to the everyday meanings and effects attributed to what “it” is called the state. It should be kept in mind that “despite the almost unavoidable tendency to speak of the state as an ‘it’ the domain we call the state is not a thing, system or subject, but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules and practices cohabiting in limiting, tension ridden, often contradictory relation to each other.” Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), 174.

destructions. Nevertheless, different from the translation of Kurdish insurgents or the children in the March events, they have translated this political debt into a means to bargaining with “the state.” Borrowing the technical vocabulary and the desire of holding a depoliticized “mediator” position from development discourse, Kurdish middle-classes try to render incommensurable and radical worlds commensurate in the discursive space of development.

The translation of the political debt to political action and incommensurable worlds to each other carry the seeds of grasping the ways through which different political actors occupy the same political space in Diyarbakır. These translations give the terms of the ways they speak to each other, and those of the negotiations and contestations between the strategies and methods of these diverse actors. The practice of translation or rendering the incommensurable worlds commensurate always take place in an undecidable space. Through this thesis I have tried to argue that the translations cannot take place in absolute terms and in each effort they contain the potentiality to disrupt the terms of hegemonic perspectives and positioning. Even when these translations have the claim to power by disregarding the subjectivities and experiences of those who have been subject to the state violence or any kind of political act that can be a reason of debt, it is crucial that they cannot be completely embedded in hegemonic discourses. The political debts of the region turn back in the guise of spectral apparitions, carrying the seeds of alternative political imaginations and subjectivities.

CHAPTER TWO

VIOLENCE, LAW AND A STORY OF DEBT: THE EVENTS OF MARCH 2006

*All concepts in which an entire process is
semiotically concentrated elude definition; only
that which has no history is definable.*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of
Morals and Ecce Homo*

*We would be good instead of being so rude, if
only the circumstances were not of this kind.*

Bertolt Brecht, *Threepenny Opera*

The events that took place between 28 and 31 March 2006 in Diyarbakır started with the coming of funerals of guerillas to the city. They were claimed to be killed by the Turkish army with the use of chemical weapons. As it has been the case in many funerals that draw the attention of the public, warplanes (F-16s) systematically disturbed the population during the funeral, and after the funeral, the police intervened in the march. The clash between the police and youth triggered events in different parts of the city. With the participation of masses, the city turned into a battlefield between the young people and children who were throwing stones at government buildings and breaking the windows of shops in the richest district of the city and the police and military forces who did not hesitate to use extreme violence and kill people some of whom had not participated in the events. Most of the participants were young Kurdish people and children, a phenomenon that was rare in the region, and on the other side “after long years it was the first time soldiers were deployed in the city center for security reasons.”⁸

⁸ Report on the Violence Events of Diyarbakır Between March 28 and 31, 2006, Solidarity Association for the Human Rights and the Oppressed, April 6, 2006.
http://www.mazlumder.org/haber_detay.asp?haberID=94

To many people living in the region, these events recalled the ‘80s and ‘90s that point to a collective memory including war, extreme forms of state violence, forced migration and increasing poverty. While state authorities defined the events as terrorist actions, the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warned the rebels and their families: “Those who leave their children in the streets or let them be manipulated by terrorist organizations! Tomorrow, crying will be in vain. Our security forces will conduct the necessary form of intervention against those who have become a pawn of terror, regardless of the fact that they may be women or children. You cannot find an understanding of rights and liberties anywhere in the world that excuses violence and terror. Violence is not a legitimate way of seeking rights.”⁹ For him, no democratic or legal standard would allow that kind of violent act. Everyone that is accustomed to the democratic and legal standards of Turkish state officials, especially in the Kurdish region, translated these sentences as an effort to legitimize the state violence that was already in action.

“Legitimacy, in turn, emerged as a function of this boundary-marking effect of state practices. The violence of warfare contracted between states and police control of the diffused violence of society by force were constituted as legitimate because they were of the state. Other forms of violence that seemed either to mimic state - violence or to challenge its control were deemed illegitimate.”¹⁰ Excluding rebels from the space of the political subjectivity by declaring participants as “the pawn of terrorists” or as those who “let themselves be manipulated by terrorist

⁹ “Çocuklarını sokaklara dökenler veya çocuklarının terör örgütleri tarafından kullanılmasına izin verenler! Yarın ağlamanız boş yere olacak. Güvenlik güçleri kadın da olsa, çocuk da olsa, eğer terörün maşası haline gelmişse, gerekli müdahale neyse onu yapacaktır. Dünyanın hiçbir yerinde şiddet ve terörü mazur gösterecek hak ve özgürlükler anlayışı bulamazsınız. Şiddet meşru bir hak arama yolu değildir.” <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=183107>

¹⁰ Veena Das and Deborah Poole, “The State and Its Margins,” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, ed. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2004), 7.

organizations,” the Prime Minister was also pointing to the exclusion of Kurds from the space of mourning by the rejection of the recognition of their pain. The exclusion of the violent acts of Kurdish children from the political domain established Kurdish children as abject bodies in the liminal space of the childhood. By easily establishing the credible set of emotions towards Kurdish bodies and refusing to recognize the pain or mourning of Kurds, the Prime Minister rendered the bodies of “subversive Kurds” deserving of pain and their families’ pain was made invisible in the public sphere of Turkey. Emotionality depends on relations of power, which endows “others” with meaning and value.¹¹ Exclusion from the space of mourning and legible emotional domain renders the Kurdish children morally inappropriate in terms of proper childhood. Emotionality engenders moral claims in the social spaces through moral assessments, valuations and demands¹² within existing power relations. This means a reiteration of morality, (dis)order and relations of power through emotionality.

A Definition of Non-appropriate Childhood: Children of the March Events

Erdoğan rendered the children in the events of March as “illegitimate objects of emotions”¹³ for whom the citizens of Turkey should not mourn when they are killed, be sad about their imprisonment, tortured bodies or condemnation at the ages between 12 and 18. By the ease of exclusion from the realm of proper childhood, the children and “those who leave their children in the streets or let themselves be

¹¹ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

¹² Geoffrey White, “Moral Discourse and the Rhetoric of Emotions,” in *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, ed. Lutz and Abu-Lughod (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹³ Özlem Aslan, *Politics of Motherhood and the Experience of the Mothers of Peace in Turkey*, (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2007), 108.

manipulated by terrorist organizations” are excluded from the public nor are accorded children rights of life. It is noticeable that during the events and later, public discussions focused on the discourse of terrorism and use of illegal violence by the protestors rather than the causes and results of the events. From being the “pawn of terrorist organization” to “being child terrorists” especially in the violence of public representations in the media and popular culture, the bodies of the March children and street events became the spaces where state effects were produced and reproduced.

As the minister of agriculture and definitely relying on the authority that he takes from being from Diyarbakır, Mehdi Eker argued that each one of the young boys who were fighting with the police had received 5 liras from the PKK and “they were misguided by the terrorist organization.” The idea that young people and children can fight with the police and throw molotov cocktails for 5 liras became a plausible explanation for the Turkish public. Another fundamental issue was the emphasis on the economic loss and the “uncertain and insecure environment” which would prevent or stop investments to the region. The emphasis on the destabilization of the city economy as a result of the events became the main issue in the mainstream media and the evaluations of the events. And interestingly fast, the cost of broken windows during the protests rendered the debates of killed children, the use of violence by the police and torture claims “invisible” in the popular media, especially in the western parts of the country.

While the media representation of the young people who rebelled and fought with the police did not exceed the cliché of “terrorist,” the claim of 5 liras became the very “intelligent proof” of the poverty and the socioeconomic underdevelopment of the Kurdish region, their readiness to fight with security forces became proof of

the “savage” and “ignorant” character of Kurds. Unrelieved ignorance and primitiveness function as key factors in the developmentalist discourse in the construction of not yet enlightened subjects who lack proper national identity of Turkishness. Struggling with the ignorance and primitiveness of Kurds to make them proper citizens, eliminating their “not yet” civilized character through education, development and civilization projects or to put it in simple terms, assimilating Kurds into the national Turkish identity became the *sin qua non* condition and burden of the white public in Turkey. “Within the simplistic terms of this idealized model, violence against ‘the primitive’ can be articulated in elite-coded language, without sentimentality or grandiosity, as a necessary condition of historical progress.”¹⁴

“Young people are used easily by the PKK due to poverty and underdevelopment”, “destabilization of the region by the terrorist acts prevented foreign and domestic investment”, “the region has to be developed in order to make them good citizens” were just headlines repeated by different observers. Discourses of terrorism and development were intertwined with each other and what we get from the picture was the differing tones of cultural racism with an unconditional belief in development as a solution for the region’s underdevelopment and terrorism. Being one of the biggest cities in the East and Southeast regions of Turkey and having a considerable political significance as the unofficial capital of Kurds, Diyarbakır was represented as a city and Kurds as a population that have to be developed, educated and modernized in order to eliminate terrorism.

The interdependence between the street production of state violence and the public production of its depoliticizing discourse, which can also be considered as the

¹⁴ Fernando Coronil, “Listening to the Subaltern: The Poetics of Neocolonial States,” *Poetics Today* 15.4: 654.

naturalization of the relations of power and domination, points to a theory of representation. “A theory of representation points, on the one hand, to the domain of ideology, meaning and, subjectivity and, on the other hand, to the domain of politics, the state, and the law.”¹⁵ To understand how these concepts function in the Kurdish region compels one to concentrate on the processes through which violence is (re)produced and circulated. I believe that, circulating within/through the bodies at the margins; the materiality of the state violence has to be considered in its dependency with the violence of representation and the discursive mechanisms through which meanings, ideologies and subjectivities are constituted.

Reiteration of the State Violence: Kurdish Children in the Midst of Lawfare

After the events of March 2006, Kurdish children continue fighting with the police in the social protests and demonstrations and this has become a highly popular public debate. The reactions of the police differed from beating to blackjacking, splitting the arms of a child in front of the cameras¹⁶ to stringing a child’s head with a butt¹⁷. It was reported that during the March events “the “security forces” fired on the masses

¹⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271.

¹⁶ March 22, 2008. This event took place during the demonstrations of Newroz (the spring festival of Kurds) in Hakkari. After his arm was broken the child was taken into custody for ‘resistance to civil servants’ as an irony of the history. Later it was reported that the police who has broken the leg of the child, has been acquitted due to the lapse of time.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4uyy2_hakkari-kolu-krlan-cocuk-video-byis_news

¹⁷ April 23, 2009. This event took place during the demonstrations against the arrests of the members of Kurdish party, DTP (Democratic Society Party) in Hakkari. Ironically it was the ‘Festival of Children and National Sovereignty’ the officials of the Turkish nation-state are proud of. Alongside the heavy public criticisms even in the mainstream media, this event pointed out the constitution of national sovereignty and the bodies on which this process takes place, rather than the festival of children.

<http://video.ntvmsnbc.com/Default.aspx?QueryStringValue=58585858585831333031297572776530536430863533306530536430333033456551626714401180343980748072>and
<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/24959915/>

rather than in the air. Bullets and strikes hit upon the critical parts of the bodies.”¹⁸

The conflicts between the children who were and are still throwing stones to the police and the state interventions that could even result in the killings became an everyday reality in the Kurdish region of Turkey after the events of March 2006.

The court decisions were not “softer” than the acts of the police. Three months after the events, in June 2006 the 9th and 13th articles of the “anti-terror law” have been changed so that the cases of children over 15 years old can be heard in criminal courts. The children who participated in public demonstrations were regarded as members of the PKK and punished as such. In a clear contravention to the 90th article of the constitution and the United Nations Children Rights Contract that Turkey accepted 19 years ago, the “anti-terrorism law” (TMK) no longer treats these children as children so that they get subjected to treatments as adults. The relatives of the children and Human Rights Associations assert that these children are beaten, sometimes not given food, subjected to sexual harassment, cannot be treated for health problems and, cannot continue their education.

With the heightening of political violence and its corresponding increase in the law cases, state violence fed and reproduced war in courts where the inequalities between the state and Kurdish people were reiterated. The children throwing stones at the bullet proof tanks, armed combat cars of the police and the army were/are facing long years of imprisonment. Defining the judicialization of the politics as “lawfare—the resort to legal instruments, to the violence inherent in the law, to

¹⁸ From Human Rights Organizations’ Report: “Güvenlik kuvvetleri havaya değil, kitleye ateş etti. Mermi ve darbeler ölümcül bölgelere isabet etti.” <http://eski.bianet.org/2006/04/07/77356.htm>. For the full text of the report, Human Rights Organization’s Report on March 28 events in Diyarbakır see http://www.ihd.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=106&Itemid=90

commit acts of political coercion, even erasure”¹⁹, Comaroff & Comaroff argue that with the authorization of the legalities established in the law those who act in the name of the state can work or even struggle to the disadvantage of “the citizens”²⁰, from a limited degree to reducing them to bare life. While the officials of the state always need cleansing mechanisms (morality, ethics, legitimacy) for brutal acts of power, definitions of the codes of these regulating mechanisms become the space through which the warfare between the oppressed subaltern groups and state officials is situated. Not surprisingly, it is never these subaltern groups who have the ultimate victory over definitions. Violence is intrinsic to the process of definition of these terms and only by rendering the manifestation of violence invisible in these legal, moral or ethic definitions can power seek absolute sovereignty. “In sum, to transcend itself, to transform itself into sovereign authority, power demands at the very least a minimal architecture of legalities—or, once again, their simulacra.”²¹

The New Turkish Penal Code (TPC) is such that the state can outlaw any press statement or meeting, and thus arrest you. We are face to face with an unbelievable situation. Even in the 12 September period there was not such a swirl of violence. While in the period after 12 September there were 76.000 people in prison, today there are 110.000. It is the new TPC that has broken the record of the Republican history. Every demonstration, every press release has been regarded as illegal and they have detained and arrested everybody they found before themselves. All these practices seem to be worse than those of the Nazi period.... There is no doubt that the

¹⁹ John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, “Law and Disorder in the Postcolony: An Introduction,” in *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, ed. by Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006), 30.

²⁰ The “to whom” question of the applicability of state violence and laws to the disadvantage of some citizens always include the history of encounters with the state. In 2005, Hilmi Özkök (the chief of staff of the Turkish army) called two Kurds who alleged to burn the Turkish national flag in the public celebration of the Kurdish festival Newroz as “so-called citizens”, pointing out the potential targets of law and violence. This event showed both the expendability of Kurdish bodies with ease and the limits of citizenship of Kurds in Turkey. Later it was discussed that this event was a provocation by a Turkish racist organization. <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/112251-mersindeki-newrozda-bayragi-ozde-vatandas-yakmis>

²¹ John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, “Law and Disorder in the Postcolony: An Introduction” in *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, ed. by Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006), 35.

law is being interpreted with the meanest intention by the judges and police forces. What lies behind all these is the explanation made by the prime minister Tayyip Erdoğan he made in March 2006 regarding the Diyarbakır events, where he said: “either it is women or children, everybody used as paws of terrorism will be punished.”²²

What mobilizes people in the Kurdish Region?

Working on the genealogy of the “punishment”, Friedrich Nietzsche points to the etymology of the major moral concept Schuld [guilt] that has its origin in the very material concept Schulden [debts].²³ He argues that the relation between the society and the individual is analogous to that of creditor and debtor. Like a debtor who cannot fulfill her obligations to the creditor, the individual who has caused injury – by giving harm or failing to meet obligations- for the society loses her advantages and benefits of belonging to the society and by the infliction of pain, is reminded what these advantages are worth. Following Nietzsche, Veena Das argues that the body of debtor is territorialized by the infliction of pain, so that “the creditor could inflict every kind of indignity and torture upon the body of debtor; for example, cut from it as much as seemed commensurate with the size of the debt...”²⁴

For Das, Nietzsche’s profound move has been to show us that during the punishment the return is not the material equivalent of his debt but rather the

²² Yeni TCK öyle bir kanun ki, devlet herhangi bir basın açıklamasını, toplantıyı yasadışı ilan edip seni tutuklayabiliyor. İnanılmaz bir durumla karşı karşıyayız. 12 Eylül döneminde bile böyle bir siddet sarmalı yoktu. 12 Eylül’de cezaevindeki insan sayısı 76 binken, bugün 110 bine ulaştı. Cumhuriyet tarihinin rekorunu kırmamıza vesile olan, yeni TCK’dır. Yapılan her eylem, her basın açıklaması yasadışı gösterildi ve önlerine her geleni gözüaltına alıp tutukladılar. Nazi dönemini aratıyor bu uygulamalar... Yasanın yargıçlar ve kolluk güçleri tarafından en kötü niyetle yorumlandığına hiç şüphe yok. Bunun temelinde de 2006 martında başbakan Tayyip Erdoğan’ın Diyarbakır olayları için “kadın da olsa, çocuk da olsa terörün masası haline gelenler cezalandırılacaktır” açıklaması yatıyor. Ethem Açıkalın, Human Rights Association, Adana. “Interview with İrfan Aktan” in *Express* 94 (May 2009): 17.

²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy Of Morals* (Vintage Books, New York, 1989), 63-64.

²⁴ Ibid., 64.

submission of the body to indignity and pain.²⁵ Where the power of the societal rules has been less influential, the violent and harsher forms of punishment take place. Nietzsche understands the cruelty and mercilessness of various forms of legal punishment throughout the history as “a copy, a mimus, of the normal attitude toward a hated, disarmed, prostrated enemy, who has lost not only every right and protection, but all hope of quarter as well”²⁶ in which the rules of war reiterate themselves.

What have been lived between the security forces who act in the name of the state and Kurdish children was an extension of war that has shaped the life of the region more than two decades. Sustained through means of state violence, enforcement of law, and violent regimes of representation, the war between the PKK and the Turkish nation-state is geographically carried to the urban spaces and on the other hand, discursively carried to a new platform in the public discourse. Rather than conceiving all of the children in the events as members of PKK, what I want to argue is that the foundational violence in the protests sources from PKK and simultaneously the public protests define the limits and actions of the Kurdish movement -both in harmony and conflict with the legal and illegal Kurdish institutions- in the new conjuncture.

Many people in the city emphasize that those children and youth who have not been a part of PKK got involved in the protests. Even those who have not been the sympathizers of the Kurdish movement got involved in the events in an unexpected, spontaneous manner. Both the rage of the protestors in the events that could not be controlled during four days and the emphasis on the spontaneity and

²⁵ Veena Das, “The Anthropology of Pain,” in *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective On Contemporary India* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 185.

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy Of Morals* (Vintage Books, New York, 1989), 71.

unexpectedness of the participation in the events force one to re-consider the political motivations and spontaneous mobilization of the masses more carefully. This is a call for considering the hidden scars and collective memory of Kurdish people during the period of state of emergency. A call for genealogizing the traces of a whole epistemology that has come with long-lasting disasters, as it finds echo in the words of a political activist that took place in the events:

Non-patriots did not participate in the March events; everyone involved in those demonstrations, into the whole process were patriots. In other words, patriotism is not about being involved with the party all through the day. But there was no one in the events who did not have any sense, feeling and consciousness of patriotism. There was always a trace of patriotism. You need not have an organic relationship to the party to bear such traces.²⁷

Mourning calls for the traces of the disasters of the past, a past that continues to live in the here-and-now. In a geography that is governed through a state of emergency for more than two decades and where state violence is the main mechanism through which this state of emergency is sustained, it is important to differentiate different kinds of deaths, killings and corresponding mournings. It is considerably important to note that mourning for those who have been killed with brute force and beyond “acceptable level of violence,”²⁸ calls for the collective memory and traces of a disastrous past and mobilize masses in political events. It is argued that more than 350.000 people got involved in the March events. When compared to the participation in the political protests of DTP (Democratic Society Party) seeking

²⁷ Mart olaylarına yurtsever olmayan katılmadı; o eylemlere, o sürece katılan herkes yurtseverdi, yani yurtseverlik sadece 24 saat partiyle ilişkili olmak değildir. Ama yurtsever duygusu düşüncesi ve bilinci olmayan kimse katılmadı, bir iz vardı muhakkak vardı, illa organik ilişki gerekmiyor.

Not to forget, within the historical and political context of Kurdish regions, “patriot” means that are the followers, sympathizers and activists of the Kurdish movement. On the discursive level, it strongly differentiates itself from the Turkish nationalism and Kurdish nationalism which points to a more common ideology among the Kurds in Iraq.

²⁸ What I mean by “acceptable level of violence,” is the normalized level of violence that has become routinized within the everyday lives of people in the Kurdish region. The claim that there has been the use of chemical weapons exceeds the terms of a war between two armed forces.

rights and making demands from state²⁹, it becomes more apparent why these events emerging from the funerals of guerillas who have been claimed to be killed by the use of chemical weapons, involve much more people than any political meeting. It can be argued that feelings of pain, subjection to maltreatment, abuses and injuries, tortures and killings; feelings that many things are stolen from Kurds and the state is indebted to Kurds, this societal debt and accompanying collective rage mobilize people in Kurdish region.

In the creditor-debtor relationship of the society acclaimed by Nietzsche, on the one side the officials of the Turkish nation state do not recognize the pain and mournings of Kurds on the basis of the argument that Kurds are indebted to the Turkish nation state and society for causing harm to the established societal rules and norms, and sustain extreme forms of violence on Kurdish bodies. In this debt relationship, justice is based on the equivalence between the injury that gives harm to the society and punishment inflicting pain on the body of the individual. “First, the equivalence between injury and pain, so that the infliction of pain on a person who has caused injury by failing in any of his obligations to us is seen as just. Second, memory is created through the infliction of pain and, most remarkably, the direction of this memory is not the past, but the future. Third, to fail one’s creditor is to submit one’s body to “every kind of indignity and torture”.”³⁰

On the other side, Kurds -whose bodies have been subject to every kind of indignity and torture- with a detailed and deep knowledge of the cruelties of state, consider the Turkish nation-state as indebted to themselves and get mobilized in the

²⁹ Other than big meetings during Newroz public festival –which include more than one million people only in Diyarbakır- many protests in search for linguistic, cultural rights or ‘education in mother tongue’ demands take place in the city with the participation of masses between 10 and 50 thousand people.

³⁰ Veena Das, “The Anthropology of Pain,” in *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective On Contemporary India*, (Oxford University Press, 1996), 183.

situations that involves state violence beyond exceptable and normalized level of it. In this way, societal debt becomes a metaphor that sustains the relationship between Kurds and the Turkish nation-state, between the political and economic worlds. It has the potentiality to give the terms and feelings that can lead to popular mobility in the situations of political unrest. In this way, pain and mourning of the past disasters and cruelties of state -unrecognized by the other- remain burning in and hurting the bodies of Kurds with the help of this unrecognition. “If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory.”³¹

Fantasy of “the State”: Child Terrorists

Rather than attributing a unified and general character to the state and defining it as a unitary center of power, conceiving the state as an effect of a new kind of governmentality³² that is recognizable through multiple effects³³ gives one the chance to reconsider quotidian encounters where the production and reproduction of the state take place. This requires an elaboration of the subjective dynamics of state officials on the one hand and the subject effects of governmental technologies, rationalities and rules, their subversion on the other hand. Begoña Aretxaga provides an understanding for subjective dynamics through which state officials are linked to the fantasy of statehood, total control and power:

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy Of Morals* (Vintage Books, New York, 1989), 61.

³² Timothy Mitchell, “The limits of the state: beyond statist approaches and their critics,” *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 77-94.

³³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “The anthropology of the state in the age of globalization. Close encounters of the deceptive kind,” *Current Anthropology* 42 (2001): 125-138.

Those identified as state-government officials, politicians, military personal, policemen, judges, prosecutors etc.- are also haunted by the perceived power of terrorists, subversives, guerrillas, or criminals (Aretxaga 2000a, Siegel 1998, Taussig 1986). This mirroring paranoid dynamic often takes the form of powerful identifications and obsessive fascination as when the state engages in terrorist or criminal practices in order to appropriate the power it attributes to its enemies, criminals, subversives, or terrorists (Taylor 1997). These are not just moments of repression against enemies that are already there; they are fields in which the state and its enemies are created and recreated as powerful fictional realities (Siegel 1998) through what Derrida has called “a phantomatic mode of production” (1994, p. 97), a structure and modus operandi that produces both the state and its threatening Other as fetishes of each other, constructing reality as an endless play of mirror images. It is in the act of killing, kidnapping, disappearances, and imprisonment that the state materializes as a powerful spectral reality, which marks the bodies and souls of those subjected to its practice.³⁴

Haunted by these images of powerful “child terrorists” and supported by the declarations of the prime minister, security forces have opted for violent “solutions”. The result was the death of 12 people, 5 of whom were children, along with many wounded. Additionally, it was reported that “563 people were tortured and subjected to abuses and ill treatment in custody”³⁵ after the events. The projection of the image of the powerful terrorist onto these children, intertwined with the fantasy of total control, triggers the production of anxiety, anger and hate among state officials. The security forces, the Prime Minister and the generals of the army were/are fascinated by the power of these children terrorists and get extremely nervous of the chaos they created. The realm of emotions thus created among the state officials, fed by the phantasmic reality of “the state”, materializes on the bodies of ordinary people in the form of maltreatment, beatings, sexual harrassment, torture and death.

³⁴ Begoña Aretxaga, “Maddening States,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2003): 402.

³⁵ http://www.ihd.org.tr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=106&Itemid=90: Human Rights Organization’s Report on March 28 events in Diyarbakır

“The corpse mediates between the state and the people (Siegel 1998, Taussig 1997) in a process that seems intrinsic to the materialization of the state.”³⁶ People who have been taken into custody were tortured and forced to repeat the national anthem and patriotic songs; they appear as a site of mediation between state and Kurdish people too. Their bodies were/are turned into spaces through which the fantasy of the state as absolute power is materialized and by this very act making them remember the power of “the state”. The founding and preserving violence of the state has been directed against Kurdish bodies –mainly children, the youth and women.

Arbitrariness of the State Violence at the Margins of the State

As many people –such as the journalists, lawyers and city dwellers I interviewed- emphasize, it is important to note that many children and young people who were shot or taken into custody were not necessarily involved in the events. Consequently, many people around the districts of Bağlar, Şehitlik and Koşuyolu (these districts are the lower class districts of the city that for the last fifteen years shelter huge populations of forcibly migrated people) were “taken in’ *arbitrarily*, what kind of treatment they have been subjected to depended on their class, gender, age and behaviour and the mood the police were in.

Lots of people were unnecessarily taken in custody. For example at the first day of March events, I went out to buy some medicine. They stopped me and took in custody. When they understood that my brothers have gone to the mountain, they started to swear and hit me. For one month I have been subject to every kind of torture including philistine strap, electricity, truncheon and severe beatings. They tried to make me sing Turkish marches, to talk about the [March] events

³⁶ Begoña Aretxaga, “Maddening States,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2003): 404.

and my brothers. I just kept quiet, this was the whole thing that I could do. What I have learned when I got out was that many young people and children were taken in custody regardless of their involvement in the events. For example, one of my friends who has been severely tortured was taken in just because his name is Kurdish.³⁷

Brutal effects of power tend to take place more in the marginal spaces where power becomes sustainable only by means of violence. As the recent scholarship on the state and its margins have showed, “in order to identify the margins of the state, we must turn to the pervasive uncertainty of the law *everywhere* and to the arbitrariness of the authority that seeks to make law certain.”³⁸ In the margins, the institution of the state order and its preservation is in a constitutive relation with the arbitrary use of violence, feeding each other. “Terror is what keeps these extremes [the order of the state and the arbitrariness of its emergency] in apposition, just as that apposition maintains the irregular rhythm of numbing and shock that constitutes the apparent normality of the abnormal created by the state of emergency.”³⁹

As many narratives concerning the events clearly show, the fear and the talk about the cruelty and arbitrariness of state violence, the pain of the past, deaths and the upheaval of displacement have penetrated the everyday lives of the people in Diyarbakır. As every “contact involves the subject as well as histories that come

³⁷ Bir sürü insanı gereksiz yere içeri aldılar. Mesela ben olayların başladığı gün [28 Mart] anneme ilaç almak için dışarı çıkmıştım, durdurup gözaltına aldılar. Abilerimin dağda olduğunu anlayınca da küfredip vurmaya yapmaya başladılar. Bir ay boyunca aralıksız bir şekilde filistin askısından, elektriğe, joptan kaba dayığa kadar her çeşit işkenceyi gördüm. Bana türkçe marşlar söyletmeye çalıştılar, olaylarla ilgili bildiklerimi anlatmamı istediler, abilerimi sordular. Ben sadece sustum, tek yapabileceğim buydu. Çıktığımda öğrendiğime göre olaylarla ilgili/ilgisiz bir sürü çocuk ve genç içeri alınmış. Mesela, çok fena işkence gören bir arkadaşımı da sadece ismi kürtçe olduğu için içeri almışlar.

³⁸ Talal Asad, “Where are the margins of the state?” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* ed. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research. 2004), 287.

³⁹ Michael Taussig, “Terror as Usual: Walter Benjamin’s Theory of History as State of Siege”, in *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1992), 13.

before the subject,”⁴⁰ the past haunted the everyday in the form of fear and pain. “*The past is living rather than dead; the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present.*”⁴¹ The past in the form of an uncanny specter that people already feared came again to haunt the imaginary of the city and the region. “The narratives are in themselves evidence of the process whereby a culture of terror was created and sustained.”⁴² Narrativization infuses state violence into the capillaries of everyday life of people, “the state” gets materialized and acquires an agency through feelings of fear, hate, threat and anxiety. “The spectacle of torture and death and of massacres and disappearances in the recent past have become more deeply inscribed into individual bodies and the collective imagination through a constant sense of threat.”⁴³ We must not forget that this is a bilateral process through which collective and individual bodies are shaped in a continuous relation to the materialization of the state. Referring to Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed argues that it is through the intensification of pain sensations that bodies and worlds materialize and take shape, or that the effect of boundary, surface and fixity is produced.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the constant sense of threat is not only intrinsic to the experiences and feelings of people, but through the magnification of the enemy and fascination by its perceived power, state officials produce an Other that changes in every reiteration. “Nothing distinguishes them from the rest except the fact of their death, kidnapping, disappearance, or arrest.”⁴⁵ In the continuous production and

⁴⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴² Michael Taussig, 1984. “Culture of Terror-Space of Death: Roger Casement’s Putuyama Report and the Explanation of Torture” in *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications, 2004), 45.

⁴³ Linda Green, *Fear as a Way of Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 55.

⁴⁴ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 24.

⁴⁵ Begoña Aretxaga, “Maddening States,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2003): 403.

reproduction of the Other, the state is (re)configured itself within a mimetic sense of threat and anxiety. “What I find useful is the sustained and developing work on the mechanics of the constitution of the Other; we can use it to much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than invocations of the authenticity of the Other. On this level, what remains useful in Foucault is the mechanics of disciplinarization, institutionalization, the constitution, as it were, of the colonizer.”⁴⁶

As Aretxaga argued, fascinated by the fantasy of total control in the nation-state territory, “the state” has to reiterate its existence and sovereignty through means of violence. “Iterability requires the origin to repeat itself originally, to alter itself so as to have the value of origin, that is, to conserve itself.”⁴⁷ However, this reiteration, in search for an impossible fullness of power, is sought in different ways of constituting the Other and normalizing the criminality of state. “Perhaps state terrorism must be contemplated not as a deviation of democracy, a corruption of power or “power gone awry” but as an intrinsic part of contemporary practices of power.”⁴⁸ In the eyes of state officials and security forces, Kurdish bodies appear as “killable bodies without accountability” for the security forces and in this way become the very basis of the sovereignty of the state in the region. “There is a relation of simultaneous attraction and repulsion that holds together this sovereign power and those reduced to bare life, life that can be killed without accountability.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 294.

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority”, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Cornell, Rosenfeld and Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992), 43.

⁴⁸ Begoña Aretxaga, “A Fictional Reality: Paramilitary Death Squads and the Construction of State Terror in Spain,” in *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror*, ed. JA Sluka (Philadelphia: Univ. Penn. Press, 2000), 64.

⁴⁹ Begoña Aretxaga, “Maddening States,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35, (2003): 404.

Violence and State of Exception

In rethinking sovereignty and the state of exception, Giorgio Agamben revives the term “homo sacer” that is bare life in order to conceptualize sovereignty in terms of the management of life and death. Homo sacer is the person that can be killed without accountability, killed but not sacrificed. “The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide.”⁵⁰ By situating “homo sacer” outside divine and human law, Agamben’s theory implies that the law produces certain bodies as “killable” for they are positioned by the law itself as prior to the institution of the law.

For Agamben, the figure of homo sacer holds the key to an understanding of sovereignty and modern political and legal codes because of what it reveals of the sovereign's power to resort to a boundless state of exception.”⁵¹ Starting from the work of Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt, Agamben defines sovereignty in terms of establishing the norms and as well the right to suspend the norms and to decide on the exception⁵² through which certain bodies become killable without accountability, a process that is both inside and outside the law. It gives us an understanding of how it becomes for the oppressed that *the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception but the rule*⁵³.

⁵⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 47.

⁵¹ Veena Das and Deborah Poole, “The State and Its Margins,” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, ed. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2004), 12.

⁵² Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George D. Schwab, (MIT Press, 1985)(University of Chicago Press; University of Chicago edition, 2004 with an Introduction by Tracy B. Strong. Original publication: 1922, 2nd ed. 1934)

⁵³ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257.

After the 12th September 1980 coup d'état, the state of emergency that lasted for more than two decades became the everyday reality of the peoples living in the Kurdish region. In *State of Exception*, Agamben deems the era of Hitler an exception of 12 years. For him, "modern totalitarianism, from this perspective, can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. Since then, - from the Hitler era on-, the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (though perhaps not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones."⁵⁴ And Agamben shows that the essential characteristic of this "state of exception" is its tendency to transform into a permanent administration practice. The abeyance of law and legitimization of the new regime based on violence and on "the state of emergency" transformed "the state of emergency" into a kind of rule.

In "Critique of Violence," Walter Benjamin talks about the interest of law in the monopoly of violence and how it stems from self-protective reasons rather than for the preservation of legal ends. For Benjamin, violence, when not in the hands of the law, threatens it not by the ends it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law.⁵⁵ "Violence, as a tool, is either a law maker or a law preserver."⁵⁶ Benjamin conceives violence as the basis of law and regards violence over death and life as the most remarkable expressions of this claim. "For in the exercise of violence over life

⁵⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.

⁵⁵ Walter Benjamin, "A Critique of Violence", in *Selected Writings Volume 1*. Harvard University Press, 1996), 239.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

and death more than in any other legal act, the law reaffirms itself.”⁵⁷

Rather than considering the figure of homo sacer as presocial, Das and Poole call us to genealogize the ways through which some bodies are rendered bare life. Hence, the constitution of bare life within the social and the ways through which the constitution of sovereignty has been established becomes apparent.⁵⁸ This opens up the space for an understanding of bare life “as a threat held in abeyance and a state into which any citizen could fall.”⁵⁹ This means a constant reiteration of the definitions of citizenship, sovereignty and bare life, and their inter-relation. Recognizable by the lack of authority and use of violence, Das and Poole see margins as the spaces through which reiterations of these definitions take place and power seeks to establish its (impossible) fullness. For them, the lack of authority (law) is a continuous struggle for the sovereign.

This lack should be seen as never-ending, considering the existence of sovereignty in relation/opposition to the fantasy of total control. The ceaseless interplay between the constitution of sovereignty and bare life as the state of exception both reveals the relation of violence with the law and points out the spaces in which law has to be reiterated. In another sense, it defines the margins not in terms of center and periphery but as “the places where state law and order continually have to be reestablished.”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., 242.

⁵⁸ “Thus, although Agamben presents the figure of homo sacer at least in some instances as if it inhabited some kind of presocial life; it would appear that killable bodies are, in fact, produced through a complex legal process of rendering them as bare life (Fitzpatrick 2001)” Fitzpatrick as quoted in Veena Das and Deborah Poole, “The State and Its Margins,” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, ed. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2004), 13.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁰ Talal Asad, “Where are the margins of the state?” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* ed. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2004), 279-289.

The institutionalization of state practices, their excessive mode, namely state violence organizing the various dimensions of everyday life in the margins, get routinized by the re-inscription of state power onto the bodies and imaginaries of people. “State practices in emergency zones, or state of exception, cannot be understood in terms of law and transgression, but rather in terms of practices that lie simultaneously outside and inside the law”.⁶¹ Various state technologies and practices including the disappearances, death squads and torture in the past and present of Kurdish region signify the blurred borders of legality and the law. Indeed the criminality of the state in the margins forces one to look at the inter-dynamics between rational technologies and phantasmic excesses of the state as a set of productive relations that enhance/reiterate the existence of state law and order.

Criminal states alert us to the fact that the power of the state is harnessed not so much from the rationality of ordering practices as from the passions of transgression, in which the line between the legal and the illegal is constantly blurred. One has to recall Bataille and Foucault and think of what this particular blurred border may mean for the exercise of state power. To go back to fantasy, a good deal of the literature on the state and violence shows the state not as the product of rational technologies of control but as the subject of excess that bypasses any rational functionality. What articulates this excess is fantasy (the fantasy of statehood, the fantasy of total control, the fantasy of appropriation of the other, the fantasy of heterosexual domesticity...), which appears as a major component of political life and a key factor structuring power relations.⁶²

Diyarbakır Military Prison

Let me tell a story of a debt that has shaped the life of Kurdish region for the last three decades, a debt that came in the form of disasters, shaped the collective

⁶¹ Veena Das and Deborah Poole, “The State and Its Margins,” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, ed. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2004), 15.

⁶² Begonia Aretxaga, “Maddening States,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2003): 402-403

memory of Kurds and carry the seeds of the feelings of a population, anger and rage of protestors. In Benjamin's words, hatred and the spirit of sacrifice, "for both are nourished by the image of enslaved ancestors rather than that of liberated grandchildren."⁶³ Experiences of the 80s and 90s had devastating effects on the region, creating a social trauma that gave people both a common language deriving from the everyday life experiences and feelings and at the same time a non-language that signifies the inexplicable quality of pain that is embedded into the lives of many people. In the Kurdish region, starting from the 12th September 1980 coup d'état, the state as a phantasmic excess and reality has delved into the course of daily life more traumatically than ever. Violence becomes the only way of dealing with citizens for the military government, the only possible way of discipline. "The military is not an educational, charitable, or social welfare institution; violence is intrinsic to its nature and logic."⁶⁴

During the coup d'état, a total of 650,000 people were detained and most suspects were either beaten or tortured. Over 500 people died while under detention as a result of torture; 85,000 people were placed on trial mainly in relation to thought crimes by association; 1,683,000 were officially listed in police files as suspects; 230,000 were heard during 210,000 cases, 348,000 were banned from travelling abroad; 15,509 were fired from their jobs for political reasons; 114,000 books were seized and burned; 937 films were banned; 2,729 writers, translators, journalists and actors were put on trial for expressing their opinions.⁶⁵

⁶³ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 260.

⁶⁴ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 223.

⁶⁵ <http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/419690.asp>

In this respect, the 12th September coup d'état's specific place to "tame" Kurds, namely the Diyarbakır Military Prison (1980-1984) has a very crucial place in the history of the region and the country. This prison, which is regarded as Hell in the region, became an important space of Turkification efforts of the Turkish nation-state for Kurds. While the main reason of the differential exercise of power in the Diyarbakır prison was the ethno-political character of the city, the efforts of the state officials became that of erasing the difference, struggling to establish Kurds as Turkish-speaking "Mountain Turks"⁶⁶. Torture, fear and the culture of terror surrounding the Kurdish population became the state policy to eradicate "Kurdishness". Ironically but not surprisingly, these political technologies leaving their imprint on Kurdish subjectivity and collective memory, fostered / (re)produced / iterated the difference of Kurdish bodies and subjectivities.

Referring to Michel Foucault and Darius Rejali, Welat Zeydanlıoğlu conceptualizes torture in Turkey as an intrinsic element of Turkish modernity rather than an earlier despotic past. In this way he argues, "torture is directly linked to the making and maintaining of Turkey as a homogenous nation-state of Turkish speakers."⁶⁷ As a form of establishing the sovereignty of the Turkish nation-state and an effort to eliminate "Kurdishness", there were numerous forms of torture in this prison that appears as one of the most fundamental spaces of the state-making project after 1980. Among the various torture techniques, the most common practices and the ones that are mostly emphasized in the testimonies are:

⁶⁶ This term was invented within the tradition of official historiography that tries to eradicate the ethnic and religious differences within the territories of the Turkish nation-state. For a detailed discussion on the paradigmatic shifts of the perception and codification of Kurds from the era of Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation-state see Alişan Akpınar, "İki Kitap - İki Dönem," *Toplum ve Kuram* 1 (2009): 273-279.

⁶⁷ Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, "Torture and Turkification in the Diyarbakır Military Prison" in *Rights, Citizenship & Torture: Perspectives on Evil, Law and the State*, ed. Welat Zeydanlıoğlu and John T. Parry (Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2009), 3.

Severe and systematic beating, pulling of hair, being stripped naked, being blindfolded and hosed, solitary confinement, guards' insults, constant and relentless surveillance and intimidation, death threats, the obligation to salute Captain Esat Oktay Yıldırım's dog, a German shepherd called "Jo", which was trained to bite the private parts of naked prisoners, sleep, sensory, water and food deprivation for extensive periods, falaka (beating of the soles of feet), "Palestinian hangings" (hanging by the arms), stress positions or forcing prisoners to stand for long durations, excessive exercise in extreme temperatures, stretching, squeezing or crushing of limbs and genitalia, piling of naked prisoners on top of each other, asphyxia and mock execution, electric shocks (specifically electrodes attached to genitals), burning with cigarettes, extraction of nails and healthy teeth, forcing prisoners to mix with prisoners with tuberculosis, sexual humiliation and assault, rectal examinations, forcing prisoners to beat/sexually humiliate/rape or urinate on each other, rape or threat of rape of prisoners, or relatives of prisoners in their presence by prison guards, violent forcing of truncheon rectally, forced feeding of rotten/contaminated food or faeces, baths in prison sewers (referred to as "the disco" by the guards).⁶⁸

Within the Kurdish politico-cultural imaginary the Military Prison of Diyarbakır is often positioned as a call for recognition of their collective pain and suffering, a demand for justice, a claim to politics, subjectivity, and community, and a narrative over life and death that Kurds repeatedly tell to themselves and to others. This prison has been "a painful attachment; a bleeding wound that people keep pointing their finger at, a wound that will never heal unless it is faced"⁶⁹. For many, the Kurdish conflict could be resolved only through sincere efforts to recognize and come to terms with what happened in this prison. For as one of the most fundamental spaces of the law making violence of the 1980 coup d'état, Diyarbakır Military Prison is a reference point in any violent act of state officials or any appeal to justice. For these reasons and more, perceptions of the events of March 2006 by the Kurdish population of the region are shaped with regard to the dynamics of collective

⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁹ In the words of a protestor at the protests of September 12th, 2007, the twenty-seventh anniversary of the military coup of 1980 in Diyarbakır.

memory of this prison and the subjectivity fostered by the political technologies of the coup d'état.

In many respects, what have been lived within the walls of the prison had a deep impact on the fate of the entire region. This shows us how a new understanding of the law was constituted. It demonstrates that the actions of generals and the army were not a kind of lawlessness or a breaking of the law, but just the formation of a new jurisprudence and the construction of a new form of domination. "Inside" (the prison) a new regime and a legal order were being constituted by the instrumentalization of the violence on the one hand, and on the other, Kurdish identity and the history of the whole region were (being) shaped. At this point, it is significant to note that this was not a unilateral process and while the state constructed itself, the Kurdish movement (PKK) also defined itself and its resistance around the experiences of the coup d'état and the Diyarbakır Military Prison.

This prison appears "in some way as the hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we are still living."⁷⁰ If we return to Benjamin's "Critique of Violence," it seems to me that the law "making" violence of the Diyarbakır Prison continued, through expansion into civil war, state terror, establishment of paramilitary organizations, "disappearances" ("disappearing" comes into being when someone just vanishes off the face of the map due to paramilitary death squads⁷¹), assassinations, unsolved murders of the paramilitary organizations and the state of emergency (OHAL), with a new aim to "preserve" the law in addition to "making" it. As Derrida puts it, "we can no longer discern between two types of violence,

⁷⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 107.

⁷¹ Michael Taussig, "Terror as Usual: Walter Benjamin's Theory of History as State of Siege", in *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1992), 14.

conserving and founding, and that is the ignoble, ignominious, disgusting ambiguity”⁷². It seems clear that the relation between the prison system of the 12th September coup d’état (Diyarbakır Military Prison for Kurds) and the power relations that were institutionalized throughout it, reveal the generalization and normalization of state terror that was applicable in the margins.⁷³

Nancy Scheper-Hughes asserts that “the blurring of fiction and reality creates a mass hysteria and paranoia that can be seen as a new technique of social control in which everyone suspects and fears every other; a collective hostile gaze, a human panopticon (Foucault, 1979), is created.”⁷⁴ The law preserving violence continued with the regime of fear and silencing as a social control mechanism. By the rumors of the events “inside” the walls of the Diyarbakır Military Prison and state atrocities throughout the Kurdish region, even close relatives and friends could not talk with each other. The deaths, kidnappings, disappearances, assassinations and torture meant the power to create a generalized state of fear, and so that power can become a property of the state.⁷⁵ People were suspicious of each other and everyone was scared of their neighbors and friends and this led to a fierce disruption of community life. “The point about silencing and the fear behind silencing is not to erase the memory. Far from it. The point is to drive the memory deep within the fastness of the

⁷² Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority”, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Cornell, Rosenfeld and Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992), 43.

⁷³ Veena Das and Deborah Poole, “The State and Its Margins,” in *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*, ed. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2004)

⁷⁴ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 229.

⁷⁵ James T. Siegel, *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: Counter Revolution Today* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998)

individual so as to create more fear and uncertainty in which dream and reality commingle.”⁷⁶

“Torture is used as a sanctioning tool to teach the whole society to fear, by using the individuals.”⁷⁷ The narratives and rumors about the prison fed fear in the region and became an instrument for the state. In the city, it is a well-known narrative that prison officials were careful about putting the “common prisoners” in the wards of political prisoners to make sure that what was lived inside the walls could be carried outside. This provided channels through which the torturers could objectify their fantasies in the discourse of the other, as Taussig puts it. “Cultures of terror are based on and nourished by silence and myth in which the fanatical stress on the mysterious side of the mysterious flourishes by means of rumor and fantasy in a dense web of magical realism.”⁷⁸ Lawyer Cemşit Bilek tells the years of State of Emergency and Diyarbakır Military Prison: “The injustice within the prison was also exercised outside the prison, people were living the same restlessness, in the evenings after a certain hour the streets would be empty; if there was a knock on the door at a late hour, people had their hearts in their mouths. This restless life outside continued until a couple of years ago.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Michael Taussig, “Terror as Usual: Walter Benjamin’s Theory of History as State of Siege”, in *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1992), 27.

⁷⁷ Beste Tungandame, (psychologist in torture rehabilitation of ex-prisoners), *Serbestî 14*, Diyarbakır No. 5 Military Prison (2003): 6.

⁷⁸ Michael Taussig, 1984. “Culture of Terror-Space of Death: Roger Casement’s Putuyama Report and the Explanation of Torture” in *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications, 2004), 40.

⁷⁹ *Serbestî 14*, Diyarbakır No. 5 Military Prison, (2003): 197.

After 2001, the course of everyday life changed fundamentally with the temporary armistice of the PKK and Turkey's EU integration policies. Although the destructions and the wounds of the war and forced migration have determining effects on the daily lives of many people, the materiality of the state and the market economy acquires new visibilities and forms with new political technologies. On the one side, more brutal manifestation of state violence got less visible compared to the years of OHAL (State of Emergency) established in the Kurdish region. On the other side, a discourse of development got embedded in the Kurdish landscape more than ever with the incredible expansion of development agencies and NGOs.

While the events of March 2006 were *unforeseen* within the relatively "less bloody" political climax in the Kurdish region of the last five years, they had crucial effects for the region. It seems that these events, both in their form and in the demands of the protestors, opposed the hegemonic forces and the violence of regimes of representation in the public culture of Turkey, and at the same time were pointing to a novel manifestation of the relations of power, new forms of domination and oppression after years of war and forced migration. The children involved in the events live without money or work under conditions of continuous repression in a culturally distorted, politically and economically marginalized city. What made the events of March 2006 a novel phenomenon was the participation of Kurdish youth and children who were detached from the realm of political subjecthood and were made the objects of a technical language in the discursive landscape of development. Through this language, the children -remnants of the traumatic experience of war or political agents- are rendered invisible in the regimes of representation in the Turkish

public sphere to make the pain, trauma and poverty of Kurds invisible and occlude the ethnic and socioeconomic antagonisms of the post-coup period.

As the street children, street sellers, muggers or small thieves, they are subject to a rehabilitation and education discourse as if they have chosen to live in the streets. Their families are blamed for their ignorance to “give birth and throw their children to the streets’ within the generalized racist discourse. Kurdish children become the issue of public debates as far as they disturb the image of the city or bother the city dwellers in big cities; they are the problems of the modern society. They are the objects of many development and education projects to produce docile and productive bodies. Developmentalist discourse occludes the ethnic and political reasons of the extreme poverty many Kurds face today, by leaving the burned villages, forced migration and war out of question. Kurdish people become guilty for their current conditions. Kurdish children, on whose bodies the memories of the catastrophic experiences and traces of the state of emergency have been inscribed, have no place other than to be assimilated in the developmentalist accounts.

Their participation and visibility in the March events point to cracks in the violent closures of the mainstream narratives of war, forced migration, extreme poverty and development by the regimes of representations. These cracks offer potentialities and possibilities to deconstruct these narratives.

March events has become a mirror, an opportunity for us to see many things; it was in fact a very political thing and it was at the same time a revolt of the lower class. But who is this lower class? It is very difficult to describe the revolt of the lower class fed with a national soul. Let me explain it this way: The villages of those children were set on fire, they were exposed to violence, and they now live in miserable conditions; they have no expectations for the future except political demands and they can hardly have personal expectations. The main reason why they are impoverished now, why they live in such conditions is because they are Kurds. It is because they are Kurds that their villages were burnt, it is because they are Kurds that

they cannot find jobs, it because they are Kurds that they starve to death, etc. etc.⁸⁰

Having conducted my research and interviews in Diyarbakır, it seemed clear to me that, just like the state institutions, nobody in the city could have foreseen the events of March in the ghostly reality of Kurdish region. That is “the ghostly reality which embraces and keeps us, not only in ideology but in the body, forms an ontology in which we’re enveloped.”⁸¹ The possibility of these events led by the “invisible” youth became “non-imaginable” within differing set of ideologies and hegemonic articulations.

There are many reasons for the March events: class divisions are increasingly sharpening within the Kurdish society. Political reasons aside, it seemed to me as if people were taking vengeance on something. I saw a woman. There was a stone in her hand. “Get out”, she was saying to the people getting into the houses, “this is our day”. And there was a sheer reaction. There was a reaction to many things they experienced. This was my impression while I was in those neighborhoods during the events. There was a serious reaction to everything, ranging from the forced migration to poverty and miscellaneous problems they have to cope with. I saw women knocking on doors for revolt and children had stones in their hands.⁸²

Slavoj Žižek identifies the function of ideology as “regulating the relationship between visible and non-visible, between imaginable and non-imaginable, as well as

⁸⁰ From my interview with Evrim Alataş (journalist, writer and the director of the documentary ‘Ayrımcılıktan Yoksulluğa Amed’): Mart olayları bir ayna oldu, birçok şeyleri görmemize vesile oldu, çok politik bir şeydi aslında ve aynı zamanda sınıfsal bir ayaklanmaydı da. Fakat sınıf kim? Ulusal nüvelerle beslenmiş bir sınıfsal ayaklanma tanımı çok zor birşey. Şu açıdan tanımı zor. Şimde mesela o çocukların hepsinin köyleri yakılmış, şiddet görmüş, bugün perişan halde yaşayan ve geleceğe dair siyasi talep dışında beklentisi olmayan, kişisel olarak çok zor beklenti kurabilen bir kesim. Bunların yoksullaşmış bir halde bulunmalarının, o halde olmalarının temel nedeni Kürt olmaları. Kürt oldukları için köyleri yakıldı, Kürt oldukları için iş bulamıyorlar, Kürt oldukları için açlar vs. vs.

⁸¹ Antonio Negri, “The Specter’s Smile”, in *Ghostly Demarcations, a symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 13.

⁸² A local actor of development indicating her surprise during the events: Mart olaylarının bir dolu nedeni var, Kürt toplumunun içinde sınıfsal ayrışma gittikçe artıyor, siyasal nedenleri anlatmaktan ziyade şöyle bir şey düşünüyorum, insanlar bir öğ alıyor gibiydi. Bir kadın gördüm elinde taş vardı, içeri girenlere çıkın diyordu bugün bizim günümüz. Ve bir tepki gösterme vardı. Yaşanan bir dolu şeye karşı bir tepki vardı, izlenimim bu oldu o mahallelerdeyken olaylar sırasında. Ciddi bir tepki vardı yaşadıkları bütün herşeye karşı. Zorunlu göçten tut yaşadıkları sorunlara, yoksulluğa karşı kadınların kapıları çaldığını gördüm, çocukların ellerinde taşlar vardı.

the changes in this relationship.”⁸³ Following Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser, he asserts that there is no clear line of demarcation separating ideology from reality and ideology is already at work in everything we experience as “reality.”⁸⁴ “Lacan states that (what we experience as) reality is not the “thing itself,” it is always-already symbolized, constituted and structured by symbolic mechanisms - and the problem resides in the fact that symbolization ultimately always fails, that it never succeeds in fully “covering” the real. “*This real (the part of reality that remains non-symbolized) returns in the guise of spectral apparitions*”.⁸⁵

The children of the events of March 2006, becoming the spectre of ideology point to the material conditions, hegemonic articulations and discursive regimes through which meanings are constructed and subjectivities constituted. Rather than taking the meanings and the sense of reality formed through generative matrixes of ideologies for granted, this means a call for a relentless effort to deconstruct the “naturalization” of the symbolic order (that is, “as the perception that reifies the results of discursive procedures into the properties of the “thing itself””⁸⁶). “*What the Spectre conceals is not reality but its “primordially repressed”, the irrerepresentable X on whose “repression” reality itself is founded.*”⁸⁷ Children of the events of March become invisible in the Turkish public culture and get unforeseen within the imaginary reality of the developmentalist landscape of Kurdish region due to the

⁸³ Slavoj Žižek. “The Specter of Ideology”, in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 1.

⁸⁴ For Althusser, “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence”. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review P, 2001).

⁸⁵ Slavoj Žižek. “The Specter of Ideology”, in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 21.

⁸⁶ Roland Barthes as quoted in Slavoj Žižek. “The Specter of Ideology”, in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 11.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

liberal hope of progress and belief in democratization with the EU integration process. More importantly constitutive of this “reality” by the fact of being the irrepresentable in it, these children become the very manifestation of the constitution of this ideological and ontological reality on the one side and carry a messianic premise on the other side. “The spectrality is the form of most radical politicization and that, far from being locked into the repetitions of neurosis and obsession, it is energetically future oriented and active.”⁸⁸

Following Spivak’s conceptualization and situating the subaltern in the place of difference rather than an identity⁸⁹, and refusing to claim to represent the consciousness, will or thought of the March children in the events –which will probably be never recovered as Spivak puts it-, my effort will be firstly to look at the *distinct imprints*⁹⁰ of the events at that historical moment of Turkey and the cleavages they have created in public culture. In addition, this calls for an analysis of the efforts, aiming at the closure of those cleavages by the reiteration of technologies of domination and power, and their institutionalization in the constitution of domination.

This means a conceptualization of the thought of children of March events as “a perfectly neutral name, the blank part of the text, the necessarily indeterminate index of a future epoch of difference”⁹¹ like Spivak does, who neither attributes an essence to the subaltern consciousness nor considers the subaltern as a unified

⁸⁸ Frederic Jameson, “Marx’s Purloined Letter”, *Ghostly Demarcations, a symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 60.

⁸⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asia History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 340.

⁹⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Invitation to a Dialogue,” in *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asia History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 93.

subject -because it would constitute a hegemonically predetermined subject position at the moment of speaking. She calls for an understanding of a subaltern subject-effect in poststructuralist terms: “that which seems to operate as a subject may be the part of an immense discontinuous network (“text” in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language and so on... Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject.”⁹²

As a quite common narrative of about the children and young people in the city repeatedly tell, these children don’t have any dreams/utopias other than finding a job with social security. Nevertheless, what they say and do, render obvious the oppression and domination mechanisms of which they are the effects. “The street tears from obscurity what is hidden and publishes what happens elsewhere, in secret; it deforms it, but inserts it into the social text.”⁹³ Quoting Henri Lefebvre’s political reading of the street, Maurice Blanchot emphasizes the critical importance of the street in everyday life and its power to make public. While the quotidian is subjected to overdetermination by various political technologies and fantasies, it definitely contains the potentiality to subvert it. “Thus, there is an originary short circuit in any social logic: on the one hand, the objective content has its own principles of rationality and of differentiation; on the other, these principles are constantly interrupted and subverted. This logic of the “subversion of the rationality of the

⁹² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asia History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 341.

⁹³ Maurice Blanchot, “Everyday Speech,” in *The Infinite Conversation*, translated by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 242.

determinate' is what we have called overdetermination –and it is crucial for understanding the formation of political identities.”⁹⁴

A Violent Contestation of Power

Pointing to the articulation of subjectivity, gender and power in situations of heightened political violence, Aretxaga criticizes Michel Foucault for not addressing the points where normalization technologies break down and docile subjects cannot be produced through the disciplinary techniques of the body. Following Lacan, she underlines the importance of the emotional dynamics and subjectivity that must be considered in relation with Foucault's understanding of the body and power, thus bringing the deep play of subjectivity in the center of social analysis. “For Lacan (1977: 50-52), subjectivity is always grounded in a history –a history that includes the scars left by forgotten episodes and hidden discourses as well as conscious narratives.”⁹⁵

Using overdetermination in its Freudian sense, “as the condensation of different strands of meaning, none of which are in themselves necessarily determinant”⁹⁶, Aretxaga conceptualizes the dynamics of the Dirty Protest in a way that reveals both the overdetermination of the subjectivities within interconnected political domains and the subversions of differing sets of determinations. In this way and conceptualizing gender as intrinsic to violence, she gives way to an

⁹⁴ Ernesto Laclau and Lilian Zac, “Minding the Gap: The Subject of Politics,” in *The Making of Political Identities*, ed. Ernesto Laclau (London; New York: Verso, 1994), 16-17.

⁹⁵ Begoña Aretxaga, *Dirty Protest: Symbolic Overdetermination and Gender in Northern Ireland* Ethnic Violence, in *States of Terror: Begoña Aretxaga's essays*, ed. Joseba Zulaika (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, Reno, 2005), 59.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

understanding of the Dirty Protest as “the materialization of the buried “shit” of British colonization”⁹⁷ and a concrete rejection of it; and the sexual difference of women prisoners (menstrual blood—as Spivak argues “the space of what can only happen to a woman”⁹⁸) as the permeation of that rejection with gender politics against the asexual Catholic mother symbol of the Republicans.

Following Begoña Aretxaga, I will argue that the events of March 2006 led by these children and young people, overdetermined by the interconnected domains of a history of war, forced migration and extreme poverty, unconscious motivations (fears, anger, desires) and intertwined discourses of underdevelopment and terrorism were a violent contest of power. It was a contestation of state violence, of the destructions of the past that has a claim on the materiality and emotionality of the present, of the symbolic violence of regimes of representation. A contestation of the police who hit the children with more anger and hate for the desire to educate and correct the children of a population who knows nothing other than “giving birth and throwing their children to the streets.”

They said, “One should better take you to the forest and do this and do that. All the police should better do to you this and that. You are Kurdish children. Your mothers and father only know to have babies, and afterwards they throw you out into the streets.” They said all the derogatory words for the Kurdish people.⁹⁹

Most importantly and probably giving shocking power to the protests, Kurdish children in the events opposed the very basis of meanings of childhood and Kurdishness articulated in the Turkish public sphere. More than anything, Kurdish children are represented as objects of the education system and a civilization mission

⁹⁷ Ibid., 66.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 71.

⁹⁹ Three years after the March events, a 17 years-old Kurdish girl telling the story of her arrestment and torture at the hands of the police in Adana. “Interview with İrfan Aktan” in *Express* 94 (2009): 10-11 (my translation).

that finds its roots in the establishment of the Turkish Republic. To free them from their “backward and feudal roots,” “ignorance and savagery,” “language composed of a hundred words” and assimilate them in the modern Turkish culture, these children are coded as in need of education to be proper subjects and citizens. They were defined as primitive, backward and so ignorant and irrational that they can fight with the police for 5 liras they get from the “terrorist organization”. Deprived of the means and potential to become proper subjects if they insist on an identity other than that given by state officials, the children protesting state institutions and attacking the rich districts were subjected to extreme forms of material and symbolic violence that included the terms of that civilization mission, various education projects and a development discourse. In the protests, it seems that what was contested did not only include the violence of the state or their socioeconomic oppression but also these insulting terms generated around the ideas of progress, civilization, education and development.

CHAPTER THREE

DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE IN THE KURDISH REGION

Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.

Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"

In this chapter, I will try to elaborate the mutually dependent relationship between the art of government and sovereignty through an analysis of the correspondences between the ways "the voices of the Other" are silenced, repressed, domesticated and rendered commensurate with differing technologies of domination. Concentrating on the formation of development narratives with respect to the poor, marginal and subaltern groups in general and the events of March in particular, my aim is to make visible the violence inherent in the development discourse. Furthermore, considering the March events as a breach both in the self-evident structure and the progressive temporality of development, I will attempt to focus on the strategies and techniques through which the possibly different meanings that could be attributed to these events are silenced or domesticated by differing technologies of domination.

I will conceptualize "development" as a discursive regime that can be identified as a more or less coherent set of practices organized around and possessing "their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and 'reason'".¹⁰⁰ For Foucault, focusing on the understanding of practices rather than institutions, theories or ideology is necessary to grasp "the conditions that make them acceptable at a

¹⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, "Questions of Method" in *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol.3, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York : New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1997), 225.

given moment.”¹⁰¹ An elaboration of the mentality of how we govern and are governed becomes the way to analyze a regime of practices – “practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reason given, the planned and the taken-for-granted meet and interconnect.”¹⁰²

Following Foucault’s method for an analytics of government, Mitchell Dean argues that the regime of practices can be coded as the regime of government that strives “to connect questions of government, politics and administration to the spaces of bodies, lives, selves and persons.”¹⁰³

Regimes of practices can be identified whenever there exists a relatively stable field of correlation of visibilities, mentalities, technologies and agencies, such that they constitute a kind of taken-for-granted point of reference for any form of problematization. In so far as these regimes concern the direction of conduct, they form the object of an analytics of government.¹⁰⁴

Taking development as a regime of practices, and a form of governmentality, my aim will be to analyze how the values, mentalities, knowledge and technologies attached to development function in Diyarbakır. I will study the kind of effects they have in the formation of perspectives, ways of seeing, visibilities, agencies and government rationalities as well as the kind of technologies, strategies and play of forces, through which they become necessary, universal and self-evident. What I want to explore is not a top-down implementation of political rationalities and programming but rather a contestation of “different strategies that are mutually opposed, composed and superposed so as to produce permanent and solid effects that can perfectly well be understood in terms of their rationality, even though they don’t conform to the initial

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 225.

¹⁰² Ibid., 225.

¹⁰³ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, (London; Sage Publications, 1999), 12.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 27.

programming: this is what gives the resulting apparatus its solidity and suppleness.”¹⁰⁵

Spaces of Development: The Creation of a Middle-Class

With the dampening of the conditions of armed conflict, and the flourishing of NGOs and European Union projects in the city, it can be argued that new opportunities and investment possibilities emerged for the middle classes. As the armed conflict and forced migration had led to a rapid urbanization and extreme forms of poverty for the forcibly migrated people, the openings of a new urban life and a cheap workforce became available for the upper classes. The inequality between classes have increased substantially and become more visible by the constitution of a new middle class life in the city. In the last decade, fast and striking changes in the spatial organization of the city and the corresponding move of the middle and upper classes to a new district (Kayapınar¹⁰⁶) have led to a stark spatial segregation between different classes.

On the other side of the city, most of the population is unemployed and “60 percent of the population in the region lives under the level of poverty. Beyond this, the experience of armed conflict has severed the present economic networks, the resulting migration and fast urbanization have intensified the poverty and made it a

¹⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method” in *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol.3, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York : New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1997), 231-232.

¹⁰⁶ “The sharp growth of Kayapınar district can be seen in population figures: In 1991 when the municipality was established, the population was 3,000. In 1994, it was 20,000, in 1997 42,000 and in the population census of 2000 it was 68,000. It is estimated that the current population of the district is about 150,000. Concerning the number of constructions in the district that looks like a building site, within the next two years a population increase about 40,000 is expected.” (my translation)
http://www.diyarbakirkayapinar.bel.tr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=84

phenomenon that can be passed on from generation to generation.”¹⁰⁷ Conditions of forcibly migrated Kurdish populations deteriorate in the urban areas where they become subjected to extreme poverty and varying kinds of violence.

During the period between 1993 and 1999 when the armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK was at its peak, 3438 rural settlements in the Southeastern region of Turkey have been evacuated by the Turkish army forces as part of a policy aiming to undermine the popular support and logistic help that PKK was attaining from Kurdish people. It is estimated that 4 to 4.5 million Kurdish people were forced to flee their homeland and resettle in urban areas such as Diyarbakir, Izmir, Mersin, Adana and Istanbul as a result of evacuation policies. It is also widely documented that the forcibly displaced migrants not only lost home but also have been victim to several forms of violations during the evacuation including killings, torture, beatings and harassment. Moreover, after they migrated, the police, arrests, and accusations did not stop, and coupled with unemployment, poverty and the discrimination and at times animosity they faced from local populations, their sense of victimization and oppression has deepened. While forcibly displaced Kurdish people have been receiving some attention and recognition in public since 1999 due to the cease-fire following Abdullah Öcalan’s arrest, the possibility to return seems to be grim for most of these people.¹⁰⁸

After the village evacuations of the 1990s, forcibly migrated Kurds became the new urban poor of Kurdish cities and metropolitan centers of Turkey. In the cities of the Kurdish region, poverty became the main medium through which state policies began to be implemented in the poor segments of Kurdish population. “This [social solidarity] is erased by the modern state; the village culture gets to be destroyed, because in the villages nobody is dependent on the state, however Kurds can be

¹⁰⁷ Çağlar Keyder and Nazan Üstündağ, “Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu’nun Kalkınmasında Sosyal Politikalar,” in “*Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu’da Sosyal ve Ekonomik Öncelikler Raporu*”, Bölüm IV (TESEV, Istanbul 2006) (my translation)

¹⁰⁸ Nazan Üstündağ, “The Construction of Witnessing Voices and the Representation of Violence and Loss”, Paper presented at the Symposium ‘The Stakes at Issue with Turkey’s Application for Membership of the European Union’ organized by the Kurdish Institute in Paris, October 2004. URL: http://www.institutkurde.org/en/conferences/the_stakes_at_issue_with_turkey_s_application_for_membership_of_the_european_union/Nazan+Ustundag.html

controlled in the urban areas.”¹⁰⁹ On the one hand, after 2002 with the help of state officials and city governors¹¹⁰, the neo-liberal Islamic government party AKP (Justice and Development Party) distributes material goods and money in return for votes. In addition, many Islamist charity foundations and institutions associated with the government party get the opportunity to establish themselves by distributing these goods and services.

In the 90s, there used to be rich people, who own villages. All they had were set on fire, their villages were burned. They left their villages, taking along nothing material with them, so poverty deepened. Especially AKP exploited this poverty through political Islam. Exploiting religious sentiments and making use of poverty are the last two means of the state. In the recent period, the state takes this path in the guise of AKP.¹¹¹

On the other side, by the expansion of economic and political power they hold, Kurdish middle classes got the means and power to define themselves as the key group for the resolution of the Kurdish problem. And correspondingly, middle class subjects claim to define the public reason, their educational capacities to foster development of Kurdish people, “good” forms of organization, and the most appropriate ways of communication through divergent social groups. This means a celebration of the new forms of Kurdish middle class subjectivity fostered around the

¹⁰⁹ In the words of a political activist who is working in the municipality based NGO (Sarmaşık) to eliminate the new forms of poverty: Bu [toplumsal dayanışma] modern devletle silinmeye çalışılıyor köy kültürünün üzerinden geçiliyor, çünkü köylünün kimseye eyvallahı yok şehirdeyse kontrol altına alınlabiliyor Kürtler.

¹¹⁰ Outside the Kurdish region, city governors (secular and militarist bureaucratic elite) and neo-liberal Islamic government party (AKP) represent opposite sides in many public discussions concerning the implementation of secularism. However, their cooperation and reliance on each other in the Kurdish issue are remarkable in this respect. Kurds become the “constitutive outside” of the Turkish politics as Judith Butler has used the term.

¹¹¹ From an interview with another political activist who is working in the municipality based NGO (Sarmaşık). He has based his arguments on the data he gets through in-depth interviews with the forcibly migrated people in the poorest districts of the city. 90’da köy sahibi, zengin insanlar vardı. Herşeyleri yakıldı, köyleri yakıldı. Maddi olarak hiçbir şey alamadan çıktılar köylerinden, yoksulluk daha da derinleşti. Özellikle AKP, bu yoksulluğu siyasal İslam üzerinden çok kullandı. Dini duyguları sömürmek ve yoksulluğu kullanmak, devletin son kalan iki argümanıdır. Devlet yeni dönemde bunu AKP olarak yapıyor.

discourse of development. It finds the most “promising” echoes in the words of an informant:

Before then, nobody was making their voices heard, people were not united but when I say ‘united’ I do not mean those who provoke an incident everywhere in a negative manner. Today the organization of those who love carnation, that of those who belong to the youth segment of a party, or the organization of businessmen are all different forms of organizations. In the end everyone tries to do things in their own ways. Of course time will be the judge of the amount of our success. If these [the development projects conducted around the business organizations] were not done, we could have been not far away from the ways things were conducted during the 1970’s. Because there has been a slight movement after 88’s, SIAD’s were established both in other regions and in the region. Up until that time the chambers of commerce were semi-official foundations and they still are. They were flattering the decisions made by the government. However, due to the existence of the alternative foundations, their rules have changed. Necessarily they started to operate with the other non-governmental organizations. In this way the businessman began to have their own identities. Up until the time all the businessmen, merchants, craftsmen could have solved their political problems either with the governorships, politicians or with the government itself. Then they started to form their own identities by establishing chambers. They also started to present reports to the government, the president, the prime minister and related ministries mean what is the problem, what shall the solution be, who will solve it? They presented a lot of projects and reports this way. For this reason, government had to pay attention to these reports. They did not stop at this point, their voices were heard by the world public opinion and it was also reflected to the European Union. They put pressure on the governments accordingly and as a result the governments had to take measures.¹¹²

¹¹² Interview with a director of an important association of businessmen, he is telling the implication of their efforts, and overall effects of their development projects in Diyarbakır: Evvelen kimsenin sesi çıkmıyordu, insanlar örgütsüzdü tabi bu örgüt dediğim zaman kötü anlamda orada burada olay çıkaranlar anlamında söylemiyorum. Bugün bir karanfil sevenler derneği de bir örgüttür, işadamları derneği de bir örgüttür, bir siyasi partinin gençlik kuruluğu da bir örgüttür, sonuçta herkes kendi kulvarında birşeyler yapmaya çalışıyor. Tabi ne kadar başarılı olduk zaman gösterecek. Belki bunlar yapılmıyorsa, şuanda daha 1970’lerdeki çizgide olacaktık.

88’lerden sonra yavaş yavaş kıpırdanma oluşunca Türkiyenin genelinde SIADlar oluşmaya başladı, bölgedede kurulmaya başladı. O zaman kadar ticaret odaları, yarı resmi kuruluşlardı halen de öyleler. Hükümetin aldığı kararların pohpohçuluğunu yapıyorlardı. Ama ondan sonar kendilerine alternatif çıkınca kularları değişti. İster istemez diğer sivil toplum kuruluşlarıyla birlikte hareket etmeye başladılar, ilk defa kimlikleri oldu işadamlarının. O zamana kadar iş adamıydı, esnaftı, tüccardı; bireysel ilişkilerle, valilikle ya da hükümetlerle siyasilerle işlerini görüyorlardı. Sonradan odalar halinde kimlik kazandılar, o kimlikle hareket etmeye başladılar. Ve hükümetlere, cumhurbaşkanına, başbakana, ilgili bakanlıklara, daire başkanlıklarına raporlar sunmaya başladılar. Yani sorun nedir, çözüm ne olmalıdır, kimler çözecek? Bu şekilde proje ve raporlar sundular, ve birçok rapor sunuldu. Böyle olunca hükümetler de bunu dikkate almak zorunda kaldılar. Bu yalnız burada kalmadı, dünya

Within the hegemonic discourse of development, “underdevelopment” is attributable to stubborn “traditional” attitudes and cultural practices. In this way, the answer to the desperate problems of poverty, lack of social provision and political instability becomes the diffusion of modern attitudes through educational programmes, development projects and so on.¹¹³ This has defined a particular path for the so-called “underdeveloped” societies to “develop” to a level that has been predetermined by Western categories. This predetermined path the non-modern societies needed to follow called for an endless struggle to attain the level of advanced Western societies, producing a conception of non-Western societies in terms of lack. And as Stuart Hall points out, “the ‘West’ is an *historical*, not a geographical, construct.”¹¹⁴ A perception of the non-West as a never-ending lack within what Benjamin has called “homogeneous and empty time,” prompts the development of social projects that aim to re-arrange societal terms and categories that organize the society. For the “underdeveloped” countries, the effort to deal with a never-ending lack is defined in terms of unattained modernization ideals, education and the ability to possess techniques and science that have been attained by the advanced role models. “Consequently, catching up was declared to be their historical

komuoyuna, Avrupa Birliği’ne yansıdı. Onların da manevi baskıları oldu, sonuçta hükümetler bazı tedbirleri almak zorunda kaldılar.

¹¹³ John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism, A critical Introduction*, (London: Pinter Publications, 1991)

¹¹⁴ Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” in *Formations of Modernity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (Cambridge : Polity Press, 1992), 277.

task. From the start, development's hidden agenda was nothing else than the Westernization of the world.”¹¹⁵

With the modern conception of time and linear temporality, time is deprived of human experience and reduced to a mechanic unit in which the lacking and “underdeveloped” subjects are in need of developing to the level of the developed Western subjects. Time is conceptualized as linear along which different temporalities and subjectivities are ordered, some of which are coded as contemporary and the rest as backward. In this way, the existence of alternative subjectivities are ignored and are perceived as different stages of a universal humanity which have to reach the levels of the advanced Western subjects. “The metaphor of development gave global hegemony to a purely Western genealogy of history, robbing peoples of different cultures of the opportunity to define the forms of their social life.”¹¹⁶ In the Kurdish region, coding Kurds -who do not fit into the Western standards of modernity- as backwards, disregarding/assimilating their political agencies and making them the objects of the technical language of education programmes and economic growth models point out to a discursive regime of development based on a perception of linear temporality, a violent regime of representation and a concrete desire for modernization.

In this way “underdeveloped” populations become subject to economic, cultural and political transformations to dissolve and destroy pre-modern socio-cultural and economic relations. “The extent to which societies differed from the modern (and-implicitly or explicitly-Western) ideal neatly indexed their "level of

¹¹⁵ Wolfgang Sachs, “Introduction” in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1992), 3-4.

¹¹⁶ Gustavo Esteva, “Development” in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. by Wolfgang Sachs (Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1992), 9.

development" toward that ideal. The effect of this powerful, narrative was to transform *a spatialized* global hierarchy into a *temporalized* (putative) historical sequence.”¹¹⁷ In Turkey the effect becomes a stubborn belief in the idea that the Kurdish region has to be brought to the economic development level and socio-cultural living conditions of the Western parts of Turkey, as an effect of the fantasy imposed on the whole country (giving priority to the Western parts of the country) to attain the level of contemporary civilizations. With respect to this temporalized sequence that means a desire to modernize Kurds who are imagined to occupy a space that belongs to the past of advanced role models. In this way, collective or political agencies of Kurds can easily be disregarded as backwards and the will to modernize the Kurdish population is justified.

Subjects of Underdevelopment

The forcibly migrated people become the objects of governmental strategies of development and education. “Once they enter the urban realm, they become part of a larger narrative of development and world capitalism where the specific violations they endured and the main problems that caused their “migration” become hidden and go unregistered.”¹¹⁸ Once forced to leave their homes, villages and forcibly migrated people lose their life sustaining knowledge and experiences. “*Because they do not know anything other than farming and animal husbandry,*”¹¹⁹ fathers and

¹¹⁷ James Ferguson, “Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy after Development” in *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neo-liberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 178.

¹¹⁸ Nazan Üstündağ, “The Construction of Witnessing Voices and the Representation of Violence and Loss”, Paper presented at the Symposium ‘The Stakes at Issue with Turkey’s Application for Membership of the European Union’ organized by the Kurdish Institute in Paris, October 2004.

¹¹⁹ This has been a common way of defining the “ignorance” of forcibly migrated people among most of my informants from the development institutions and business associations.

mothers –if they have not been killed- cannot work in the cities. In the economy of absolute poverty and hunger, children and young members of families become the main breadwinners of the homes as tissue-sellers, burglars, sex workers and cheap work force in industry, service sector and various work places. If the family cannot have or find a home or if there is no family, they become street children. Within the political and intellectual limits of the development discourse, questions concerning war and forced migration, the reasons why there are so many street children in Diyarbakır lose their significance.

They say ‘let’s send girls to school’ but there are no girls around. They are working in cotton fields. You cannot ask them to go to school. There are education projects around but there is no child, children have gone to collect garbage.¹²⁰

The acts/programmes of development, modernization and education are justified with respect to the urgency of the poverty problem in Diyarbakır and the miserable conditions people live in. Any project or policy proposal towards the poor is realized behind the story of “*the youth whose dreams/utopias have become finding a job with social security money.*” In one of the institutions, even new forms of slavery¹²¹ were proposed as if it was a good thing for the poor. “The event of pauperism is as much

¹²⁰ One of my informants, who have worked in the campaigns that aim to send the Kurdish girls to the schools, has told her field experiences in this way: Haydi kızlar okula deniliyor ya ortada kız yok ki, pamuk tarlasında çalışıyor. Senin haydi kızlar okula demenin anlamı yok. Eğitim projesi var ortada da çocuk yok, çocuklar çöp toplamaya gitmiş.

¹²¹ In that proposal, which was the most radical of all, my interviewee argued that the best way to struggle against underdevelopment and poverty can be realized through using the urban youth as the cheapest workforce at the world scale. Proposing that by adopting the minimum wage levels according to the socio-economic indexes of the region and letting the children work, he argued that with a wage of \$ 100 for month per worker, both the domestic production can be boomed, investment can be ‘attracted’ and at least the people can earn money to survive.

Here, it is important to emphasize that like the operation of universalizing political technologies of development at the global level, at the local level the development policies and technologies can be used as means by the development actors that hide their interests. They are instrumentalized by local development actors or businessmen as means of the power, as in the harmony of the proposed China growth model and the class interests of my interviewee. However beyond that point, there is the issue of development as an overarching discourse, a world-making process which makes the argument plausible for the public without the need for direct class interests.

about ‘morals’, forms of everyday life, families, breadwinners, households, and self-responsibility, as economics, the state, poor laws, and poor policies. It is about the formation of particular categories of social agent, and of specific class and familial relations, in so far as they are promoted by governmental practices.”¹²²

It seems significant that for local development actors, the representation of the “underdeveloped” subjects includes violence towards those who are being represented and a self-confirmation of their own subject positions and their claims to define the most legible form of public reason in the realm of politics. The ways these actors reproduce themselves with their narratives give one the possibility of considering the processes through which their subjectivities were formed, and what constitutes public reason and morality in social relations.

Most important indicators of the underdevelopment level are the number of street children and homeless people, the crime rate and prostitution.¹²³

During my interviews with the local development actors, the numbers of these groups (working children, homeless people, street children, criminals and sex workers) become the main indicators through which the level of backwardness, underdevelopment and ignorance were calculated. Marginality and poverty constitute a space of violence in the organization and the reorganization of the rules and the norms of public space, a space in which the subjects are abstracted from their agency and historical conditions of possibility and thus they are turned into the objects of a technical eye/I. These remnants of a period of destruction and catastrophes turn into

¹²² Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution Of Poverty: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance* (Routledge, London, New York, 1991), 3.

¹²³ This sentence is repeated by different development agents in a more or less similar way during my research. During most of the interviews, it had become the main axis through which they structured their arguments: Azgelişmişliğin en önemli göstergeleri sokak çocukları ve evsiz insanların sayısı, suç ve fuhuş orandır.

the signs of traumatic past thus becoming obstacles for the desires of middle classes to be modern, developed and Western. The families of the children working or living in the streets are considered as ignorant for “making lots of children.” And if they live the families become lazy because of the fact that “they don’t work”.

In reality, we are a lazy people. Just think that in the world, Diyarbakır has the highest number of the coffeehouses in proportion to its population. They sit in the coffeehouses all day long, smoke and talk. Nobody cares about working.¹²⁴

As I have tried to argue, for the owners of technical gaze the street children of the war come to be represented as objects that have to be managed, the Kurdish population is represented as lazy, ignorant and backwards and in need of drastic changes in its own culture. These characteristics of the “subjects of underdevelopment” are put forward as the essential traits of “Kurdish culture”. This claim was invented and manipulated by the ruling elites and by Turkish nationalists; nevertheless Kurds now appropriate and use it within the discursive space of development. “Development discourse makes people subjects in both senses that Foucault emphasizes: subjected to someone else by a relationship of control and dependence, and tied to one’s own identity through self-knowledge.”¹²⁵ Detached from the historical and social experiences and causalities, some statements from my interviews regarding “Kurdish culture” can be instructive in this sense:

Enough infrastructure for investment does not exist, and one of the most important reasons is lack of education. People are ignorant, there is not enough human resources for qualified jobs. Look, on the other side, our people are lazy. For example green cards have to be

¹²⁴ A development actor, arguing the most important reasons of the underdevelopment of Diyarbakır and the region: Sonuçta biz de tembel bir halkız ha. Şunu düşün, Diyarbakır nüfusa oranla kahve sayısının dünyada en fazla olduğu yer. Gün boyu kahvede oturuyorlar, sigara içip konuşuyorlar. İş güç yapma derdinde olan yok.

¹²⁵ Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 39.

given to people who cannot work and in need of care, everybody owns it here. Nobody works with this laziness.¹²⁶

The identification of Kurds as lazy, ignorant and backwards both put part of the blame for underdevelopment on the Kurdish population and paves the way for a kind of (self) racism that has particularly been directed towards the poorer segments of the Kurdish population. Although these traits are essentialized as “Kurdish culture,” it is interesting to note that middle classes detaching themselves from the backwards temporality of Kurdishness, blame the poor for “their laziness and ignorance.” De-historicized and essentialized arguments on cultural traits prevent any kind of social analysis that may relate the here-and-now to the knowledge of the past, displacement of people and destruction of their lives. This closes off any other solution other than mimicking the “developed” subjects of the West through the means of “education and investment.”

Mimicry through Education

In order to develop, there is a need to create an atmosphere of peace and investment for future. People have no utopias, the utopias we used to had in the past have disappeared. If people do not imagine how this place should be, I don't think there could be any improvement there. If the youth do not have any dreams for the development of the country and the region, if their only business is to find a way to get out of here and to find another place to live in, there would be no development there. Young people should imagine; in order for a region to develop, young people should have dreams of their own related to the place they live in. As for old people, they don't imagine anyway, so it would be futile to think that it will be them who will develop the region. What I want to say is that it is the young people who are the catalyst. Young people dream. That's why

¹²⁶ Yatırımın yapılabilmesi için gerekli altyapı yok, yani bunun en büyük sebeplerinden birisi eğitimsizlik. Halk cahil, kalifiye işleri yapmaya yeterli insan kaynağı yok. Bak bir de bizim millet tembel, mesela normalde yeşil kartın sadece çalışamayacak olan, bakıma muhtaç olanlara verilmesi lazım, bir bakıyorsun bizde herkesin elinde. Bu tembellikle kimse çalışmıyor.

we say that this is related to education, that's why I correlate dreaming with the education of young people.¹²⁷

As far as the war is apprehended as an obstacle to the investments and conceptualized in terms of economic loss, the desire for peace is always articulated with economic reasons in the development discourse. Peace is equated with an atmosphere of investments and becomes a necessity so far as “development” becomes a necessity for the region. It should be emphasized that the basic means to reach the level of modern world, to attain the capacity to go after, replicate the successes of “developed” regions become the education. What makes the education imaginable and desirable among the middle classes in Diyarbakır becomes the development discourse.

Analyzing the development discourses and institutions as the new regime of global governance that replace the economic and political control system of colonialism, Akhil Gupta argues that regions in the Third World were both located on the periphery of the West and “thought to occupy the past, thereby denying that the poverty and underdevelopment of the many might be directly related to the current structures of inequality that result in growing wealth for the few.”¹²⁸ For him, development promises a story of success for the “other” that can be achieved by replicating, repeating, going after, learning and improving. In spite of the differences among the assumed ways/paths to develop and attain to the level of the modal

¹²⁷ In an interview with a development actor, who has worked in the Kurdish movement for years, defining the need for peace and the path for development: Gelişmek için geleceğe yönelik barış ve yatırım iklimi kurulmalı. İnsanların ütopyası yok, ütopyalarımız kayboldu. Bir yerde insanlar burası nasıl olmalı diye insanlar hayal kurmuyorsa, gelişme de olmaz diye düşünüyorum. Bir ülkenin, bir bölgenin gelişmesi o ülkenin gençleri hayal kurmuyorsa bu bölgeyle ilgili, hep kaçmak niyetindeyse, başka yerde yaşam arıyorsa orada gelişme olmaz. Gençler hayal kurmalı, bir bölgenin gelişmesi için o gençlerin hayallerinin olması lazım. Yaşlılar hayal kurmuyor zaten onlar da geliştiremez. Yani katalizör gençlerdir. Gençler hayal kurar o yüzden diyoruz ki bu eğitime bağlıdır, eğitimle ilişkilendiriyorum o yüzden.

¹²⁸ Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 10.

subject, “the means to end is assumed to be mimicry.”¹²⁹ Engendered within the discursive arena of development, mimicry gets to be the main mechanism through which the assumed/forged temporal lag between the “developed” and “underdeveloped” can be closed.

“Development, thus brings together the phenomenon that Johannes Fabian (1983) has called “allochronism” (the displacement of “others” in the Third World to the past) with that feature of colonial discourse that Homi Bhabha has termed “mimicry.” Like colonial mimicry, development discourse produces the less developed countries (LCDs) as a reformed and recognizable Other, “a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not yet quite” (Bhabha 1984: 126). Again, as in colonial mimicry, one finds that development discourse is subtly but pervasively racialized, so that underdevelopment connotes not only economic backwardness but also a lower position in the global racial hierarchy.”¹³⁰

Furthermore, Gupta argues that the metonymic association of the human life cycle to the assumed periods of development processes links the question of identity to development in fundamental ways. “If there is an enduring trope in development discourse, it is that which equates ‘development’ with adulthood and ‘underdevelopment’ with infancy and immaturity.”¹³¹ For him, while the acts of the “underdeveloped” get subject to the supervision and monitoring of the developed, development also serves to naturalize the control of the “underdeveloped as less-than-fully-formed subjects” by the West.¹³² One of the main mechanisms through which the control is institutionalized is the education system of the “developed” and the desire of the “underdeveloped” for education.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹³¹ Ibid., 11.

¹³² Ibid., 11.

Thus, the claim of education policies to enable the conditions for these backwards populations to acquire the necessary characteristics of the economically advanced and developed societies of that time, connotes much more than what it directly denotes. In the Kurdish region, one of the hidden suggestions behind that claim becomes eradicating the signs of Kurdish and Kurdishness that are in a racialized paradigm situated in “pre-modern, feudal and archaic socio-cultural and economic relations.” In this way, Kurdishness is associated with the feudal and archaic values that belong to the past. And the imagined passage from “underdevelopment” to “development” becomes that of assimilating the “backward culture of Kurds” into modern Western culture. When the time of Kurdishness is destructed to reach the modal others within the temporal order of development, it becomes a necessity to assimilate Kurds into others. As Gupta makes it clear, development “in its narratives of progress share a great deal with colonial, and specifically Orientalist, discourses.”¹³³

Southeast Anatolian Project: A Failure of Mimicry?

The history of the Southeast Anatolian Project (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi or GAP) as the most extensive development project conducted in the region mimicking the development discourse of “the West” and creating its own terms. To focus on the making and remaking of “development” in the Kurdish region rather than homogenizing the concept under a universal schema¹³⁴, one has to deal with some of

¹³³ Ibid., 33.

¹³⁴ Underlying the differences and specificities of globalization projects, Anna Tsing abstains from homogenizing globalization projects; rather she focuses on their interconnectedness and conceptualizes globalization without recourse to universal schemas or global *forces* but in terms of the making and remaking of the notion itself. My claim is that investigating development within a similar

the historically specific conditions and effects of Southeastern Anatolia Project. Starting as a state generated regional development project consisting of vast infrastructure investments, GAP was transformed by 1980s and 1990s into a massive social development project with an estimated cost of “32 billion US dollars, which makes it the largest regional development effort ever launched in Turkey.”¹³⁵ The Turkish state started to be visible in the region through non-military means that concentrate on “the materialization of investment and services in the fields of planning, infrastructure, licensing, housing, industry, mining, agriculture, energy, transportation and others needed for the rapid development of areas covered by the Southeastern Anatolia Project.”¹³⁶ Based on the premise that the GAP would lessen the people’s inclinations to join/support the PKK, the project became another way of dealing with the Kurdish problem *in addition to* military means. The power of the state became visible in new ways in the region. “Social projects, which were predominantly carried out through the GAP, would provide a realm within which the state would gain another form of visibility, more as a caring, curing and protecting body than as a disciplinary and punishing military entity.”¹³⁷

From the 80s and 90s on, many academics, journalists and politicians have argued that by empowering the Kurdish region economically, the government would be able to dissolve the feudal relations, eradicate the backwardness and ignorance

framework gives one the more chance for a genealogical analyze that concentrates on its effects. Anna Tsing, “The Global Situation” in J. X. Inda and R. Rosaldo (eds.) *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader* (Blackwell Publishers, 2002)

¹³⁵ History of the Southeastern Anatolia Project:
http://www.gagov.tr/gap_eng.php?sayfa=English/Ggbilgi/gtarihce.html

¹³⁶ History of the Southeastern Anatolia Project:
http://www.gagov.tr/gap_eng.php?sayfa=English/Ggbilgi/gtarihce.html

¹³⁷ Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, “‘Social development’ as a Governmental Strategy in the Southeastern Anatolia Project,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 32 (2005): 98.

and thus prevent “terrorism.”¹³⁸ With the help of economic reductionism, the motivation of Kurds to rebel appeared as solely economic ones in the Turkish political imaginary. Also fed by various modernization theses, development projects usually turn into a civilizing mission, the only appropriate way to deal with the Kurdish population. As they put it, “the Southeastern Anatolia Project brings civilization back to the Upper Mesopotamia.”¹³⁹ In order for Kurds to attain the level of modern civilization, they have been expected or forced to leave behind forms of cultural life that supposedly confine them to feudal and backward life forms of “the Middle Ages.” This attempt simply made it easier to disregard the social, political and cultural problems that Kurds face as well as any alternative claims regarding the Kurdish issue.

It is extremely important to emphasize that in the Turkish political imaginary the “backward and feudal culture of Kurds” is generally associated with the “causes of terrorism and the PKK.”¹⁴⁰ While in the Turkish nation-state discourse, feudal

¹³⁸ During the 1990s, this perspective occupied a central space in the Turkish political imaginary and many have argued that the Kurdish problem could be resolved through economic means and investment. However, in spite of the emphasis on the economic aspects of the problem, the war economy which has drastically worsened the economic conditions of the region and Turkey in general was disregarded and made invisible by both the mainstream media, economy writers, academia and most of the oppositional intellectuals and leftist groups.

In his study on the war economy, Taylan Doğan points out that during the 90s the military expenditure of the low-intensity war in the Southeast have been compensated by domestic debts. He argues that this domestic debt has created a high and chronic inflation which has destructive effects on the peoples of Turkey. He gives an elaborate account on the ways through which this phenomenon was rendered invisible in the public sphere and “intellectual milieu.” Relying on data derived from state institutions, he argues that the representation of public economic enterprises as wasteful institutions is a systematic media disinformation. Although he brilliantly analyses the deteriorating fiscal conditions of public economic enterprises (Kamu İktisadi Teşekkülü- KİT) as the result of increasing military expenditures, he does not focus on the discourses through which this disinformation and misrepresentation have justified the privatizations and accompanying neo-liberal turn. Taylan Doğan, *Savaş Ekonomisi* (Avesta Yayınları, İstanbul, 1998)

¹³⁹ History of the Southeastern Anatolia Project:
http://www.gagov.tr/gap_eng.php?sayfa=English/Ggbilgi/gtarihce.html

¹⁴⁰ And yet, feudalism occupies a fundamental space in the discourse and practices of the PKK, and is identified as an important enemy that must be eliminated within Kurds to eliminate the traces of backwardness. In its first years, the PKK fought against the state-associated or sponsored tribes and

relations and the assumed power of tribes become plausible explanations for underdevelopment and terrorism, there has not been any attempt in the history of the Turkish Republic to destroy feudal relations such as the land reforms conducted in Western Anatolia. Rather, the Kurdish region has been historically governed through a series of negotiations between state officials and tribe leaders.¹⁴¹ The intermingling of discourses of underdevelopment and terrorism in state discourse works as a way to deal with the Kurdish problem by concealing the socio-economic and political antagonisms.¹⁴² That means a closure of the political for Kurds by identifying them as ignorant and backward people whose political subjectivities can easily be disregarded. On the other hand, it becomes a way to justify Turkish modernity¹⁴³, a self-affirmation of the subjective positions of the reasonable citizen of the Turkish nation. A self-affirmation for which Kurds have to be educated and have to leave “being Kurds” in order to be modern and belong to the nation.

Seeing the GAP as a part of the neo-liberal restructuring of the world economy and politics and the escalating armed conflict in the region, Nilay Özk-Gündoğan shows the transformation of development in the region in relation to historically specific governmental rationalities:

both gained a popular support of the masses oppressed by the tribal elites and state officials and acquired a basis for the justification of its practices.

¹⁴¹ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Düzeni: Sosyo-Ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller* (E Yayınları, Ankara, 1969)

¹⁴² In my interview with Evrim Alataş, she has offered an totally distinct account: “Kurds persistently denied this: For instance, they used to say that if there were investments, Kurds wouldn't take to the mountains. Kurds said no, even if you make investments, we will still take to the mountains. Both of them are wrong, because the problem in here is not only a linguistic problem. It is first and foremost a problem of discrimination through and through. There is no investment. Plus the banning of their languages. Plus the banning of their culture. Plus driving people to starvation and dumbness. Driving people to starvation is something really different.” (my translation)

¹⁴³ Sirman argues that discussions of gender have become the medium through which everyday mechanisms of ethnic discrimination and micro-racist practices are produced and reproduced during the debates of honor killings. As a side-effect, but not less important, this became a way to justify familial relations of Turkish national strategy. For an elaborate account see Nükhet Sirman, “Kürtlerle Dans,” *Kültür ve Siyasette Feminist Yaklaşımlar* 2, (2007).

A greater part of the 1990s witnessed the increasing eagerness of the state to develop surveillance and knowledge technologies that ultimately aimed at controlling the peoples of the region. Towards the end of the 1990s, as the armed conflict began to wind down, the development practices carried out within GAP were transformed once again. The project increasingly adopted the global development premises and practices of the neo-liberal turn. Thus, under the rubric of sustainable human development, GAP was transformed from a state-led development project to a market-led one. Social development was reconstituted in accordance with the requirements of capital for self-managing and productive individuals who not only should not constitute a risk or obstacle for the smooth functioning of the market-led development process, but also facilitate and reinforce it with their abilities to manage risk and act as productive agents. The project, with its diversified social programs that started to be carried out to a great extent by NGOs and private capital, became the major medium of the neo-liberal social development model in Turkey.¹⁴⁴

The social and economic projects of GAP have been shaped around the differing governmental rationalities; both in its state-led and market-led versions, development discourses have acquired varying forms to manage the population in Foucauldian terms. “The population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign; the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of government, aware, vis-à-vis the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it.”¹⁴⁵

Development as a Means to Conceal Violence

As a regime of practices, development conceals the violence towards the “underdeveloped” subjects by establishing it as a necessity for them to develop. Besides, it renders the violence inherent in the historical constitution of the

¹⁴⁴ Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, “‘Social development’ as a Governmental Strategy in the Southeastern Anatolia Project,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 32 (2005): 109-110.

¹⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality” in *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol.3, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York : New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1997), 217.

difference between these “underdeveloped” and “developed” worlds invisible. In discourses of development and success tales of the West, there is no place for “colonial violence, ecological destruction, the genocide of native peoples, and the repression and displacement of its poor.”¹⁴⁶ To put it more bluntly, development makes the violent conditions of its own existence invisible through a set of technologies, relationships and a corresponding episteme that set up this new form of government rationality. “While governmentality retains and utilizes the techniques, rationalities and institutions characteristic of both sovereignty and discipline, it departs from them and seeks to reinscribe and recode them.”¹⁴⁷

In this respect, March events have become an opposition to the matter of course “to show that things ‘weren’t as necessary as all that’”¹⁴⁸ and made the violence inherent in the development strategies visible. I will try to elaborate on the incongruousness of the March events in the discursive space of development, thus looking at the forms of inclusion or translation of the events in the language of “development”. I aim to show the ways the use of public reason, the idea of progress and the liberal hope of accession to the EU are intermingled and articulated to domesticate radical worlds? For a thorough analysis of the incorporation of the events in the discourse of development, I will investigate the ways “these disparate social and cultural worlds made commensurate with the social idea(l) of nationalism and/or civil society without the use of repressive force.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 42.

¹⁴⁷ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 19-20.

¹⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method” in *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol.3, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York : New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1997), 226.

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth Povinelli, “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability,” *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 326.

My main effort will be to concentrate on the events of March 2006 as a breach in the progressive temporality of the apparatus and discourse of development. A breach in the ways things are done and said get “imaginable” within the mental space of development discourse. This breach opposes not only discursive limits but also the “regime of practices” of previous forms of government. It has carved a space through which the voices and actions of subaltern groups have been expressed. These voices and actions oppose the oppression of the war and forced migration, nationalist policies and brutal violence of the state, and at the same time they oppose the translation of their stories in the narrative of development and capitalist relations where the reasons of migration and poverty are concealed by reducing their actors into misguided children.¹⁵⁰

It is significant that my informants in the development institutions and business associations have interpreted the events of March as a just reaction to the discriminatory policies of the state. Nevertheless, while proposing development projects they try to recuperate the actors of these events into the terms of the development discourse. In this fashion, the development discourse attempts to reduce the protestors into a target population under the category of the “urban poor.” To be educated and “corrected,” the poor becomes the objects of the development projects to be embedded in the “civilized” way of life and the time of modern subjects. Mehdi Eker’s argument departs from the local actors of development with a strict economic reductionism intertwined with the discourse on terrorism. However, to a certain degree, these statements and their effects in the society overlap by disregarding the political agencies of the actors in the events of March.

¹⁵⁰ See the interpretation of March events by Mehdi Eker. He has argued that the children in the events were misguided by the PKK that has given all children 5 liras.

In this respect, it is important to consider the similarities and interrelatedness between the ways events of March 2006 had become unimaginable and unforeseen by the professionals, sociologists, development experts, administrative officers of the city and the closure of those social and political cleavages¹⁵¹ opened by these events by political technologies and their institutionalization in the course of domination. I will refrain from situating these events in a general historical constant, structure or a self-evident / plausible narrative and making it invisible in this way. Following Foucault, my effort will rather be conceptualizing the March events as “a breach of self-evidence, of those self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences and practices rest.”¹⁵² Their singularity reveals much more and has the capacity to pave way for a genealogical analysis of the apparatus and discourse of development by “rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies, and so on, that at a given moment, establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal, and necessary.”¹⁵³

Specters of the Political

In his study on the development apparatus in Lesotho, James Ferguson takes the question of Foucault’s “instrument-effects” concerning political questions. Rather than just questioning the adequacy of solutions offered for the problems of Lesotho, their feasibility or failure, Ferguson concentrates on their side effects that had far-

¹⁵¹ By political cleavages I mean the debates around the violent suppression of the events of March and consequent deaths, tortures of protestors including children, long years of imprisonment for the children whose ages vary between 12 and 18.

¹⁵² Michel Foucault, “Questions of Method” in *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol.3, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York : New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1997), 226.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 226-227.

reaching consequences for the communities. “Like the prison in Foucault’s case – which fails in terms of its explicit objective of reforming the criminal and yet succeeds in producing a normalized, disciplined society- the development apparatus shows remarkable productivity; not only does it contribute to the further entrenchment of the state, it also depoliticizes the problems of poverty that it proposed to solve.”¹⁵⁴

The responsibility of the non-poor for new forms of poverty is veiled and even erased whereas the poor turn into objects to be managed, educated and developed. Reducing the problem of poverty to a mere technical problem and at the same time, carrying out the extremely political operations of state institutions “under cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object,”¹⁵⁵ the problematic of “development” depoliticizes the questions of poverty. “If the “instrument effect” of a “development” project ends up forming any kind of strategically coherent or intelligible whole, this is it: the anti-politics machine.”¹⁵⁶ The political, with all its significance in the everyday lives of people, loses its meanings and is turned into an empty faith on the progression of humanity within a linear, progressive temporality.

As the narratives of poverty, the expanding abyss and separation between life standards of different classes –materialized in the rigid spatial segregation- show that these urgent problems cannot only be included under the fabric of “Kurdishness.” Nevertheless, it seems significant that Kurdish politics concentrates on language, identity and cultural rights. The question of poverty and the newly crystallizing

¹⁵⁴ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 143.

¹⁵⁵ James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development”, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 256.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 256.

economic antagonisms within the Kurdish society cannot find any space or language to be expressed other than the streets.

This a reality: If you ask the politicians throughout the region, they would probably conceptualize the problems within the region as an identity problem. But I do not see it this way. (During the March incidents) Both the person who broke the windows in ‘Ofis’ district and the owner of the workplace were Kurdish. Most of them were politically engaged Kurdish and they were also supporters of the opinion that Kurdish language is important and it should be emancipated. I do not consider this issue cannot only be explained by the Kurdishness but I believe it is a matter of class division. I think about the incident of throwing stones at the window of a bank, normally these are places where youth cannot get in.

Let’s have a look at the places where things happened. Around Kayapınar, there are no serious incidents going on. Kayapınar region is a place where mostly rich and elite people live so that here no one goes out for revolting. The invasion regions are mostly ‘Bağlar’ and ‘Suriçi’ which are full of poor people. These demonstrate that identity and class issues are hand in hand, you cannot separate them from each other. In that sense the rage of the youth was not only originating from their Kurdish identity but it was also because of being poor. And if you take a closer look, you can see that their rage was not only subjected to the state, the police or the military but it was also subjected to the merchants and the landholders. These reactions are hand in hand and they were subjected to many issues ranging from being Kurdish, famine, poverty, exclusion and being carried away to the suburbs. If it was only a matter of being a Kurdish, then the people of Kayapınar would have been out on the streets, reacting.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Interview with an officer working in the municipality: Şu bir gerçek aslında, belki bölgedeki birçok siyasetçiye sorarsan, bölgedeki meseleyi sadece kimlik meselesi olarak kodlarlar. Ama açıkçası ben işin böyle olmadığını düşünüyorum. [Mart olaylarında] Ofis’te sahibi Kürt olan işyerlerinin camını kıran da Kürt, bunların birçoğu da politik Kürt, bunların hepsi Kürtçe’ye, Kürt diline önem veren ve serbest olmasını isteyen insanlar. Bunun sadece Kürtlük üzerinden açıklanamayacağını, o yüzden ben bunun sınıfsal birşey olduğunu düşünüyorum. Bankanın taşlanması falan düşünüyorum, aslında bunlar gençlerin ulaşamadığı yerler.

Olayların çıktığı yerlere bakalım, Kayapınar bölgesinde çok ciddi olaylar olmuyor. Kayapınar bölgesi, Diyarbakır’daki elit tabakanın merkezleştiği bölge, burada insanlar sokaklara dökülüyorlar, sokakları işgal etmiyorlar. İşgal bölgeleri aslında sur ve bağlardır, daha fazla yoksul kesimin yoğunlaştığı alanlardır. Hani bunlar, kimlik ve yoksulluk birbirinden çok ayrılan şeyler değil, bunlar zaten içiçe geçen şeyler. Ama gençlerin öfkesi tek başına Kürtlüğün ezilmişliğinden kaynaklı bir öfke değildi aynı zamanda yaşadığı yoksulluğa karşı da bir öfkeydi. Ki dikkat edersen bu öfke sadece devlete, sadece polise askere değil, esnafa, mülk sahibi olan kesime de yöneltilmişti. O tepki içiçe geçmiş ama kürtlük kadar yoksulluğa, açlığa itilmişliğe, varoşlara sürüklenmişliğe karşı çıkan bir tepkiydi. Sadece Kürtlük olsaydı, Kayapınar’da da insanların sokağa dökülmüş olması gerekiyordu.

Through the discourse of development, most of the middle and upper classes claim to rid their practices and subjective positions from the political and confining them into a technical realm. Borrowing the terms of a depoliticized¹⁵⁸ agency from the lexicon of development discourse, they claim a role of mediation between “the state” and their own people. An analysis of the ways through which the March events are rendered commensurate in the public representations of different actors/institutions has the capacity to reveal the techniques and play of forces that have served to naturalize the order of domination by the closure of the breach that March events have opened.

During the EU integration process, the Turkish government was forced to make structural adjustments in the laws and regulations concerning the freedom of expression and speech, the identity rights of ethnic groups, curbing torture in police stations and prisons, and so on. In Diyarbakır and the Kurdish region in general in which “the state” is materialized as political violence, these subtle changes in state practices and regulations had/have remarkable effects on the everyday lives of people. On the one hand, as the physical violence of the state got less visible in the cities, the state acquired a new visibility through novel governmental technologies, on the other hand, the de-intensification of the war between the Turkish army and the PKK led to a relative “normalization” of the socio-political life in the region. But it must be said that alongside the catastrophic results of the war, forced migration and displacement, and long-lasting years of state of emergency rule, this only meant a

¹⁵⁸ This term borrowed from Ferguson, doesn't mean an absolute depoliticization. Rather this means a repoliticization of the previous terminology and conceptions that signifies other way of doing politics, “doing politics as if you do not do anything political”. In Derrida's terms, “But, of course, a repoliticization always involves a relative depoliticization, an awareness that an old conception of the political has, in itself, been depoliticized or is depoliticizing.” Jacques Derrida, “Marx & Sons,” in *Ghostly Demarcations, a symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker, (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 223.

modest decline of the physical violence, an infinitesimal decrease in the material existence of state as brute force.

These changes did not mean a total replacement of physical violence by other governmental techniques; rather political violence worked as the condition of existence of the governmental techniques that have been inaugurated to emerge in Diyarbakır. As Dean suggests, “the relation of the arts of government and sovereignty is not the replacement of one by the other but each acting as a condition of the other.”¹⁵⁹ Political violence -inherent in the implementation of development projects and the governmental rationality of development- was thus rendered less visible through regimes of representation and governmental technologies based on the premise of development and the idea of progress.

“Development occupies the center of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation. There is nothing in modern mentality comparable to it as a force guiding thought and behaviour. At the same time, very few words are as feeble, as fragile and as incapable of giving substance and meaning to thought and behaviour as this one.”¹⁶⁰ Quite common among the middle classes in Diyarbakır, a developmentalist discourse and the idea of progress were materialized in the hope and dream of accessing the European Union and what people call the ‘democratization’ process of Turkey. “For development is much more than just a socio-economic endeavour; it is a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts societies, and a fantasy which unleashes passions.”¹⁶¹ Predominant in the

¹⁵⁹ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London; Sage Publications, 1999) 106.

¹⁶⁰ Gustavo Esteva, “Development” in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1992), 8.

¹⁶¹ Wolfgang Sachs, “Introduction” in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1992), 1.

political imaginary of the developmentalist discourse, the fetish of democracy and persistent belief in the ideas of progress and development [towards the ideals of Western civilization and democracy] that were/are materialized in the desire for the EU¹⁶², rendered the new social antagonisms invisible, giving the events of March their uncanny, shocking power of “specter”:

On the other hand, during the EU integration process people talked freely under a feeling of security. In this period, a total terror of surveillance was experienced in the events in Diyarbakır. A process of suppression was put into practice through the custodies. That was a shocking experience for me. I had conducted research in Diyarbakır, Van, Adıyaman and Doğubeyazıt provinces. There I noted that there was an obvious dreadful tension, a great class conflict, and what is more, people could not bear the state anymore. Despite the report in which I had written all these clearly, I do not know how I made it up, but I still thought that there was a movement toward the solution; because the EU accession process was there.¹⁶³

Politics as Anti-Development

While development projects work as an anti-politics machine, the new signification of the politics becomes/is reduced to “anti-investment and anti-development machine.” The lack of public and private investment or any kind of discrimination in the state policies in the region are seen as the results of the “*oppositional character*

¹⁶² During the EU integration process, there have been harsh critiques of the European Union and its relation with the Kurdish region or with the “democratization” of Turkey. While they cannot be generalized to a particular political position, the tendency of most of the leftist groups was to criticize Kurds for co-operating with “imperialists.” This critique was important in the sense that it reminded the coming of a new era of governmentality. However, the systematic lack of a critique of the brutalities of the Turkish nation-state, negated improvements that had remarkable effects in the lives of Kurds as a result of EU process, and the national tone that is embedded in the critique of imperialism prevented the possibilities of a fair critique of the process.

My intention is to focus on the effects of the EU integration process and the idea of progress it has enabled, and analyze the political imaginary and the set of knowledges, desires and subjectivities it has fostered in the Kurdish region.

¹⁶³ Nazan Üstündağ, “Türkiye’de ‘Devlet Sorunu’ Üzerine,” *Kültür ve Siyasette Feminist Yaklaşımlar* 8, (2009) URL: <http://www.feministyaklasimlar.org/> (my translation)

of the city” or at least “related with the political structure of the city and struggles of the past years.”

If your feet do not get mud when you walk in Ankara or İzmir, they should not get mud in Diyarbakir as well. Everywhere there are highways, but they just started to construct highways in 2008. Why didn't they do it 20 years ago? I mean what is the reason? Here there is a certain amount of reluctance and resistance. There is resistance within the bureaucracy. The political events, the crisis and the war atmosphere within the region resulted in a kind of antipathy on the part of the western originated people against the region. This, in turn, creates reluctance when it comes to performing their duty. This also has its share from the policies of the current government from Ecevit to Tansu Çiller and Mesut Yılmaz.¹⁶⁴

In this way, the politics and political subjects of the present come to be obstacles in the path of development, obstacles that have to be defined in terms of the elements of the past, backwardness and underdevelopment. “The power of a particular form of communication to commensurate morally and epistemologically divergent social groups lies at the heart of liberal hopes for a nonviolent democratic form of governmentality.”¹⁶⁵ The violence of the children and youth groups in the March events “constitutes more than a political threat, it is an obstacle to the desire to become European, that is the desire to bear the marks of modernity and success. It must be eliminated at any cost.”¹⁶⁶ In this way the actors of the March events – who are the products of the war, forced migration and who oppose to the poverty and misery they live in- are turned into elements of politics that led to the instabilization

¹⁶⁴ From an interview with a director of an important association of businessmen: Şimdi Ankara’da, İzmir’de yürüdüğü zaman ayağın çamur olmuyorsa Diyarbakır’da da olmaması lazım. Her tarafta otobanlar var, 2008 yılıdır daha yeni yeni otobanlar duble yollar yapılmaya başlandı. Niye bu 20 yıl evvel yapılmadı? Yani sebep ne? Burada bir İsteksizlik var, direnç var. Bürokraside bir direnç var. Bölgede olan olaylar, kriz ve çatışma ortamı batıdaki insanları bölgedeye karşı antipati besler duruma getirdi. Bu da görev yaparken onlarda isteksizlik yaratıyor. Hükümet politikalarının da etkisi var, örnekleri de var, Ecevitten tutan da Tansu Çillere, Mesut Yılmaz’a kadar.

¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth Povinelli, “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability,” *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 30. (2001): 326.

¹⁶⁶ Begoña Aretxaga, “A Fictional Reality: Paramilitary Death Squads and the Construction of State Terror in Spain,” in *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror*, ed. JA Sluka (Philadelphia: Univ. Penn. Press, 2000), 61.

of the region and therefore preventing investments. As far as their bodies materialize as an obstacle to the idea of progress, the actors of March events or the poor of the city are considered as the objects that must be eliminated. At the same time, this has defined a certain form of organization and a particular way of dealing with the Kurdish issue.

In Diyarbakır, local actors of development claim to define the most legitimate forms of public life and reason on the basis of education, investment and development. Consequently, the children, actors of the March events can exist in this societal contemplation as far as they can be assimilated into the terms of a cheap workforce or subject group to be remedied. As far as they get assimilated into the terms fostered by political technologies and new forms of governmentality, they can exist –as the other and excluded- and certainly not as themselves. It becomes the political recognition of the other through assimilation. To domesticate radical political contestations in the narratives and configurations of a nonviolent democratic future, they have to be detached from their political agencies.

The correspondences between the effects of nonviolent means of rendering divergent radical worlds and social imaginaries commensurate and brute violence directed towards its actors reveal the mutually dependent relation between the art of government and sovereignty. This carries knowledge of the presence of violence inherent in development as a form of governmentality and the interrelatedness of different techniques of domination that aim “to silence the Other.” In this respect, it is considerably important that voices of the other (March events) have created a breach in the self-evident structure of the social imaginary of development. “Only an

encounter with an Other can break the hermetic seal of linguistic subjectivity.”¹⁶⁷

What I have tried to figure out were the strategies, play of forces and technologies aiming to render “the voices and actions of the subaltern groups” commensurate in the discourse of development.

¹⁶⁷ Rorty quoted by Elizabeth Povinelli, “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability,” *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 328.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSLATING THE DISASTERS INTO THE HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT: THE PAST AS A SITE OF CONTESTATION

The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself.

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the
Philosophy of History"

In this chapter, my main concern will be to look at how "the political" that is related about the past of Diyarbakır and the Kurdish region is narrativized within the discursive space of development. How can local development actors and businessmen in Diyarbakır translate/incorporate the *dangerous memories* of these events into narratives of development or fail to do so? What is the effect of this translation? The destructions of the past, the Catastrophe¹⁶⁸ of 1915, the Kurdish rebellions and their bloody suppression, the long-lasting war, forced migration and corresponding forms of extreme poverty. How are memories and images of this past that has the potential to disrupt the temporal conception of the development itself,

¹⁶⁸ "The history of the Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century has been sealed by an event that requires no immediate qualification: the total extermination of the Western Armenians, those who lived in the Ottoman Empire. This event bears a name in Armenian, a name among others, a name that did not really prevail in popular consciousness and henceforth in everyday language, a name which is still waiting for its full understanding. This name is *Aghed*, which means Catastrophe, like Shoah in Hebrew." Marc Nichanian, *Writers of Disasters: Armenian Literature in the Twentieth Century*, Volume One: The National Revolution (Gomidas Institute, Princeton and London, 2002), 10-11.

narrativized by local actors of development and businessmen? And what are the bits and pieces that resist the temporality and logic of these narratives, what remains?

I would like to write a genealogy of the methods, strategies of the translation, and search the traces of its successes and failures. But first of all, let me tell another story of debt, a quite common debt story that is told by local actors of development and businessmen to make the listeners sure that “the state” owes the peoples of the region. It is told that the economic index and development indicators which are prepared by these very same institutions show that Diyarbakır, just like the other cities in the Kurdish region, are falling in the development rankings in an increasing rate after the 1980s up to now. Having entered into a period of stagnation in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, Diyarbakır, according to the first national census in 1927, was still the third biggest city after Istanbul and Bursa in terms of industrial employment. However, according to the data of the State Planning Organization on socio-economic development levels, Diyarbakır regressed to the 27th rank in terms of this indicator in 1972, and, as of 2000, to the rank of 54th among 81 provinces. In the research conducted in 2003, it has occupied the 63rd place¹⁶⁹ among 81 provinces, sharing the last 20 ranks with other cities in the Kurdish region in general.

Defining the most important problem of Diyarbakır and the region as poverty and underdevelopment, local development actors blame the state for ethnic discrimination and assimilation attempts. “The history of underdevelopment” is told on the basis of exclusion and annihilation of ethnic and religious groups other than the Sunni Turks. It is argued that the city was a center of trade and the deterioration of the economy and trade started from the Catastrophe of Armenians in 1915 and continued through the 1920s by the forced migration of non-Muslim groups. Because

¹⁶⁹ The State Planning Organization, <http://www.dpt.gov.tr/bgyu/seg/iller2003.html>

Armenians, Jews and other non-Muslim groups were mainly involved in production and trade, their destruction has meant the annihilation of the urban culture and city economy and consequently also the catastrophe of those who have remained there. Then ensue the stories of other groups, discriminatory policies and practices of the Turkish nation-state and the narratives of Kurdish rebels.

“The history of underdevelopment” in Diyarbakır turns into the history of destructions and systematic brutalities that are embedded in a “genocidal continuum.”¹⁷⁰ Deriving from the past experiences and collective memory of the region, in the narratives of local development agents “the state” gets indebted to the peoples of the region on the basis of past disasters and brutalities. Nevertheless, this debt becomes a way of formulating demands or bargaining with “the state.”

Although for some, this means demanding more public investment and education or increasing the investment initiatives for the private sector, for others this can mean a demand of withdrawal of the state from economic affairs. Regardless of the kind of demands and the ways they have been claimed, they become imaginable with respect to the indebtedness of “the state” to the peoples of the region. As this unarticulated debt constitutes the terms under which people enter into these relations of bargaining, it is my claim that the emergence and demands of the subaltern groups [as in the case of March events] who have been carrying the burden of the political and economic debt on their shoulders disrupt the terms of bargaining.

Local culture, political struggles and the history of rebellions -which are defined as indicators of the social backwardness that middle class members are

¹⁷⁰ Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, “Introduction: Making Sense of Violence” in *Violence in War and Peace: an Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publications, 2004), 8. “Within the framework of a genocidal continuum, it is essential to recognize the ease with which the abnormal is normalized, and the death of “anthropology’s” indigenous subjects is accepted as inevitable or routine...”

trying to escape- come to be the spaces of encounter with the development discourse. The indebtedness of “the state” derives from the personal and collective experiences that are related to the symbolic and structural violence of the state in the region. The debt told in economic, political or social terms has been based on the remnants of the collective memory from the times of the destructions, a memory that resists to be simply incorporated in the narratives of development. However, these stories of “*ethnic and religious discrimination*” quickly transform into blaming the state for the lack of investment and education, local actors use the development discourse to castigate the state. Nevertheless, it seems that the experiences of the past events, which cannot be completely embedded in the discourse of development, haunts the ordinariness and linearity of development narratives.

The relations of local development actors and their discourse to the global theories and meta-narratives is a contested struggle area which is not devoid of the local struggles, culture and power relations. While focusing on the subjectivity formation of distinct development actors can give basic ideas about the ways of governing fostered around the apparatus and discourse of development, it is important not to forget that “regimes of government do not determine forms of subjectivity. They elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities, qualities and statuses to particular agents.”¹⁷¹ It is possible to trace the contestations and negotiations of local struggles with global narratives and discourses within the narratives and subjectivities fostered by development discourse but that are not determined by it completely.

¹⁷¹ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, (London; Sage Publications, 1999), 32.

“The impacts of discourse of development and violence of the representation it has set are thus profound at the local level. At this level the concepts of development and modernity are resisted, hybridized with local forms, transformed, or what have you; they have, in short a cultural productivity that needs to be better understood.”¹⁷² It is this hybridity “which entails a new cultural (re)creation that may or may not be (re)inscribed into hegemonic constellations. Hybridizations cannot be celebrated in and of themselves, to be sure; yet they might provide opportunities for maintaining and working out cultural differences as a social and political fact.”¹⁷³

For Escobar, hybridity provides the conditions for the constitution of different and alternative subjectivities with regard to modernization ideals. The deconstruction of development means that we have to look at the negotiations of these local conditions and global meta-narratives at the everyday level with new devices and theories; trace local meanings and fostered subjectivities with new tools. It means elaborating the space where politics is turned into anti-politics but not without remnants, where the events that resist the linear temporal order of development are -or in certain cases cannot be- put in the progressive temporality of development. It means a conception of “an antiprogressive temporality of repetition and rupture, the arresting image interrupts historical continuities to grasp the monads or fissures in which time stops and prophetically restarts.”¹⁷⁴

Focusing on the formation of the narratives of the past as told by middle classes and local development actors, I will try to concentrate on the strategies through which they have embedded the past into development narratives and the

¹⁷² Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 51.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 220.

¹⁷⁴ Walter Benjamin quoted in Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in An "Other" America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 96.

ways these actors reproduce themselves and the social conditions which produce them through their narratives. Considering the “local” culture not in a coherent unity or singularity but rather conceptualizing it as “a schizophrenic tension that produces force and proliferates forms,”¹⁷⁵ I will try to focus on the space of narrativity. “The question of narrative in culture, then, is not so much the question of the meaning of any particular story or narrative structure but the question of the meaning of narrative itself- of narrativizing the world.”¹⁷⁶

How collective memory is called into the development narratives and their temporal order, and how dangerous memories reconstitute the temporality of narratives, what kind of temporality do they reflect on? How can we think of temporality as a zone of contestation? Concerning the density of the narratives on development and their inevitable relation with local memories and the past, that kind of an analysis conducted on the narratives of local development actors and businessmen would give us a chance to reconsider the meanings of narrativizing the destructions of the past and war in terms of “development”.

Narratives of the past

A common theme in most of my interviews was a kind of nostalgia towards the past, a past before the destructions of the Turkish nation-state and its predecessors. While the region during Ottoman times is narrated as an important center of trade, economy and education, Diyarbakır occupies a central place in these narratives. According to

¹⁷⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari quoted in Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in An "Other" America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 21.

¹⁷⁶ Ross Chambers quoted Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in An "Other" America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 30.

many people, the causes behind the process of “underdevelopment” and accompanying poverty have started to emerge with the 1915 Armenian Catastrophe. In this narrative, during a process that began with the forced migration and annihilation of Armenians, the “urban culture” and economic knowledge of “Armenian craftsmen” and “Jewish merchants” have begun to vanish in the region. In the following years, “migration” and annihilation of Armenians and Jews are accompanied by stories of the Yazidis, Syrians and Chaldeans, the other non-Muslim communities who have occupied an important percentage of the population of Diyarbakır and the region in general.

For my informants, with the loss of the “indigenous knowledge” of economy, trade and education, the region has turned into a barren landscape. Diyarbakır and the cities of the region with similar demographic structures have lost most of their urban population, which was replaced with migrants from villages. Devoid of the accumulation of thousand years of “indigenous knowledge and culture”, these barren cities have lost contact with the world economy. In addition to the lost experiences of craftsmen and merchants, the national borders established with the new Republic have made it difficult to integrate with the world economy and finished the incomes earned by being on trade routes.

“Ethnic and religious discriminations” perpetrated by the state has continued with the repression of the Kurdish population. In my interviews, it is emphasized that *“in spite of the fact that Kurds have fought in the War of Independence with Turks,”*¹⁷⁷ the Turkish state, resting on a rigid Turkish nationalism, has denied even

¹⁷⁷ In her speech in the European Parliament in 2004, Leyla Zana has argued that Kurds are the “essential founders” of the Turkish Republic who have fought with Turks in the War of Independence. Although this has been a common theme in the Kurdish discourse, this speech was important in the sense that it was the first time that the desire for being founding element of the Turkish Republic was given voice by a Kurdish politician. There have been harsh criticisms both by oppositional groups and intellectuals, and this is a matter of discussion within the Kurdish movement itself. However, it is also

the existence of Kurds. In these narratives, the homogenization politics of the Turkish state that has tried to eradicate Kurdish culture, language and identity in any way possible, have become the underlying reasons for Kurds to rebel.

For my informants, although Kurds have been just in rebelling on the basis that it has become the only way to deal with the discriminatory practices of the state, it is emphasized that the Kurdish rebellions that have continued through the history of the Turkish nation-state have created an image of “*oppositional character of the city*.” The lack of public/private investments and big infrastructural projects that is apprehended as the basis of underdevelopment in the region is tied to this particular image. The narrative of the last Kurdish rebellion and the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army is told within a historical continuity with the history of the region, rebellions and the “fate” of the landscape.

Nevertheless, in the narratives of the middle classes, the destructions and brutalities of the past or the catastrophic fate of the region turn into a debt, a debt the Turkish state owes to the Kurdish people. This debt gives the power of mediation to the middle classes between “the people” and “the state”, bargaining with “the state” on behalf of the dead bodies and ghosts of the others who are not present. It gives them the power to translate the stories of war victims, rebellions, catastrophes, forced migrations, displacements and dispossessions into the terms of their own.

On the one hand, my intention is to search for the strategies of translating and domesticating the destructions of the past into the terms of the discourse of development and point out to the effects of this incorporation. On the other hand, I

clear that there have been many supporters of this view. The problem with this perspective is that it rests on a certain classification of different peoples in terms of their religion and participation in the War of Independence. Because it opposes the repression and assimilation of Kurds by the Turkish state on the basis of the participation of Kurds to the War of Independence or just being “muslim brothers,” this view legitimizes the discriminatory practices of the state directed toward other religious and ethnic groups who have been “secondary and unimportant” elements of the republic.

will try to reveal the ghostly ambivalent nature of this translation and its failure that has the potentiality to destabilize and even deconstruct the official history of the Turkish nation-state, or simply the history of sovereign.

History and Memory

The past as fact, as narrative and the gap between them, is one of the bases of the formation of historical subjects. Foucault argues that the conventional/official strands of history are written as if the course of the history was inevitable. The diversity of time is reduced to one and alternative life-worlds and different imaginations are isolated from modern history writing. “The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled.”¹⁷⁸ He is in search of “effective histories” to disrupt and distort the assumed continuity of time and to show the multiplicity of the possibilities of the constitution of historical subjects. Undoubtedly such a project would reveal the relations of power and their operation, and would historicize different regimes of truth, which would give one a chance to reconsider the relations of power in the production of history and mechanisms of memory. The point becomes to “discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Cornell University Press, 1977), 88.

¹⁷⁹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 25.

Memory appears to be the source from which "the biases, omissions, exclusions, generalizations, and abstractions of history"¹⁸⁰ can be challenged. "It follows if memory is indeed polymorphic and historically situated that it will be called continuously into question."¹⁸¹ Memory is also subject to the play of dominations and includes narratives and silences that are in the interests of their tellers. It has to be examined closely; it, like history, can have biases, silences, and exclusions and can rest on generalizations. It is at these sites of silences one can see the traces of the past disasters, reminiscent of the past worlds, as Marx calls it "unvanquished remnants of the past" in detail. Or conversely by transmitting the voices of the forgotten peoples, and the local memories excluded from the official history of nation-states, different sites for counter memories can be created.

What history and memory do? Any analysis concerning their relation should be based, not on the comparison or fit between what happened in the past and the ways they are told; but rather on the work of the differing narratives, how do they tell and what these narratives do? Rather than situating memory into an ontological opposition with the history, the issue becomes a genealogy -in the way Foucault uses the term- of the historical constitution of collective memories as well. "The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself."¹⁸² Far from an investigation concerning the correctness of the narratives with respect to the events,

¹⁸⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, "Introduction", *Representations*: 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter Memory (1989): 5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸² Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Cornell University Press, 1977), 82.

the point becomes how the narratives are articulated in relation to the construct of the past, what work they do and in this regard the problem is not what history is but how it works. That would allow us to genealogize the constitution of identities and subject positions, and at the same time to leave space for the multiplicity of historical possibilities. “Identity depends on memory, whether we mean by that a core self that remembers its earlier states or, poststructurally, the narratives that construct (and deconstruct) identities by comparing ‘once upon a time’ and ‘here and now.’”¹⁸³

Problems of agency, context, positioning in the relations of power and the spaces of memory acquire considerable importance in the work of memory. Memory is to be thought in “interdependence” with history, surely it carries an unstable relationship with history. “If anything, it is the tension or outright conflict between history and memory that seem necessary and productive.”¹⁸⁴ However power relations in the production of both of them can become more apparent with detailed analyses of the historical constitution of both and the tension between the two. Theorizing “an irreducible distinction and yet an equally irreducible overlap between what happened and that which is said to have happened”¹⁸⁵, Trouillot argues that “the ways in which what happened, and what is said to have happened are and are not the same may itself be historical.”¹⁸⁶ In the narratives of my informants, it is significant that the development discourse in Diyarbakır gives the terms of the “historical” both in the constitution of memory and identity and their relation to the past.

¹⁸³ Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, “Introduction”, *Representations: 26*, Special Issue: Memory and Counter Memory (1989): 4.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Beacon Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁸⁶ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 4.

Resurrecting the glorious past: “Mesopotamia as the cradle of civilizations”

If you ask me, the most significant catalyst for our development is education. This Kurdish region, especially the area in Upper Mesopotamia is in fact a place of education since the early times. Also, education had been passed from here to other places throughout history. Just think for a moment, in times before AD, that is in the beginning of history, during the reign of Sumerian, Assyrians Aristotle’s teacher came here, to Mesopotamia, for education and then went there, trained thinkers like Aristotle in those shrines. I am still of the belief that after that period of forgetfulness, the one and only way of re-awakening this dynamism, lies in education. If the conditions are created in which this young population gets a proper education, a dynamism can be achieved. But of course, there is an educational policy which is not sincere with truths and which aims at assimilation in line with current state policies. That is, I think it has bad intentions because it is there for the sake of assimilation rather than for contributing to the development process of the people.¹⁸⁷

The desire for a golden past, a deeply Orientalist narrative about Mesopotamia and the Kurdish region is largely seized by the middle classes, though told in different ways. Too “modernized” to be authentic natives and too “brown” to be Turkish or European, the Kurdish middle classes refer to a golden past that points the “true spirit of the Kurdish region and its people.” It is important to emphasize that like the Southeast Anatolian Project (GAP), the desire of middle classes and the ultimate aim of local development actors turn into “*bringing the civilization back to*

¹⁸⁷ Bizim gelişme için en önemli katalizör bana sorarsanız eğitimidir. Bu Kürt bölgesinin, özellikle Yukarı Mezopotamya bölgesi aslında tarihten bu yana bir eğitim bölgesi. Tarih boyunca da sürekli buradan eğitim başka yerlere de taşınmış. Düşün ki milattan önceki yıllarda, yani tarihin başlangıcında, aslında burada Sümerler Asurlar döneminde Aristo’nun hocası gelip mezopotamyada eğitim almış, ve Aristo gibi filozoflar yetiştirmiş bu tapınaklarda. Ben yine de bu unutulmuşluk döneminden sonra bu ivmenin tekrar canlanabilmesinin tek yolunun, başat yolunun eğitimde olduğunu düşünüyorum. Bu genç nüfusun iyi eğitim alabildiği bir durum yaratılabilirse bir ivme kazanılır. Ama tabiki şimdiki devlet politikasının uygulandığı asimilasyon amaçlı ve gerçeklerle samimi olmayan bir eğitim sistemi var. Yani insanların gelişim sürecine katkı sunmaktan öte asimilasyon amaçlı olduğu için kötü niyetlidir diye düşünüyorum.

Mesopotamia.” The idea of resurrection¹⁸⁸ of a glorious past appears as the inverted version of a civilizing mission brought by a state-development project.

The greatness of the civilization in Mesopotamia “was proof enough that there was nothing inherently second rate or inadequate”¹⁸⁹ about Kurds. At the same time, defining the past civilization of Mesopotamia in terms of education paves way for a conception of a “developed future” that can only be realized through the means of education. What should be emphasized is the constitution of a phantasmic space of “development.” Development “provides a schema according to which certain positive objects in reality can function as objects of desire.”¹⁹⁰ In other terms, it functions effectively in shaping the co-ordinates of *how* middle classes desire. In most of the interviews, after the history of underdevelopment is told –and these narratives have nothing to do with ignorance and philistinism- “ignorance of our peoples” become the most important reason of “underdevelopment”. So, “by definition” education¹⁹¹ becomes the most effective way of dealing with underdevelopment. In this manner, the eradication of ignorance and philistinism of the “traditional Kurdish people” becomes the only possible solution.

“Thus, on the one hand, one finds the glorification of indigeneous systems of knowledge, social organization and aesthetic forms, often identified with the past but

¹⁸⁸ I am drawing the basic lines of my argument on the brilliant analyses of Akhil Gupta, for a detailed and complicated discussion on the uses of indigeneness discourses in colonialism, nationalism and developmentalism and their interrelatedness in the Indian context, see Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 166-183.

¹⁸⁹ Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 170.

¹⁹⁰ Slavoj Žižek. “The Seven Veils of Fantasy”, in *The Plague of Fantasies* (London; New York: Verso, 1997), 7.

¹⁹¹ Almost in all of my interviews, education occupies the central place among the solution proposals for the problems of the city, in some of them the Turkish education system and its assimilationist practices have been harshly criticized. Nevertheless, their proposal for the solution of the Kurdish issue and underdevelopment does not change: the exact means to attain the desired future is defined as education.

sorely in need of resurrection. ... On the other hand, these discourses display the reformist urge to change traditional practices, to eradicate superstition, “backwardness,” “stagnation,” and individious distinctions based on caste, class, region, religion and language.”¹⁹² Although they are opposed to each other, orientalist and modernizing accounts of the past are articulated in the narratives of Kurdish middle classes which are situated at the juncture of development and nationalist discourses. As Trouillot puts it, “pastness is a position in which constitution of collective subjects goes hand in hand with the creation of the past.”¹⁹³

The Catastrophe of 1915 occupies a fundamental place in the sense that the history of underdevelopment is narrativized starting from there. It is told that with “the events of 1915” non-Muslims were forced to migrate and many of them have been killed by Hamidiye troops. Although, this can be conceptualized as a trace of the collective memory of the region that strongly opposes the official history, the emphasis is on the loss of the “indigenous knowledge.” Within the discursive space of development, Armenians, Jews and other non-Muslim groups are considered as far as they contribute to the local economy: being craftsmen, merchants and traders.¹⁹⁴ This way of narrativizing the Catastrophe of 1915 render ethnic

¹⁹² Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 171.

¹⁹³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995), 16

¹⁹⁴ On the other side, for Turkish nationalists the emphasis on the ethnic division of the division labor, and representations of non-muslims as ‘unscrupulous compradors’ become the justifying discourses for the destructions of 1915. While Muslim population is represented as poor and underdeveloped, non-muslims and particularly Armenians and Greeks are represented as compradors in collaboration with their “European allies” all of whom prevent the economic development of the Ottoman Empire. This turns into an argument behind the provocation of the exploited Turkish population to get rid of “them.”

In his book *Imperialism, Racism, and Development Theories*, Hilmar Kaiser presents an elaborated and brilliant analysis (and deconstruction) of this basic thesis of Ottoman Historiography shared by Turkish nationalists of 30s, liberals modernization theories of 50s and 60s and Marxist World system theorists of 1970s. “Kaiser’s argument is especially strong where it examines the Kadro movement and World System Theory, for scholars from both of these schools readily subscribe to the stereotypes

antagonisms and catastrophic results invisible, while the terms of “the events of 1915” are rearranged and told solely in economic terms.

The way the past is remembered turns into nostalgia for a glorious past that needs to be resurrected, a way of remembering without regarding the pain and mourning of the others who have been subject to exterminations, disasters and systematic cruelties. For the others, exclusion from the realm of pain and mourning goes hand in hand with the exclusion from the realm of the political. “Nostalgia is a particularly appropriate emotion to invoke in attempting to establish one’s innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed.”¹⁹⁵ Once forced to exile, massacred and deprived of their “dangerous” agencies, non-muslims can now be depicted as objects provoking nostalgia; Armenians, Jews, other non-muslim groups turn into “the colors” of the geography. “In short, indigenous culture was worthwhile only to the extent that it was a museum artifact.”¹⁹⁶ On the other side, this “longing for what has been destroyed” becomes a way of rendering the complicity of Kurds in “the events of 1915” invisible. “The rejection of *memoria* was essential to the modern order of memory based on linear, directional time and a past of dead individuals, absent, with whom the living could have only the most disturbing contact.”¹⁹⁷

about non-Muslim Ottomans in general, and Armenians in particular.” (Stephan H. Astourian, *Foreword to Imperialism, Racism, and Development Theories*, by Hilmar Kaiser (Gomidas Institute, 1998) viii.)

Tracing the intellectual genealogy of the “division of labor according to nationality”, Kaiser focuses on concealed ideological basis and veiled interests of the use of this argument within the historical context. For further account see Hilmar Kaiser, *Imperialism, Racism, and Development Theories* (Gomidas Institute, 1998.)

¹⁹⁵ Renato Rosaldo, “Imperialist Nostalgia”, *Representations*: 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Baecon Press, 1989): 108.

¹⁹⁶ Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 169.

¹⁹⁷ Craig Koslofsky, “From Presence to Remembrance: The Transformation of Memory in the German Reformation”, in *The Work of Memory: new directions in the study of German society and*

It is not a coincidence that nostalgic ways of remembering and longing have become “reasonable and rational” for Kurdish middle-classes and enjoyed popularity. This attitude both opens up a space for longing without accepting the historical complicity in the brutal domination of non-Muslims and a naïve belief in the progression of humanity. “Such forms of longing thus appear closely related to secular notions of progress”¹⁹⁸ Narrativization of the past, constitution of the historical with respect to the terms of the development discourse and corresponding ways of remembering shape the meanings and subjectivities of the present.

When Kurds become “muslim brothers”?

During the last years of the Ottoman Empire, non-muslim groups were subjected to various kinds of violence. As a result of the invention of “Turkish nationalism” and the attacks towards non-muslim groups starting from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and carried through during the Republican years, the percentage of Christians to the general population of the geography that is now called as ‘Turkey’ has dropped from 20 percent in 1913 to 2,5 percent at 1927.¹⁹⁹ In the nationalist historiography of the Turkish nation-state, the Catastrophe of 1915 and the other destructions aimed to destroy non-turks and non-muslims are made invisible. The creation of silences through the act of forgetting is a common strategy during nation-state building. However, the scale of the events in 1915 and the fact that great

culture (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 31. By *memoria*, Koslofsky means the real presence of the dead among the living, this presence meant interaction with the dead.

¹⁹⁸ Renato Rosaldo, “Imperialist Nostalgia,” *Representations: 26*, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Baecon Press, 1989): 108.

¹⁹⁹ Ayhan Aktar, “Ermeni Sorunu (4), interview with Ertuğrul Mavioğlu,” *Radikal*, February 15, 2006 <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=178732>

numbers of the peoples of Turkey have experienced these events in a way (as killers, plunderers, witnesses or victims) have made it more difficult to forget.

As a founding myth of the Turkish state, it is a crucial trait of Turkish nationalism to suppress the Catastrophe of 1915. It can be argued that the succession of systemic brutalities and destructions of the Turkish nation-state always carries a certain continuity and referentiality to the Catastrophe of 1915.²⁰⁰ In addition to the refusal of Turkish nationalist elites to recognize the Catastrophe, they have denied even the existence of ethnic and religious groups other than Turks. In this way, the “Turkish identity” has been constructed on the absolute denial of other²⁰¹ ethnic and religious identities within the borders of Turkish Republic. It is based on the eradication of the whole cultural differences and assimilation of cultural, lingual, ethnic and religious diversity.

The Kurdish middle class narratives of development depart from national narratives of official history in a strict sense in that the existence of the events of 1915 and the existence of non-muslims are acknowledged. However, there still remains a question of recognizing the pain and mourning of the victims of exterminations and massacres. Or to put it in other terms, what do the Catastrophe of 1915, massacres of non-muslims mean within the discursive space of development that is shaped around the idea of progress? What does it mean other than a debt

²⁰⁰ The Catastrophe of 1915 was a model for the Turkish nation-state both as a way to deal with the cultural differences (ethnic, lingual and religious) by destroying them and ignoring their existence. Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, it has also become a model to “remember” the past as it rests on ultra-nationalist history writing and a certain refusal of the historical complicity for the past brutalities.

²⁰¹ It can be argued that throughout the Republican era, as a strategy of dealing with the population consisting of diverse cultural backgrounds, articulation of “the Other” has changed considerably with respect to the political conjuncture. This has provided flexibility for the Turkish nationalists to struggle with the “inner and outer enemies” through practices of exclusion and inclusion, and strategic alliances with culturally diverse groups against others. However, it is important to emphasize that within the Turkish nationalist imaginary non-muslim groups still occupy a sense of threat that makes Turkish nationalists more offensive towards non-muslims.

through which the complicity is erased, and a debt that gives the power to bargain with the state? And “when the struggle for survival of marginal groups comes to be equated to the often unabashedly nostalgic goal of “preserving” their “system of knowledge,” is their agency acknowledged, let alone respected?”²⁰²

They were at daggers drawn with Armenia and we were their Muslim brothers. (Now) they go and call them brothers, sit with them to talk for a solution; then they say there's nothing to talk about with the local people, meaning the Kurds, at the region. I mean this has an effect on the local people and the people see this, hear this and evaluate this, whether we like it or not.²⁰³

At the time of bargaining with the sovereign, or demanding sovereignty, the language of development shares much with that of the oppressors, the winners of history. Deprived of the recognition of their mourning, the pain of Armenians is dismissed with respect to their “otherness.”²⁰⁴ The development narratives of Kurdish middle classes share a great deal with Turkish nationalism in this respect. It is emphasized that Kurds are their “muslim brothers” who have found this country together, who have fought with “them” in the War of Independence. Armenians then become “non-muslims” and are excluded from the realm of the political in a consistent way with the exclusion mechanisms of Turkish nationalism and nationalist discourses in general.

²⁰² Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 176.

²⁰³ In one of my interviews, a businessman interpreting the Kurdish and Armenian issues and the Armenia trip of the President of Turkey: Ermenistan’la kanlı bıçaklıydılar, biz de onların müslüman kardeşleriydik. Gidiyor onlara diyor kardeşim, onlarla oturup konuşuyorlar, çözüm yönünde; bölgedeki bölge insanıyla, yani Kürtlerle diyorlar ki konuşacak birşey yok. Yani bu ister istemez bölge insanı üzerinde etki yaratıyor, insanlar bunu görüyor duyuyor ve değerlendiriyor.

²⁰⁴ It seems that in addition to the desire of middle classes to hold economic and social power, this situation also points to the success of the strategy of nationalist Turkish elites to create different oppression axes and exclusion mechanisms that can prevent an alliance of oppressed groups between themselves.

Nevertheless, it seems that this is not a mere question of nationalism, but rather an articulation of Kurdish nationalism within development discourse. To depart from the dualism between muslims/non-muslims, it can be argued that concentrating on the analysis of development narratives about Kurdish rebellions can give one a chance to re-consider the relation of middle-classes to the past. Although the narratives about the Kurdish rebellions involve an affirmation of the rebelling Kurds in their struggle against the repression and domination of the Turkish nation-state, within the history of underdevelopment they turn into the image of the “*oppositional character*” of the city and the region. At the last instance, it is argued that both leading to material destruction in their conflicts with state forces and creating an insecure political environment, certainly they become obstacles to development.

As far as they are embedded in the history of development and therefore in the history of capital, it is possible to make a parallel reading of the ways the Catastrophe of 1915, Kurdish rebellions and the events of March are translated in the narratives of development. How the mourning and pain of the others are disregarded, actors of past rebellions are deprived of their political agencies, and radical/disparate worlds of the “here and now” are abstracted in the narratives of development, share a certain “numbing recognition”²⁰⁵ towards the Other. “The transition from *real* to *abstract* is thus also a question of transition/translation from many and possibly incommensurable temporalities to the homogeneous time of abstract labor, the transition from *nonhistory* to *history*.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Elizabeth Povinelli, “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability,” *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 329.

²⁰⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Time of History and the Times of Gods,” in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of the Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe, David Lloyd (Duke University Press, 1997), 54.

The Question of Translation

A Klee painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.²⁰⁷

While the destructions of the past are translated into the socio-economic history of underdevelopment, collective memories of the past involve a potentiality that disrupts the construct of the past in official history. Although the stories of the catastrophes of the past are translated in the history of underdevelopment, the experiences of Kurdish development actors and businessmen as members of an oppressed group become obstacles that prevent the complete translation of the stories. These stories of oppression reminiscent of the experiences of war and state of emergency lasting for decades, the narratives of the past always involve "a Derridean trace of something that cannot be enclosed, an element that constantly challenges from within capital's and commodity's – and by implication, History's – claims to unity and universality."²⁰⁸

In each iteration and effort to translate the stories of the past into the terms of development, "Kurdishness" - as far as it has been lived as an experience of the

²⁰⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 257-258.

²⁰⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Time of History and the Times of Gods" in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of the Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe, David Lloyd (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 55.

oppressed- prevents the unfolding of the development discourse. The memory of the Catastrophe of 1915 and other past disasters of the region have made the mechanisms of brutal power and quotidian existence of the nation-state in the region familiar for the subjects of the present. Each effort to translate these experiences into the history of development brings an unclosed cleavage to the fore. Let it be the silenced histories of the others, denied existence of forced migration, systematic brutalities, effects of war and state of emergency; the past experiences of oppression become challenges to the desire of progress and complete unfolding of the terms of development.

This does not mean that Kurdishness or experiences of oppression can always disrupt the development discourse. As I have tried to argue, Kurdishness can be articulated in relation to development or the experiences can become the basis of political indebtedness on which middle classes can claim. On the other hand, the stories which remain resisting the meta-narrative of the history of the oppressor, which cannot be abstracted completely; by reminding the existence of possible, alternative life-worlds, these stories resist the inevitableness of the course of the history. It is at this relationship that one has the possibility to search the traces of possible worldings, alternative political subjectivities and the operation of the state violence and development discourse.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This thesis has become an attempt to identify the political actors inhabiting the same political space in Diyarbakır. I have explored the ways through which they translate the political debts of the past and each other in their own narratives and discourses. I have tried to map out the lexicon and languages that become the means of communication between them and the translations of the incommensurable worlds to each other. I have argued that through an examination of the ways the political debts and incommensurable life-worlds are translated, and following the constitution of mediums by which translations take place, one can focus on the formation of the subjectivities by different political actors. This would bring us to an exploration of the the ways we govern and are governed in a Foucauldian sense.

Throughout this thesis, I have focused on the formation of the Kurdish middle-class subjectivities through which I can analyze the effects and operation of development discourse in Diyarbakır. By relying on the political debt that “the state” owes to the Kurdish people as they argue, I have tried to study the mechanisms by which they contact with the political realm under a de-politicized image of “technical interventions.” On the one hand stand the translations of the rebellions, bloody counterinsurgences, wars and disasters of the past and the present in the development discourse to bargain with the state. On the other, there remain the traces of a catastrophic history that resist to be embedded in the history of the oppressors, remembering both the alternative worldings and past disasters that have rendered the “here and nows” possible.

Giving an account of the March events and their effects in the public sphere, I have tried to trace the motivations of mass political mobilization in the Kurdish region. It has also turned into the elaboration of an alternative translation of the political debt into political action and the creation of an incommensurable and radical world. In the second chapter of the thesis, I argued that the insurgent children in the region have mobilized through a claim of an act “exceeding the normalized level of violence in the region.” In addition, this has also fueled the feelings of mistreatment and political indebtedness that comes with a history of state violence that has turned the lives of these children and Kurdish youth into ruins. Although I did have the opportunity to talk with them in the coffeehouses and streets where I also grew up, I could not have the chance for a detailed ethnographic inquiry.

For this reason and more, I have concentrated on the effects of the materialization of “the state” and the political violence in the region. And I have written together with what I listened to in these coffeehouses and streets. I have conceptualized the repression of the March events by the use of “unproportional” state violence in line with both the lawfare in which the “Kurdish children”²⁰⁹ find them and the exclusion of Kurdish insurgents from the space of mourning, pain and the political in the public sphere.

Throughout the chapter three, I have focused on the intermingling of the state violence and development discourse. I attempted to explore the strategies and techniques through which they work as the condition of each other. I have emphasized the centrality of this merging in the context of European Union integration process. To do this, I examined the similarities and connectedness

²⁰⁹ I do not use the term as “Kurdish insurgents” or “children insurgents” to emphasize the arbitrariness of imprisonments and tortures.

between the state violence that repress/disregard/deny the existence/acts/languages of the insurgents and the incorporation of the insurgents in the development narratives by Kurdish middle classes.

At the chapter four, I have argued that the construction of the past in the narratives of the Kurdish middle classes and their current positionings have similar features which can give us the chance to examine the language and lexicon of the middle-classes more carefully. Through an analysis of the ways past is remembered in the narratives of my informants who work in the important development projects conducted in Diyarbakır, I argued that the experience of “Kurdishness” as an identity of belonging to an oppressed community disrupts the narratives of development on the one hand and the history of the Turkish-nation state on the other.

Like the difficulty of translating the radical worlds in the March events, in the re-construction of the past by the Kurdish middle-classes, the rebellions, disasters, low-intensity war and forced migration disrupt the terms of translation. As the experiences, narratives and existence of the insurgents interrupt the acts of bargaining and carry the terms of the political to a different realm, the traces of a catastrophic past intervenes in the role of mediation, a clean translation in each attempt. Traces of the past, subjectivities and radical worlds become the means to imagine alternative worldings and political subjectivities. The translations of political debts and incommensurate worlds take place in an undecidable space, both opening up a space for alternative political subjectivities and imaginations and trying to close this space by continuous work of translation, incorporation and domestication.

I think that this thesis has been a minor attempt to grasp the ways political debt has become the way of “doing politics” in the Kurdish region. I have tried to ask some tentative questions about the political debt and the strategies different political

actors use to translate it into their own languages. Political debt as a shared medium by different political actors carries the terms through which these actors can speak with each other and at the same time within each group. Becoming the means²¹⁰ of contestation of power, claim of power or sharing it; political debt brings the sites of contestations, negotiations and struggles between and within these incommensurable worlds to the fore. In other terms, tracing the works/translations of political debt in Diyarbakır can give the seeds of further ethnographic researches by showing the spaces where the multiple effects of power get visible. I hope that this study can contribute to the future works of ethnography in Diyarbakır and the region in a minor way by its attempt to search for the traces, effects and implications of political debt in different contexts.

²¹⁰ Not to miss the focus on the basic problems of this thesis, I did not pay attention to the use of *bedel* (price, cost) in the hegemonic Kurdish discourse. However, it is remarkable that by rendering the realm of politics legible for the ones who have paid its “price,” this concept carries a key role in the archeology of debt in the political realm in the Kurdish region.

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