

The everyday violence of forced displacement

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The everyday violence of forced displacement

Community, memory and identity politics among Kurdish internal
forced migrants in Turkey

Het alledaagse geweld van gedwongen ontheemding

Gemeenschap, herinnering en identiteitspolitiek onder Koerdische
gedwongen interne migranten in Turkije

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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te Dronten

Promotoren: Prof.dr. A.C.G.M. Robben
Prof.dr. M.M. van Bruinessen

To Azad and Göksel

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Türkiye’deki insanlara...

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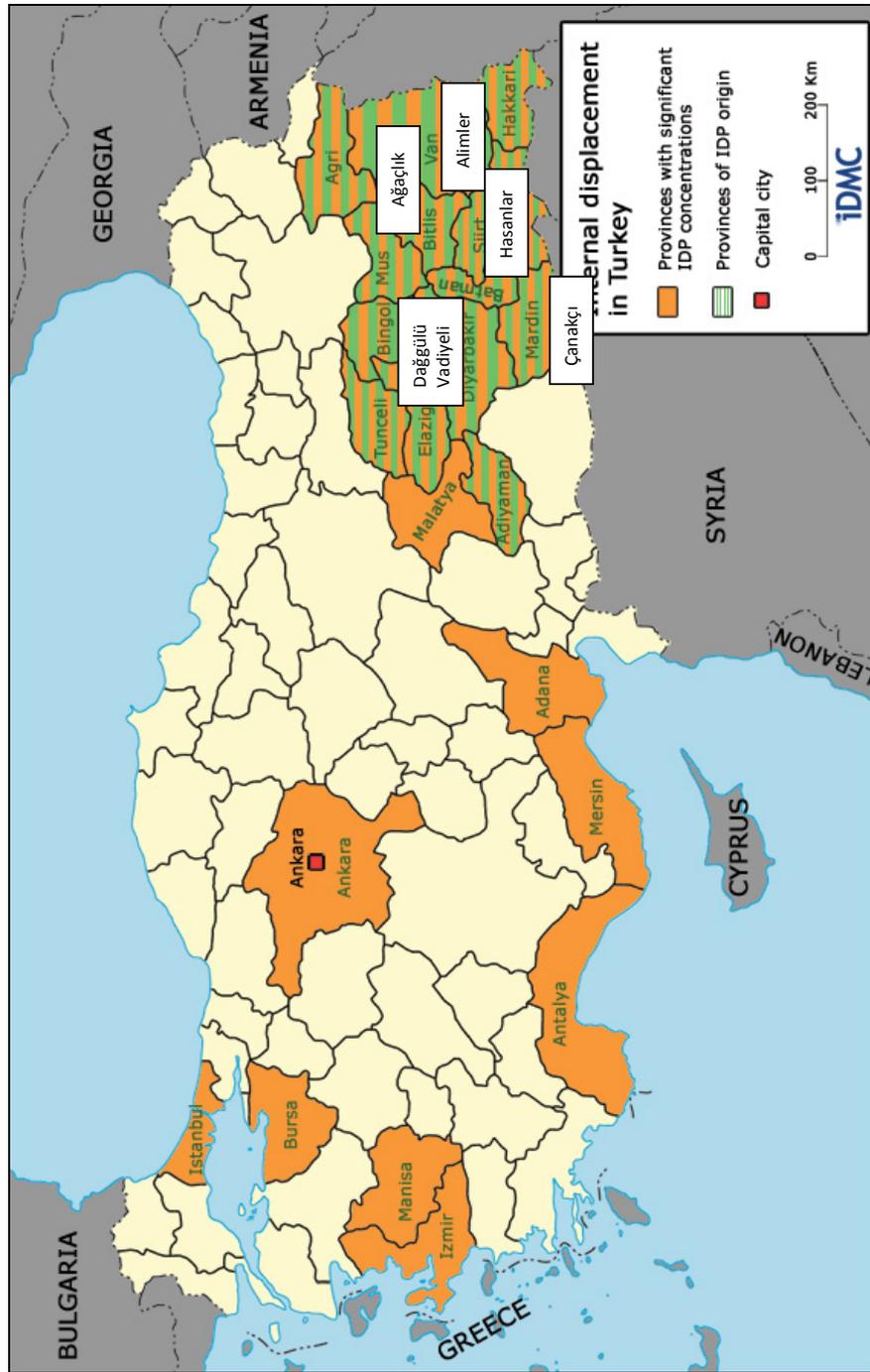
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Map 1. Turkey, with regions from which displacement occurred marked and approximate locations of the villages mentioned most often. Adapted from a map of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, with its permission: http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/httpCountry_Maps?ReadForm&country=Turkey&count=10000



Map 2. Map of Istanbul, with research districts marked.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Istanbul is a beautiful city. There is the grandeur of its majestic mosques and palaces, the magnificent Bosphorus with its bridges and authentic wooden villas sprawled along the waterside, and the exotic scents, colors and designs of the bazaars. The city smells history and tourists love it. For the natives, the *Istanbullu*, Istanbul is a city full of opportunities for a comfortable life, a beacon of culture and civilization, celebrated in folk songs, films and in some of Turkey's finest literature.

Yet, most of these people visiting or inhabiting Istanbul are unaware of the tragedy staged behind thousands of doors in the impoverished parts of the inner city, in the squatter neighborhoods around it, and in the bleak newer districts, which are rarely - if ever - visited by tourists and *Istanbullu* alike.

This tragedy is one of the refugees of a war waged in Istanbul's hinterlands: a war within the borders of the same country so grandiosely crowned by Istanbul, a war fled by the 'other' of 'the other Turkey', the *öteki* of *öteki Türkiye*. The tragedy of the refugees never made it into the scenario of the national soap of war - shown at primetime but turned on and off at will - about a violent struggle between heroes and villains, whose ever new adventures have gained the leading actors acknowledgement, but have rendered the ten thousands of poorly paid extras invisible. The tragedy is that for the refugees, the war is not a soap. It is real life. And it is still with them, even now.

There are a number of possible ways to introduce the subject of this dissertation. This is one of them. An alternative beginning would highlight very different aspects of the lives of the wartime migrants on whom this dissertation is based. It might go like this.

"Why bother spending a fortune on a marriage? Why bother about your children marrying at all if you can hardly feed yourself, if you can't even go to the doctor when you're sick!" This thought crossed my mind while observing the burdensome and nerve-racking arrangements for the costly marriage of a young man and woman who were not particularly eager to marry each other in the first place, and who would have an uncertain future. Half a second after wondering why the respective families would go through so much trouble, I told myself: "Stupid! Of course people want their children to marry, of course people want to have grandchildren, life goes on". The families of the couple-to-be had been forced out of their villages in the early 1990s, during the armed

conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK¹) and the Turkish state. In Istanbul they had been faced with the task of rebuilding their lives in great poverty.

In retrospect I realize better that, yes, the villagers were worn out by intimidation, torture and fear, but their migration did not constitute a kind of Pavlov reaction to a negative impulse. People left their villages precisely to ensure the survival of their families. Parents wanted their sons and daughters to live, to marry, to have children, they wanted to grow old knowing that they had done their part in life, even under the most dire of circumstances: they wanted to pursue their 'culturally scripted life projects'² under less unfavorable conditions. And as might be expected, some turned out to be decidedly more successful at this than others.

Yet another beginning could be as follows:

War and large-scale displacement tend to be envisaged as watershed events constituting new and uncharted chapters in the broken lives of the people affected by them. The violence of war and displacement are regarded as overriding experiences. This is one way of looking at the fate of displaced Kurds in Turkey who experienced violence and repression which, many observers agree, was quite different from that of preceding time periods both in form and outcome. During the war, which was at its height in the late 1980s and early 1990s, tens of thousands of civilians were arrested and tortured, thousands perished, and at least one million were displaced. Entangled in this mounting repression was a process of Kurdish unification and politization.

On closer inspection, however, it seems equally justified to argue that war and displacement were added on to, and at the same time fed on, local struggles for dominance within and between families, factions, villages and tribes. Kurds did indeed become politicized and unified in new ways, but this was not only because they shared the experience of state oppression. There were other factors at play too. Support for the PKK offered a way out of a dull and limited existence and constituted a powerbase in local struggles. Besides, Kurds were used to situations in which powerful parties in conflict demanded them to pledge loyalty. Considering this array of sites for conflict and

¹ PKK stands for Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (in Kurdish). The organization changed its name several times. I refer to it with its oldest and best-known acronym, which is also its present name.

² Culturally scripted projects may simply be goals for individuals, such as the wish to marry and have children, or the plan to travel around the world for a year before starting college education. Other projects involve complex interactions and negotiations between people with different positions, personal goals and capacities. For a family, it may be a project to increase its influence in the wider community. Family members will then adopt different strategies (for example, in the realm of education, work, marriage etc.) to achieve this, but it is also possible that some members of the family will try to opt out. For a group of squatters, a culturally scripted project may be to create a more or less self-supporting community. For a business company, it may be to make profit, extend its market share, and/or accumulate influence in other spheres than business. In adverse situations such as imprisonment, for the people affected, it may become a culturally scripted project to recreate the conditions of a 'normal life' in as far as possible. See Sherry Ortner 1984:150-152; 2006:144-152 and Stephen Lubkemann 2008:14.

violence, it was only to be expected that divisions between families, and between men and women continued to be played out in Istanbul, Antalya or Diyarbakir, or wherever the villagers had migrated to.

These alternative beginnings constitute different angles for looking at the same social dynamics: they contain dissimilar and partly contradictory statements, yet they are all 'true'.

The first one about the 'national soap of war' addresses two issues, namely the lack of interest in the devastating impact of war and displacement on civilians who were displaced from the war-affected region, and the ways in which war and displacement still inform the everyday lives of those displaced.

The second one about people leaving their villages with particular aspirations, foregrounds the 'issue of agency' which is easy to lose sight of in the study of people who live through the so-called 'totalizing phenomena' of war and displacement (Oliver-Smith 1991).

The third one about the watershed view of war and displacement elaborates on the second. It emphasizes continuity between past and present amidst processes of rapid social change. Although the focus here lies on the potential for conflict and on established ways of responding to it, links between past and present can also be discerned in other areas. For example, the process of war-induced migration was also connected to processes of labor migration.

This dissertation focuses on the disruption and tragedy of displacement, as well as on the continuity and mundanity involved in displacement. It draws out connections between 'then' and 'now' and 'there' and 'here', more than that it emphasizes the break between the southeastern³ past and the Istanbul present. After all, as I will show, both the structural conditions of life and people's desire to pursue their 'culturally scripted life projects' remained largely the same. In tracing different lines of continuity in the lives of the forced migrants, the phrase 'old wine in new bottles' often sprung to my mind. However, it was not so much a matter of old wine being put in new bottles, or of the complete destruction of the vineyard, it was more a case of the same grapes producing different wines in different climates and kinds of soil. This dissertation then is about the ways in which Kurds who left their villages during the early 1990s perceived the violence in their past, about how they dealt with the difficulties that faced them after having abandoned their villages, and about how they rebuilt their lives in the city. To extend the 'same grape, different wine' metaphor, this dissertation concerns the question which wine was produced in the Istanbul climate.

³ My use of the term 'southeastern' and 'Southeast' refers to the region where the forced migrants are from. The Southeast as I employ the term includes provinces which are officially labeled as provinces of East Turkey, see Nicole Watts (2009). Many Kurds call the Southeast of Turkey North Kurdistan as opposed to South Kurdistan (Iraq).

To study the above-mentioned themes, between 2001 and 2004⁴, I carried out fieldwork among internally displaced Kurdish families in four districts on the Asian side of Istanbul, who came from different regions in southeastern Turkey.⁵ They fled their villages at the height of the war between the nationalistic Kurdistan Workers' Party and the Turkish state⁶, which had started in 1984 when the PKK attacked military installations in two southeastern towns.

In the first section to follow, I will provide a short outline of the armed conflict, introduce the concept of internal forced displacement, and elucidate the aims and focus of the research. The second section of the chapter is devoted to the way in which the research was carried out. I will explain how and where I got started, which choices I made as to who to include in the research, and which methods I used. Besides providing some background information about the Istanbul districts in which the research was carried out, I will focus on relevant aspects of my relationships with the migrants. By way of conclusion, I will set forth the contents of the different chapters.

SETTING THE STAGE: THE CONFLICT, THE DISPLACEMENT, THE MIGRANTS, THE RESEARCH

The armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army is one of the most visible and violent expressions of the 'Kurdish issue', that is, Turkey's inability to come to terms with the identity claims of its Kurdish population. The armed violence left more than 40 thousand people dead.⁷ It also culminated in the displacement of at least one million villagers, almost all Kurdish, in the early 1990s.⁸ Many of them were expelled from their villages by the Turkish army ostensibly in an effort to deprive the PKK of logistic support, while others fled

⁴ I also did some interviews in March 2005 and the summer of 2005.

⁵ Not all forced migrants come from villages. In the survey of Mahmut Barut (2001), over 85 percent of the respondents were from hamlets and villages, but the rest was from more or less urbanized areas. I focused on rural forced migrants because they form the largest group and the variation in this group is already very wide.

⁶ 'The state', 'the Kurds' and 'the Turks' are debatable terms. I will clarify my use of these terms in chapter 2.

⁷ According to Kirişçi and Winrow (1997:126), who base themselves on official figures and on figures provided by a Turkish newspaper, between 1984 and 1995, 20,181 people were killed in the conflict (5,014 civilians, 11,546 PKK members and 3,621 security forces). In figures provided by the Interior Ministry, 3,965 civilians, 4,389 members of the security forces, and 14,836 'organization members' (PKK) were killed between August 15, 1984 and September 1, 1997 (TBMM 1998:80). Most estimates of the total death toll now are around 40,000.

⁸ Official figures, which have long constituted the absolute base line in estimations, are that 378,335 people were displaced from 3,428 settlements. These figures are reproduced in a parliamentary report, in which it is also stated that the figures are probably far too low (TBMM 1998:11,31). In 2006, the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies published a report in which the number of people who migrated for security reasons is estimated between 953,680 and 1,201,000, see:

http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/english/press_release.pdf, accessed April 24, 2009. NGOs generally estimate the number of forced migrants to be between one and four million.

PKK coercion to choose its side. In its heydays, the PKK, which was fighting for an independent state, commanded more than 10 thousand militants and received active support of over 50 thousand so-called civil militias (*milis*) (Marcus 2007:1,172). Once the Turkish army had built up its force, at any given time an average of 300 thousand soldiers, police and intelligence officers were stationed in the Southeast, and over 60 thousand Kurdish villagers were given arms and salaries by the state to fight the PKK (Barkey & Fuller 1998:140,147-149; Kirişçi & Winrow 1997:130). Whereas some of these so-called village guards (*korucular*) joined the village guard system voluntarily, others were forced, for example, by the army or gendarmerie (*jandarma* - rural police). In any case, when villagers joined, they often did this under the patronage of a local Kurdish leader (İmset 1993⁹). When the PKK started its attacks, the region was already under martial law. In the early and mid 1980s, martial law was progressively lifted in different provinces, but was replaced by State of Emergency legislation (Human Rights Watch 2002:13).

Turgut Özal, the president between 1989 and April 1993, was a proponent of a fast military crackdown of the PKK on the one hand and the allocation of cultural rights to Kurds on the other. While in 1991 he set the first steps on the path to granting the Kurds cultural rights - he lifted the ban on the Kurdish language, for example - at the same time a draconian anti-terror law was put into effect in which terrorism was defined as any action with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Republic (McDowall 1996:429). A confidential report written under Özal's authorization acknowledged the existence of mass support for the PKK and proposed village evacuations on a limited scale to deprive the PKK of support in one final move (Cemal 2003:124-128). In Özal's plan, these villagers would be compensated, contrary to the many villagers who had already been expelled, and who had received nothing in terms of substitute housing or compensation. Turgut Özal, who was not afraid to utter the word 'Kurd' and to speak of Kurdish grievances, was regarded by many Kurds as a politician who might have the insight and stamina to bring the Kurdish problem to a solution. However, in April 1993, shortly after PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan declared a unilateral cease-fire, Özal died of a heart-attack.¹⁰

This was three years after the first legal Kurdish political party had been founded. Since the establishment of the Republic, leading Kurds had been active in politics, and with the introduction of the multiparty system in 1945, Kurds came to play active roles in almost all major parties. However, they did not do so *as Kurds*, and no party had a distinct Kurdish profile. This changed in 1990

⁹ Turkish names of authors are written with Turkish spelling, unless the names are spelled differently in the original book or article.

¹⁰ Many people believe Özal was poisoned for political reasons. In an interview with Samanyolu television, his wife Semra Özal made it clear that she also believes this. See also an interview in newspaper Taraf with Kurdish politician Nurettin Yılmaz:

<http://www.taraf.com.tr/nese-duzel/makale-nurettin-yilmaz-talabani-federasyonu-kabul.htm>, accessed August 31, 2010.

when eight Kurdish politicians founded the People's Labor Party (HEP¹¹). They were former deputies of the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP¹²) who had been expelled from this party for attending a Kurdish conference in Paris (Bruinessen 2000e:255). HEP started off representing a broad range of Kurds with differing political ideas, but became more PKK-oriented over the years, partly because of direct PKK interventions (Marcus 2007:224-228). HEP was banned in 1993 and replaced by DEP, which was closer to the PKK. Every time the party was banned, it re-emerged under a different name. When I came to Turkey in 2001, the party was called HADEP, during the research it became DEHAP and when I did my last interviews in 2005, it was DTP.¹³

Under the leadership of prime minister Tansu Çiller and the new president Süleyman Demirel, there was a vast increase of human rights violations, forced evacuations and destructions of villages (Bruinessen 2000e:260-261). Fighting resumed but the PKK declared (and renounced) several unilateral cease-fires in the years to come. The organization went through a rough patch in the mid 1990s, among other things because the displacement of villagers on whom the PKK had previously relied for food and other kinds of support, inhibited the PKK's combative force (Marcus 2007:222-223). In 1999 Öcalan was captured, imprisoned and trialed. In the Turkish courtroom he assumed a humble position: he publicly apologized to the mothers of 'martyred' Turkish soldiers, argued that he was an admirer of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and relinquished the idea of Kurdish independence - or even autonomy¹⁴. Instead he argued for full citizenship rights for Kurds in a strong Turkey, and a few months after his trial, he called on the PKK to retreat from Turkey and cease the armed struggle. The PKK did indeed withdraw into northern Iraq/southern Kurdistan, where neither the Iraqi Kurds nor the US did much to hinder the organization. Significant numbers of PKK commanders and fighters felt betrayed by Öcalan's reconciliatory approach and left the organization, but Öcalan retained his

¹¹ Halkın Emek Partisi.

¹² Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi.

¹³ The relevant dates and names are: 1990-1993 HEP; 1993-1994 DEP (Democracy Party - Demokrasi Partisi); 1994-2003 HADEP (People's Democracy Party - Halkın Demokrasi Partisi); 2003-2005 DEHAP (Democratic People's Party - Demokratik Halk Partisi); 2005-2009 DTP (Democratic Society Party - Demokratik Toplum Partisi); 2009 - present BDP (Peace and Democracy Party - Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi).

There are other Kurdish parties, for example, the Rights and Liberties Party (Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi - Hak-Par) founded in 2002 by Abdülmelik Fırat, but none of the other Kurdish parties is as widely known as HEP and its successors.

Depending on the context, I will use the names of individual parties or I will make combinations with hyphens in between. For example, in cases in which people spoke about the Kurdish party at one particular point in time, I will use the then name of the party, if the party was referred to over a longer period of time, I will use combinations of the then used party names. 'HADEP/DEHAP', for example, covers the time period between 1994 and 2003.

¹⁴ In interviews with Turkish journalists which appeared in print long before he was captured, Öcalan had indicated that the PKK was no longer striving for independence, so this was not a new thought.

position as the leader of Turkey's Kurds (Marcus 2007:282-299; Bruinessen 2000f:285-286).

Although in 2002, Turkey lifted the State of Emergency in the last provinces still covered by it, military repression remained vital to Turkey's Kurdish strategy. Civilians remained under close police and military surveillance in much of the Southeast, and the Turkish army carried out numerous cross-border raids into Kurdish Iraq. Law reforms in the sphere of the protection of human rights and the granting of cultural rights to Kurds were initiated in grudging compliance with European demands, and the implementation of the reforms was spotty. For many Kurds, Turkey's response to Öcalan's political advances was disheartening, and they began to view Öcalan's isolated confinement - he is the only inmate in a prison on a tiny island - as symbolic for the position of the Kurds in Turkey. In June 2004 Öcalan called an end to his cease-fire. Güneş Murat Tezcür (2009:10) argues that the resumption of the armed struggle should be understood as a PKK effort to undermine the appeal of the ruling 'Islamist' Justice and Development Party (AKP¹⁵), which attracted a great many Kurdish voters in the local elections of 2004 and in the parliamentary elections of 2007.

Over the past years, fighting has flared up and died down only to flare up again. Every year PKK militants and members of the security forces are killed in military operations or in attacks on police offices and military installations. Occasionally, civilians get killed as well, if not during raids or attacks by any of the armed forces, then by the mines which are scattered over much of the countryside or also, sometimes, in Turkish custody.

In July 2009, the AKP initiated a debate about the Kurdish issue as well as reforms aimed at expanding the cultural and political rights of Kurds. The AKP's 'Kurdish initiative' met with fierce opposition from AKP voters and politicians of rival parties who thought the reforms went way too far, and from the DTP, the Kurdish party, which argued that the reforms were totally inadequate (Sommer & Liaras 2010). In the wake of the AKP's initiative, simmering ethnic violence between non-Kurds and Kurds also surfaced and the AKP backed down. A year later, many Kurds feel that no substantial positive change has occurred or will occur in the near future.

Internal displacement

In legal terms, by staying on Turkish territory, the Kurdish villagers became 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs) as opposed to refugees who are defined by their crossing of state borders to find refuge. The label 'internally displaced'

¹⁵ Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (the party name is also abbreviated as Akparti). The AKP is a right of center party with an 'enlightened Islamic' profile. It wants Turkey to become a member state of the European Union, and has set steps to achieve this goal. Its chairman Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has held the office of prime minister since 2003. In 2007, prominent party member Abdullah Gül was installed as president, much to the dislike of those parties and members of the establishment who regard themselves as the guardians of secularism and Kemalism.

refers to people who were displaced by force within the borders of their ‘own country’.

With the rise of international interest in the phenomenon of internal displacement, displaced populations became a matter of concern to international humanitarian agencies: agencies that tend to view internally displaced people primarily as a ‘category in need’ of food, medicine, clothing, accommodation, education, security, counseling and so on (Sørensen 2001:6). In response to the growing demand for guidelines for the protection of and assistance to internally displaced people, in 1998, Francis Deng, the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, presented the Guiding Principles in Internal Displacement to the UN Commission on Human Rights. These Guiding Principles apply to people or groups of people “who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict, violations of human rights or natural¹⁶ or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border”. The principles “set forth the rights of IDPs and the obligations of government and insurgent forces in all phases of displacement” (Cohen 1998:3-4). The appeals made fell on deaf ears in Turkey where the wartime migrants were almost devoid of support of nongovernmental and governmental organizations. Also international attention was and is quite meagre. Forcibly displaced Kurds never gained such a prominent place on the humanitarian agenda of international agencies, including the UNHCR, as many other forcibly displaced groups, for example, the Palestinians.¹⁷

Unacknowledged internal forced migrants

Although I sometimes denote Kurds who fled their villages during the armed conflict as ‘internally displaced persons’, I also refer to them as forced migrants, wartime migrants, and migrants. More precisely I regard them as unacknowledged internal forced migrants.¹⁸

They are ‘internal migrants’ because they moved from one place of residence to another within the borders of the ‘nation-state’ of Turkey. They experienced many of the same things that previous internal migrants, among them also many Kurds, had experienced. Although the wartime migrants were not motivated to move by the same things as previous migrants, once they had arrived in their new environments, their first priorities were those of most migrants: to find a

¹⁶ Oliver-Smith (1996:314) argues that also ‘natural’ disasters are often (at least partly) induced by human activity.

¹⁷ See Ayşe Betül Çelik and Bahar Rumelili 2006 for a commentary on the activities of European organizations and the UNCHR with regard to Turkey.

¹⁸ Authors and organizations in Turkey with an interest in these migrants mostly denote them as forced migrants (*göçe zorlanmış insanlar*) and sometimes as displaced people (*yerlerinden ettirilmiş/edinilmiş insanlar*), and their move/flight as forced migration and internal forced migration (*zorunlu göç* and *zorunlu iç göç*).

house and a job, and then to send the children to school. The Kurdish migrants could be expected to employ the same strategies as previous migrants to the extent that these were available (cf. Erder 2002a:151-153). To acquire the necessities of life and to achieve socioeconomic mobilization, generations of rural migrants in Turkey had mobilized a number of social affiliations - regional, religious and otherwise (Karpas 1976; Kartal 1982; Levine 1973; Seufert 1997; Suzuki 1964). Or to put it differently, they had mobilized their “social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them, and the value of these for achieving mutual goals”, that is, their social capital (Schuller, Baron & Field 2000:1). In a country like Turkey where there is almost no institutionalized safety net for the poor, the homeless and the unemployed, this social capital is crucial to survival. For the Kurds, who migrated almost *en masse* under extremely difficult circumstances, being able to mobilize social ties was even more important than for other rural migrants.

Their internal migration was ‘forced’ because the migrants were displaced against their will: they had much less control over the migration process than other internal migrants and were less able to make provisions for the first months or year. From my contention that this particular migration of Kurdish villagers was forced, it does not follow that force was always applied in the same way or was equally pervasive in different cases. Actually, to make a clear-cut distinction between forced and voluntary migration proves to be a tricky business. Labor migration, for example, tends to be regarded as voluntary, inviting detailed analysis of decisions, motives and the like, whereas wartime migration is almost automatically regarded as forced, virtually reducing people to puppets on strings. I fully agree with the sociologist Anthony Richmond (1988, 1993) and the anthropologist Stephen Lubkemann (2008) who argue that we should be wary of a ‘hard’ distinction between voluntary and forced migration. Because most migrations are neither purely forced nor purely voluntary, Richmond argues for a replacement of the ‘voluntary-forced’ dichotomy with a continuum between proactive and reactive migration, terms which refer to the amount of calculation and planning involved in the migration process: “Between these two extremes, many of the decisions made by both ‘economic’ and ‘political migrants’ are a response to diffuse anxiety generated by a failure of the social system to provide for the fundamental needs of the individual, biological, economic and social” (Richmond 1988:17). However, to underscore that the migration of Kurds during the war needs to be analysed differently, albeit not separately, from other instances of rural-urban migration, I do find it important to label the Kurdish migrants as forced migrants, a denotation that also fits the self-perception of most of them.

The migrants remained ‘unacknowledged’ because they had to make do in a society which denied the injustices done to them. When the villagers had not yet been forced out, the authorities had regarded them as actual or potential terrorists. This image of Kurdish villagers as terrorists had pervaded public

opinion and it stuck to them in the city: the migrants were discriminated against by ‘the locals’. In a state which neither acknowledged the existence of the Kurds nor its own efforts to violently erase all awareness of a separate Kurdish identity, it was impossible to refer to the forced evacuations of Kurds *as such*. The work of academics, journalists and human rights organizations¹⁹, to which I will return later, provides a pretty clear picture of the contours of the wartime migration of Kurds, and offers striking insights into the problems encountered by these Kurds, in their home regions and in the places they moved to. Still, until recently the forced migration of Kurds was a non-issue in Turkey.

Only very slowly is critical research becoming incorporated into dominant discourses and narratives about the Kurdish issue and Turkish society. In as far as dominant discourses and narratives have begun to change, the experiences of forced migrants are still undervalued and the significance of their experiences remains unrecognized (cf. Ayata and Yüksek 2005; Güney 2009). Even today, little is known about the ‘inside’ of the forced mass migration of Kurds and its long-term impact on Kurds and on Turkish society.

Narrowing down the aims and focus of the research

Because knowledge about the characteristics of the large-scale forced migration of Kurds in the early 1990s is not disseminated broadly - not even in universities - it remains relatively easy to depict the migrants in any way the picturer deems suitable, or to deny that their migration was instigated by the war.²⁰ One aim of this dissertation then, is to add weight to the arguments of those who argue for a better informed and more balanced view of a painful aspect of Turkey’s recent history, which does justice to the experiences of its firsthand ‘witnesses’, the migrants themselves. I will do this by providing an alternative take on Turkey’s recent history based on the narratives of the migrants. Commenting on the value of oral history in the study of Kurds, Ayhan Işık (2009:192) states that, taking into account the virtual absence of a written Kurdish history and the presence of a strong oral tradition among Kurds: “the field of oral history is one of the few fields which is able to reflect the tragedies of the past century”.

¹⁹ For example: Cihan Ahmetbeyzade 2007; Mahmut Barut 2001; Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı 2004; Serpil Bozkulak 2005; Handan Çağlayan 2000; Ayşe Betül Çelik 2003; Hasan Cemal 2003; Vedat Çetin 1999; Namık Kemal Dinç 2008; Sema Erder 2002a; Doğu Ergil 2008; Human Rights Watch 2002 and 2005; Ahmet İçduygu and İbrahim Sirkeci 1999; İpek İlkaracan and Pınar İlkaracan 1999; İnsan Hakları Derneği 1998; İnsan Hakları Derneği İstanbul Şubesi Kürt Hakları Komisyonu 1995; Oğuz Işık and M. Melih Pınarcıoğlu 2002; Gülay Kayacan 1999; Sevilay Kayalak 2001; Dilek Kurban, Deniz Yüksek, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Turgay Ünal and A. Tamer Aker (TESEV) 2007; Sibel Özbudun 2000; TBMM 1998 (report by a Turkish Parliamentary Committee, referred to as the TBMM-report in this dissertation); Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth Winrow 1997; Mazlum-Der İstanbul Şubesi 1995; Leyla Şen 2005.

²⁰ The U.S. Committee for Refugees (1999:13,9) provides stunning examples of such denial and of the ways in which the authorities tried to block the author of the report from carrying out research into the situation of displaced Kurds.

By offering insight in the social lives of people who lived through a ‘swept under the carpet’ forced migration movement, I hope this study will benefit students of forced migration and displacement, also those with no particular interest in Turkey or Kurds. My theoretical aim is to contribute to anthropological debates about the impact of war and displacement on ‘warzone inhabitants’. More specifically, by situating the costs and rewards of social capital in the context of processes of social positioning and identification in a climate of structural inequality, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of how social capital operates in violent contexts.

Although the ‘elicitation’ of narratives was an aim in itself, it also served the objective of gaining insight in connections between previous experiences and their (then) ‘present’ circumstances. I wanted to understand how the forced migrants developed their networks, which social connections they managed to retain, which they were able to form in the new environment, where these ‘old’ and ‘new’ connections got them, and how all this was related to their experiences during the armed conflict and as migrants in Istanbul. In their narratives, the migrants implicitly or explicitly connected ‘objective’ circumstances to their own understanding of their (then) present and past positions. Thus, my focus throughout was on the interrelationships between past experiences, ‘present’ relational embeddedness, and people’s understandings of their positions and experiences. Coupled with my observations of and participation in aspects of people’s social lives, the narratives enabled me to gain insight in the relationship between the ways in which people imbued meaning to their past experiences and the mobilization of social capital.

A descriptive framework

It might be helpful to arrange the key areas for attention in a descriptive framework. While the framework directs attention to relevant issues and areas, in chapter 2, I will cast the conceptual net a little wider. Most of the framework is borrowed from the anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith (1991) who designed it to study people’s potential for resistance against displacement in vastly differing contexts. Whereas Oliver-Smith focuses on the ways in which people try to prevent displacement, I focus on forms of social action after displacement in the absence of resettlement schemes.²¹ Clearly then, I am not using Oliver-Smith’s analysis to explain the Kurdish potential for resistance to displacement of resettlement. I am using the framework because it provides insight in the range of opportunities which existed for forced migrants to rebuild their lives in

²¹ I am speaking of planned resettlement in pre-designated areas. Toward the end of the 1990s, after the mass displacement had occurred, plans were drawn up c.q. refurbished to resettle the displaced populations in so-called village-towns and center-villages, not to enable the villagers to return to their old habitats, but to foster the urbanization c.q. modernization of Kurdish villagers. However, very little of these plans materialized (e.g. Human Rights Watch 2002, 1996; Jongerden 2006).

the city, to establish ties with other people, and to identify themselves with others on the basis of shared experiences and/or a shared feeling of belonging.

The framework consists of the following six factors:

*1. The cause of displacement*²²

The cause of displacement is important for my analysis in two different ways. First of all, the cause of displacement implicates some ‘determining’ effects. To illustrate this point, I will show that the cause of displacement affected how and with whom people migrated. The arrangements made in this context had a decisive impact on how people established their lives in the city. Secondly, the cause of displacement has an impact on how people related to or dealt with the displacement.

2. People’s relationship with the land

As Oliver-Smith (1991) remarks, if forced migrants have a strong connection to the land they have had to abandon, they may be expected to want to return, or at least, to preserve ties with people who have that same connection with the land. The fertility of the land, the availability of resources, its overall productivity, its opportunities for employment, its connections to cosmology, and to individual and cultural identity, all affect the value of the land or territory for the displaced population. If opportunities for employment in people’s new location are vast and opportunities to recreate cherished aspects of village life in the city are abundant, the relationship with the land might become less salient.

3. People’s relationship to the agent of displacement

In Turkey it was the state who was the prime, but not the sole agent of displacement. In a case where a state displaces an ethnic group for its ‘resistance’ to the cultural blueprint of the state, as was the case here, relationships between this group and the state could be expected to be tense. However, perceptions of the state might change in the new environment. Much would depend on the way in which state practices affected Kurds in their new environment: are these practices exclusionary and repressive or does the state (or the local administration) provide security and opportunities for social mobility?

4. The capacity of the community or group to mobilize itself

This capacity will be greater if there exists a large degree of solidarity and cooperation in the group, if its members are familiar with state institutions and their procedures, if the group is characterized by a large degree of internal coherence and solidarity, if it has experienced and effective leaders, and if it has a history of successful defence of interests. Although most of the capacity of the group to mobilize itself depends on social capital, the level of education of the individual members, for example, might also play a role. Because ethnic enclaves can serve as the basis for community formation, it was important to investigate to which extent people managed to stay together.

²² My choice and description of these factors is based on Oliver-Smith (1991:135-137). I added the one about relationships with the ‘host’ community.

5. *People's relationship to the 'host' or previously settled community*

Attitudes and actions of people already established in the city have a great effect on the migrants' opportunities to manage in the city. Earlier settled relatives, neighbors, local business owners, school teachers etc. have a direct impact on the well-being of individuals and families. They can help with finding houses and jobs and affect the migrants' sense of belonging. In the Kurdish case, whether a neighborhood was dominated by Turks or Kurds, and of which political and religious dominations, whether a neighborhood was unified, divided or 'anonymous' directly affected the migrants' social and economic lives.

6. *The availability of allies*

To address the problems related to displacement in an organized manner, the forced migrants needed allies. The availability of local and non-local allies (such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), unaffected members of the same ethnic group, other ethnic groups, businesses, associations and political parties) are often decisive in the ways in which forced migrants deal with their situation (Gillard & Paton 1999²³; Hernandez Delgado & Laegrid 2001; Kharashvili 2001). To acquire allies, a shared understanding about the nature of the problems faced by the forced migrants is needed. At the same time, it should be noted that the dependency on agencies which often arises when communities are resettled by the state or NGOs might also decrease the migrants' 'organizing potential' (Oliver-Smith 1991:134; Harrell-Bond 1999).

The framework presented above accounts not only for 'objective' opportunities and capacities, but also for 'subjective' emotions and perceptions. It can be employed to look for mechanisms behind possible forms of overt or covert resistance, but it can also be employed to investigate obstacles and opportunities for the forced migrants to advance their public lives in accordance with the expectations of the 'dominant society'. Although I was not aware of this particular framework at the time of my field research, almost all my research questions, actions and observations were geared toward gaining insight in the above six factors. They roughly coincide with the before, during and after of displacement. However, the relevance of these factors was not confined to one time period or geographic area only, for one thing, because people's narratives tied the 'before', 'during' and 'after' intimately together.

RESEARCHING FORCED DISPLACEMENT

It was crystal clear from the beginning that the forced migrants could not have survived in Istanbul as individuals but only as members of families, which is why I focused on families and their social networks. By spending time with a number of Kurdish families, having meals together, attending weddings and religious ceremonies, and by visiting their relatives, workplaces and villages, I

²³ This research is about people whose houses were destroyed by a hurricane.

tried to grasp the contexts in which people told and reproduced their stories, and to gain an understanding of how people's past experiences, their connections to other people, and the narratives told by them, were linked.

At the start of the research I was living in Kadıköy, a centrally located neighborhood on the Asian side of the city. However, following in the footsteps of many foreign tourists, journalists and researchers, I began my research in Taksim, the 'cultural heart' of modern-day Istanbul, which is located on the European side. Through contacts with several organizations working with forced migrants, among them the Dicle Women's Culture and Arts Centre²⁴ and the Human Rights Association (İHD²⁵), I was introduced to six or seven families of forced migrants who were all living on the European side of the city, mostly close to Taksim district. In meeting with them, I soon realized that some interviewees had told their stories so many times that they had virtually learned them by heart: I was yet another person with a notebook in a fairly long line of journalists and researchers.²⁶

I noticed that NGOs concerned with forced migrants - whether their involvement consisted of research, support or counseling - were mainly concentrated in Taksim and the surrounding areas, and that when their scope was wider, their efforts were still mostly limited to the European side of the city. Taksim was the home, not only of the organizations mentioned above, but also of the Foundation for Societal and Legal Studies (TOHAV²⁷), which supports victims of torture, and of the Mesopotamia Culture Center (MKM²⁸), an organization with links to the PKK. The Kurdish Institute²⁹, which also has ties to the PKK, is based close to Taksim as well, as is the major organization working with and for forced migrants, the Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (Göç-Der³⁰). My observation that forced migrants on the European side - especially those in and around Taksim - received more attention than those on the Asian side, was confirmed by people from NGOs and by non-NGO-affiliated well-informed Kurds. Yektan, a Kurdish sociology student I met around that time, called the area around Taksim an 'aquarium' for researchers: very interesting indeed, but largely unrepresentative of the situation of Kurds in Istanbul. I preferred to carry out my research among people who were, so to speak, less visible, and with whom I would be able to establish contacts without resorting to a range of organizations.

²⁴ Dicle Kadın Kültür Merkezi.

²⁵ İnsan Hakları Derneği.

²⁶ Cihan Ahmetbeyzade (2007) studied displaced women in Esenyurt, which is far from Taksim but on the European side. Bediz Yılmaz (2008) did research among displaced Kurds in Tarlabası (Taksim area) between 2004 and 2006. Not all relevant research resulted in academic publications. Nazan Üstündağ from Bosphorus University, for example, carried out research among displaced women in Esenyurt, but I am not aware of her work being published.

²⁷ Toplum ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Vakfı.

²⁸ Mesopotamya Kültür Merkezi.

²⁹ Kürt Enstitüsü. The institute carries out research and publishes books, among other things.

³⁰ Göç Edenler Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği.

One practical criterion for the research sites was that they had to be easily accessible from the house in which I was going to live with my husband and child. This house had to be located close to a pickup point of the service bus to my husband's workplace in Tuzla, a district on the southeastern outskirts of the Asian side of the city. Districts on the European side could be candidates - there was an excellent connection between Taksim and Tuzla, for example - but not if they were too far out. Districts like Esenyurt and Bağcılar, which would be of interest for their large concentration of forced migrants in particular and of Kurds in general, were thus rendered ineligible.

Coming to the Asian side

One day, when visiting my husband's older sister, I met Gül, another relative of his. As is the case with many families of Kurdish heritage, the family of my husband - both his parents were Kurdish - consists of people who regard themselves as Turks, but also of people who regard themselves primarily as Kurds. Gül was of the 'still Kurdish' branch and she was living in alt-Kaynarca, a collection of squatter neighborhoods in the district of Pendik. It did not take Gül long to understand what my research was about because she was familiar with the topic of forced expulsion from villages. Listening to Gül's stories about Kaynarca, her neighbors and the recent influx of immigrants from Kurdish regions in the neighborhood, doing research in this part of the city started to look appealing. After all, there was relatively little reporting on forced migrants living on the Asian side of Istanbul³¹, and it seemed feasible in terms of the living arrangements that I would be able to make.

Gül agreed to introduce me to some of her acquaintances whom she thought might know forced migrants. She started off in alt-Kaynarca ('lower' Kaynarca) called this way because the area borders on the sea of Marmara and is situated 'below' the D100 Highway, which is the road connecting Kadıköy to Asian Turkey. First she introduced me to her neighbour Cengiz, who lived in the same greyish apartment building as herself. Cengiz was a friendly young man from Muş and a committed HADEP member who showed an interest in my research. Cengiz introduced me to his friend İbo Bedran, also a HADEP supporter. İbo and his wife Rana were newly married and they welcomed me warmly. They lived in üst-Kaynarca ('upper' Kaynarca) which is situated further away from the sea, on the other side of the D100. İbo was originally from Alimler village, a small village in Tatvan district of Bitlis province. İbo and his family, the Bedran family, had been forcibly displaced in 1994. Their village was torched by the military and remained depopulated for years. The Bedran family and their fellow villagers were part of a large network which contained a large number of forced

³¹ One of the notable exceptions is Sema Erder (2002a). After I had moved to Pendik, an NGO established that also carried out research (Başak 2004). I also came across research of several others who did include, but not primarily focus on the issue of forced migration, such as that of Serpil Bozkulak (2005) and Işık and Pınarcıoğlu (2002).

migrants from a region affected quite heavily by the forced migration policies of the state (TBMM 1998; Çetin 1999).

In the months after my first meeting with İbo, he introduced me to many of his relatives and friends from Alimler village and the surrounding area, most of whom were forced migrants. Many of them resided in Pendik, but they had relatives on the European side of the city. Some male members of the Bedran family had established economic and social ties with Istanbul long before 1994 by working in Istanbul on and off. The Günay family, another family from Alimler village, had even built itself a one storey house when the family still had its permanent residence in the village. Female members of the Bedran family introduced me to a young couple from Diyarbakir which they had met in HADEP. The couple and their three children fled to Istanbul after having suffered severe and protracted military oppression. They participated in my research too.

Because the ‘Alimler network’ seemed interesting to investigate, a few months after having first met İbo Bedran, I moved to a central location in Pendik. Another reason for moving to Pendik was that, after having met the Bedran and Günay families, I learned that there were many displaced Kurds from other regions as well, not only in Pendik, but also in the adjoining districts of Kartal, Tuzla and Sultanbeyli. Living in Pendik would offer me a base from which I could quite easily visit all of these districts. For my husband, Pendik hardly qualified as Istanbul. He had spent most of his life in European *gecekondu* (poor/squatter) neighborhoods³² (Gaziosmanpaşa and Esenyurt), had attended university in Kadıköy, and had spent part of his working life in a posh centrally located neighborhood called Teşvikiye. However, he was willing to give Pendik a try on the condition that we would not live in a *gecekondu* neighborhood: he was “past that stage”. Therefore, we rented a house in one of Pendik’s better neighborhoods, close to the sea of Marmara.

Both alt- and üst-Kaynarca were administratively divided in a large number of neighborhoods housing thousands of people. On the European side of Istanbul, there were several neighborhoods where Kurds constituted a majority, but on the Asian side these were fewer. In Pendik, Kartal and Tuzla, many forced migrants lived in mixed neighborhoods which housed a significant number of Kurds, but were dominated by Turks.³³ Sometimes forced migrants from a particular extended family or region clustered together in a few adjoining apartment buildings, but often they were dispersed over different streets and neighborhoods. The Bedrans and their fellow villagers, for instance, were

³² Rural migrants often occupied land that was not their own and built a shack (a *gecekondu*) on it. Literally *gecekondu* means ‘placed overnight’: if a dwelling was constructed overnight and finished by morning, the authorities were not entitled to tear it down without resorting to the legal system. The term ‘*gecekondu* neighborhoods’ can be translated as ‘shanty towns’ or ‘squatter neighborhoods’. However, if a defining feature of a *gecekondu* is that it is built on land not legally owned by the builder or home owner, also many villas in Istanbul are *gecekondu*s.

³³ In Sultanbeyli, neighborhoods that were primarily populated by Kurds were more common.

scattered over a large area because most of them were dependent on the supply of cheap rental housing in the cheaper parts of the district. Considering the fact that most of the Bedrans and the other forced migrants had little contact with their (Turkish) neighbors, their closest social relations (those with fellow villagers and people from the same region) were with people they did not see on a daily or weekly basis. To understand the relevance and content of these relations, I had to travel around quite a lot.

While still busy getting to know different members of the Bedran and Günay families, knowing that people from different regions and with different ‘family set ups’ might have different experiences and views, I thought of workable and meaningful ways to broaden the number of participants in the research. To gain insight in the diversity within the group of forced migrants, I decided to include different ‘types’ of displaced people from different regions in my research. Although my main interest remained with Kurds who had been expelled by the military or the PKK, situations in which the armed conflict had *indirectly* contributed to the departure of villagers needed to be taken into account too.³⁴

The research participants

Most of the forced migrants I spoke with were sympathetic to HADEP/DEHAP and the PKK, and many were strong PKK supporters. Yet, I felt it was important to try and arrange interviews with forced migrants who did not feel close to the PKK. After all, state oppression and the forced migration policies of the 1990s affected large numbers of rural Kurds, not only those with sympathy for the PKK. Any family that did not join the village guard system could be at the receiving end of the depopulation policies of the state - in fact, even the village guards were not always exempted from this (see, for example, Kurdish Human Rights Project 1996). During the years of intensified state oppression, popular support for the PKK greatly increased, but it is unlikely that all people affected by state oppression became PKK sympathizers. Heidi Wedel (2000:190), for example, reports on a group of Kurdish displaced families in Istanbul who apparently voted for an Islamic party.³⁵

When I brought up this topic, the forced migrants claimed that virtually all forced migrants were sympathetic to HADEP/DEHAP. This was confirmed by well-informed Kurds in and outside HADEP/DEHAP who were not forced migrants themselves. However, a few people did know forced migrants who supported the ruling AKP or the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi)³⁶. Unfortunately,

³⁴ I do not have the space to detail how I contacted all the research participants, but the appendix gives some information about this, and provides other relevant information about the families as well.

³⁵ This does not exclude the possibility of the migrants also feeling affinity with the PKK, but such feelings are not too likely.

³⁶ This is a small Islamic party, which is generally regarded to be more dogmatic and conservative than the AKP. It has never been represented in the Turkish Parliament, but has mayors in a number of cities and districts.

none of them was willing or able to introduce me to these migrants. To give an example, in an effort to meet forced migrants without ties with HADEP/DEHAP - and keeping in mind that religion is a very important factor in the life of many Kurds - I approached the local branch of the Saadet Party. A representative of this party introduced me to a family from Tatvan that had voluntarily migrated to Istanbul in the late 1990s. The oldest son of the family told me that his uncle - also a Saadet supporter - had suffered a lot in the military conflict and that his village had been depopulated. Unfortunately, he was reluctant to bring me into contact with his uncle. I approached several other Kurds, including imams, Islamic intellectuals and workers at NGOs, with the request to put me in contact with forced migrants who were not pro-HADEP/DEHAP, but without result.

Finally, Celal Akkaya, an Islamic intellectual and publicist, arranged for me to meet Seyyid *mele*, a Kurdish religious teacher who had been trained at the *medrese* (school for Islamic religious learning, banned by the state). This teacher fled Diyarbakir to escape both state oppression and Hizbullah, a militant Islamic group which supposedly worked with the state. Seyyid added a different experience of forced migration to the range that I was hoping to describe and I spent quite a lot of time with his family. A few months after our first meeting, he introduced me to his father-in-law Abbas, who had been a village guard when he still lived in Siirt province, and who was a supporter of the Saadet Party. My relationship with Abbas remained a bit superficial. He was never too willing to talk until I revisited his family in 2005. By then, I had also developed rather warm relations with his female family members.

In short: who, when, where

Most of my observations are based on my contacts with members of families from Elazığ, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Siirt, Eruh and Midyat. My contacts with these families were established in 2001 or 2002 and I continued to visit most of them until mid 2004 (see appendix 1). Some families I visited five or six times, other families I visited over twenty times. Of six families, several members visited me and my family at least once. Most of my research activities took place in the Asian districts (Pendik, Kartal, Sultanbeyli and Tuzla). To follow up some of the family ties of the migrants, I travelled to the European side several times, mainly to Bağcılar. In 2002 I went to the Southeast to witness some of the destruction which had taken place in the 1990s. I visited Vadiyeli village in Elazığ province, Dağgülü village in Bingöl province, Alimler village in the Tatvan district of Bitlis province, as well as a village close to Alimler, and the village of Rana (the wife of İbo Bedran from Alimler) in Bingöl province. In 2005, I visited Ağaçlık village in Bitlis province. Besides studying families, I interviewed individual forced migrants - in Taksim, a few other European neighborhoods and on the Asian side - as well as six *muhtars* (elected neighborhood officials), several civil servants, doctors, Kurdish imams, officials of political parties, and many NGO workers. Before focusing on my

relationships with the migrants, I will provide some more information about the districts where they lived.

Pendik, Tuzla, Kartal and Sultanbeyli

Istanbul is built on two stub shaped protrusions of the European and Asian continents, which face each other over the deep blue waters of the Bosphorus strait (see map 1). In the north, these stubs of land are enclosed by the Black Sea, in the south by the Sea of Marmara. Kartal, Pendik and Tuzla are located at the far southeast of Asian Istanbul on the coast of the Sea of Marmara. They have an older and somewhat more impressive history than Sultanbeyli, which is located more offshore to the east, behind Kartal and Pendik, so to speak. In the 1930s, the total population of Kartal, Pendik and Tuzla was a little over 10,000. In 1960, Sultanbeyli still housed as few as 433 people.³⁷ Today, the population of the four districts is over 1.4 million. Kartal is around 150 square kilometers, its population is now over 600 thousand, Pendik is close to 200 square kilometers and houses around 520 thousand people. At the time of my research, an official sign at the entrance read 348,000. Sultanbeyli and Tuzla are smaller, both in geographic terms and in population size. Sultanbeyli covers 35 square kilometers, in 1990 its population was 83 thousand, but today it holds over 273 thousand people. With 125 thousand residents on twelve square kilometer, Tuzla is the smallest of the four districts.

Pendik, Kartal and Tuzla used to be small villages, located miles away from Istanbul and inhabited by fisherpeople and horticulturalists, many of whom were Rum (Greek-orthodox Christians) who were forced to leave after the First World War. In the early 20th century, Pendik's population, consisting of Rum, Turks and Armenians, was about 3700. During the forced population exchange between Turkey and Greece, which was stipulated in the Lausanne Agreement of 1923, many Rum abandoned Pendik and Muslims from Greece were settled in their place.³⁸ Pendik was well-known for its high-quality fruits, vegetables and meat, and functioned as a summer resort. Its houses and villas were surrounded by lush gardens and fruit trees. In the 1950s, Pendik became part of the Kartal district of Istanbul. Pendik was proclaimed an industrial area and many factories were built along the D100 Highway, generally referred to as the E5 Highway, about a kilometer offshore. On both sides of the E5 Highway, *gecekondu* neighborhoods arose. In the 1970s, the area between the E5 and the shore became completely inhabited, and after 1980 the area north and east of the E5 followed. In 1987 Pendik became a separate district. Over time, several of

³⁷ Much of the information on Kartal, Pendik and Tuzla, and some about Sultanbeyli, is derived from Atilla Aksel's contributions to the *'Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi'* (Istanbul from Yesterday until Today Encyclopedia) published in 1995.

³⁸ See Renée Hirschon 1989 for an insightful anthropological study of Greek-orthodox forced migrants from Turkey who settled in Greece. They still called themselves refugees in the early 1970s.

the surrounding villages lost their independent village status and became neighborhoods of Pendik. Today Pendik comprises over 35 neighborhoods. The center of Pendik also changed appearance. Its one or two storey mansions and wooden houses with their large gardens were replaced by tall apartment buildings.

Sema Erder (2002a:61,65-70) notes that Pendik's migration and settlement history contains many ingredients that might give rise to tensions between groups. The district has urban structures and an 'indigenous' middle class which goes way back, but its characteristics changed tremendously with the influx of large groups of migrants. As stated above, Pendik was an important receiving area for forced migrants from the Balkan in the 1920s. In the 1950s, other groups of forced migrants from the Balkan settled in Pendik (among them *Sancaklı* Bosnians and Bulgarians). Around that same time period, migrants from Anatolia started to come to Pendik, turning Pendik into 'Anatolia's first stop in Istanbul' (Erder 2002a:61). Subsequently, in the 1990s, Pendik received many forced migrants from the war in Bosnia and from Turkey's Southeast. Erder observes that settlement below the E5 (D100) occurred mainly within legal frameworks, but that the area above the E5 is characterized by illegal settling patterns. The forced migrants who took part in my research almost all lived above the E5, in Gözdağı, Sülüntepe, a Pendik neighborhood and üst-Kaynarca, but also below the E5, in alt-Kaynarca and Güzelyalı, for example.

Pendik borders on Tuzla in the southeast. In the 1960s and 1970s Tuzla was still a small place and very green. The building of the Pendik shipyard, most of which is actually located in Tuzla, signified a major change. In 1990, when Tuzla still resorted under Pendik district, the population of the Tuzla area was a little under 73.000. In 1992 Tuzla became an independent district, administratively divided in ten neighborhoods. The forced migrants that I interviewed primarily lived in Şifa neighborhood, an area that looked quite bare at the time. It had wide unpaved streets and many of its *gecekondu* and apartment buildings were unfinished. Tuzla is well-known as one of Istanbul's more recent *gecekondu* districts, but is also known for its shipyard, leather industry, Infantry Academy, and the Turkish Naval Academy. The prestigious Sabancı University, a private university established in the mid 1990s by one of Turkey's leading family-run business companies, is also in Tuzla.

Kartal became a district of Istanbul in 1928. It functioned as a summer resort and a central transport center. In 1947 Kartal was declared an industrial area. On both sides of the E5 factories were built, and *gecekondu*s were erected in their wake. After 1970, the coast line became covered with apartments. In 1992, Maltepe, which lies to the north, became a separate district, as did the area that is now called Sultanbeyli. Yakacık, where most of the Kartal-based forced migrants lived that I studied, is situated on a mountainside northeast of the E5, close to what remains of the Aydos forests. Kartal houses people from many different regions and backgrounds, among them many forced migrants. Serpil

Bozkulak (2005:254) states that Gülsuyu, the Kartal neighborhood she studied, took in a large number of forced migrants from the Southeast. A large percentage of Kartal's population is Alevi³⁹ and the district has long been a stronghold of the Republican People's Party (CHP⁴⁰), which tends to be popular among Alevis. Of all four districts, Kartal was (and is) best connected to central Istanbul. At the time of the research, Kartal was connected to the city center in three main ways, that is, by the D100 and the 02 Highways, by the 'sea bus' (fast ferry), and by the so-called coast road which continued to Pendik in the other direction. Kartal has long been a center of commerce and services, notwithstanding the fact that in the 1990s, many of the old factories in Kartal stopped operating: they became superfluous or were outdated. The same thing happened in Pendik and Tuzla.

While Kartal has the oldest history of integration into Istanbul, Sultanbeyli has the shortest. The earliest report of a settlement at present-day Sultanbeyli dates back to 1960, it was then called Sultanbeylik. The construction of a large highway connecting Thrace to Anatolia (*TEM yolu*) in 1985, which went right through Sultanbeyli, spurred the growth of Sultanbeyli. Most of Sultanbeyli's development was unplanned and remained outside the scope of the law. Property was appropriated and bought and sold illegally (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001:242-258). The first people coming to Sultanbeyli were mostly from Trabzon, Muş, Gümüşhane, Tokat and Erzurum. Of these, only Muş is primarily Kurdish. In the 1980s, the majority of immigrants originated from within Istanbul. In the mid 1990s, however, those from the Southeast started to make up a much larger proportion of the immigrant group (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001:296). The Islamic parties Saadet and AKP have long been very successful in Sultanbeyli (see Tuğal 2009), but Sultanbeyli also houses thousands of Alevis, who tend to be associated with progressive politics, and Kurdish political parties draw a higher percentage of voters in Sultanbeyli than in, for example, Pendik.

³⁹ Alevism is a container term for a heterodox religious minority in Turkey. It is estimated that between 10 and 40 percent of the population of Turkey is Alevi. Some communities of Alevis have Azerbaijani Turkish as their native language, others speak Arabic, Turkish or Kurdish (Zaza and Kurmanci). There is great variety in beliefs and practices among different Alevi communities. Most people in Turkey regard the Alevis as Muslims with a flawed understanding of Islam. In the eyes of these critics, the Alevi worshipping of Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed, is just one example of Alevi wrong judgement. Although some Alevis do indeed regard themselves as Muslims, others insist they are not. These Alevis often stress the non-Islamic origins or aspects of their faith. An Alevi friend of mine told me, for example, that the word Alevi is not derived from the name Ali, but from *alev*, which is the Turkish word for fire, the worshipping of which has long been important in pre-islamic religious practices. Others argue that being Alevi is more a matter of (a progressive) mentality than religion. Alevis tend to possess a strong group identity. Whether this 'groupness' constitutes a religious identity, an ethnic identity or something else, is a matter of discussion among Alevis and among academics as well.

⁴⁰ Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi. Until the introduction of the multi-party system in 1945, the CHP was the only political party. The party has long regarded it as its duty to educate the 'ignorant masses' so that the masses will become 'enlightened secularists'. The party is fiercely opposed to the AKP and is against the wearing of headscarves as 'political symbols' in the public realm.

Most of these recently built *gecekondu* districts have none of the picturesque character of the impoverished historical inner city neighborhoods such as the ones around İstiklal Caddesi in European Istanbul, or in Arab cities like Cairo (cf. Singerman 1995). In most *gecekondu* neighborhoods, the rustic one storey *gecekondu* houses of a few decades ago have been replaced by four or five storey buildings, made of undecorative red brick. In better neighborhoods the bricks would be plastered, painted or overlaid with miniscule ceramic tiles, but in *gecekondu* areas they are covered in grey cement at most. In spite of the uniform character of the built development, no two buildings are exactly the same, because families constructed them with sweat, blood and tears after their own private plan. This relative variety is sometimes interrupted by *siteler*, complexes of slightly more luxurious apartment buildings, built with commercial purposes by contractors, and a few flower-adorned *gecekondu* houses which have survived the recent building waves. In short, with the exception of the occasional brightly coloured clothes-line or oriental carpet left hanging over a balcony to dry, everything about Istanbul squatter neighborhoods seems rather grim, grey and bleak, although less so in areas where development is sparse enough to allow the natural environment to keep its presence.

In Pendik center, with my dark hair and medium height, I could walk around without being noticed much. In stores, people would sometimes wonder if I was Bosnian or Herzegovinian. In the poorer neighborhoods of Pendik and in most of the other neighborhoods where the forced migrants lived, I stood out much more, and not only because I was foreign or European. Oğuz Işık and M. Melih Pınarcıoğlu (2001:25-26), two Turkish sociologists who lived in Sultanbeyli for a while, describe having felt strangers there from the beginning until the end. Once, when they went into a photshop to ask for a slide film, the salesperson asked them: 'Do you speak English?' They also relate how, when they had 'escaped' to Pendik center to enjoy some cold beers, they felt like two students at military high school who had sneaked out without permission. The 'natives' of Kartal and Pendik regard the old Kartal and Pendik as very sophisticated in comparison with the 'backward and fundamentalist' Sultanbeyli. And Pendik residents living 'below the E5' generally regard this area as '*kültürlü*' (cultured) and inhabited by '*kaliteli insanlar*' (people of high quality) as opposed to the area 'above the E5'. Pendik center still 'feels' different from Sultanbeyli but its people have changed appearance over the past years. A befriended university teacher recalled that thirty years ago, young girls would stroll the Pendik coast in bikini. Today most women in Pendik cover their heads and wear long overcoats. In the view of many Pendik natives, the 'low culture level' which they attribute to Sultanbeyli has taken root in their district as well. In Kartal and Tuzla, I expect 'elite attitudes' to be more or less the same.

How the forced migrants viewed me

By most Kurds, I was received warmly. Because I usually came through trusted channels they were willing to talk with me. Kurds often pride themselves in being hospitable, I showed a genuine interest, and my visits presented a break from their routine, so people welcomed me in their homes time and time again. I was sometimes introduced to other Kurds as ‘a daughter-in-law of ours’ (*gelinimiz*), because my husband’s parents were of Kurdish descent. At the same time, I was perceived as European.

Many Kurds have a favorable view of Europe and Europeans: they regard European countries as much more democratic than Turkey, and the European ‘mentality’ (*zihniyet*) as ‘more humane’ than that in Turkey. They are well aware of the lobbying activities of European and other foreign human rights organizations in their favor. Yet, they also regard Europeans as ‘two-faced’ (*iki yüzlü*).⁴¹ Although many appreciate the freedoms that Kurds enjoy in European countries - the PKK-associated channel Medya TV⁴² broadcast from Europe, the Kurdish Parliament in Exile was founded in Europe, Kurds are free to adhere to a number of Kurdish associations and so forth - they also feel that outside its borders, Europe is mainly supporting human rights in theory. When it comes to matters such as the extradition of supposed PKK terrorists, or when it comes to the way in which Turkey deals with its Kurds, Europe is accused of putting economic and diplomatic interests first. Several times I was - mildly, I must say - interrogated on Dutch and European politics, for example, when Nuriye Kesbir, a high ranking PKK official who had applied for asylum in The Netherlands in 2001, was threatened with extradition to Turkey. I was asked why the Dutch government took anti-Kurdish decisions and how ‘the Dutch people’ felt about these matters. However, on the whole, people looked at Europeans favorably, and in my dealings with them I often regarded it an advantage to be European. A Turkish researcher of non-Kurdish background could well acquire the same measure of rapport, but it would probably demand more effort from him or her.

Women sometimes tried to persuade me to become a Muslim. I usually smiled and said that becoming a Muslim was not really on my mind. One girl shyly asked if I had considered becoming a Muslim. “You would be above us”, she said. When I asked her what she meant, she said she didn’t know. Later others told me it would be *sevap* (a good deed) for the person who made me a Muslim, he or she would go right to heaven.⁴³ Some men prided themselves in their ability to judge me on my humanity, instead of on my gender, supposed

⁴¹ Many Turks also state that Europeans are ‘more civilized’ in social interaction. Only when it comes to the Kurdish issue, interpretations of European attitudes and actions differ. Although Turks and Kurds often agree that Europe is hypocritical in this respect, Turks generally situate this hypocrisy in a different place. They feel that Europe blows up Turkey’s problems in the human rights department while glossing over its own past and present misdemeanours.

⁴² It is now called Roj TV.

⁴³ Alevis never hinted at a conversion to Alevism.

religion, or Europeanness. They told me that in the village, they would not have treated me the same, because I was not a Muslim and did not cover my head. As a young man from the Bedran family said once:

Ten or fifteen years ago we would have treated you differently. When people, *Nurcular*⁴⁴, for example, don't want to talk with you, it can be because you're Christian, because you're foreign, they may wonder if you're from the state, they will look at you with suspicion. In HADEP, for example, half of the women is covered⁴⁵, the other half isn't. People who go to HADEP are used to seeing those differences. People who don't have ties with HADEP, aren't. When a *Nurcu* sees you, he'll first see that you're not wearing a headscarf, then that you're Christian, then that you're from Europe, these are all disadvantages for you. That's at least how I think he'll see you, I'm not completely sure.

At first I did not give the headscarf much thought. Istanbul is a big enough city to allow for virtually every possible variety of faith and dress. I had lived in Istanbul before, was married to a 'local', and was used to situations in which women with and without headscarves interacted. My own home was not so far removed from the areas where I did my research, and I regarded it odd to wear a headscarf to the migrants' homes and take it off in my own neighborhood. Such an arrangement might bring me in funny situations if interviewees ran into me at Pendik *çarşı* (Pendik bazaar), for example. Even weirder would it be when people came to visit me at my house. Besides, many women in HADEP/DEHAP, the party to which most migrants adhered, did not wear headscarves.

As it were, I only covered my head on religious occasions and when I went to meet the *mele* and his relatives in Sultanbeyli, for, not only is Sultanbeyli known for its religious vigor, *meles* are entitled to a special degree of respect and have to be careful in their dealings with women: for the *mele* to speak to me was already stretching the limits of what was regarded decent. It looked better if I covered my head at least. Most of the time I unelegantly wrapped and tied the cloth around my head trying to make sure no hair was showing. I tended to feel rather uncomfortable when I caught myself rolling down my sleeves and adjusting my headscarf, the minute a man came into the room. My embarrassment at my incompetence faded a little when I realized that all women adjusted their headscarves and posture when a man entered. Yet, they must have

⁴⁴ The *Nurcu* movement finds its origin in the early years of the 20th century, when Sait Nursi, a Kurd from the village of Nurs in Bitlis province, started to gather a large following around him. He was outspokenly pro-Kurdish but joined the Kemalists - when he was young, he was a military commander - in their opposition to the European occupation of Ottoman lands. After falling out with Mustafa Kemal over the role of religion in the new republic, he was exiled to western Turkey. There he devoted the rest of his life to religion (Bruinessen 1992:257-258). According to many Kurds I met, today's *Nurcular* have forgotten all about the Kurdish origin of the movement.

⁴⁵ 'Covered' means wearing headscarves, long sleeves etc.

been more subtle than me, because after the second or third visit to the family of Abbas, in which I struggled to stay covered and not sweat too much at the same time, Abbas's daughters assured me that I really did not need to wear a scarf if I was not used to it. I persisted in wearing it in Sultanbeyli, but on the bus home, I tried to find a fitting moment to do away with my scarf.

It would have been an advantage if I had spoken Kurdish. Through self-study and by taking lessons from private teachers, I did gain a significant knowledge of Kurdish grammar, but I never developed the ability to understand and speak Kurdish. Although the majority of forced migrants could express themselves well in Turkish, many lamented the fact that they could not speak Turkish well enough, and that they would have been able to express themselves better in Kurdish. While these people focused on their own perceived inability to speak Turkish well, a few others reproached me for not having learned Kurdish. On a visit to an NGO in Taksim, a young politically conscious Kurdish woman sourly reproached foreign researchers who made the effort to learn Turkish but not Kurdish. I was one of them obviously. I do not think I would have been received very differently by most people if I had spoken Kurdish - the migrants were welcoming as it was - but the focus of the research and the outcome of conversations and interviews might have been different. The fact that I did not speak Kurdish made it difficult to catch 'narratives-in-use', as Michael Gilsonan (1996:57) termed the stories told in a multiplicity of 'daily life situations', in which Lebanese men give accounts of themselves. Some of the narratives told to me were established 'on the spot' in liaison with other Kurds present, others were reserved for - or fashioned in - private conversations with me, yet others were told in similar form in daily interactions with others.

THE DISSERTATION IN BRIEF

In *chapter 2*, the theoretical context of the research will be drafted. First, to place the phenomenon of forced displacement in a comparative perspective, I will consult the 'forced migration studies' literature which has burgeoned in the past few decades. Secondly, in putting forth aspects of theories about internal displacement, refugees, international and internal migration, diaspora, social memory, identity, war and violence, I will argue that the Kurdish forced migrants were engaged in a struggle for survival and meaning in a context marked, but not determined by, different forms of past and present violence.

Chapter 3 focuses on the people from Alimler. It is a story about village life before the PKK came to the region, the encroachment of the armed conflict on the village, the subsequent forced migration of the villagers, and their life in Istanbul. It is a story presented from beginning to end as it was often told by forced migrants, albeit with minor variations. This story unsettles dominant narratives about the armed conflict and the forced migration. It is a true story in the sense that it is based on the migrants' lived experiences. Yet, as I will argue,

it is not the only story which could and perhaps should be told about the impact of war and displacement on the villagers of Alimler.

In *chapter 4* the pre-migration part of the Alimler story is placed in the perspective of the other stories told, and in a broader conceptual perspective. The chapter sheds light on war-related reforgings of relationships and on the creation of mindsets that provided the basis for people's adaptation to later circumstances. It will become clear how pre-war social dynamics shaped the positions adopted by villagers - or thrust upon them - during the armed conflict, and how these positions (with all their including and excluding potentialities) 'primed' their future lives in Istanbul. Three main ingredients of most pre-migration stories were 'The State', 'The PKK' and the relationships between and among villagers. All of these themes came in at least two versions, one that was easily narrated, and one that was not at all easily narrated. By looking at the impact of gender and social position on people's ability to gain acknowledgement of their experiences, internal divisions affecting people's opportunities after migration are addressed.

The focus of *chapter 5* is on the processes of displacement and early settlement. In concentrating on the pre-migration connections of the forced migrants with Istanbul, on the events that directly preceded the actual move from the village and on the different migration trajectories, I will try to reconstruct how different factors worked together to produce particular outcomes in particular cases. I will also argue that in the 1980s, Istanbul had changed in such a way that it had become more difficult for migrants to procure housing and to climb the economic ladder. For Kurds, the aggravating armed conflict between the state and the PKK added injury to insult: not only were the forced migrants unable to preserve economic, social and cultural ties with their village of origin, they also had to battle with strong anti-Kurdish sentiments.

The next three chapters deal with the migrants' ongoing search for economic, social and emotional security. The question is raised who might have been their allies in the procurement of stable employment and health care, for example. *Chapter 6* is devoted to a discussion of activities of governmental and nongovernmental organizations in the field of social welfare. I will explain why the forced migrants in my study proved unable to capitalize on the limited opportunities provided to them by state organizations and NGOs. It will be shown that welfare provisions were meagre to begin with, and that Kurds were exempted of most of the existing provisions, not just because they were unknowledgeable of some of the opportunities, but also because of clientelist practices and procedural obstacles, *and* because of the 'state-oriented' approach adopted by most organizations. This approach is engrained in all 'affairs of the state' and even restricts professionals who do not share the ultranationalistic tenets of state discourse about Kurds.

Chapter 7 and 8 are devoted to the significance of 'old' and 'new' informal social relationships. The social capital of displaced Kurds cannot be understood

without an understanding of their violent experiences with state violence, the Turkish media, widespread feelings of ‘anti-Kurdism’, the repression of the Kurdish language, the physical destruction of the villages, and the lack of institutionalized support. The Kurds arrived unwillingly, impoverished, disoriented and distrustful. Most of them felt unwelcome and were hoping to return. Initially, they were not geared at making their lives a success in Istanbul, they just wanted to bridge the time between arrival and return in the least uncomfortable way. They had low stocks of physical, human and cultural capital, so practically the only thing that they could rely on was their social capital. The migrants’ social capital turned out to be crucial to their survival (cf. Loizos 2000), yet it was unreliable and insufficient.

Chapter 7 focuses on the ‘failures’ of social capital. In this chapter, the topic of social capital is studied through the ‘health lens’, because ‘health’ is the field in which the shortcomings of people’s social capital could be discerned most clearly. Health problems were widespread, not only because the experience of forced migration had particular repercussions on the mental health of the forced migrants (Aker 2007a and 2007b), and armed fighting and state repression ensued in a high vulnerability to physical afflictions, but also because the Kurds were and are among the poorest of the Turkish population. The poor in any country tend to be in worse health than the wealthier segments of the population. The concept of ‘structural violence’ or “the soft knife of state policies that severely disrupt the life worlds of people” (Das & Kleinman 2000:1), which I will elucidate in chapter 2, is of particular relevance to the argument in this chapter. Although the migrants’ social capital played an important role in improving people’s access to health care, the shortcomings of ‘the system’ and exclusionary practices were such that social capital was by no means effective enough.

Chapter 8 focuses on the ‘successes’ of social capital by treating the concept from another angle. I will show that when (displaced) Kurds were confronted with conflicts, it was common practice to approach the leaders of the local branch of the main Kurdish political party. HADEP/DEHAP/DTP’s interventions had a profound effect on the ways in which people related to each other in the city. The possibility of approaching the party in case of a conflict can be regarded as an ‘ethnic resource’ that helped Kurds to stay on their feet in the city. One of my main arguments in this chapter is that by picking up where ‘the state’ left off, or better said, fell short, the Kurdish party constituted an alternative for the state and other civic networks. The Kurdish party reached a position in which it competed with other authorities for power in the urban setting, and this development had a lasting effect on the directions in which displaced Kurds developed and nourished their loyalties.

In *chapter 9*, the conclusion, I will rephrase my argument in the terms of theories regarding agency, narrative and social capital, and will place my

findings in the context of other research about forced migrants in Turkey, some of which was carried out more recently than my fieldwork.

As I will show, social capital tends to have unequal benefits in any given network, group or 'constellation' of people. This turns out to be even more so in a context in which wartime violence and displacement restrain people's opportunities for the maintenance and recreation of previously important relationships, as well as their capacities for the establishment of new ones. The violent past 'primed' Kurds to foster relationships that provided a sense of security and belonging, but that sometimes also confined or even harmed them, and foreclosed - for some - the establishment of more 'advantageous' relationships. Because the outcome of this 'effect of the past' was far from uniform for forced migrants of different ages and genders, sometimes inequalities within and between families were reinforced. The seeds for this situation were planted by 'objective' events in and related to the region of origin. But the structural violence of which Kurds bear the brunt, the insensitivity resulting from mainstream renderings of 'issues Kurdish', and the migrants' own memories of war and displacement - which were, of course, fertilized in this hostile climate - were responsible for its growth. I hope that my analysis of the stories and practices of individuals and families will throw light on how this state of affairs came into existence, and that this dissertation will convey to the reader an understanding of the different ways in which different forced migrants dealt with the 'basic facts' of their Istanbul lives.

CHAPTER TWO

Dealing with Near Totalizing Experiences: Perspectives on Politically-Induced Displacement

Ethnic identities are ... nothing more than acts of ethnic identification that are frozen in time. As the social climate gets colder, they can go into deepfreeze and harden; as the social climate gets warmer, they can unfreeze and melt into new forms. (Baumann 1999:21)

Coping with violence becomes the only social role and task for warscape inhabitants - or at least the only one that their social analysts acknowledge. In the process, analysis tends to lose track of - or simply dismiss - all other potential sources of motive force that usually shape social behaviour. (Lubkemann 2008:12)

With the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Turkish state was defined as a republic whose religion was Islam and whose official language was Turkish (Göçek 2008). At that time, there was still room for the inclusion of people who did not regard themselves as ethnically Turkish, but in the following years it became clear that politicized Kurds had lost out in the state-making process. The armed violence in the Southeast emerged in the context of a long lasting state policy of treating Kurds as 'deficient Turks', as people with a potential for 'Turkishness' which needed to be developed, preferably with soft, but if necessary also with harsh methods (Barkey & Fuller 1998:12-13; McDowall 1996:186-211).⁴⁶ Many people of Kurdish background have indeed become 'Turkified' and are fully accepted as Turks. However, ever since the bloody repression of a number of Kurdish revolts in the 1920s and 1930s (Olson 1989; McDowall 1996:187,94-210), the quest for the acknowledgement of Kurdish identity and everything attached to it - the formulation of which varies between Kurdish individuals and groups - has continued (Bozarslan 1992; McDowall 1996). Millions of Kurds do not aspire to Turkishness or are unable to achieve the accent, the education and the life style that make a Kurd 'Turkish enough' to become Turkish.

To bring about the assimilation of Kurds in the Turkish mainstream, the Turkish authorities have repeatedly resorted to a strategy of forced displacement

⁴⁶ Turkification policies in the late 19th and early 20th century consisted primarily of 'cleansing' the country of Christian 'elements' (Akçam 1995). The Kurds came to be targeted later. See Mesut Yeğen 1999 for a study of Turkish state discourse regarding the Kurds.

of Kurds (Beşikçi 1977; Jongerden 2006). However, the forced migration wave of the early and mid 1990s was of an unprecedented scale. The forced displacement of Kurds constituted a form of political violence. It was an infliction of suffering ‘from above’ aimed at destroying the collective.

To understand in which directions the Kurdish migrants developed their responses to displacement, in this chapter I will pin attention down to a number of different processes and phenomena regarding the ways in which people who are displaced tend to understand and ‘express’ their past and present situations. Much of what will be discussed in this chapter and the rest of the dissertation can be viewed in terms of ‘social substances’ melting in the heat of war, assuming new forms in the rough weather of displacement, and hardening again in the Istanbul cold.

I will start the first section with a concise treatment of the terms ‘the state’, ‘the Kurds’ and ‘the Turks’. Then I will sketch the historical context of the forced displacement of Kurds in Turkey. This section concludes with a discussion of the unofficial goal of the state’s forced displacement policy, which was the dispersion and assimilation of Kurds.

In the second section the tension between the presumed totalizing character of forced migration and the insight that people even in the most dire of circumstances act on their own behalf, is discussed within the context of the question whether internal displacement and forced migration are ‘phenomena’ to be studied in their own right. The descriptive framework presented in the introduction suggests that they are, as long as we have a keen eye for distinctly local and national processes. However, I do find it useful to consider where and how an approach of forced migration as a generalizable experience falls short.

Then, because the theme of this dissertation is not ‘just’ displacement but *wartime* displacement, in the third section, I will focus on the implications of the fact that the forced migration of Kurds occurred in a situation of war, gross human rights violations, and structural violence. A conclusion to be drawn from this and the previous section is that experiences of displacement and war are likely to remain socially poignant also long ‘after the fact’. Better said perhaps, often there is no clear-cut ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’ war or forced migration.

Because social memory and identification practices constitute crucial ‘mechanisms’ in the ways in which the past continues to affect the present, the fourth section focuses on these and related concepts. The censorship of the forced migrants’ memories through dominant discourses and narratives and the social implications of such censorship constitute important topics here and throughout the dissertation.

I will conclude this chapter by depicting ‘the paradigmatic Kurdish forced migrant’ as he or she emerges from Kurdish human rights reports. As I will show in the following chapters, the story of the paradigmatic forced migrant constitutes a Kurdish counter-narrative which is influential in the migrants’ social ‘reworking’ of their experiences of war and forced migration. My

depiction of this paradigmatic forced migrant functions as a prelude to chapter 3, which comprises a 'lived instance' of the counter-narrative. But before doing any of the above, I will elucidate my use of the concepts of discourse and narrative, terms which I have used in the previous chapter and will use repeatedly throughout the dissertation.

Discourse and narrative

Discourses can be regarded as 'representational practices': as more or less coherent representations through language of - people's experiences with - aspects of the world (Mills 2004:106). In their production and reproduction discourses have real effects: they impact on people's perceptions - although not always in the ways 'intended' by the discourse - or at the very least, they impact on the ways in which people express themselves. Differentiations such as those between 'believers' and 'infidels', 'freedom fighters' and 'terrorists', and 'autochthonous' and 'allochthonous' people, for example, may make it hard for people socialized with these labels to speak, or even to think and feel outside them. Depending on the agents and institutions which 'author' specific discourses, discourses can be more or less dominant. As Gerd Baumann (1996:22) argues, dominant discourses present 'the issue at hand' in a rather simple set of terms, they are flexible of application, they lend themselves for established institutional purposes, and their communicative resources border on monopoly. However, even dominant discourses rarely are entirely coherent, homogeneous, or answering to all situations. This is why they often contain opportunities for dissent (Mills 2004).

Unlike discourses, narratives are explanatory, temporal and sequential. Narratives explain the present with reference to the past and create models for the future (Bruner 1986a). As Hinchman and Hinchman (1997:1) assert, both "as individuals and as members of various groups, our present existence is powerfully shaped by recollections of the past and anticipations of the future", and we tend to convey these recollections in narrative form. With the term public or dominant narrative, I refer to a story with a "drama, plot, explanation, and selective appropriation of events" (Somers & Gibson 1994:62), which has gained dominance in a society and which concerns a particular social, cultural or political phenomenon. Narratives are produced in and by discourse (Lambek & Antze 1996; Mills 2004:48) more than that they are producers of discourse. All narratives, even narratives which compete with those of 'the state' or 'the mainstream', are bound to be formed in response to - or to draw on - dominant discourses and their accompanying narratives.

THE TURKISH STATE AND THE PROBLEM WITH ASSIMILATING A PEOPLE THAT 'DOES NOT EXIST'

In writing about the repression of Kurds, it is difficult not to refer to the Turkish Republic or the Turkish state as some kind of cruel father who beats his children into obedience, or as some kind of machine to which historical positions and situations are 'fed' and which subsequently blurts out the corresponding discourses and narratives. Social scientific research of the past decennia has refuted the idea of the state as some kind of superhuman being with a life and will of its own, or as a unitary entity looming over us (Aretxaga 2003). The state has been exposed as an illusion, a fantasy, or a fictional reality which does in fact not exist 'as itself' outside the political, bureaucratic and administrative practices and machinations of people, but which nevertheless exists as "a powerful, inescapable, social reality" (Aretxaga 2003:400; see also Navaro-Yashin 2002; Sharma & Gupta 2008). As Wendy Brown argues:

The paradox of what we call the state is at once an incoherent, multifaceted ensemble of power relations and a vehicle of massive domination ... 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. (quoted in Aretxaga 2003:398)

'The state' is almost as imaginary as the nation: almost, because in everyday life the state is more tangible than the nation. In Turkey, millions of people are salaried by the state, all regularly deal with civil servants, many identify with the state, some despise or fear it, some want to change it, others want to preserve it, some fight for the state and others fight against it. In the Southeast and among (self- or externally-identified) Kurds in general, being pro-state or anti-state (or being viewed as such by others) had and has real costs and rewards. Clearly then, 'manifestations' of and ideas about the Turkish Republic govern people's interactions, thoughts, and discourses (e.g. Sirman 2006). Most people have expectations of and aspirations for the state, whether they like, love or hate it. The Turkish state then is as alive and kicking as it is nonexistent and elusive. I will use the concept of 'the state' as shorthand for people, powers, positions and policies that are thought of as 'being of the state', but that do not actually make up a unitary whole.

'The state' is not the only household term in need of deliberation. The same goes for 'Kurds' and 'Turks'. In speaking about 'the Kurdish issue' - in saying that for some Kurds it is more difficult to become Turkish than for other Kurds, for example - it is impossible to avoid terms suggesting that the basic categories of 'Kurds' and 'Turks' are timeless. They are not of course: the first pieces of evidence of categorization of people as Kurds and Turks date back over a

thousand years, but these labels did not denote ethnic or national groups in the modern sense of the word. Only in the late 19th century did people start to employ these categories as a basis for ethnic and/or national identity (Aydin 1995; Bruinessen 2000d). The great-grandparents of people who now unequivocally identify themselves as Turkish or Kurdish, are likely to have identified themselves rather differently when they were young, for example, in tribal, religious or occupational terms.

However, over the past century ‘Turks’ and ‘Kurds’ have become ‘categories of practice’, that is “categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors” (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:4). Today in Turkey, the validity of the label ‘Turk’ is beyond questioning: people may - and do - disagree about what it entails to be Turkish, but the term itself comes natural. The Kurdish label came into common use much later and does still not enjoy the same degree of legitimacy.

Until the early 1990s, any public discussion of ‘Kurdish’ issues was done without reference to Kurdish ethnicity. The Kurdish issue was viewed in terms of tribalism, religious fanaticism, backwardness, banditry and/or political extremism (Yeğen 1999), and army officers, politicians, policy makers, journalists and even Kurdish intellectuals spoke and wrote in terms of ‘the problems of The East’ (e.g. Bozarşlan 2002). The PKK’s attacks on military installations in two Kurdish towns in 1984 constituted a dramatic change of context. At first, the ‘separatist and terrorist’ - still not Kurdish - PKK was to be wiped out with conventional military means. However, when it became apparent that the PKK was growing instead of subsiding, a rift emerged among state elites, allowing journalists and other opinion makers who had been uncomfortable with state discourse to start phrasing the ‘problems of the East’ also in terms of an ethnic group being disenfranchised and repressed by the Turkish-nationalist state (Sommer 2005a).⁴⁷

Almost overnight, the term Kurd gained common usage. This resulted in a mainstream discourse evolving around a much broader set of terms than state discourse had until then accounted for. Although state and mainstream discourses about Kurds are neither separable nor entirely homogeneous, they can both be called dominant discourses in that they have a major impact on the language and thinking options available to people. It is almost impossible to be taken seriously in debates relating to the Kurdish issue if one does not implicitly or explicitly denounce the PKK as a terrorist organization, those who call the Turkish state or security forces ‘terrorist’ still are in deep trouble, and Kurdish politicians who acknowledge ties of closeness - family wise or feeling wise - between themselves and PKK members, can be almost sure to be persecuted.

⁴⁷ See Melissa Wall and Dilara Sezgin 2005 for an analysis of the use of the term ‘Kurd’ in *Hürriyet*, a mainstream newspaper, between 1997 and 2002.

Joost Jongerden (2006:63-66) has convincingly argued that the forced migration of Kurds in the 1990s was geared at the assimilation of Kurds in mainstream Turkish society. At the very least, assimilation through dispersion was supposed to be a ‘collateral advantage’ of smoking out the PKK. In fact, the notion of assimilation is thorny to begin with. Considering the fact that most people in Turkey were raised to believe that there are no Kurds in Turkey, only ‘mountain-Turks’, it has long been difficult for people to face up to the idea that there really does exist a separate ethnic group in Turkey, which the Turkish state has been unable to assimilate and which resists assimilation.⁴⁸ In such a context, to speak of the need for assimilation implies a major failure of the state. At the time of the research, to speak of Kurds as mountain-Turks would have made the speaker a laughingstock. People were more likely to dismiss claims of ethnic difference with expressions such as: “We are all brothers, we all intermarried. You can’t really know who is a Kurd anymore”.⁴⁹ Thus, the conviction that displaced Kurds were in the process of being assimilated was seldom made explicit by those who welcomed assimilation. References to the assimilation of Kurds were usually shrouded in implicit assumptions and in disregard of developments which might point in another direction.⁵⁰ After all, to argue a causal link between displacement and assimilation, one would first have to acknowledge that a large number of Kurds were indeed displaced by force.

Assimilation literally refers to the shedding of ‘old’ cultural characteristics and the adoption of ‘new’ ones, so as to blend in with the new. The expectation in Turkey is - or was until recently - that the adoption of ‘Turkish culture’ and the Turkish language will sever Kurds from their roots. But cultural homogenization does not always ensue in the assimilation of people’s minds and feelings (Eriksen 1993:28-30; Suárez-Orozco 2000). When immigrants or members of a minority group become more similar to members of the dominant group in terms of cultural practices, they may still regard themselves as different, they may start to attach different meanings to existing boundaries between them and members of other groups, or may erect new boundaries. Thus, usually, what is really at stake for proponents and adversaries of assimilation is

⁴⁸ People are used to only thinking of Christians and Jews as ethnic minority groups. The assumption is that the Turkish Republic has joined all the ‘Muslim brethren’ together.

⁴⁹ Much of what I describe here for the early 2000s is still applicable today. A difference is that nowadays there are more people who feel that the Kurds do exist and that they should enjoy some limited cultural rights. At the same time, an openly racist discourse in which Kurds are depicted as an inferior racial group is on the rise. In this discourse there is no discussion about whether ‘Kurds’ exist. The assumption is that they do and that they will and can never merge with the superior Turks. See Delal Aydın (2009) for an analysis of this racist discourse.

⁵⁰ In commenting on the ‘low’ percentage of votes for the Kurdish party DEHAP in the general elections of 2002, for example, Emin Çölaşan, columnist for *Hürriyet* newspaper, triumphantly argues that ‘the voters’ don’t support a party based on ‘Kürtlük’ and ‘Kürtçülük’ (Kurdishness and Kurdish patriotism), that is, ‘racism’ (November 5, 2002). He does not explain DEHAP’s vote increase from 4.8 to 6.2 percent, and fails to mention the fact that in some regions the party took over fifty percent of the vote. Taha Akyol, writing for another mainstream newspaper, often used a similar rhetoric.

the dissolution of cultural or ethnic *identity*. This is certainly the case in Turkey, where culture is regarded as a ‘symptom’ of group identities, and as a vehicle for the erasure and reinforcement of identities, a bit like in constructionist visions of ethnicity. The difference with constructionist visions of identity is that many people in Turkey do not regard the ethnic category in which they place themselves as constructed but as everlasting: Kurds are called upon to change or bolster their identity, but the identities at stake are usually regarded as immutable and timeless.

There is an obvious tension between the desire for the assimilation of Kurds and the measures taken by subsequent governments - always in close cooperation with the army, if not dictated by the army - to deal with the ‘Troubling East’. One of the strategies employed, that of forced displacement, was inherently problematic because the people targeted by this policy could not be made into loyal Turks through the use of threat and violence, nor could they be made to disappear. In the following section, I will investigate the impact of forced displacement and migration on the people who live through these ‘phenomena’. One observation to be made is that forced migration tends to leave a lasting imprint on people in ways unintended by the agents of displacement. However, I will also focus on the pitfalls of a too generalized approach of forced migrants and the circumstances under which they live their lives.

FORCED MIGRATION: A TOTALIZING EXPERIENCE?

The recollections of forced migrants which will be presented in some of the following chapters indicate that they were at the receiving end of developments beyond their control. This is also how forced displacement is viewed in much of the academic literature. Yet, in recent years, researchers of forced displacement have begun to place more and more emphasis on resistance to displacement, and on the abilities and capabilities of internally displaced people to reorganize their lives on their own terms (Oliver-Smith 1991; Cernea 1996; Vincent & Sorenson 2001). Case studies show that displacement carries a potential for unruliness: ‘the target population’ is likely to resist the implementation of forced migration policies or to ‘sabotage’ their logic and objectives.⁵¹

The anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith (1991) argues that internal displacement and resettlement tend to be ‘totalizing phenomena’.

The process is invariably difficult and painful, engendering feelings of powerlessness and alienation as people are uprooted from their familiar

⁵¹ Displacement does not have to be forced to have consequences unanticipated or unwanted by so-called ‘host governments’ and ‘host communities’. As Stephen Castles (2002) argues, policies regarding ‘voluntary’ migration have often achieved the opposite of their original objectives, partly because migration policy makers and analysts “have ignored the character of migration as a collective process based on the needs and strategies of families and communities” (Castles 2002:1145).

circumstances. Whole communities suffer acute degrees of disintegration as community structures, social networks and even kin groups may be dispersed to different resettlement sites. The affective ties between individuals and communities and their material environments are destroyed by uprooting and resettlement. These ties lie at the core of both individual and collective reconstructions of reality and removal from their most concrete manifestation endangers both psychological well-being and community mental health generally. (Oliver-Smith 1991:133)

A question that more and more researchers have started to ask over the last years, is whether it is useful to approach internal displacement and forced migration as areas of study in their own right. Some researchers find the use of the IDP-category as an analytical category problematic. Birgitte Refslund Sørensen (2001:6), for example, objects to the “grouping together of some 20-25 million people from several continents into one single humanitarian category with little attention to the aspects that define the internal differences of that category” and emphasizes that anthropological fieldwork challenges the validity of the IDP-category in a diversity of ways.

Liisa Malkki's (1995) criticisms of the way in which academics and international organizations approach international refugees are similar but more poignant. Malkki takes issue with the concept of ‘refugee status’ as a “recognizable, generalizable psychological condition” and argues that psychological interpretations of ‘the refugee condition’ obscure the political dimension of refugee movements (1995:510). In her view, academics have been biased toward ‘rooting’ as a universal human condition: “Again and again, one finds in this literature the assumption that to become uprooted and removed from a national community is automatically to lose one’s identity, traditions and culture” (1995:508). She argues that such academic and political framings of refugees are grounded in deeply engrained assumptions about the convergence of place, culture and nation. However, as she indicates, refugees are not necessarily poor, their new surroundings are not necessarily alien, they have not necessarily lost their social embedding and identity, they are not necessarily prone to mental illnesses, and their ‘homeland’ may not have been an ideal place to live at all. In Malkki's view, instead of presuming that displacement is an area of study in its own right, social scientists should show more attention to those who stay and the issue of ‘emplacement’, the state of staying put, of not being displaced.

Stephen Lubkemann (2008) extends Malkki's critique to academic views of internally displaced people on the one hand, and to civilians in war-affected environments on the other. He argues that in much of the literature, the plight of internally displaced people is highlighted as even more dire than that of refugees: displaced people are viewed as being ‘crammed’ behind the gates of camps and ‘stuck’ behind national borders. But not only refugees and internally

displaced people are regarded as ‘paradigmatic victims’ stripped down to their human core: “all warscape inhabitants - *whether they move or not* - tend to be discursively constituted in terms that suggest they are at the whim of larger forced and uncontrollable currents of violence” (Lubkemann 2008:8). In Lubkemann’s opinion, the stress placed on disruption, disintegration and destruction, and on the need for - or the inability of - displaced people to *cope* with war and displacement, incorrectly implies that war and displacement always constitute overriding life experiences. In fact, he argues, life is about many other things. Lubkemann also argues that it is paradoxical to use the term forced migration in combination with agency, because the use of the term ‘forced migrant’ assumes the migrant to be devoid of agency by definition.

In my view, Lubkemann slightly exaggerates the academic tendency to view forced migrants as mere victims. In 1999, almost a decade before Lubkemann’s book appeared, by drawing on the work of Julie Peteet, Julia Kristeva and others, Nevzat Soguk drew an outline of a more sensitive and realistic attitude toward forced migrants. In his view, this ‘emergent attitude’ gives priority to the standpoints of refugees themselves and to the multiplicity of refugee experiences, takes seriously their powers and resourcefulness, shows awareness of new possibilities of living created through or despite of dramatic changes, and interrogates notions of displacement as always characterized by physical dislocation between or across national borders. In the words of Soguk (1999:6), the emergent attitude urges “a reconsideration of territorializing national, ethnic, economic, cultural, and aesthetic identities amid the transversal ambiguities of a world ever in ferment. It reminds us that there are a thousand different ways to be and to feel displaced in the exhilarations of the world”.⁵²

Clearly, to view refugees and internally displaced people merely as helpless victims goes against the grain of a mass of evidence that shows that people, even in the worst of conditions, try to influence their circumstances (Dryden-Peterson 2006; Grabska 2006; Hernandez Delgado & Laegreid 2001; Kharashvili 2001).⁵³ It also goes against the grain of a mass of theory that tries to account for the ‘interaction’ between structure and agency (Giddens 1979; Ortnor 2006; Sewell 1992). But to acknowledge the wide diversity of experiences of displaced people and their own roles in processes of forced migration and resettlement, is not to negate the fact that forced displacement is likely to constitute a watershed event with long-lasting, and often negative effects for the people who are at the receiving end of it. Lubkemann (2008) seems to be so wary of research in which ‘warscape inhabitants’ are regarded as mere victims devoid of agency that he

⁵² Interestingly, this work of Nevzat Soguk, a political scientist, has hardly been picked up on: there is no mentioning of his work in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* or in the *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, for example.

⁵³ See Floya Anthias and Gabriella Lazaridis 2000 for a discussion of agency, structural constraints, and force among female migrants. See Farha Ghannan 1997 for an analysis of ‘cultural resistance’ by relocated people to the politics of urban restructuring projects.

steers away from assessments of war and displacement as likely to result in loss, disintegration and destruction. However, even views of refugees and internally displaced people as people who are hit by loss after loss provide room for agency.

As long as people perceive loss, they are actively reviewing their situation. The communal disintegration which many refugees and internally displaced people *do* experience (e.g. Downing 1996; Matlou 1999; Olaa 2001), often encourages them to try and rebuild their communities and to regain a sense of belonging as quickly as possible. To use the adjective ‘forced’ does not imply neglect of the issue of agency. Force and agential response, for example, in the form of accommodation or resistance, are two sides of the same coin. In the same way that we can speak of forced labor or forced sex, we can speak of forced migration without assuming that force is always ‘total’ - in the sense that people had no options or influence on the situation whatsoever - or that people’s entire lives revolve around the fact that they are or were forced to do things against their will. In an apt summary of the ‘state of the art’ knowledge about displacement, Elisabeth Colson⁵⁴ (2003) draws attention to all the ‘work’ and ‘parties’ involved in displacement and its aftermath.

Displacement is now seen as an endemic phenomenon that affects those uprooted, the communities that feel the impact of their arrival, governments, and the international agencies which increasingly play a major role in dealing with displacement. Uprooting and movement into new communities involve processes such as labelling, identity management, boundary creation and maintenance, management of reciprocity, manipulation of myth, and forms of social control. Uprooting also provokes loss of trust in governments and existing political leaders. It creates new diasporas with their own political interests. What happens after uprooting depends largely on whether people resettle on their own using existing social and economic resources, are processed through agencies, or are kept in holding camps administered by outsiders. (Colson 2003:1)

As stated earlier, social capital is an important concept in this dissertation: it is the focus of later chapters. Thus, the management of reciprocity and social resources to which Colson refers will be dealt with later. In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on war violence and violence more broadly, labelling processes, the emergence of diasporas, and the socioeconomic climate in which the Kurdish forced migrants resettled.

⁵⁴ She is the author of a classic study of displacement and resettlement, in which displaced people were by no means pictured as being devoid from agency, see Colson 1971.

WAR-RELATED AND OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Considering that the forced migrants moved from an area in which a low intensity war was fought to a warless city, we could say that their migration entailed a move from a war zone to a peace zone. However, it is questionable whether such a clear-cut division exists between ‘war zones’ and ‘peace zones’, or between ‘wartime’ and ‘peacetime’. As stated in the introductory chapter, my research brings out the lines of continuity between the before, during and after of migration, more than emphasizing the break between the southeastern past and the Istanbul present. Continuity is apparent when we realize that ‘pre-war’ and ‘after-war’ life can be as violent as life during war, that war is not contained in neat boxes confined by geographic borders or declarations by warring parties such as cease-fires and peace agreements, and that war-related violence does not always constitute an overriding experience, not even when people are ‘in the midst’ of war (Lubkemann 2008).

War and peace are intermingled categories for several reasons: for one thing because the profiteering from war is international, and for another thing because much of the abuse, exploitation and killing during war is grounded in pre-war practices and beliefs (Nordstrom 1999:71-72, 2004; Richards 2005). The observation that abuse and exploitation during war are grounded, at least partially, in pre-war practices and beliefs - and as such do not exemplify a total diversion from the ordinary - is captured in the following quote.

The soldier who aims the gun aims along years of training, not only on how to kill, but how to draw divisions, hatred, fears, and justifications - a mix of cultural and military lore that has been fed by everything from local grievances through military advisors to global media and music. All of this intersects to shape the lives of everyone involved in war, from the elite decision makers to the youth-soldiers fighting on shifty and hazy front lines. (Nordstrom 2004:13)

While it may in general be hard to distinguish analytically between ‘war’ and ‘peace’, this is certainly so in situations in which the refugees of the ‘warscape’ continue to live in the state in which the war was waged, or where it continues to be fought. Nordstrom’s contention that soldiers aim “along years of training, not only on how to kill, but how to draw divisions, hatred, fears and justifications - a mix of cultural and military lore”, is especially relevant here. For the Kurdish migrants, Istanbul was safer, but not peaceful: an anti-Kurdish mix of cultural and military lore was ever so present. In the Southeast the Kurds had lived in a constant state of surveillance: the State of Emergency had severely restricted people’s freedom of association, assembly and movement and had harmed their livelihoods, among other things through the imposition of curfews, food embargos, and a ban on the use of mountain pastures. In Istanbul, there were neither curfews nor checkpoints where soldiers inspected groceries to see whether people had perhaps bought excess flour or sugar to give to ‘the

terrorists'. However, heavily armed police officers and soldiers in the streets of Istanbul - who sometimes wore the same uniforms and carried the same guns as police and army officers in the Southeast - triggered recent memories of intimidation and torture, and the forced migrants were subjected to the same discriminatory laws to which they had been subjected in their home region, laws which prohibited Kurdish names, for example. Thus, while their relatives and friends continued to live in the war-affected region, the war continued in Istanbul in different ways.

Unobvious forms of violence

Until now, I have made ample reference to armed and other kinds of physical violence. Violence tends to be associated first with physical assault, and then with overt psychological abuse. However, in accordance with a growing number of authors, I view violence also in terms of deprivation and the sometimes hardly visible exercise of force. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (2004) argue, violence defies easy categorization.

It can be everything and nothing; legitimate or illegitimate; visible or invisible, necessary or useless; senseless and gratuitous or utterly rational and strategic. Revolutionary violence, community-based massacres, and state repression are often painfully graphic and transparent. The *everyday* violence of infant mortality, slow starvation, disease, despair, and humiliation that destroys socially marginalized humans with even greater frequency are usually invisible or misrecognized ... Rather than *sui generis*, violence is in the eye of the beholder. (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2004:2)

The most visible kinds of violence with regard to the armed conflict and the forced migration are the intimidation and torture many Kurds were subjected to: the violence of boots pacing through the contents of the larder and crushing frames with photo's of beloved relatives, the violence of ropes tying people's wrists and guns being pushed in people's backs, the violence to which the migrants made ample reference in their narratives. While the brunt of the intimidation and physical violence experienced by the forced migrants was meted out by members of the security forces in their region of origin, in Istanbul, armed state oppression did not always come to an absolute end. Several forced migrants were arrested during my research or went into hiding. Clearly, the state remained an agent of overt oppression. As stated above, the war continued in Istanbul in different ways.

But the Turkish state was not only an agent of war violence and forced displacement. It was also implicated in violence which is not readily classified as such, because it is regarded 'normal', 'natural' or a matter of 'bad luck', that is, structural violence. Structural violence refers to the systematic ways in which social structures and institutions make individuals, or masses of individuals,

vulnerable to illness and early death or coerce them to do certain things, by depriving them of the means to meet their basic social, cultural and subsistence needs. In explaining the high incidence of illnesses such as AIDS among poor women in certain poor countries and regions, the anthropologist and medical doctor Paul Farmer (1996) states:

It is neither nature nor pure individual will that is at fault; but rather historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire to constrain individual agency. Structural violence is visited upon on all those whose social status denies them access to the fruits of scientific and social advances. (Farmer 1996:23)

Structural violence inheres in elitism, nationalism and sexism, to name just three phenomena relevant to the Turkish-Kurdish context.⁵⁵ In visions of structural violence, there is much emphasis on the ways in which agency is restrained, in fact, structural violence *is* nothing but the restriction of agency by social forces, a restriction of agency which “generates bitter recrimination, whether it is heard or not” (Farmer 2005:25), but which is not publicly acknowledged as violent. I use the term structural violence to refer to the experiences of those at the receiving end of exclusionary policies, to refer to the invasive and unsettling impact of exclusionary human-made mechanisms on people. I do not use the term ‘structural violence’ to argue that as much blood sticks to hand of a civil servant who refuses food support to a poor woman in the slums, as there sticks to the hand of a soldier who shoots a deaf old man for ignoring his stop warning, or to the hand of a drunken youth who stabs a by-passer to death for blocking his way. I also do not argue that the same theories should be employed to understand these different kinds of violence. But the pen in the hand of the civil servant can be as deadly as the gun in the hand of a soldier, or the knife in the hand of an outraged youth. It is the ‘experiential level’ with which I am concerned (cf. Scheper-Hughes & Robben 2008:83).

Structural violence affects large numbers of Turkish citizens. However, Kurds tend to be more seriously affected. In the forced migrants’ region of origin, the lack of educational opportunities and decent health care facilities had long led to distress, poverty and numerous unnecessary deaths (Koivunen 2002; Özer 1998:338-362).⁵⁶ During the war the situation deteriorated. In a 1996-report prepared by the Turkish Chamber of Physicians⁵⁷ it was stated that the health problems in the region created a more dangerous environment than the PKK (Akçura 2008:285). In later chapters I will show that Turkish governmental

⁵⁵ For example, see Yilmaz Colak 2003 for an analysis of the political roots of cultural elitism in Turkey, and the edited volume by Sirin Tekeli 1995 for analyses of gender relations, gender inequality and resistance to gender inequality in different life spheres.

⁵⁶ See Majeed Jafar 1976 for an analysis of the economic situation in southeastern Turkey in the time period in which the PKK emerged.

⁵⁷ Türk Tabipler Odası.

and nongovernmental institutions operate in such a way - and this is both a matter of laws and procedures as well as the biases of the civil servants who apply these - that certain categories of Kurds are even less able to procure decent health care and education for their children than other poor people.

DEALING WITH DISPLACEMENT

Migrants, also voluntary migrants, are often distrustful of the 'host society', because they have not yet established the enduring relationships necessary for trust to develop, and have lost familiar social cues that would enable them to evaluate other people's characters and motives (Colson 2003:5-6). In the case of the Kurds, such 'normal' distrust might be expected to be magnified. Large numbers of Kurdish forced migrants were indeed prone to feelings of alienation and loss, and displayed feelings of hostility, insecurity, isolation, hopelessness, distrust, and paranoia, feelings which many of them had developed during the war and which were worsened by their displacement (Aker, Ayata, Özeren, Buran & Bay 2002; Arslan 2000). According to M. Salih Arslan (2000:93), many Kurds who were both tortured and displaced reported that the forced displacement was the most devastating experience of the two.

Even if the migrants tried to fit in, to the 'locals' their looks and accents signified non-conformity, if not resistance. Critics of the forced displacement of Kurds point to the marginalization of forced migrants, and some hint at the emergence of a Kurdish underclass or speak of radicalization (e.g. Pelda 2000:27-28; Zarakolu 2000:11; Yılmaz 2008:209).

As Ahmet Pelda (2000:25) argues, assimilation of Kurdish forced migrants was bound to occur in some areas, but the places of settlement were unable to 'absorb' large numbers of forcibly migrated Kurds - even if these Kurds were willing to renounce identity claims, I would add. Doğu Ergil (2008:78,104), a political scientist who in 1995 carried out a survey among Kurds in the Kurdish regions and in three Turkish cities, repeatedly states that young displaced people are disconnected from society and are likely to become involved in criminal activity.⁵⁸ The findings of Bediz Yılmaz (2008) who studied forcibly migrated families in Istanbul point in the same direction. At the same time, it is argued, by Yüksel Akkaya (2000:63), for example, that the masses of forced migrants without jobs or with jobs in the informal sector are quite politicized. Along similar lines, others argue that the migrated Kurds hold on to their ethnic identity (Ahmetbeyzade 2007; Çelik 2005). Ergil (2008:42,68-69) found that of the 12 percent of the interviewees favoring an independent Kurdish state, 71 percent

⁵⁸ His research was the first 'high profile' survey of 'ordinary' Kurds into their opinions about the Kurdish issue. It was funded by the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB - Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği). A lawsuit was filed against Ergil for making separatist propaganda but he was acquitted. See Ümit Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 1996 for an assessment of the report.

was displaced: displacement leads to radicalization, he concludes. Reports about the PKK successfully recruiting Kurdish young men and women who live in Turkish cities, suggest that people's allegiance to the PKK did not always falter in the urban context (Kirişçi & Winrow 1997:136; Marcus 2008). Haydar Darıcı (2009) presents a striking example of the recent politicization of Kurdish youths in a neighborhood in Adana, a politicization which is so strong that it has the potential of 're-politicizing' the older generations.

The immediate shock of displacement did not come to the supposed group identities of the Kurdish villagers who were displaced, but to their emotional, social and economic lives: the displacement directly affected who they lived, worked and socialized with. Nevertheless, the defiant glorification of Kurdishness that I encountered in the narratives of the migrants makes 'identity' an important component of the research. It should be noted in this respect that, analytically, the issue is not just one of ethnic identity becoming weaker or stronger, or of it being created or dispatched - the issue is one of a multitude of 'identity-related' feelings, positions and processes. In Gerd Baumann's (1999:21) terms: "ethnicity is not an identity given by nature, but an identification created through social action". A central focus of the research turned out to be on the migrants' responses - in 'real life' and in their narrations - to instances of 'hostile' external identification. What this identification dynamic meant for the forced migrants' understandings of themselves and their sense of 'groupness', defined by Brubaker and Cooper (2000:20) as "the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group", was an open question: the coming into existence of a new kind of groupness, as in diaspora, was one possibility.

Diasporas and oppositional consciousness

Above I quoted Elisabeth Colson (2003) who argues that displacement creates diasporas with their own political interests. As William Safran (2005:37) remarks, diaspora communities preserve heroic myths about the history, geographic location and achievements of their 'true fatherland', from which they feel they have been displaced by forces outside their own volition. Its members are convinced never to become fully accepted in the country to which they have migrated and believe to return to their homeland one day. To make this return possible they are actively involved in the improvement of conditions in the homeland, oftentimes they preserve strong emotional, cultural, economic and political ties to the homeland and to members of the same diaspora who have moved elsewhere. Peter Loizos (1999), Øivind Fuglerud (1999), Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson (2001), and Stanley Tambiah (2000) all provide examples of displaced populations in and from a diverse range of countries who long for their 'land of origin'.

Diasporas are 'imagined communities' (Anderson 2006) as much as ethnic groups and nations are. They do not flow naturally from the act of moving from

one place to another, and when diasporas emerge, displacement is unlikely to be the sole 'cause' of this. But the shared reiteration of memories of uprooting often has ensued in the emergence of a diaspora-consciousness centred around images of the past which "commonly legitimate a present social order" (Connerton 1989:3). When displaced people are made to feel unwelcome in their new surroundings, and especially when organizations with mass support among the displaced take modern nationalist notions about the convergence of place, culture and nation to their extreme - which is what the PKK did - displaced people are likely to develop a 'diaspora-consciousness'.

Although the term diaspora is generally applied to communities whose dreamed homeland lies across the borders of the state in which they live, it has also been applied to people who have not been displaced but whose 'real home' lies outside the state in which they live, and to people who have been displaced within the borders of the state in which they reside. An example of the first category is formed by Russians in the former Soviet republics, who were not displaced but who regard Russia as their true home (Sheffer 1995).⁵⁹ Kurds from southeastern Turkey who remained within the borders of Turkey, and Native Americans who were forced from their land before the American Civil War but who still live in what is now the US, fall in the second category (Ahmetbeyzade 2007; Houston 2001; Sayers, Burke & Henry 2007, see also Honkasalo 2009). Cihan Ahmetbeyzade (2007) argues that forced migrants in Esenyurt, a neighborhood in Istanbul, developed a strong diaspora-consciousness.

Diaspora consciousness can be a form of 'oppositional consciousness', a form of groupness which Jane Mansbridge (2001) defines as follows:

Oppositional consciousness (...) is an empowering mental state that prepares members of an oppressed group to act to undermine, reform or overthrow a system of human domination. It is usually fueled by righteous anger over injustices done to the group and prompted by personal indignities and harms suffered through one's group membership. At a minimum, oppositional consciousness includes the four elements of identifying with members of a subordinate group, identifying injustices done to that group, opposing those injustices, and seeing the group as having a shared interest in ending or diminishing those injustices. (Mansbridge 2001:4-5)

She continues to argue that, if people identify a specific dominant group as causing or benefitting from the injustices they perceive, and if they view certain actions of the identified dominant group as forming a 'system' which operates in the interests of the dominant group, they possess a full-fledged oppositional

⁵⁹ Natalya Kosmarskaya (1999:190) points to the severe difficulties and discrimination that Russians from ex-Soviet republics face in Russia ('their historic Motherland'), after having been forced to move there. Her work brings the possibility to mind of the emergence of a 'reversed' diaspora-consciousness, one in which the migrants' old habitats and their ties with migrants with similar backgrounds play a central role.

consciousness. Much of this dissertation bears witness to the formation of an oppositional consciousness among the forced migrants, be it diasporic or not, which is expressed in counter-narratives. In the remainder of this chapter I will delineate some of the primary conditions under which, and processes through which, this oppositional consciousness was formed.

Social memory and the censorship of memories

Not only displacement may leave lasting ‘political’ imprints on people, war may do the same. For example, both the perpetrators and the victims of abuse in wartime, take the actions of abuse and the meanings associated to them into their after war lives (Green 1994; Nordstrom 1999:72). Many victims of abuse and repression during war continue to be haunted by their experiences even in situations of relative safety. As Linda Green (1994:248) argues, whereas the ways in which the past haunts people in the present are often analysed primarily in terms of individual psychological coping and maladaptation, they should also be analysed in terms of social memory.⁶⁰ Studies show that the violence of war lives on in people’s shared memories. It is communicated to the next generations, in silences, in words, or in practices (e.g. Lindgren 2005; Neyzi 1999; Zur 1999). Green, who did research in a war-affected Maya community in Guatemala, suggests that social memory can even be embodied in illnesses. Regardless of the form, if memories are shared, they are kept alive for the community to be ‘used’ then or later. As long as there is a common consciousness of wrongdoings against the community in the past, the potential for an oppositional consciousness remains, be it diasporic or not.⁶¹

Social memory is crucial in the creation of diasporas, but also in the creation of other forms of groupness. The political nature of social memory has been amply demonstrated (Connerton 1989; Passerini 2003). Without a ‘politics of memory’, that is, without imbuing selected historical events - which may be fictional - with political meaning, neither ethnic groups, nor nations, nor states could exist (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). Through military rites and schoolbooks, for example, people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds can come to identify with a common national past. Censorship of memories is directed against all those whose memories threaten dominant renderings of history and national unity. The memories of people who are central to, but who

⁶⁰ The medical doctors Patrick Bracken, Joan E. Giller and Derek Summerfield (1997) are very critical of the ‘psychologizing’ approach which is often imposed by Western agencies on people who suffered (war) violence. In the Turkish context, to demand attention for the psychological effects of forced migration, as some of the above-mentioned researchers and also, for example, the psychiatrist Murat Paker (2007) have done, is a political act, not a depoliticizing one.

⁶¹ This stress on the collective reproduction of fear and violence in ‘after war’ lives seems to come close to understandings of war as constituting social traumas (Eriksen 1995; Suárez-Orozco & Robben 2000; Sztompka 2000). The breakdown of communal trust which is often a legacy of war and other traumatizing events, and which I did also observe among Kurds, does indeed point in that direction (cf. Colson 2003:6; Das & Kleinman 2001:16-20; Suárez-Orozco & Robben 2000:5).

are at the same time at the margins of state projects - for example, refugees, immigrants, and victims of war - tend to be scrutinized more than those of others. Chamberlain and Leydesdorff (2004) draw attention to the special place assigned to immigrants and minorities in 'the politics of memory' by stating:

The memories of minorities are especially vulnerable to censorship and silencing. Equally, immigrants are often expected to adapt to the new society. In the process, it must be assumed, they are required to forget, or at least relegate, the past so that the memory of what is here and now - and thus identification with the present - becomes dominant. (Chamberlain & Leydesdorff 2004:229)

The question whose memories are to be nurtured and whose are to be repressed is closely linked to processes of external identification. In the 'identification with the present' which is expected of immigrants and minorities, the state is a powerful agent. Not only because it devises laws to censor people's self-expressions, but also because, as Brubaker and Cooper (2000:16) argue, the state "has the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting with which bureaucrats, judges, teachers, and doctors must work and to which non-state actors must refer".

The censorship of memories can be 'direct' and 'hard' in the sense of being encoded in laws and enforced by visible violence, or 'indirect' and 'soft' in the sense of being engrained in systems of health care and education, for example. To illustrate, Turkish psychologists often gloss over important aspects of the psychological problems experienced by people from the war-affected Southeast, because the politics of memory require them to do so.⁶² To give another example, by disregarding the fact that the native language of tens of thousands of schoolchildren is Kurdish, the Turkish educational system contributes to the creation of a hostile environment for subaltern memories. Kurds are only 'seen' in as far as they resemble or fail to resemble the 'model Turkish citizen', and recently immigrated Kurds tend to be implicitly identified as deficient Turks with a surplus of unworthy characteristics. It should be noted that such "identification does not *require* a specifiable 'identifier'; it can be pervasive and influential without being accomplished by discrete, specified persons or institutions. Identification can be carried more or less anonymously by discourses or public narratives" (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:16-17).

⁶² See, for example, Kuloglu, Atmaca, Tezcan, Gecici and Bulut 2003. In a study of patients with conversion disorder in Eastern Turkey, they focus on abusive family relationships in the emergence of the disorder, but make no mention of war, torture and other forms of repression. Only once they speak of 'compulsory migration' from rural to urban areas having a negative effect.

THE EVIDENCE OF EXPERIENCE

Migrants, minorities or victims of war may demand a space to speak, even when faced with the external censorship of memories. Then again, as Marita Eastmond (2007:261) argues: “Violence and displacement, as life-turning events, may ‘urge towards expression’ but also undermine the premises of narrativity, creating a sense of isolation and mistrust in those victimized”. While on the one hand, there were pressures on the Kurdish forced migrants to forget what they experienced or to frame their past experiences in a particular way, and while forgetting might have been made easier by the fact that the migrants were physically removed from the places and people of their past (cf. Feuchtwang 2003), on the other hand, the migrants were likely to want to try and fulfil a psychological and social need to give meaning to their lives and experiences by talking about their past to others. This is indeed what many Kurds did and still do. A question for me was how to interpret their narratives and how to employ them in my writing.

One of the things that I will be doing in this dissertation is to ‘write against’ dominant Turkish discourses and narratives about Kurds. Because the accounts of displaced Kurdish villagers were rooted in experiences with violence and displacement ‘on the ground’, I figured they would represent a reality closer to experience than the dominant narratives of the armed violence, or at least, contribute ‘unassailable insights in reality’. However, Joan Scott (1991) opposes the use of experience as authoritative evidence which can, by itself, falsify prevailing interpretations of matters. She asserts that experience only exists within the realm of discourse: experience can not be separated from the act of attributing meaning with language. With regard to the relations between reality, experience and the language used to speak about experience, Edward Bruner (1986b) distinguishes between ‘life as lived’, ‘life as experienced’ and ‘life as told’. As alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, narrative is not the sedimentary deposit of experience. It is “a form in which activities and events are described as having a meaningful and coherent order, imposing on reality a unity which it does not inherently possess. Narrative also inevitably reduces experience which, in its vitality and richness, always far exceeds the expression which a person can give it” (Eastmond 2007:250).

Although memory, language and discourse are crucial faculties in the process of converting experience into narrative, there is no clear-cut relationship between experience, memory and the language used to talk about these: not all what people experience is remembered, not all what is remembered is, or can be, recalled, and not all what is recalled is, or can be, put into words. Memory is selective: while certain experiences never enter into memory or are forgotten, others may be rekindled over time. Not only can the memory of painful experiences be repressed - for a time at least (Kirmayer 1996; Passerini 2003), it is also the case that events which people never personally experienced can be infused in their memories as if they were their own. As Leydesdorff and

Chamberlain (2004:229) assert: “Other people’s memories become incorporated into our own, thus they are always mediated”, and language forms a powerful vehicle for the sharing and embellishing as well as the censoring of memories (Tonkin 1992:86-87). All this is part of an ‘in-group politics of memory’, meaning that the censorship of memories does not only come from outside: not only ‘the state’ is an important identifier, members of the ‘in-group’ can be so too.

To conclude this paragraph, I agree with Joan Scott (1991:797) that “what counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political”. The fact that I employ the narratives of the migrants to ‘write against’ dominant discourses and narratives, does not mean that I should uncritically accept the narrators’ categorizations of the world. In counterposing and comparing narratives told by people of different backgrounds, it was possible to gain insight in some of the politics behind the narratives, to reveal the phenomenon of internal censorship, and to point out processes of internal differentiation.

Narrative and the paradigmatic forced migrant

In the following two chapters, by analyzing the narratives of different migrants from different regions, I will demonstrate that there were many similarities but also many dissimilarities between forced migrants: there was not one forced migration experience. To be able to deconstruct the image of the ‘paradigmatic forced migrant’ before the eyes of the reader, I have to first sketch the contours of this image. This is what I will do here, in conclusion of the present chapter and as a prelude to the next.

My mental image of Kurdish forced migrants during the early stages of the research, based on my reading of human rights reports, was of people forced under physical threat to leave their house and land behind, their possessions subsequently being destroyed by fire or other means, or appropriated by village guards. Although the reports also paid some attention to situations in which the villagers’ houses were not torched and had far more time to leave, threats, guns, haste, panic, destruction and fire seemed to be the constitutive elements of the experience of forced migration.⁶³

The 1998 report of the Human Rights Association (İHD), in which the stories are recounted of 49 displaced families who settled in Istanbul, was especially important in the production of my image of the forced migrant.⁶⁴ Over half of the families recounted that their village was destroyed by fire in whole or in part, sometimes in front of their eyes, sometimes after their departure. One woman recalled that village guards torched her house with petrol taken from the truck that she and her relatives had brought to the village in preparation for their

⁶³ See for example Çetin 1999, Human Rights Watch 1994; İnsan Hakları Derneği 1998, Stichting Nederland-Koerdistan 1995; U.S. Committee for Refugees 1999.

⁶⁴ The report lists 50 stories but one story is printed twice.

departure. Several interviewees related that houses were torched with everything inside them and that sheds were burned without releasing the cattle first. One child died in the fire. In a few cases, houses or even whole villages were destroyed in armed attacks and bombings. Often, what was left of people's stocks and the produce of the land was 'eaten' by village guards or by soldiers. Generally, villagers were summoned to leave within a week or a few weeks. Before that, arrests and torture had been the order of the day. Almost always, the most prominent determining factor in the experience of forced migration was the refusal of villagers to become village guards.

A report published by the Human Rights Association in 1995 foregrounded not the burnings, but the aspect of fear of the authorities. Twenty-two of the 37 respondents in this report left because of state coercion, violence and oppression⁶⁵, four because security forces had torched their villages, seven because they did not want to become village guards, one because his or her whole family had died, one because he or she was exiled, and one to escape a blood feud.⁶⁶ Apart from the person who escaped a blood feud, all the respondents in this report fit the image of the paradigmatic Kurdish forced migrant. To give another example of the emphasis on the paradigmatic forced migrant, I may refer to Mahmut Barut (2001), who carried out a survey of over 2100 displaced Kurds.⁶⁷ Barut found that the main reasons for people to migrate were the activities of the security forces and Emergency State rule practices, pressure to join the village guard system, fear of death, evacuation of villages and hamlets, and the ban on mountain pastures.⁶⁸

Yet, the category of forced migrant also includes people whose migration was less directly coerced: people who had been displaced by the military in the 1980s when village expulsions had taken place incidentally⁶⁹, village guards who feared government reprisals after having resigned from the village guard system, village guards who fled the PKK, villagers who had been displaced by the PKK, and people who were unable to make a living in their region of origin because the war had paralysed the economy. Many Kurdish migrants who migrated for economic reasons might have still been in their region of origin, if the military conflict had not disrupted their familial, social and economic lives. The Parliamentary Committee that investigated forced displacement of villagers (TBMM 1998), Kerim Yıldız and Koray Düzgören (2002), Human Rights Watch (1994), and Kurban et al. (TESEV) (2007) pay explicit attention to these

⁶⁵ "*Devlet baskısı, şiddeti ve zülmü.*" *Baskı* can mean a number of things: pressure, force, oppression, coercion and so on.

⁶⁶ One respondent did not state the reason for migration so that the total adds up to 36.

⁶⁷ The survey was supported by and carried out on behalf of Göç-Der. It looked at migrants in six residential areas, that is, Istanbul, Izmir and İçel (Mersin region) in 'Turkish Turkey', and Diyarbakir, Batman and Van in the Kurdish regions.

⁶⁸ For 'security reasons', villagers were prohibited by law to herd their cattle in the mountains.

⁶⁹ For information about forced expulsions in the 1980s, see Yıldız and Düzgören 2002:34-36. An editorial in İkbine Doğru (1987) and Saim Gözek (1987) report village expulsions in Tunceli province. Evin Aydar (1989) reports the torching of forests in Siirt province.

migration motives. Human Rights Watch speaks of three categories of displacement (displacement for refusal to join the village guard system, displacement as a result of military action, and displacement as retaliation for PKK attacks), as well as of PKK abuses which might incite villagers to flee.

The İHD reports *do* pay attention to some of the above-mentioned aspects. The 1998 report, for example, devotes several pages to the economic aspects of the forced migration.⁷⁰ It does, however, say very little about the reasons for people refusing to become village guards - which might have been PKK intimidation - and about the role of the PKK in general. In Barut's (2001) research, PKK pressure was an incitement to leave for less than one percent of the respondents. Yıldız and Düzgören (2002:27), however, state that the PKK may have been directly responsible for up to ten percent of village evacuations, and in Ergil's report (2008:74), 16 percent of the forced migrants stated to have fled intimidation of the PKK while 10 percent reported having fled intimidation by the state.⁷¹

The image of violence, haste and fire stuck more to my mind than the other reports. In my meetings with Kurds who moved from the Southeast to Istanbul in the 1980s and 1990s, I realized better that the İHD reports tell an important story, but that they do this from one particular perspective. This is a perspective which was much needed at the time when the İHD projects were carried out, and which is still undervalued, but which does need to be expanded. The story of the paradigmatic forced migrant constitutes a Kurdish counter-narrative with its own blind spots, and in the next chapter I will present one 'version' of this counter-narrative.

In this chapter and in some of the subsequent chapters as well, it will become clear that for many forced migrants, coping with war violence became one of the few roles that they acknowledged in their interactions with me, the researcher. Although in the research process, I tried not to lose track of - or simply dismiss - other potential sources of motive force that shaped the social behaviour of the forced migrants, one of my central arguments is that forces related to, but other than war and forced displacement, instilled in many of them a pressing need and desire to keep hammering home the price and pain of displacement.

⁷⁰ Later in this dissertation I will label the İHD as a Kurdish NGO, because I found that many Kurds regard the organization as 'their own'. However, the İHD does not restrict its work to Kurds. Although many in Turkey regard the İHD as a pro-PKK organization, the organization has protested against the kidnapping of teachers and journalists and the killing of captured soldiers by the PKK (Plagemann 2000:442)

⁷¹ The information Ergil provides about the migration motives of the respondents is not too sophisticated. Economic factors and war-related forms of repression and intimidation are presented in isolation from each other, but they are entwined.

CHAPTER THREE

Displaced from Alimler: A Story from A to Z

The sky has turned black. We are huddling together in the only inhabitable house in the village. The rain is coming down with buckets, turning the unpaved paths between the remnants of the other houses into pools of mud. The wind is sweeping through the leaves of the trees with a deafening noise. “The children, they are still up there”, a woman says nervously. A few hours earlier, they had left to herd the sheep in the mountains. Two youngsters come in, soaking wet. They went out to look for the children, but there is no sign of them. “They will be all right”, someone murmurs: “They’ll be fine”. All we can do now is wait for the storm to blow over. Water is leaking through the roof and gushing through the windows, none of which has shutters or glass in them. The improvised sheets of plastic and pieces of wood which cover the window holes, can not keep the heavy weather at bay.

After the storm has died down, the children return with the sheep, sopping and shivering. They probably wished their parents had left them in Van where they were living in more comfortable conditions. Looking out of one of the windows of the house, which is at the far end of the village, I can see the mosque at the village entrance. Apart from a torn-down minaret, it is still intact, used as a temporary refuge by villagers who are planning to live in Alimler permanently. The ruins of the houses are scattered on either side of a water stream, which, last time I looked, quietly meandered through the village. Now it has risen to impressive proportions, its clear water has turned a muddy yellow. The village is enclosed by steep mountains, but on my left side a stretch of fields between the water and the mountains adds depth to a stunning view, all the more virginal after the rain. Taking in the view, it occurs to me that the village is as beautiful, and its physical state as disheartening, as its Istanbul residents had told me before I came here.

It was the summer of 2002, when I visited the village of Alimler - or what was left of it. This village, situated south of Lake Van in the Tatvan district of Bitlis province, was destroyed by the army in 1994. In Istanbul, I had spoken with tens of its previous residents. To grasp the ways in which the villagers were affected by the forced migration, I had asked them to tell me about the local impact of the armed conflict, the move out of the village, and the aftermath of their displacement. Now I was in Alimler village to get a feel of village life as it might have been before the villagers’ exodus, and because I wanted to see with my own eyes what the destruction of Kurdish villages looked like.

The attempt of some villagers to bring a wracked village back to life forms the preliminary end of the story I am about to tell in this chapter. By presenting the villagers' recollections of 'pre-war' and 'during war' events in their local context, I will clarify the gradual way in which the armed conflict often encroached on the villages, the forms that oppression took in concrete cases, and the ways in which people imbued meaning to the events. I have chosen my topics and citations not only for their potential to establish a minimum sense of coherence, but also for their resonance with stories of people from other villages. Within the scope of this dissertation, the story of Alimler is a seminal story: it provides the building blocks for subsequent chapters.

The story-tellers

Several hundreds of the previous residents of Alimler and the surrounding villages moved to Istanbul in the 1990s. They settled in Pendik as well as neighborhoods on the European side of Istanbul. Other families set up house in the towns of Tatvan, Van, other parts of Turkish-Kurdistan, or in South Turkey. The largest families living in Alimler village were the Bedrans and Günays. These were also the families I had most contact with in Istanbul. The two families were related to each other in more than one way: the wife of one of the brothers heading the Bedran family was the *hala* (father's sister) of the Günay brothers, for example. Both the Bedrans and Günays had a multitude of familial ties with smaller families from the village as well.

My naming of the families is male-biased because Kurds tend to be patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal. Women move in with their husband's families, bear their husband's name, and family leadership is mostly a male business. This is not to say that the female line is unimportant - married women create important connections between families, and no one ever forgets from which family his or her mother and grandmothers actually are. But living arrangements and primary loyalties are male-centered, and daily family life is experienced in this context.

When I speak of the Bedran and Günay families, I speak of the male siblings who head these families, their wives, children and grandchildren. In this chapter, I will mainly rely on my conversations with the wives, children and grandchildren of the four brothers who headed the Bedran family - Zülfü (deceased), Fahri, Serhat and Ubeydullah - and those of the six brothers - Selahattin, Kadir, Abdülaziz, Hikmet, Cafer and Müşir - who headed the Günay family (see the diagram at the end of chapter 4). I also spoke with some of these men themselves. When not using their names, I will refer to them as villagers or migrants.

The story of the Bedrans and Günays was one of bearing unremitting hardship, but also of transformation: of overcoming *cahillik* (ignorance) and isolation, and of 'awakening to the realities of life'. Perhaps it is apt to say that this story has a political and a not so political side to it. The political story line is

about the ‘awakening’ of the Kurds to the existential realities of life as Kurds in Turkey. The not so political story line is about the transformation of the conditions of everyday life - from ‘primitive’ rural to modern/urban - in which much was lost, but some was also gained. To understand the migrants’ views of the impact of the forced displacement on their lives, it is important to attend to both story lines. If there was so much talk of an awakening, then what exactly was it that the villagers awoke to? What was the ‘sleeping state’ of the villagers to begin with? And if the migrants became worldly-wise, what was the ignorance, isolation, and backwardness which they felt they had left in the past? Although the transformation of ‘primitive’ village life into a more sophisticated way of being might be narrated by migrants from non-Kurdish regions as well, the Günays and Bedrans - and most other forced migrants that I spoke to - ‘charged’ this story differently. In the eyes of many of them, their previous ignorance was - at least in part - a result of political repression. Still, it is important to separate the two story lines, if only because some forced migrants tinged their narrations of the state of *cahillik* with more political ideology than others.

The Story

BEFORE THE PKK: POLITICAL AND OTHER KINDS OF OBLIVION

Most members of the Bedran and Günay families strongly identified as Kurds, but this had not always been the case. Surely, they had always known they were Kurds, but they had not pursued their Kurdishness in any way. To put it crudely, before the villagers woke up to who they really were, Islam was the defining aspect of their identity, and the local blend of Islam constituted the antithesis to radical politics. The migrants made it clear to me that the previous generations had been pretty much misguided in awarding Islam such an elevated position. But interestingly enough, the Bedrans still prided themselves in the illustrious history of their family as religious leaders: they claimed to be the descendents of a family of *seyid* (descendants of the prophet Mohammed) with great prestige in Kurdistan. Because almost everybody in the village was related to the Bedrans in one way or another, the prestige of the seyids also reflected on other families, on the Günays, for example. Although the Günays related a less well-developed family history, with regard to their more recent past they asserted similar things as the Bedrans: the elder men of their family were well-known and respected in the region.

For the political story line before the 1980s, I mainly rely on my interviews with Adil Bedran, because he spoke most extensively, coherently and pointedly about this time period. Adil Bedran was a middle-aged father of eight children, who was imprisoned several times on accusation of supporting the PKK. He was an older brother of İbo Bedran, the first person from Alimler village that I met.

Adil's observations and views were confirmed - in bits and pieces - by many of the other villagers.

My father, our family, we were held in the highest esteem in the region. We were like a tribe - but not if you associate a tribe with oppression. We didn't have an oppressive tribe. In a village nearby this was different. There it was normal to offend others, to beat them up. Imagine, you had a herd there. Someone would just come and take your herd. This wasn't possible with us, because we wouldn't allow it, we would go against it. The Bedrans have been in the area since 1400. Originally we came from Van, from Müks. In our village, there were no armed fights, the Quran was our weapon.⁷²

Adil's family was *köklü*, 'rooted' firmly in the history of the region, and with much to be proud of. The villagers' realization that Kurdish religious leaders have often exploited religious sentiments for their own benefit, did not alter this. The villagers' ancestors might have been misguided in believing that their 'holy connections' automatically assigned them a leading role in worldly affairs, but the people who spoke to me felt that the influence of their family was based not just on religious sentiment, but also on real leadership qualities. Yet, some Bedrans stated that even their ancestors had unseemly mixed religion and politics in the past. Adil: "I have to say, they used the Quran a lot, also in an oppressive way. It wasn't open *baskı* (force, suppression), but indirectly, people were oppressed".

Although for centuries, the Bedrans never defied the state, they were said to be involved in at least one major uprising in the early 20th century. Adil told me that a sheikh of his family was executed for his participation in an uprising in 1914. He was probably referring to a revolt initiated by a certain Molla Selim. This revolt was fuelled by discontent with the de-islamization of Ottoman politics and by widely felt rural discontent about high taxes. The Ottoman government responded harshly, and Molla Selim as well as some of the other rebels were executed (Ünlü 2005:66; McDowall 1996:101). One of the best-known Kurdish rebellions of the 20th century is that of Sheikh Said. This revolt, which took place in 1925, was led by religious and tribal leaders and targeted the secularising reforms of the Turkish government, as much as it was an expression of Kurdish ethnic identity. It was suppressed with much bloodshed (Bruinessen 1992:290). This rebellion was much referred to by the Bedrans and Günays, but it seems that their ancestors had nothing to do with it. This is hardly surprising because Alimler and the surrounding villages were located outside the central area of the revolt.

⁷² Most of the casual conversations and interviews that I had with the forced migrants were not taped. I worked out my notes shortly after having spoken to people. For my quotations, I rely quite heavily on the taped interviews. Still, many quotes do not come from taped interviews. Based on my notes, these quotes were transcribed as close to verbatim as possible.

A heavily criticized aspect of the villagers' 'old' understanding of Islam was the once widespread belief that non-Muslims, more exactly, Armenian and Syrian-orthodox Christians, did not deserve to live. As the villagers told me: "The people believed that to kill an Armenian would assure them a place in heaven". Whereas the great majority of people in Turkey strongly denies the Armenian genocide - the official view is that Turks defended themselves against the rebellious Armenian people - the Bedrans and Günays related the crimes committed by their grandfathers and granduncles without restraint.⁷³

The anecdote which struck me most was about the murder of a seven-year-old Armenian child. Apparently, during the time when the Armenians were ousted and annihilated, the Kurds moved into their houses. According to Adil Bedran, a small child who was the only Armenian left in the village, had hidden himself out of fear. When the boy kneeled at a well to drink water, a Kurdish villager stealthily approached and killed the boy by striking him on the back of his head with a stone. Adil told me that the boy had begged the villagers to spare him, and had sworn to work for them all his life. The exact way this happened remained unclear to me, and probably also to Adil who was born decades later. But for the Bedrans and Günays, the indescribable cowardness and cruelty of a grown man sneaking up on a defenseless child quenching its thirst - a child undoubtedly subsumed by grief and fear - and of smashing the child's skull, exemplifies and symbolizes the depths into which the Kurds had sunk. In the view of the Bedrans and Günays, stories such as the one about the little child exposed how backward, misguided and manipulated the Kurds were: they were unable to understand the nature of the repression which would eventually target not only the Armenians, but also themselves.

The villagers also referred to the participation of military recruits from Alimler in the 1937-38 military operations in the Dersim region, or present-day Tunceli. In the 1930s, the Turkish state set out to 'modernize' and 'civilize' this region which was inhabited by Kurdish-speaking Alevi tribes that had a reputation for rebelliousness. As part of a broader effort to Turkify the non-Turkish population of Turkey, in 1936 Dersim was placed under a military government with far reaching powers to arrest and deport individuals and families. Early 1937, the authorities had come to believe that a major rebellion against the regime was in the making. Army troops were sent to Dersim to arrest the supposed instigators of the rebellion, and to subdue the region in any way deemed necessary (Bruinessen 2000b:72-75). In the operations called 'punishment and deportation' (*tedip and tenkil*) 30 thousand soldiers participated. Thousands of Alevi civilians lost their lives, and thousands of others were exiled or fled the region (Üngör 2005:138-141).

⁷³⁷³ See Taner Akçam 2006 for an insightful study of the Armenian genocide. Employing Ottoman sources, he systematically invalidates all the crucial arguments used by those who deny the genocide.

Adil's father Fahri Bedran recalled that villagers from Alimler who had carried out their military service in Dersim, told the other villagers about their experiences there. When I asked him how the villagers had reacted to the news of the killings, he said they thought it was absolutely terrible, but without pausing he continued to say that the villagers in Alimler lived in great fear because they were forced to change their traditional headgear, mosques were closed down, reciting the *ezan* (call to prayer) was prohibited, and anyone reading the Quran could be imprisoned for six months.⁷⁴ Clearly then, this man viewed any state repression at that time in religious terms. Younger people *did* associate the repression of Alevi, as well as the efforts to secularize the Sunni Kurdish countryside, with the Turkification policies of the state. They pointed out that the repression of Islam in Atatürk's time was not so much directed against religion per se, but against Islam as a vehicle for religiously inspired Kurdish solidarity. Robert Olson (1989) and David McDowall (1996) come to similar conclusions. McDowall (1996:196) argues that the Sheikh Said rebellion provided the state with an excuse to take its secularization policy all the way.

Although the villagers of Alimler regarded the rebellions of Molla Selim and Sheikh Said, the Armenian genocide, the repression of the Alevi in Dersim, and the secular reforms as part of their history, most of these events remained far removed from people's daily occupations and preoccupations, that is, from everyday village life.

Everyday village life

There was a world of difference between the lives of the older and the younger generations, and of men and women. Yet, in talking about the village past, people of different ages and gender almost all invoked a sense of having been contained in a very small world. When I asked Zarife Günay, who was in her fifties when I met her, about her childhood, she said:

I always helped my mother with household tasks. I took food to the highland for the workers. I helped with milking the animals. My mother had a baby every year. I helped raise my brothers and sisters, I'm the second oldest girl. When I was small I played *didokele*, a game with stones. I also played with sticks, I made little dolls out of sticks. And the rest of the day I helped my mother. The day before Ramadan we made henna and put it on our hands. We painted eggs. I sought out my best clothes and put them beside my pillow. And the next day I put them on and went to all the houses in the village. We congratulated everybody and we got sweets at every house. We played with the painted eggs, like, we beat the eggs, and if your egg broke first, you got the egg from the other person. We made swings in a tree. We celebrated for three days and then it was over.

⁷⁴ In fact, the *ezan* had to be recited in Turkish instead of Arabic. See Erik Jan Zürcher 1995 for an analysis of the reforms.

Later when I got older, when I started to have feelings for men, I didn't do these things anymore. I knitted socks, sewed clothes, I made things for my trousseau⁷⁵. And then later, you get married and the trouble starts, a father-in-law, a mother-in-law, sister-in-law... I was eighteen or nineteen when I got married. I was in love with my husband. With my parents, I could sleep until eight or nine o'clock - my mother never wanted to wake us up, she felt sorry for us. When I got married, things were different. I always woke up very early, I had to make breakfast for the men who worked in the fields. And then prepare the afternoon meal and take it to them. I had to bake bread and do loads of other things around the house.

I have nine children. They grew up in poverty. We had 300 sheep. We had to go to the highlands for two hours every day, we had to milk the animals, the children were always dirty... Three of my children died. One was eight months old. The others were twins, I was six months pregnant when I had a miscarriage. All the children were born in the village. Neighbors helped me with the births. I never left the village, only when my children were ill, a few times, I went to Tatvan, that was it. (transcribed from Kurdish-spoken tape and translated)

Like Zarife, many villagers recalled their childhood with nostalgia: life was pure and simple and they had little to worry about. Yet others complained about the hard work to which they were assigned, even as children. For those who had a careless childhood, upon maturation the obligation to work hard and act responsibly began to weigh heavier. This included marrying the person your family deemed suitable. Zarife was lucky in that she did not marry at thirteen or fourteen like many other women, and that she married the man she loved. Yet, also for her, life was hardly a bed of roses: she had to share her husband with his first wife. Although it was a public secret that she and her husband-to-be were in love, he was forced to marry someone else first. "Had I been as smart as I am now, they could have promised me a room full of gold, but I would never have become anybody's second wife. If I had had the brain I have today, I would have fought for it not to happen", she said. But when she was young: "The people in the village weren't smart, they weren't clever, they had never been to cities. We were like animals".

Adil Bedran was married off against his will in much the same way as Zarife's husband, even though he was about twenty years younger. Adil had tried to escape the monotony of village life by venturing out to other regions to work: "Marriage was a way to keep me tied to the house, so that I would stay with my parents and work for them", he explained.

The fact that the villagers had few relations with the outside world, was often offered as an explanation for the 'primitive ways' of the time. As Adil said:

⁷⁵ Girls were expected to prepare a trousseau (*çeyiz*) for their wedding, filled with a large collection of hand-crocheted and hand-embroidered napkins, towels, headscarves and so on.

Until the 1970s, we bought nothing in town, only tea and sugar. Everything was made in the village, even the material for our clothes and shoes. We didn't drink much tea, we drank milk and *ayran* (yoghurt with water). Tea came to our area very late, fifty years ago there was no tea. I used to drink raw milk, half of it was foam, it was delicious. There was coffee before there was tea, but no one drank it. Only aghas or sheikhs could afford it. We lived disconnected (*kopuk*) and independent. We didn't have identity cards, we didn't know what it was. You had no means of communication. Television came long after 1980. There is still this story going round about a man going to Istanbul. He brings a radio back to the village, on batteries, because there was no electricity then. When he's away from home, his children manage to turn on the radio - they can turn it on, but they can't turn it off. They begin to panic, start crying. They scream for help. In the end there's someone who turns it off. Not only the children were scared, everybody was. They didn't understand where the sound came from. This happened in a village close to ours.

Some of the older men were relatively mobile, even before young men like Adil started to leave the village in search of work and adventure. Zarife's husband Abdülaziz, for example, travelled a lot because he traded cattle. People like him had an extensive network of relatives and friends in the broader region, also across the border with Iraq. But the dominant image conveyed by the villagers was that of the village and its close surroundings as constituting a small world with a repetitive rhythm. This image was often conveyed with a double purport, it contained elements that people longed for, but also elements that people were glad to have left behind in the past.

Even those villagers who did not want to return, sorely missed the recalled spirit of solidarity, the good times spent at the *yaylas* (mountain pastures), the green mountains, the fresh water, the healthy air and homegrown food. Zarife:

We miss our old lives. We were with more than 35 people, all together. Now we are just sitting around. I hardly ever go out. It isn't beautiful here. Life is so much healthier in the village, I would have more exercise there. Because I don't have enough exercise here, I have rheumatism, I gained a lot of weight here, I got ill in Istanbul. The food in the village is much healthier, pure nature, the vegetables... I am reliving the village every time.

In retrospect, the predictability of village life established a sense of control and security, which stood in stark contrast to the daily struggle in Istanbul to pay for water, coal, electricity, the telephone, bread, the other necessities of life, and - for those who did not own a house - the rent. Although the Bedrans and Günays were poor in comparison to Istanbul standards, the roof over their heads was their own, there was enough to eat, and they were not dependent on others for work. They owned their own tools, herded their own cattle, and worked their own lands with their own hands. As Hikmet Günay, a brother of Zarife's

husband Abdülaziz, said: “It was very difficult to leave there. We had everything there, we had enough land for a whole village, and vegetable gardens. Only when I go to the village, I do not feel alone. There, the trees, the earth, even the stones make friends with me. My deepest desire is to return there...”

Threesome of thieves: agha, sheikh and state

Looking back, many villagers felt that the opportunity to be part of the larger world was stolen from them, not only or primarily in a material way, but also in a social and cognitive sense. They conveyed a strong sense of having suffered an unfair delay on the road to modernity. Electricity, television, radio - all the amenities of modern life which allow people to live like ‘a real person’ (*adam gibi*). Most villagers could only begin to enjoy their benefits somewhere in the late 1980s. There never was running water in the village and electricity arrived as late as 1987. And even then, hardly anybody had a refrigerator or other electrical device. Adil’s anecdote about the radio was one of many that illustrated the implications of the late arrival of modern communication means and technology, which was that people were retarded in their development. More fundamental even was the lack of decent health services and of educational institutions. The negative side of isolation and confinement was typically illustrated by stories of preventable sicknesses and deaths.

While Zarife did not identify a party to blame for the ‘animal state’ of affairs, many others did. They blamed the state as well as their own religious and tribal leaders, sheikhs and aghas. As Adil said:

The state had a few men in every region, a sheikh, an imam, an agha, a Kurd raised and educated within the system. That’s how the regions became of the state. In the whole of Kurdistan you had this institution of the sheikh. They were completely tied to the state, they were virtually a state institution. One of the mistakes they made was that they said nobody should send their children to school, but their own children went to the best schools.

Adem, a son of Adil’s *amca* (father’s brother) Ubeydullah, expressed it like this:

Socially, the people lived very *dar* (narrowly, confined). In America you had the Indians, it wasn’t exactly like that, but it was quite like it. The smallest disagreement had big consequences. There were aghas and sheikhs who saw themselves as leaders. They made deals with the police. When a soldier came to the village, nobody stayed in the village⁷⁶, people were so afraid. (...) In the 1970s the people were repressed without weapons being necessary, by the aghas who had ties with the state. In the 1990s the people were repressed with weapons.

⁷⁶ He means that everybody fled, to the mountains, for example.

Adil, Adem and many others believed that the villagers were left to the whims of traditional leaders who mainly had their own interests in mind. In explaining the 'primitive' conditions under which people lived, the villagers often said they lived much like the *Kızılderililer* ('Redskins' - Native Americans) of earlier times.

Kamran İnan, one of Turkey's most prominent politicians, was often mentioned as an example of a 'bad sheikh'. In 1954, İnan became a deputy for the Democratic Party. In subsequent years, he was a parliamentarian for several conservative parties, served as a minister in several cabinets, and held the office of UN ambassador. In 1993 he ran for president but was defeated by Süleyman Demirel. The fact that İnan was the son of the most prominent religious leader in the region assured his party of the vote of the villagers of Alimler.⁷⁷ İnan's family had patriotic credentials - his father was exiled after having participated in a rebellion in 1925 and his grandfather had been involved in the rebellion of Molla Selim. The Bedrans and Günays believed that İnan's lust for power had made him lose sight of the right path.⁷⁸ Adil:

Years ago he came to the village once, not long before the elections. I was sitting by the main road talking with some friends, there are vegetable gardens there as you may remember. We told him we wanted a road to the village. "Why don't you build it yourself", he said. I told him we needed bulldozers for that, that a bunch of villagers can't do it alone. "What are you getting your nose into", he said: "You are interfering in things that are way beyond you." Maybe I was fourteen or fifteen then. Later I ran into him again. In 1991 the police were looking for me. I was in the lobby of the Tara Hotel in Van and he was there too. I went up to him and asked him for help. "I am sorry, but I can't help you and I don't want to help you", he said. I said to him: "Do you recall coming to our village and telling me I was interfering in things beyond me? My problem now is beyond you". He smiled and said: "*Belanı bulursun!*" (You'll get what you deserve).

That Adil was on the run for the authorities implied that he had broken the 'mould of tradition'. Many of his peers, and many members of the generation younger than him, felt that they had done the same.

Widening horizons: educational and other journeys

Although the transformations of young male villagers took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the first seeds of change were planted by the occasional out-migration of young men from the village, and by the introduction of formal education. Until the 1970s, the only education that male villagers received was

⁷⁷ Clientelism is common in the whole of Turkey, but especially in the Kurdish regions the state has tried to control the population by cooptation of local leaders, see McDowall 1996 and Ozbudun 2005.

⁷⁸ See McDowall 1996:398.

in the *medrese*.⁷⁹ In the 1970s, however, some parents started to send their sons to formal boarding schools at an early age. For most children, boarding school was a very painful experience. As Davut Günay, a son of Zarife and Abdülaziz, explained:

My father didn't really think about sending his children to school at first. But later, Ahmet and me, we had to go to boarding school. I think I was eight then. Right from under my mother's wings. At school we didn't find the same kind of affection we got at home. We missed our mothers so much. Whether you want it or not, you miss your mother at that age. When we ran away from school my father beat us, but I stayed at home anyway. Ahmet and my other brother continued school. They probably had more willpower than me. School was terrible. We always had lice at school, they had a laundrette but it didn't wash our clothes clean. The teachers showed no interest in us. They were all Turkish, when you spoke Kurdish, they beat you.

These schools were set up with the aim of assimilating the non-Turkish population (McDowall 1996:210; Üngör 2005:142-144). Those who went to boarding schools were fashioned into Atatürk-revering beings who were oblivious to their Kurdish background. İbo Bedran grinned when he explained how he used to mock his fellow villagers for not being able to speak Turkish: "No one ever told me off for doing this".

Later, a school was built in Fidanlar, a nearby hamlet. In the 1980s and early 1990s, some children from Alimler went to school there. Still, many parents had little interest in sending their children, especially their daughters, to school. They were ignorant about the contents or benefits of formal education, and diplomas had little value in the village. Besides, many children did not exist in state records, because they had never been registered by their parents or other relatives. The villagers had little interest in the formal registration of births, marriages and deaths. Registration merely meant that young men could be summoned to join the army, which was something some villagers would rather avoid. Most people contracted 'imam marriages' only, which meant they were not legally married, and many children remained unregistered or were registered with a different age. It was difficult to enroll these 'non-existing' children in school. Asiye, a relative of the Bedrans who lived in Fidanlar, explained:

The teacher came to the village to see who had reached schoolgoing age. (...) She told my parents that I had to go to school and that she needed my ID. My

⁷⁹ *Medreses* were banned in 1924 (Lewis 1952:41) but continued to exist. Little has been written about *medrese* education in Turkish Kurdistan. Zeynelabidin Zinar provides valuable insight in the meaning and functioning of the institutions of the *medrese* and *mele* (religious teacher) in Kurdish villages. He states that the last 'real' *medreses* disappeared in the 1960s. His article can be accessed at the website of Martin van Bruinessen, who translated the article from Kurdish into English: http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/medrese_education_kurdistan.htm, accessed September 22, 2009.

parents said they had no such thing. The teacher said that they should apply for it. I desperately wanted to go to school, but my father didn't care, my mother didn't either. The day school started I saw all the children walking to school. I ran outside, bought a notebook from the grocers' and went to school. The teacher asked what I was doing in her class, her class was fifth grade. She took me to the first grade. I told the teacher I just wanted to go to school. Thank god, she let me sit there. After fifth grade everybody received their diplomas except me. I asked why I didn't get one. The teacher said I would only receive one if I applied for my ID. I begged my parents to register me. In the end my mother said she would take care of it. Believe it or not, a few days later the school got burned down, with my diploma in it.

Whether state schools were able to change the children from Kurds into Turks or not, the net result of the introduction of formal education was that the students' cognitive distance to 'the outside world' decreased.

During the time period in which the first village children were enrolled in formal education, young males started to leave the village to try their luck elsewhere. Seasonal migration did not only enable young men to contribute to the family income, but also to escape the control of their parents and the monotony of village life. As Adil recalled:

In 1974 I came to Istanbul for the first time. I ran away from home, from my *memleket* (homeland), from everything really. It was all so confined. I wanted to see the world. I always loved new things, things that were different, I didn't like the narrowness... I was rebellious. Always running away, from my environment and maybe from myself. I looked around in the village, and saw the state that the people were in, that they couldn't achieve anything, because of a lack of schooling, because of social factors. I was always searching for something else.

Adil stressed his desire for adventure, but others emphasized different migration incentives. Halil, a son of Serhat Bedran who was about the same age as Adil, explained how he came to Istanbul:

I was the first one to go to Istanbul. My *dayı* (mother's brother) lived in Istanbul. He came here 28 or 30 years ago. I came to Istanbul with him, after he visited the village. In 1974 something happened in Fidanlar village. Two people were killed. That's why some people left the village. My *dayı* was one of the people who left. The village had broken up into two *kabile* (clan) and from every *kabile* one person was killed. It had something to do with a conflict about cattle and pastures, revenge, hate...

One of the reasons that Halil was in Istanbul, he explained, was that his family thought they might not be able to manage in the village: "We had a large family and the land wasn't enough to feed everybody. My father's children and

grandchildren are maybe forty people now. Back then, we weren't with so many". Clearly then, an important reason for the migration of some villagers, was to sustain village life for the others. Regardless of the incentive for migration, these young migrants felt like pioneers in a new world. Adil:

I went to Çukurova, to Mersin, I saw the whole of Turkey. Two months after I got married, I was off to Istanbul again. I was in all kinds of trades. I worked in a hotel, on construction sites, as a street peddler... I didn't know anybody in Istanbul, I didn't have a place to stay. There was no migration then, there was no one who took his family to Istanbul. There were people who stayed in Istanbul in winter. Sometimes they stayed in hotels, or on the building site where they worked... They didn't send money home. The money they made was just enough for themselves. There was plenty of work, but not so much for Kurds. Kurds spoke little Turkish. I didn't speak much myself, and I went to school! I learned it after I was twenty or so, when I felt the need for it. To find work you had to be *usta* (skilled worker, craftsman), but Kurds weren't *usta*. They didn't have any skills on their hands (*Ellerinde sanat yoktu*).

At that time, Adil and the other seasonal migrants had not yet developed the interest in Kurdishness which was to get them into trouble later. In the village, the situation was no different. None of the older members of the Günay and Bedran families said anything about supporting left-wing Kurdish groups in the 1970s and 1980s. They only recalled having been impressed by Mulla Mustafa Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Iraq. Barzani was well-known and respected among Kurds in Turkey for his continued resistance against subsequent Iraqi governments. For the rest, the villagers seem to have had no interest in Kurdish organizations or in politics in general. The memory of the repression of the uprisings in the first decades of the Republic was kept alive, but nothing more than that. The villagers were '*ödlek*' (afraid, cowardly) as I was told repeatedly: any attempt to challenge the state was smothered by the elderly. When comments like these were made, elderly men and women present nodded in agreement, sometimes smiling apologetically.

Younger males attributed the earlier aloofness from Kurdish organizations to two things: state oppression on the one hand and the religious consciousness of the villagers on the other hand. Ahmet, a brother of Davut Günay, said:

Before the PKK came, the villagers voted for ANAP (Motherland Party⁸⁰) and some voted Refah (Welfare Party⁸¹). People voted ANAP because Kamran İnan was in the parliament⁸². We had family ties with him. He never did

⁸⁰ Anavatan Partisi. This right of center party was founded by Turgut Özal.

⁸¹ Right of center Islamic party which was renamed in 2001 into AKP, the ruling party of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In 1994 the Refah Party won the mayoral elections in Istanbul.

⁸² Kamran İnan used to be in the Democratic Party and its successor the Justice Party, but the late prime minister and president Turgut Özal recruited him to ANAP as the most prominent Kurdish personality in the state apparatus. Because ANAP was founded in 1983, Davut's statement must

anything for the villagers. I'm sure he promised a lot, but he didn't do anything. İnan was from a family of a large sheikh, the only sheikh in the region. That's why people voted for him. After 1990, the whole village voted for HADEF⁸³.

In the 1970s, villagers inclined to religion almost automatically voted for right-wing parties, but Hikmet Günay, an *amca* of Davut, surpassed everybody by becoming an active Turkish nationalist when he was in boarding school. Kamran İnan personally supported Hikmet with his studies - this was the one thing İnan was credited for: he encouraged villagers to educate their children. However, instead of studying hard, Hikmet got caught up in the struggle between left-wing and right-wing extremists.

Left-wing activism had started to spread in the 1960s, a decade of unprecedented population growth, increased access for young people to higher education, rapid industrialization, and with a relatively liberal political climate (Zürcher 1995:313-327). The social disintegration of the time ensued in street violence between armed left-wing and right-wing groups. Although some rural areas were affected quite heavily, most of this violence took place in cities and towns. According to Şerif Mardin (1978), socialization in a culture of epic heroism facilitated young people's identification with militant groups, and the conspicuous use of symbols to communicate one's political 'colors' fuelled the violence by emphasizing the demarcations between groups. In 1971, the military intervened, ordering the government to restore order and take measures against the 'communist threat'. However, the political establishment was unable to restore a credible government during most of the 1970s, in part because right-wing political leaders allied themselves with extremist right-wing groups. Toward the end of the 1970s, street violence had claimed more than 1500 deaths. On 12 September 1980, the Turkish army staged a military coup d'état, banning all political parties and lashing out hard at militants, especially left-wing activists, effectively muting political activism.

In these tumultuous years, Hikmet Günay supported the Nationalist Action Party⁸⁴ (MHP), an ultranationalist Turkish party which played a major role in the street violence (see Landau 1981). Hikmet:

When I was in *ortaokul* (middle school) in Diyarbakir, you didn't have this problem of Turks and Kurds. You had the political issue of left and right. Our family was very religious and then you had to be right-wing. We were against socialism and communism, as it was explained to us. I was an active participant in the struggle between left and right. But when I look back, I see

have referred to the 1980s. However, the migrants often used names of political parties to refer not only to itself, but also to a type of party or player in the political system. The implication of a statement such as that of Davut was that İnan went wherever status and power were to be found.

⁸³ He meant, the Kurdish party, which at that time was called HEP.

⁸⁴ Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi.

how wrong we were. Not just us, but also the others. Killing people and things like that, it was wrong. There was absolutely no discrimination in that group that I was in. Like I said, the Turk Kurd issue did not exist. After we left school, I lost contact with them. But one of them, he called me a few years ago in Tatvan. He got my number from 118 (directory enquiries). He was a doctor in Ankara.

At the time, Hikmet's faux pas was less disturbing to the villagers - if it was disturbing at all - than to have a relative who was a socialist or a communist.⁸⁵ In the villagers' opinion, to be a socialist or communist equalled being a non-believer. As Adil explained:

The son of my *dayı* lives in Europe now. I remember we had a discussion once about religion, in 1979 I think, when he was in the village. With the military coup in September 1980 he went to Europe. He was kind of an atheist then. I really hated him for it. Look, we are still Muslims, but then we looked at it differently. We were completely tied to religion.

Other villagers also referred to this one atheist. Often they summarized the entire political involvement of the villagers in juxtaposing Hikmet, who was extreme right-wing, with this other man, who was extreme left-wing, but who got along pretty well with one another. After the 1980 coup d'état, a few other villagers also began to warm to socialism. Although İbo, who went to boarding school in the mid 1980s, was "all for *Türklük* ('Turkdom')"⁸⁶ at first, at some point he started to become interested in socialism. "Until then, we knew nothing. One day, someone said to me: 'Why are you the only one in your family who studies, why not your five brothers?' Then I started thinking".⁸⁶ Several people also spoke of a relative, another *dayı* of the Bedrans, who was a radical left-wing

⁸⁵ The MHP still enjoys a limited degree of support among conservative Kurds. Some Kurdish tribal leaders, like village guard leader and parliamentarian Sedat Bucak from Siverek, have close relations with prominent MHP members and politicians. They are despised for this by the Bedrans and Günays. In 1996 Sedat Bucak was involved in a traffic accident near the town of Susurluk, see Gunter 1998 and Navaro-Yashin 2002. The car, in which he was seated with three other people, was hit by a truck. Bucak's fellow travellers were: former deputy chief of the Istanbul Police Hüseyin Kocadağ, ultranationalist hit man and mafia leader Abdullah Çatlı, and Çatlı's girlfriend Gonca Us. The trunk of the car was loaded with weapons, and Çatlı - sentenced to death in absentia for killing at least seven leftists - was carrying a police chief's identity card and a green passport with which he was exempted from visa requirements. This accident put the intimate relations between the mafia and the state intelligence services on the agenda, and pointed to the existence of an illegal organization with an ultranationalist agenda in the state. Important to note here is that Sedat Bucak, the only person in the car who survived the accident, was in the middle of all this. Also noteworthy is that Hüseyin Kocadağ was one of the founders of the notorious 'special teams' set up to combat the PKK with counterinsurgency tactics.

⁸⁶ When I wondered whether no one asked why his sisters did not go to school, İbo and the other people present smiled: "Socialist organizations didn't care about women's position, that came with the PKK".

imam, and who was tortured severely. The nascent socialism of people like İbo hardly touched on the rest of the village though. Referring to the time period between the late 1930s and early 1960s, the political scientist Hamit Bozarslan (1992:96) remarks that “there was not a sign of revolt or even of Kurdish nationalism”. In Alimler, this remark seems to have been valid until much later.

THE ENTRANCE OF THE PKK

With the entrance of the PKK, the villagers finally ‘woke up’. Ahmet Günay’s narration of the transformation was similar to that of many other Bedrans and Günays:

The PKK came to our village in 1989. Before that, some people were politically aware, but that didn’t touch on the whole village. We knew we were Kurds, but that was about it. (...) All the older people in the village knew about Sheikh Said. They talked about it to the children in the form of a legend. Between the Said rebellion and the entry of the PKK there was no rebellion. The people were reticent. When the PKK emerged, people supported them, but not without hesitation though. They asked them what they did, what they wanted. Then individuals started to give their support. When they saw the PKK was with the people, and was fighting for a right cause, others followed.

As might be expected, the Turkish authorities tried to recruit the villagers into the village guard system. İbo Bedran, and all the other people from the village whom I talked with, recalled that the villagers were threatened and intimidated constantly by the state.

Alimler was one of the most conspicuous villages in the area. Logistically and geographically, it was an important village. Everything started first in Alimler. The most severe pressure was on Alimler. In other villages people said: “If the villagers in Alimler become village guards, we will too”. They made it harder for us that way. All oppression was on our shoulders. It started in 1991. (...) In the villages around us there were people who became village guards. These were people who had no sons, for example, They thought: If I have to go to the city, I will starve. That’s why they became guards. Someone like that would get five or six *kuruş* (piaster or penny)⁸⁷ and would go into the mountains with the soldiers. But in our area there were more PKK members than village guards. In 1993 four or five people joined the PKK, or five or six, then the situation got much worse. Especially against the families of the people in the PKK but also against the rest.

⁸⁷ At the time of my research, the word *kuruş* was only used in expressions such as that of İbo. If a loaf of bread costs 150.000 or 300.000 Lira, as was the case during my research, there is not much use in the term ‘penny’ or cent. With the introduction in 2005 of the New Turkish Lira (1 million Turkish Lira became 1 New Turkish Lira) the *kuruş* was reintroduced. One New Turkish Lira is 100 *kuruş*.

Respected older males and young people were exposed to violence from the gendarmerie (*jandarmerie* - rural police), soldiers (*asker*) and special security teams (*özel timler*).⁸⁸ Murat, a brother of İbo and Adil, was one of many young people who were taken away to be tortured. He said:

My cousin and I were also taken away. They took us to the gendarmerie post and said we were helping the PKK. They tortured us and held us for fifteen days. The girls were held separately from us. The boys were all under twenty, the girls around thirteen or fourteen. They were looking for our parents, for my *amca*, for example, that's why they took two of his sons, and also the son of my other *amca*, because they were looking for him. When we were released after fifteen days, we returned to the village. We stayed there for a while. Whenever there was a military operation, we fled to the mountains not to get caught. Many people who were completely innocent were tortured. That's why the young people fled to the mountains, to escape being caught and tortured. All young people were living with the same fear. One of that group that was tortured, joined the PKK. The people who joined the PKK were the ones who said: "Until where are we going to be repressed like this, until when will we endure this?" The parents were against their children joining the PKK, but they couldn't stop them anymore.

Although Murat did talk about girls being arrested and tortured, most repression seems to have landed on the shoulders of the men. Some villagers did speak of the sexual violation of Kurdish women by Turkish soldiers and village guards, but no one made this concrete with regard to their village or family. In chapter 4 I will elucidate why this might be so.

According to the migrants, in the early 1990s, when the PKK established a strong base of support in the region, it started to behave "like a state" (*sanki devlet gibi*). The PKK not only mediated in conflicts between villagers - a task it took over from the traditional *önde gelen* ('people who come first', that is, leading people), it also prescribed that no one should send their sons to the army. Young men who were called up for military service had to decide whether to comply, with the risk of being stationed in the Southeast, or whether to evade military service. Evasion or desertion was a risky 'choice': those caught were sure to be tortured. Obeying the call to join the military entailed other risks.

⁸⁸ Traditionally the countryside is policed by the gendarmerie, which is not trained as well as the regular armed forces. Over the past decades, the regular army and elite (commando) forces have been present in large numbers as well, and hundreds of thousands of young men carrying out their military service have been stationed in the Southeast, see Mater 1998. The so-called 'special teams' were set up in the police and gendarmerie to combat the PKK and its supporters with counterinsurgency tactics. They contain a large number of MHP militants, former PKK members (*itiraflılar - confessors*) and members of one wing of Hizbullah, a militant Islamic organization that had gained a strong base in Kurdish cities like Batman and Diyarbakir, see Barkey and Fuller 1998:140-141,148; Netherlands Kurdistan Society 1995:4.

Adem, a son of Ubeydullah Bedran, recalled that the families of those who did join the army, were punished by the PKK.

In 1992 a call came from the mountains [from the PKK]: “Don’t send your sons to the army. We don’t want to kill our brothers”. But one family sent their sons to the army anyway. Then they were fined, I think it was 50 million per person that joined the army [more than 2000 Euro] (...) They could have just not joined the army, or they could have waited until they were rounded up. But they came forward themselves. In our family there are at least thirty people who did not do their military service.

To prevent themselves from becoming a victim of violence, boys and young men seized on opportunities to study or work elsewhere, but girls were not sent away often.

The raids, house searches and the omnipresent threat of arrest and torture instilled a deep fear in people. Zarife recalled having felt nervous all the time. Once, she said, soldiers threatened to collect all the children of the village and to run them over with the *panzer* (armoured vehicle): she often felt paralysed, not knowing what to do, apart from being on guard and helping the older boys and men to flee when the gendarmes and soldiers were on their way to the village. Elif, a daughter of Selahattin Günay, was around eleven years old when her family was evicted from Alimler village. She was still extremely afraid of the police after having lived in Istanbul for years, and not without reason.

They beat up our young people, they came to the house and went inside. To search the house they completely ruined it. They put their own weapons there. Then they made things up like: “You have weapons here!” The gendarme did this. They asked: “Are they [the PKK] coming to your village?” To make the children talk they promised to give them sweets. The children said: “No, we haven’t seen anything”. They were very afraid. We always hid ourselves. They never asked me because I was so afraid, I hid myself and didn’t come out, but I watched them [the soldiers]. I saw a boy, he was fifteen, he went to school in Tatvan, they threw him in the stream, they had broken his arms. The gendarme said he had hidden his *amca’s* weapon, they beat them both. This Newroz (Kurdish New Year) I was arrested. I was so afraid, I couldn’t talk. They asked me if I knew people in the PKK: I said no. My brother’s back still hurts, and my father and his younger brother were also tortured [in the region of origin].

While arrests, torture and imprisonment became widespread, some people learned to live with the fear of these things happening to them. A psychiatrist who treated victims of torture told me that for many Kurds torture almost became a routine event, and this was also how some of the people from Alimler talked about it. İbo said, for example: “Once you have been arrested and tortured

once, you are not so afraid anymore.”⁸⁹ However, İbo continued: “People were always afraid to get lost, to disappear (*kaybolmak*)”. The risk of being murdered, especially the possibility of being abducted, murdered and your body being discarded without anybody ever being sure about what happened, was something which the villagers found very difficult to cope with. Their fears were based on the large number of killings by unknown assailants (*faili meçhul*) in the Kurdish provinces. Many victims were shot in broad daylight while they were going about their daily business, but others were abducted first and found dead later, yet others were never found. Among the victims of these *faili meçhul* were writers, students, journalists, distributors of Kurdish newspapers, civil servants, imams, members of Kurdish political parties, human rights workers, and ‘ordinary’ farmers and villagers. Figures provided by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey and the Human Rights Association, count up to a total of 1423 assassinations by ‘unknown actors’ between 1991 and 1995, a number which excludes disappearances, extrajudicial executions, deaths under torture, and victims of assault by the PKK, police or army (Bruinessen 2000e:268(note 5),270).⁹⁰ The Bedrans and Günays had no doubt that the state was behind the vast majority of these killings, and they feared becoming a victim too.

Moving out and away

In the end, all villagers moved out and the village was destroyed, but the villagers had very diverse migration experiences. Some villagers migrated alone, others migrated together with a large number of relatives and fellow villagers. Whereas some people migrated to Istanbul directly, others migrated via other towns and cities. Both the Bedran and the Günay families migrated in smaller units over a time period of more than a year. I will present the Bedrans’ migration history mainly through the words of Aleyna, a younger sister of Adil and İbo, who was around fourteen years old when her family was expelled from the village. When I first met Aleyna, she was newly wed to her father’s sister’s grandson, a son of Cafer Günay.⁹¹ She was living with her in-laws and had a baby daughter. I met her many times over a time period of several years. On two

⁸⁹ I do not mean to say that this was ‘the dominant experience’ of torture. It was the viewpoint stressed by those who were most vocal about the impact of torture.

⁹⁰ Asked who was behind the killings, state officials customarily pointed to the PKK and to Hizbullah. However, among the local population there was a strong belief that the state was involved in many of the murders, not only those perpetrated by Hizbullah but many other killings as well. The fact that many victims were killed in broad daylight, that some of the attackers were recognized by witnesses as members of the police forces, and the lack of willingness in the police force to arrest suspects, added to this deep feeling of distrust toward the state, see Bruinessen 2000e:269; İnsan Hakları Derneği 1994:118; Helsinki Watch 1993:17-22; Rasime Hazer and Can Karakuş in *Nokta*, February 23, 1992:9-10. Ahmet Cem Ersever, the first commander of JİTEM, the intelligence body of the gendarmerie, was himself killed by unknown assailants after he had criticized the conduct of war in public, see Bruinessen 2000e:268.

⁹¹ I will refer to her as Aleyna Bedran-Günay, because she was a daughter of the Bedran family who married into the Günay family.

occasions I spoke with her extensively about the forced migration and its aftermath.

Aleyna recalled that her family had tried to stay in the village as long as possible: “Our family said: ‘Let’s stay, let’s see, maybe they [the soldiers] will let us stay’.” At that time, some of her brothers and sisters had already moved out, to work, to marry, or to escape the police and army. One sister lived in a nearby village named Bitek, another lived in Mersin, Adil and another older brother were living in Istanbul.

The whole village had left, except for a few old people. All the old people had stayed, the young people had left. The young men had left the village first. From my family, I, one *yenge* (brother’s wife), her two children, my brother İkbâl, my mother and one niece stayed. Two of my *yenges* had left, and my unmarried brothers had left... The village used to be crowded, but now we were left with only a few people. We were so afraid at night. Before that, we were never afraid. The state kept coming to the village to scare us, they intimidated us. We often heard the sounds of shooting. There was a bridge below the village. The soldiers did a lot of shooting there. We were very frightened, we couldn’t go out at night. In the village you don’t have a toilet and bath inside, they are separate from the house. We couldn’t go to the toilet at night. (...)

We had a lot of sheep to tend. One day, I was with my *yenge* looking after our sheep when the soldiers came again. We were talking together. They shouted and swore at us, because we spoke Kurdish. We had a cemetery above the village. The soldiers went to the cemetery and shot at the electricity installation, they burned it so that we wouldn’t have any light, any electricity in the village. Then they told us: “You will be out of here in a month”. Later they gave us a week to leave. (...)

When we left, our chicken were breeding. The eggs were about to come out. We took the breeding chicken with the eggs and tied them to our chests, four or five big chicken. We also took some sheep and put them in front of us. For the rest, we hardly took anything, except for our beds. There wasn’t much left in the village anyway. We started walking. (...)

We stayed a few nights in Bitek village, the village of my older sister. A few nights in this, a few nights in that house. We managed like this for about a month.

Most villagers were obliged to sell their animals in a very short time period: they needed money to travel to other destinations and were aware that they wouldn’t be able to pursue their cattle-farming lifestyle anymore. They often received very little for their animals. Aleyna’s mother decided to take the sheep with her to Tarsus in the hope of selling them at a better price there. Tarsus is a town some 25 kilometres away from Mersin, a city on the Mediterranean coast in Southern Turkey, which, like Tarsus, took in large numbers of forced migrants (e.g. Kaygalak 2001). Tarsus is located close to Çukurova valley, the most

developed agricultural area of Turkey. Before the foundation of the Turkish Republic, large numbers of Armenians had inhabited Çukurova. After the Armenian genocide, large numbers of Kurds were moved in. Also later, in the 1950s and afterwards, many Kurds moved to Çukurova.⁹² Aleyna did not go to Tarsus with her mother though. For a year she stayed in Bitek with her older sister Zerda, who was married to someone from that village.

We had a cow and a bull left. I stayed because of them. There was no one else who could look after them and after the fields. We left our village in spring, when we had just planted and sown everything... green beans, horse beans, potatoes.... They had started to blossom when we left. (...)

Some villagers stayed in nearby villages, some in Tatvan. We couldn't do that. Had we stayed, the state wouldn't have left us in peace for one minute. I only stayed until we had dried the beans. My sister and I went to the village secretly, they [the soldiers] didn't give permission. They thought that if we went to the village we would take bread with us [to give to PKK members], the state didn't let anybody go. Me and my sister looked after the beans and dried them. My father came from Mersin to get them. And I came with him to Mersin. We went to Van and from there directly to Mersin. The moment I arrived there, I started work.

Although Aleyna's family would have preferred to settle somewhere close to the village, they did not do so out of fear of the police.⁹³ Some of Aleyna's relatives who did move to Van eventually felt forced to also leave this town. Cahit, a grandson of Zülfü Bedran, who grew up in a hamlet of Alimler village, said:

From the village we went to Van. We stayed there for a year. We didn't want to leave Van. There isn't much work there, there's only work in restaurants there, but we could get by. But every week the police came to our house, always in the middle of the night. They said that if we didn't leave, bad things would happen to us. Our neighbors were tense about us living there. We just had to leave. First my father sent me to Istanbul to work. I started work with my *amca* who had left the village together with us. Three months later the rest came. We only left Van because of the police.

Families tried to organize their migrations as well as they could - they tried to make sure that every single individual had a decent roof over his or her head and remained under the protection of relatives.

While Aleyna's *amca*'s children were trying to carve out a living in Van, Aleyna's family moved to Mersin because her older sister was living there. They

⁹² Adana also took in large numbers of forced migrants, as has been reported by human rights organizations, but is also acknowledged in scholarly work unconcerned with the phenomenon of forced displacement. See e.g. Fatma Ünsal 2004.

⁹³ Van took in large numbers of forced migrants, see for example the TBMM-report 1998:52-57.

had a hard time finding a house because the family was very large, but finally a landlord from Muş (a Kurdish province) agreed to rent them a house. In explaining the difficulties of the first years, Aleyna said:

We didn't know anybody else in Mersin. We rented three houses. When we arrived there, we had no money, nothing, we suffered a lot. There were days that we couldn't even find bread. We were mainly working to pay the rent. We sold the sheep to pay the rent. We were hungry at times. The rent, electricity, water... and we were with so many. (...)

One of my *yenges* had eight children. Her husband was in prison. The other one had four children, her husband was in prison too. My older brother İbo was newly married then, his wife was pregnant. There was no work for the men. But all of us went to work, me too. My mother, İbo's wife, and the little children stayed at home. They did the housework of these three houses, the beds, cleaning, cooking. They looked after the children, they washed the laundry by hand - we didn't have a washing machine, they swept the floors, cooked food, put away the beds, they did everything. In Tarsus, the women and girls worked. There was no work for the men, it was women's work.

Aleyna's niece Refika, Adil's daughter, who worked with her on the fields, said that maybe the men could have worked, but that the women didn't want them to: "They were grown man (*kocaman erkekler*), we were working in the dirt, the mud... it's bad to see men doing that work". Aleyna:

We picked oranges, then peaches, after that we planted leeks. Barefoot, in the water to our knees, in the mud. Leeks have to be wet or they won't grow. Our feet were in the water all day, until the evening. We didn't wear socks or shoes, the land owners wouldn't let us. After the leeks, we planted lettuce (*marul*) that also grows in water. We were stung by thorns, cut by pieces of glass. Frogs were jumping up from the mud. We were afraid but we worked anyway. There were men supervising us - me, my older sisters, my brothers' wives and their children. When the leeks were ready to be harvested we tore them from the ground. My older brother Murat and my nephew Erkan helped us sometimes. We planted potatoes, watered them. Then we picked cotton in the burning heat.⁹⁴

Aleyna's parents lived in Mersin for two years. Then they bought a house in Adana city with the money they had left from selling the sheep, had saved from the salaries of the family's working members, and had received when Aleyna's brothers' wives sold their wedding gold. Also while living in Adana, the women worked on the land. As Aleyna recalled:

⁹⁴ The *Göç-Der Haber Bülteni*, a journal issued by Göç-Der, ran many stories about the hard labor in which the forced migrants engaged. See, for example, the editorials in 1999 and 1998.

In Adana, we went to work after the morning *ezan*, around five or six in the morning and we came home around seven in the evening. The wages were very low, it was very hard. We had to do work that we didn't know. Everything was new to us. When you had to pee they gave you only five minutes. Then you had to cross the whole field and find a place to pee and walk back. It was boiling hot and they gave us warm water to drink, as if it had been heated first, the food we took with us went bad before we could eat it. We made very little money. İbo's wife was killed in an accident there, and their baby son was injured very badly. He went in and out of hospital, we had no money to pay the hospital bills and medicine. We sent money to Istanbul for their travel expenses and for medicine.

By that time, more than half of the family had migrated to Istanbul. Some of Aleyna's brothers, who had been in prison when her family was expelled from the village, had moved to Istanbul after their release. When Adil's son Erkan was getting married, Aleyna went to Istanbul to attend his wedding party. She planned to return to Adana to help her mother and other relatives, but Adil did not want her to return. Asked why he wanted her to stay in Istanbul, Aleyna answered:

You know, it's a very dirty place there, Adana. We went to work there... the men, what shall I say, they were very bad. For example, we worked for this man, he was an Arab. We pulled the grass from the beans. If one blade of grass was left, he used to yell and swear at us. He was the owner of the fields. Once we had to sow garlic in a very big field. He said to me: "Go get us some water". I had to walk for an hour to get water. There were a lot of orchards there, oranges, apples... I was afraid to walk there on my own, I was afraid of snakes, of men, it was very far from the city, you see. First I didn't want to go, but when he yelled and swore at me, I went, because I was so afraid of him. Once he came with me to get water, that I found even scarier. He said: "Wait here, I'm going to pee. I'll be right back". When he came back, he said: "Wait here, I'm going to pick some corn". I waited but he didn't come back. Then I fled, I was so afraid I spilled half of the water. I panicked and climbed in a tree. (...)

He had a separate room. We had to bring him water and food in his room. The walls of this room were covered with pictures of naked women. We were scared to death. When he yelled and swore at us, we trembled with fear.

One day, the man who had found the girls this job, a Kurd from Mardin, came to visit Aleyna's boss.

We were with four girls that day. After dinner they called two of their friends, then they were with four. Four men, four girls. And this place was very far away from the city. We were scared to death. The man sent the other two girls away to cut the grass under the orange trees and told my *abla* (older sister) and

me to cook dinner. They ate and they drank a lot of alcohol, we had never seen anything like it. I said to my sister - there were a lot of kebab skewers lying around - I said: "If they attack us, we should get one of those and defend ourselves". My sister was very afraid but she was braver than me, she told me not to be afraid. One of those men was very good. He was an Arab - a lot of employers were Arabs, you know. He asked us which political party we liked. We said: "HADEP". "I like that party too", he said. They drank all evening, but they didn't do anything to us. It was very late when they got up. We had cleared everything away. How were we to go home? That man from Mardin was our neighbor in Adana. We always went to work with his truck and then we walked for an hour. He had to drive but he could hardly look straight. He lost his way at least five times. He swore at the other drivers, he was picking fights with them. We had to come between him and the other drivers all the time. We didn't know where to go, we had to keep asking in which direction Adana was. It was very dangerous...

This went on for a few months. Then my *abla* couldn't come to work anymore, because she had to take care of my brother's baby. In the end, I worked for this man alone. Then this man from Mardin wanted me for his son, but I didn't want to marry him. My brother knew what it was like there, that's why he didn't want me to go back to Adana.

So, Aleyna stayed in Istanbul. As Aleyna was still quite young and had been living in a protective environment - always in the company of brothers and sisters and her parents - this fear of sexual harassment was quite new to her. Aleyna was happy to be away from Adana because to her, Istanbul was more civilized: "In Istanbul men don't shout things at you when you walk past. I have never seen the filthiness (*pislik*) here that I saw there".

Many of Aleyna's relatives followed different migration routes to Istanbul. The starkest contrast with Aleyna's experience is perhaps the 'being on the road' experience of Yakup, a son of Abdülaziz Günay. Yakup was eight years old when his family loaded their belongings on a truck and drove to Istanbul. When I asked him how he remembered the journey, he smiled apologetically and said: "I have no idea, I must have slept through the whole trip". His father already owned a small house in üst-Kaynarca. It had been built in 1987 by his sons, who used to come to Istanbul every now and then to work in construction. At the time of migration, the house was occupied by a few nephews of Abdülaziz. When Alimler village was evacuated, these nephews rented a *gecekondu* elsewhere in Pendik and moved out. Abdülaziz, his two wives, their eleven children, a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law, a nephew, Abdülaziz's brother Cafer, and Cafer's wife and eight children moved in. They lived with 27 people in a basement apartment consisting of five small rooms, in the meantime working to finish the ground floor of the building. The rest of the family, apart from Hikmet who was living in Tatvan at the time, had moved to a hamlet of Alimler.

In subsequent years, every time a new storey was added on to the house, another brother of Abdülaziz and Cafer came to Istanbul with his wife and children. At some point, one floor was divided in two to provide all families with separate homes. In this way, in a time period of approximately four years of pooling their labor and incomes, Abdülaziz, his brothers, their wives and their children succeeded in constructing an apartment building which could house all of them. Decisions as to who would come to Istanbul when, were informed by a host of practical and economic considerations such as the size and cost of their accommodation 'in the region' and the chances of finding employment in Istanbul, as well as by the risk of becoming yet again a victim of repression and torture. While still in the region of origin, Abdülaziz's son Murat had been arrested and tortured together with two sons of Abdülaziz's brother Selahattin. These young men were among the first to come to Istanbul in order to escape the threat of new arrests and the risk of being tortured again. Only Hikmet never resided in Istanbul permanently. However, when he or his son came to Istanbul to do construction work, they never had to search for jobs or a place to stay: they worked side by side with the sons of Abdülaziz and their other *amcas*, and slept and ate on any of the four floors of the apartment building.

LIFE IN ISTANBUL

The Bedrans and Günays had not asked to be dropped in a city dominated by Turks, and at arrival, most of them would have preferred to retreat in their old communities. But their own community, although it had not disintegrated entirely, had been decimated and dispersed. They were forced to make do in a foreign environment dominated. Admittedly, some of the migrants were in slightly better financial shape than others. However, to feed and house tens of relatives all at once was a daunting task, even for the lucky or visionary few who already owned a house and had worked in the city before. The migrants never received any kind of financial compensation, nor any practical or material assistance. In her study of Pendik district, Sema Erder (2002a:155) describes forced migrants who received help from their 'religious brothers' or the *muhtar*, but the Bedrans and Günays said they had not.⁹⁵

The small circle of *tanudık* (acquaintances) which tends to provide assistance in regular migration situations was unable to do so, because this circle consisted mostly of people in similar positions. Besides, institutions which might have been expected to assist the forced migrants with finding accommodation, getting access to medical services and to ensure that the children were enrolled in school, were nowhere to be found. As Behzat Bedran, a son of Zülfü Bedran,

⁹⁵ Erder states that the forced migrants, understanding that they could not express their needs in terms of being repressed Kurds, tried to mobilize their religious affiliations: Sunni migrants appealed to Sunni brotherhood. To do this - or to admit to having done this - did not befit the self-image of most Bedrans and Günays.

said: “We received help from no one. The municipality was in the hands of Refah - everybody needs help and they only help their own people. And our neighbors were just like us, *mağdur* (unjustly treated, disadvantaged), they couldn’t do anything”. Other Kurds - people from the same region, Kurds they met in the Istanbul branch of the Kurdish party, and friends of friends - did help the Bedrans and Günays to find jobs and accommodation.

In spite of the lack of institutional support, the Bedrans and Günays did not have to camp in the open air, or in tents or buildings still under construction, as some other displaced Kurds (see e.g. Kayacan 1999). As I showed above, most migrants stayed with relatives in other towns until a father, brother or uncle who was already staying in Istanbul had found them a place to live. Unfortunately, these places were usually temporary lodgings of low quality, cramped, dark and damp. To find something decent and more permanent was difficult. In as far as extended families had not been dispersed in the years before, this happened now. Most families split into nuclear households, because it was impossible to find a house big enough to house the older generations, their sons, unmarried daughters and grandchildren.

It was always the men who searched for housing. Not only because it was regarded a man’s prerogative - predicament might be a more apt term in this situation - to move into the public sphere, but also because of the related fact that most women did not speak any Turkish at all, and were afraid to venture outside. The men walked the streets of cheap neighborhoods to look for apartments for rent, asked around with relatives and friends, and enlisted the services of local *emlak* (real estate) offices. Behzat recalled: “All the time, you get this question: “How many are you?” and “Where are you from?” In the end we found a place through an *emlakçı* (real estate agent), the owner of the house was in Europe, when he returned he threw us out, and the whole thing started again. We changed houses maybe six times”. They had no doubt that the major reason for the many rejections was their Kurdishness. Sometimes landlords told this to their face, sometimes the migrants noted that a landlord or lady became unforthcoming once he or she heard where they were from. This made the search for a house a painful process in which the migrants were constantly reminded of their supposedly inferior status as ‘others’ and ‘Easterners’.

Naturally, work was no less important than a roof over one’s head. Most adult men looked for jobs in construction, often they had some experience in this line of work. If we disregard the fact that the workers were not insured, had no income when they were sick, and sometimes received their salaries very late, a day’s work in construction was relatively well-paid. Yet, the earnings of one man were insufficient to cover the expenses of a married couple and six, eight or ten children, and the work was in unreliable supply: there could be work for three months and none for the next four months. Children and youngsters, however, could provide families with a more steady income - even when it was very meagre - by working in the garment industry.

Having to provide for the family implied that many schoolgoing children were unable to continue their education. Some had already dropped out of school when their families were still living in the village, because the school in the neighboring hamlet of Fidanlar had not been operative for a few years, others had dropped out of the school system when their families moved to Mersin. Behzat recalled that his third son started work when he was nine: “In the morning I took him to his workplace and in the evening I took him home, he fell asleep on my shoulder, I put him to bed rightaway, he made 500.000 a month.⁹⁶” One of his older sons earned 3 million. Their rent at that time was 5.5 million. Although most families preferred to keep the girls at home, some girls were sent to work: Refika Bedran, who had worked on the fields of Adana with Aleyna, went to work the day after arrival, as did many others. Initially, none of the women worked.

Most of the work for the children and youngsters was found via other Kurds. Ali, a younger brother of Adem Bedran, recalled:

My father went to visit his *amcaoğulları* (father’s brother’s sons) in Bayrampaşa prison. There was a Kurd there from Diyarbakir. He gave my father the address of someone he knew *karşıda* (the European side of Istanbul). My father went there. This man could not hire us because we lived here, too far away. There was someone else with him, also from Diyarbakir. He had an *atölye* (workshop, atelier) in Kaynarca, that’s where we started work. The workers there weren’t happy with us: “*Allah aşkına* (for god’s sake)! It isn’t a children’s playground here”, they said. I was twelve or thirteen, my brother was eleven. They said we couldn’t do the work. This was true actually, but we learned it quickly. That *atölye* was owned by three brothers and the *ustabaşı* (foreman). The man who hired us did this to help us, because we were Kurds. Actually, his brother was more *yurtsever* (patriotic) than him.

The children and youngsters who were sent to work experienced a true culture shock, not in the least because many did not speak Turkish and had never worked in an urban setting. Adem:

There was this guy there, he was going to the army, he hit my little brother because he was speaking Kurdish. He said: “You’re in Istanbul now, you can’t speak Kurdish here”. Then I held his arms on his back while my brother hit him in the face with a stone. He was pretty badly hurt. He went to the boss all crying and bleeding. The boss asked what happened. When he heard, he hit this guy a few times himself. He said to him: “They are not like us, they are *şerefli* (proud, honorable)”. We had come to Istanbul because we couldn’t preserve our language and culture in the village, that’s why we came here and then you are here and they attack you for the language you speak! Someone

⁹⁶ On average, in 1994 500.000 Turkish Lira amounted to ca. 26 German Marks (around 13 Euros), in 1995 500.000 lire amounted to less than 16 German Marks.

would tell me to hand the scissors and I wouldn't know what he meant. I learned Turkish on the job. We started as *çırak* (apprentice) and earned very little. We worked more than the normal hours, we didn't know that there was anything like *mesai* (overtime work). They didn't pay us extra. We knew nothing. We stayed there for nearly two years.

Adem's remark about the scissors was made by many of the other young adults who had started work as children. To illustrate how little they knew about this new world, they explained that, not only did they not know the word for scissors, they did not even know how to hold and use it. Many of the children and youngsters employed were practically or totally illiterate. Their illiteracy was a handicap in certain types of work, and also implied a lack of knowledge about their rights as workers. A daughter of Behzat, who was sixteen or seventeen at the time, worked in the export department of a garment atelier: "It was very hard, I couldn't read the numbers. I worked six days a week, on Saturday until one p.m., we had one break a day, only on Sunday we were off. Sometimes it was very late and there was nothing you could do against it". None of the workers had social or health insurance.

Once the young migrants became confident about their work skills, they started to realize that they could work elsewhere for a better salary or in better conditions, and they became more assertive. If their employers were acquaintances of their parents, it was difficult to stand up to them, but some did so nevertheless. Berivan, a daughter of Musa Bedran, said:

After seven o'clock, the *usta* said to me: "Go mop the floors". I didn't want to do it. He asked if I had come there to work or if I was there for fun. Then I said: "Hire a *bekçi* (caretaker) to clean the floor if you like. I didn't come here to scrub floors". That's how I left that place, the first place I worked.

Although the employers who hired these children and teenagers did so to help, or to fulfill their duties as friends or fellow Kurds, the knife cut both ways for them. Under the cover of altruism - using the excuse that the children were new to the job, and that they had had to create extra jobs for them - the employers could get away with paying very low salaries. Adem and his brother, for example, were paid much less than the other workers, even after they had learned the ropes of the work. After two years they left because of a conflict over their salaries. When I spoke to them, Adem and his brother had started their own garment atelier. However, before that they had changed jobs five or six times. This was common. Usually, the workers found a better job through the help of work friends who had moved to another atelier.

Whereas most men, many youngsters, and some of the children were out working or looking for jobs, women tended to remain at home. Istanbul was an unpredictable, unfamiliar and dangerous place for them: they were afraid to get

lost, to be harrassed by strangers, and even to be talked to in a language they did not know. As Zarife recalled:

We were afraid. Once one of the children didn't come home, we didn't dare to go outside to look for him. We were afraid to set even one foot outside. We didn't know anybody, if we went anywhere, it was with people from the same village. We were afraid of everything, the environment, the people. If a child didn't come home, we waited until late, until the men came home, to look for them.

After a few weeks or months this fear receded, but even then, most women seldomly ventured outside their direct surroundings. If, on rare occasions, they went to the market, they would take a child with them to guide them to the right place and translate for them. Although some women became more mobile over time, they still preferred to remain close to home. Around 2003, some of the women found work to do at home, such as 'cleaning' newly sewn clothes.⁹⁷

The people of Istanbul

For Aleyna Bedran-Günay, Istanbul constituted a great improvement in comparison to her harsh and stressful working conditions in Adana. Also the eight-year-old Yakup Günay was positively excited about coming to Istanbul - he hoped he would finally be able to go to school. For most others, however, Istanbul was less than attractive, to use an understatement. "The noise, the stench, the crowdedness, the traffic... it was a totally different world. I have been in this city for eight or nine years and I still don't know it, and I'm not curious either. I never became an *Istanbullu* and never will be one", said one of Behzat's sons. "We spent the past few years as prisoners here", his father added: "Our heads and hearts are still in our *memleket* (homeland)". When I asked Rauf, Behzat's little boy who had started work when he was nine, if he remembered the village, he smiled and nodded yes. His older brother said: "In the village he spent the whole day fishing, until late in the evening": being an odd-job boy in a sweatshop clearly did not compare to that. Adem explained Istanbul as follows:

In Istanbul we felt like a bird in a cage. Our own culture, our way of life, everything was different. In the village we had a *töre* (customs, traditions) that fit us. But here the culture is totally different. In our *memleket* everybody was very warm to each other. Here you have people who don't wish you a good Bayram (religious holiday) because you are Kurdish, who don't greet you because you are Kurdish. They look at you with the eyes of the media... We saw young people here who are addicted to *tiner* (thinner), young people are

⁹⁷ A sister of Aleyna had bags of newly sewn clothes delivered to her house to cut lose threads with tiny scissors. Ateliers that produced for the European market sometimes preferred to deliver the clothes to nearby homes, to evade regulations of European companies, one of which was that all workers should be insured.

ruined here... In the village nobody would say an indecent word to a woman. Here in Istanbul, it's different.

A recurring theme was discrimination. Whereas people's economic and housing positions tended to improve slowly once they had settled, much of the name-calling and discrimination which they had experienced at the beginning, remained. Once, when I was at Adil Bedran's house, I met a neighbor from the Black Sea region there. I noticed that Refika was curt in her dealings with this woman. When I asked her about this neighbor, she said:

We don't like them, we never go to their house, but they come here. They tell us they don't like Kurds at all. We are Kurds! If they don't like Kurds, they shouldn't come to our house either. But no, they like us, what kind of nonsense is that. I told her once, I said: "*Teyze* (aunt, a term of address), I'm the worst among the Kurds". Then she said: "No, you are fine". I have a poster of Ahmet Kaya⁹⁸ in my room. She says: "Why are you putting that up, who is he of yours". I told her he's a singer, someone I like very much. She asked if he is family, I said no. "But he's a terrorist", she says. She told me I'd better take it off the wall. We dislike Kurds, she says. I asked her why. "They're terrorists", she said. I asked her where she got that idea from. "It's on television", she said.

The migrants were acutely aware that they were regarded as ignorant *gundi* ('villager' in Kurdish) at best, and as monstrous terrorists at worst. In environments in which they were surrounded by Turks, they kept themselves to themselves. Davut Günay:

In this street there are all kinds of people, Georgians, Circassians, Laz, Turks, Gypsies, but no Kurds.⁹⁹ I don't know if they mix, but we don't see them a lot. People are a little bit afraid of us, because we are Kurds and a big family. Our children play with other children, but we don't socialize with the people in our street. People have this image of Kurds, from television, that they are wild, that they live in caves, that they are *kıro* (boorish) etcetera, like the Amazonians or something like that. (...)

We worked on Erdek island. We did construction work there. There are a lot of people who were Rum (Greek) originally. The person we worked for was a Rum. A relative of us had brought us there. We were talking Kurdish among

⁹⁸ Ahmet Kaya was a very popular Kurdish singer in the 1980s and 1990s. In November 2000, he died in exile in France, see:

http://www.ahmetkaya.com/ozgecmis_eng_2, accessed September 22, 2009.

⁹⁹ My use of the word 'Turk' here is shorthand for non-Kurds. As Davut made clear, not all non-Kurds are ethnic Turks, or necessarily regard themselves as Turks. However, most people in Turkey who say that they are Georgian or Laz or Albanian, for example, have no problem to (also) identify themselves as Turks.

ourselves. Then the employer says to this relative of ours: “How could you bring these Gulugululular here?!” He meant *Kızılderililer*.¹⁰⁰

The Bedrans and Günays socialized - and married¹⁰¹ - with relatives and co-villagers, with old acquaintances from the region of origin, and with Kurds they met in subsequent Kurdish parties HEP, DEP, HADEP and DEHAP. Socializing with Turks did not come natural. The migrants sensed they would always have to prove themselves first, and could not show their ‘real faces’. Cahit Bedran said: “Where we work, there are Turks too. We don’t socialize with them. We don’t share our problems with them. Our work life and our private life are two separate things”. Also when the migrants had fairly friendly relations with Turks, they would rarely invite them to their homes. The one place where Turks and Kurds could be expected to meet, the supposedly neutral territory of the mosque, was shunned by some, because there “they scold the PKK”. “I saw it myself”, said Ahid, the husband of Zerda Bedran.

In the mosque the imam gave a sermon. During the sermon, and this is in the *müslüman cemaati* (Muslim community)... he takes out a packet of cigarettes and says: “This Marlboro costs two million. Buy a Maltepe or a Samsun (Turkish cigarette brands) instead, and send the money that is left to the Southeast so that they can kill these terrorists. *Lüks tüketim yapmayın* (Don’t consume luxuries)”. Then he says things like: “This is the *vatan* (homeland) of the Turks, not from any other people, this is the land of the Turks”.

I was often told that ordinary Turks were not to be blamed for their ignorance, and even for their racism, considering the media bombardment of stories and images about barbarian Kurds. I was also told that, once the migrants’ Turkish neighbors and co-workers had gotten to know them, they changed their attitudes, and that Kurds were opposed to ethnic nationalism: HADEP/DEHAP was a party for all progressive people in Turkey, certainly not a party for Kurds only.

At the same time, some of the migrants were very negative about Turks in general. They regarded most Turks as narrow-minded, intolerant, and extremely nationalistic. Although most of the Günays and Bedran stated that they did not share their problems with Turks, they were not always prepared to keep the low profile which they felt was expected of them: they sometimes wanted to be able to express their point of view when a conversation, between workers, for

¹⁰⁰ The term *Kızılderililer* (‘Redskins’) is commonly used in Turkey to denote Native Americans in both positive and negative ways, but I never heard the word Gulugululular elsewhere. The employer’s use of this term was probably an idiosyncretic expression of a racist sentiment.

¹⁰¹ Based on data provided by the 1993 and 1998 Turkish Demographic and Health Surveys, Ayşe Gündüz-Hoşgör and Jeroen Smits (2002) state that the overall rate of intermarriage is low. In the early 1990s, only 3 percent of marriages was ethnically mixed, and only 10 percent of Kurds was married to a member of an other ethnic group, presumably mostly Turks.

example, drifted to southeastern issues. Thus, Cahit Bedran, the same person who had stated that his private and work life were two different things, said:

We sometimes tell others about our experiences. Some believe us, others don't. Those who believe us are usually a bit older, above twenty. The ones who have done their military service, they have seen it themselves. That people don't believe us is because of the media, they depict us as terrorists, as if we were monsters.

Those who moved up on the economic ladder probably had the best relations with Turks, but also on this level, people's closest contacts were with Kurds. The men who helped Adem and his brother to start their business, were Kurdish businessmen. One was a forced migrant from Tatvan who had started a business in 1995, the other also had a garment atelier. Some of the young people who went to *ortaokul* (middle school) or *lise* (highest level of secondary education)¹⁰² had a few Turkish friends but only saw them at school. Yakup, who came to Istanbul when he was eight and whose best friend was Turkish, was quite exceptional. He described his friend by saying: "He's Turkish, I like him a lot, I love him like a brother. In the weekends we often spend time together, we go out to Pendik with a group of friends". But later he said:

This is not our country, this is how I see it. But wherever you are, you have to conform to that environment (*ayak uydurmak zorundasın*). For me this is a strange (*yabancı* - strange or foreign) place, but you have to keep up with... I mean your environment, your friends, whatever. If people like me can not conform, they get lost. This friend I told you about just now, he still hates Kurds. He tells me: "Before I knew you..." Actually, even after knowing me he says: "So you are people too" (*Siz de insanmışsınız*). Their points of view are very different...

Even Yakup then, who was happy to live in Istanbul and whose best friend was Turkish, did not feel he belonged to the city. A major impediment for the creation of a sense of belonging was that as Kurds, the migrants were expected to keep a low profile. Yakup did not want to shout his Kurdishness from the rooftops: it was an undeniable fact that he was Kurdish, but that was it. He just wanted to study and to achieve something in his life. Hikmet Günay's daughter Seda, who was the only university student in the two families, felt exactly the same. However, the daily pressure - often almost intangible but sometimes palpable - to keep implicit anything which could remind other people of their Kurdishness made it difficult for them to 'just get on' with their lives.

¹⁰² In 1997, compulsory education was extended from five to eight years. Primary education consists of five years of *ilkokul* ('first school') and three years of *ortaokul* (middle school). *Lise*, which may be attended after middle school, takes four years to complete.

The Istanbul face of the state

In Istanbul, the disciplinary face of ‘the state’ (*devlet*) was never far away. When the migrants were sick or unemployed, when they were looking for a decent roof over their heads, or a way to obtain their children’s school requisites, the state was virtually absent. The disciplinary state, however, was everywhere. In the streets, the migrants were reminded of the strong arm of the state by the many images of Atatürk, by the uniforms of the army of police officers, and by streetsigns invoking the military successes of successive Ottoman and Turkish rulers. In the hospital, the migrants were scolded for speaking Kurdish, and at school, their children were taught to regard the virtues of truthfulness and diligence as exclusively Turkish.¹⁰³ Living in this overwhelmingly Turkish environment was one thing, but how about the possibility of being yet again confronted with overt political repression? The Bedrans and Günays were not subject to the regulations of the State of Emergency anymore, but they were living in the same country as before.

Istanbul did take them out of the heat and gave them some air. People were less afraid of arbitrary treatment of the law (*keyfi uygulamalar*). For one thing, people were much less afraid to disappear into nothingness. They believed it was more difficult for the authorities to blatantly disregard the rule of law, because communication between relatives and friends was easier and faster in Istanbul, because controlling institutions such as human rights organizations were closer, and because they had become more aware of, and vocal about, their rights. Still, at least two things could bring the migrants into serious trouble, their reputed past associations with the PKK, and their Istanbul-based political activities. Several people were on the run to escape the aftermath of allegations dating from before 1994. There was also the possibility of being ‘freshly’ accused of illegal acts in the past. Just to be present at a meeting organized by HADEP/DEHAP could be enough to be arrested. A few people said that the city provided better opportunities to go underground than the village, but İbo did not subscribe to this point of view: “In Istanbul, this is more difficult. In the village, you could not come home for months and still find a way to see your family, you could always find a place to stay, but you can’t do this in the city. Also because you need money for everything, without money you are not going to last long”.

Clearly then, the threat of arrest still loomed over the lives of many. Elif Günay, the young girl who was often very afraid in the village, was one of them. One day, when she came to my house which was very close to the Pendik State Hospital¹⁰⁴, she told me that she had been to that hospital before.

I went there after I got arrested with a group during Newroz. I was so afraid.
They held us for a week. One policeman acted as if he was going to beat me, I

¹⁰³ Every morning school children have to recite: “I’m Turkish, I’m truthful and hardworking” (*Ben Türküm, doğruyum, çalışkanım*).

¹⁰⁴ Pendik Devlet Hastanesi.

was so scared, in the village I was always terrified too. The police asked me if I knew the other people who were arrested. I was so afraid I said no. After we were released from Emniyet (the police station), they took us to the hospital to see if we had been beaten. We were waiting outside the hospital with a lot of people. Someone came up to ask us if there had been an accident, because we were with so many. I'm still scared of the police, not really when I see them on the street, but when they are at a meeting, for example. I hardly ever go to the party now, I'm too scared.

She said she had never been beaten or abused herself, but that many of her relatives had been less lucky. Whereas Elif was released after a week, relatives of her, who were arrested in Istanbul at other occasions, went in for years.

The threat of arrest, beatings and imprisonment, did not deter the villagers entirely from lending HADEP/DEHAP more or less active support. Müşir Günay, a younger brother of Abdülaziz, for example, was active in HADEP/DEHAP for a long time. In 2003 he was a candidate parliamentarian for the party. Ahmet Günay was the head of the Pendik youth organization of HADEP until 2000, when he resigned over an internal conflict, but he continued to attend political meetings. Members of both families went to Newroz celebrations and other political meetings. Large numbers of police officers are present at these meetings. Aleyna's sister Zerda said: "I go to DEHAP Pendik often. This week I went to two meetings. Suphiye (her sister-in-law) was there too. She received a lot of beatings with truncheons". With a smile she added: "I'm light, I make sure I get out of their way". Suphiye said she had accidentally stepped on the paw of a police dog, but thankfully he had just stared at her. "I'm most afraid of the police dogs though", Zerda said. Once, they went to the other side of the city in protest of Star Newspaper. This newspaper had headed a report about the election of a Kurd as governor of Kirkuk - Kerkük in Turkish - as 'Kerkürt', which means 'donkey-Kurd' in Kurdish (see Yeğen 2007:3). A storm of Kurdish protests followed in different parts of the country.

Some members of both families kept more distance to HADEP/DEHAP and the PKK than Zerda, Müşir and Ahmet. Hikmet Günay, the former MHP militant, was one of the people least pro-PKK. It was not that he did not feel sympathy for the PKK or for HADEP/DEHAP. He recalled having defended people's right to vote for HADEP when he was in Bitek village in 2002. The *ilçe kaymakamı* (administrative head of a district) had come to the village to dissuade the villagers from voting for HADEP: "At some point, I said: 'Wasn't it the Turkish state who granted HADEP permission to be formed? The constitution allows this party. If it is such a bad party, why would the state permit it to exist?'" However, he felt that the PKK had failed in its duty to unite the Kurds, because it did not understand the needs of the majority of the Kurds who were, he thought, "hundred percent tied to Islam". He said he had voted for the party of Turgut Özal, ever since his MHP period: "And the next time, I might not vote

at all". He advised his children to stay out of politics: "Because if you get into politics, you can't study. I know this from my own experience, so I tell my children and the children of my brothers: 'Don't get involved in politics when you are still studying, after graduation, you can do what you want, but not when you are still studying'."

Examples of political activism notwithstanding, most of the time, most people did exactly what Hikmet thought was wisest: they remained aloof from political activism. Most Bedrans and Günays were unwilling to risk the fragile equilibrium they had reached after seven or so years of hard work and constant adaptation to changing circumstances. Yet, even while most people tried to avoid dealing with repressive institutions, the reality of low-intensity repression became a condition of life - yet again. I already made clear that the migrants were careful with what they said to whom about their past and their political ideas. They were on guard, also with me. On one of my first visits to the house of Elif's *amca* Abdülaziz Günay, I wrote the names of a few people down. Because the room was usually full of people, it was difficult for me to keep track of who said what and who was a son or daughter of who. Knowing their names would help, I hoped. At some point, Abdülaziz's son Davut said it would be better if I did not write any names. His brother said it would be all right if I only used first names, but Davut insisted I didn't write any names: he was afraid of what might happen if I were arrested.¹⁰⁵ A fear-reducing factor was that people felt they could defend themselves against *keyfi uygulamalar*, and that they would know which strings to pull when they were arrested. As İbo said:

I am able to defend myself well. If they'd [the police] ask me why I am walking around with this Dutch person, I'd say: "Why shouldn't I, is there a law that says a Turkish citizen cannot walk around with a Dutch person?" Not everybody can defend himself like this.

For most people, the fear induced by low-intensity repression did not govern their lives, but formed one of the conditions of life. Often fear of repression was pushed to the coulisses by the daily struggle to feed the children, to find a cure for the sick, to scrape the money together to buy school requisites for the schoolgoing children, to find a new or better job, or to find marriage partners for those who old enough to get married. Aleyna, for example, was absorbed by the task of raising a small child in a hostile household, while her husband - who might have been her only ally - was carrying out his military service. She deplored the way in which 'the state' treated her relatives, but when relatives were arrested, this had relatively little bearing on her own life. Once, while

¹⁰⁵ Of course I complied at that time. I assigned pseudonyms to people without writing their real names down, but after a while this became undoable. Because most migrants were not too worried about me writing their names down, and because I never sensed any sign of police interest in me, I generally used real names in my notes. Not for Davut though.

Aleyna was talking about how she got married to her husband, she was looking through photo's I had taken of a Newroz meeting on the European side of Istanbul. Woven through the story of her marriage, she casually pointed out relatives who were imprisoned or otherwise violated:

Aleyna: This man who was in love with me worked on the other side, he always slept in hotels. Once he saw me in his dream. He said he saw me in a faraway place [she is leafing through the photo's]. Oh look, this is my *amca's* daughter, she's in jail. She was caught because of the hungerstrikes. They were holding a press conference. That's where they arrested her. She is my father's niece. In his dream he saw that three or four people were gagging me. Oh, this [pointing to a picture of a young man with a broad smile] this is also family, the courts gave him 25 years, he is 20. And this is the daughter of my other *amca*. He had two daughters. He was killed because he was *Kürtçü* ('Kurdist'), they said he was helping the PKK.

Miriam: When was that?

Aleyna: Three years ago. So he saw me in his dream and then he called my brother İbo...

People like Elif, however, were unable to shake off the fear. When a relative was arrested, this triggered the fear she had experienced in the village and had re-experienced in Istanbul, when she was under arrest. Elif had little self-confidence and was fearful of other things than the police as well. Because she had learning difficulties, some of her relatives joked that she would be married off to an *amcaoğlu* of hers who was hearing impaired: supposedly they would make a nice couple. She was very afraid for this to happen but felt unable to influence the situation. The only thing she could think of doing if this were to happen was to commit suicide, she told me. It would be too much to argue that fear became 'a way of life' for the forced migrants, but for Elif perhaps this was the case (cf. Green 1994).

In spite of the hardships, many people stated that they were much more knowledgeable about the world now than they had ever been, or would have ever been in the village. Zarife: "You know what the best thing is about coming to Istanbul? We gained more knowledge about life, we are more conscious now about ourselves and the outside world. For the rest it's not so great". They felt they had come to understand things which many other people did not understand, that they were not tied anymore to exploitative traditional leaders, understood the conditions of life 'here' and 'there', and 'saw through' the political system and the media. Through a comparison of the conditions of life in Istanbul with those in the village, they had become more aware of the position of the Kurds, and of the wash-out of traditional social relations.

Most people were less than happy with their lives in Istanbul. A minority was very clear about wanting to stay in Istanbul, or - better even - to go abroad. Some hoped to be able to find work in construction across the border, Seda

hoped to study abroad. Many longed for the village, but very few were prepared to return to the village for good, unless living conditions were dramatically improved. Zarife:

I want to walk in the same place where my parents walked. I want to raise my children in the village where their grandparents lived as well. I want my children to know the culture of their parents. But unfortunately, our presence in Istanbul is an obligation, it can not be any other way, we are forced to be here.

For a return to the village, the circumstances would have to be very different. As Vicdan (Abdülaziz's first wife, co-wife of Zarife) said:

No I don't want to go back. People are being repressed, insulted, forced to do things they don't want. That's why people don't get along so well there, that's why I don't want to go back. The village is not as nice as it used to be. We are afraid. The state burned our villages and there is nothing left. If the state didn't interfere with us, if they wouldn't repress us, wouldn't insult us, if they gave us a piece of freedom, then why wouldn't I want to return to my village. But if we go back now, even if it's safe, there is no work, no houses...

In reports about forcibly displaced Kurds, the question of return is often the 64 thousand dollar question (Human Rights Watch 2002; Jongerden 2006). At the beginning of this chapter I made clear that there were attempts to return to the village. These were mainly of villagers who had stayed close to the village. However, the father of Adil, İbo and Aleyna was also in the village when I was there: he was on his own, camping in the mosque because he so much longed to be in his village. To give another example, relatives of the Bedrans who were from a nearby village were doing anything they could to return to their village. When they were trying to return to their village, the gendarmerie or the army had opened fire on them. The Kurdish newspaper *Özgür Gündem*¹⁰⁶ devoted an article to this case. Yet, I sensed that for many of the Bedrans and Günays the question of return had no immediate relevance. They were all too aware of the fact that 'the place of return' no longer existed, and that what this place used to be in the past had hardly been perfect to begin with. Surely, the crystal clear water, the majestic mountains, and the fresh milk and vegetables would not have lost any of their attractiveness, but the village was not a place where people could live as dignified and deserving people (*adam gibi*). Therefore, most of those who wanted to return did not want to return to the same old place save the repression: they wanted to return to a better place.

¹⁰⁶ See Marcus 2007:189-194,292 for information about this newspaper.

Reflection: wrapping up the story...

In the introductory chapter I laid down a framework for the study of life after displacement. Its components related to the cause and agent of displacement, the ties of the migrants to their village and land, their connections to the people of Istanbul, and the ways in which they associated among themselves. All of these aspects surfaced in the story of the villagers from Alimler. The migrants' situation with regard to these aspects can be summarized as follows.

The cause of displacement: The Günays and Bedrans were displaced because in the eyes of the authorities, they were the wrong people living in the wrong place - the wrong people because they were tenaciously Kurdish, and the wrong place, because the last place where the authorities were willing to tolerate such tenacious Kurdishness was a Kurdish region, an area which the PKK regarded its domain.

Their relationship to the agent of displacement: For long, the Günays' and Bedrans' relationship to the state - as 'mediated' by gendarmerie officers, teachers at village and boarding schools, and government officials in Tatvan, Van and some other places - had been characterized mainly by instrumental submission to the state. However, during the 1980s, the relationship between the villagers and the state became increasingly antagonistic.

Their relationship to the land: The distance the villagers felt to the state was directly proportional to the closeness they felt toward their land - the source of their livelihood, the birthland of their ancestors, and the anchor of their social identifications. Yet, at the time of their displacement, they had established such ties with other regions and cities that the land was not anymore their only means of existence or center of attention. Both families had started to spread their wings, at the very least, the daily pursuits and preoccupations of some of their members had shifted from the village to other places. For most 'villagers' the village still felt like home - also for those who lived elsewhere a lot of the time. But perforce the villagers' relationship to the land had changed.

Their capacity to mobilize themselves as members of a group: Their ties with the city implied that, even though their capacity to mobilize themselves as members of a group had been injured by the armed conflict - after all, the larger familial complex proved difficult to sustain - this capacity was still significant. This mobilization was not so much in the rights or political arena: the Günays and Bedrans had been unable to prevent their displacement, were unable to return to the village in the short-term, and their political activities were kept simmering.

Their ties to the 'host' or previously settled community: Most of the migrants' engagements with older residents of the city were arduous and characterized by distrust. In as far as the host population was Kurdish and 'aware', relations were often quite good. Support came about by virtue of the Bedran family name, their participation in the political struggle, and a sense of Kurdishness which - sometimes - overrode village and other older associations.

Relations with non-Kurds improved over the years, but there was a marked difference between ‘those who knew’ (usually Kurds) and ‘those who did not’ (usually Turks).

The availability of allies: Allies with the capacity to help the migrants to transcend the daily struggle for existence were few. The Günays’ and Bedrans’ most visible ally was HADEP/DEHAP, the Kurdish political party. However, in the short term, this party could neither be of practical assistance, nor could it do much to assist the migrants in carving a comfortable urban niche for themselves, in which they could live with dignity. On the contrary, the migrants’ connections to the party put them at risk of renewed state harassment.

And unfolding it again...

The Alimler story is a true story. Its protagonists may have mixed up the sequences of events, they may - intentionally or unintentionally - have exaggerated or downplayed their own role in events, and the emotions conveyed are likely to be inflected with ‘present-day’ worries and convictions. I on my part may have misunderstood some of the things that the migrants told me, and may have made editorial choices that the migrants would not endorse. But the major facts and feelings on which my narrative is based are true. After decades of trying to keep aloof from the state, the Bedrans and the Günays *did* start to support the PKK, they *were* intimidated by soldiers, their village *was* raided, their houses *were* searched, some villagers *were* taken away to be tortured, they *did* work as agricultural laborers in South Turkey, they *were* discriminated against in Istanbul while looking for houses and jobs, and they *did* suffer impoverishment. The story is also true in the sense that it is by no means a unique story. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds in Turkey could relate similar stories - if they were asked.

Together, many such stories constitute a reversal of a still dominant Turkish narrative about the armed conflict in Southeast Turkey. In the Kurdish narrative of which the Alimler story forms a building block, it is not the PKK, but the state that is a terrorist organization, and it is not terrorists whom the Kurdish people are supporting, but freedom fighters. Such a narrative is still controversial in Turkey. However, among politicized Kurds it is an often told narrative, a classic one almost. In the hundreds of interviews and casual conversations that I had with forced migrants, stories like those of the Bedrans and Günays - stories which fit a Kurdish narrative able of subverting the dominant Turkish reading of events - were most prevalent. Like the Bedrans and Günays, most migrants who spoke with me wanted to counteract state censorship, they wanted to send an image of a different PKK into the world, they wanted to show who the Kurds ‘really’ are - not bandits or barbarians, but dignified people with heartfelt desires and legitimate demands which are hardly different from those of all other people in Turkey.

Yet, while the Alimler story may be a true story, it is not the full story as I know it. I told the story which many Bedrans and Günays wanted me to hear and tell, and it was in the process of establishing themselves as the recipients of great wrongs that this story about war and forced migration emerged. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the migrants' felt need to set the record straight came with its own forms of internal censorship. Some stories about the past were sacrificed - sometimes consciously, sometimes not so consciously, and there tended to be little room for ambiguities, for the 'fuzzy logic' that characterizes life at all times, and especially at times of war and insecurity. This was not only the case with the Bedrans and Günays, but with most migrants. The reversal or replacement of the dominant narrative did not allow for too many nuances, it necessitated clear-cut experiences and perceptions. However, the migrants' experiences and perceptions were not always as clear-cut as the Alimler story might suggest. There were stories 'behind' the Alimler story and behind the other stories told, and some things were easier or more accepted to narrate than others. In almost all families there was a narratable State and an unnarratable State, a narratable PKK and an unnarratable PKK, a narratable Kurdish People and an unnarratable Kurdish People.

In the next chapter, I will draw the contours of this narratable and unnarratable State, PKK and People. In doing this, I hope to provide insight in the dynamics through which the Alimler story and the other stories told by the migrants came into being, and in some of the 'stories-behind-the-story'. In terms of the descriptive framework, the focus of the following chapter will primarily be on the relationship of the later forced migrants to the agents of displacement, and on their perspectives on the causes of displacement.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘The State’, ‘The PKK’ and ‘The People’

It is in studies of violence that the state - what we imagine as the state, what we call the state, that ensemble of discourses and practices of power, that elusive subject that can so much affect the life of citizens - appears most clearly as working against the nation (Trouillot 1990). The very concept at the heart of the nation, “the people,” becomes an object of fear and violence by a state that wants to have absolute control of a nation it is at once dividing and destroying. “The people” is invoked and torn apart through the creation of ever-present enemies: criminals, communists, subversives, guerrillas, terrorists. (Aretxaga 2003:397)

This chapter is about the migrants explaining themselves to ‘the outside world’. It is about the reversal of a dominant Turkish narrative through Kurdish war stories. I will show that it was easier to reverse the dominant narrative than to subvert the discourse in which the Turkish narrative was phrased. This was a ‘discourse of war’ (Jabri 1996:7), the tenets of which were shared by both the majority of the migrants and the ‘surrounding’ society.

Stories, of any kind, are communicated in specific contexts with specific aims. Although they are often about the past, the contexts in which they are considered worth telling do not belong to the past, nor do the desires and grievances implied in their telling. This is as true in the case of forced migrants - who are more likely to be questioned about their past by social workers, immigration officers and researchers than many others - as it is for all of us, considering that we all tell stories. Marita Eastmond (2007) argues that the way in which forced migrants are viewed by the ‘receiving society’ is bound to affect the way in which they narrate their past. In situations in which forced migrants are classified and treated as a homogeneous collection of victims, as may be the case in refugee camps or asylum centers, for example, they are likely to affirm their individuality in their stories “emphasizing agency and ability rather than victimization and disability” (Eastmond 2007:254).

In the case of the Kurds, the fact that their forced migration went unacknowledged - that the ordeal of the migrants just did not exist in Turkish ‘national consciousness’ - fuelled their urge to establish themselves as victims of a great historic injustice. The forced migrants were searching for a “public space of solidarity” (Kirmayer 1996:189). In this process of establishing themselves as the recipients of great wrongs, the migrants focused due attention on three themes, namely ‘The State’, ‘The PKK’, and ‘The People’. Not all stories about

these themes were regarded worthy of narration. There were narratable, but also unnarratable, stories about ‘The State’, and the same was true for ‘The PKK’ and for ‘The Kurdish People’. To give an example, a story containing the message “The state ruined us” was narratable. “The state ruined us by means of our fellow villagers” was more painful but - sometimes and for some people - also a narratable story. Yet, stories containing other messages, for example: “The PKK was not always so different from the state”, were hardly narratable.

This chapter functions as a podium for all these stories and reflects my effort to analyze the different levels of narration of which I became aware during my research, and which point to important aspects of the migrants’ social lives during and ‘after’ the war. In analyzing the more and less narratable stories, I do not aim to present ‘just’ stories or an emerging narrative, without speaking about ‘lived realities’. On the contrary, in employing a broad range of sometimes contradictory and partly overlapping stories, I hope to expose more of the ‘logics’ of repression, the experience of war, and relevant processes of social identification than would have been possible if I had relied on the recollections of people from one village or community only.

In the first section of the four in which this chapter is organized, I will elucidate the difference between ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ as I understand it, will comment on their relation to ‘discourse’, and will delineate the implicit criteria by which the narratable and unnarratable were defined. This section functions as an analytical backdrop to the material in the next three sections, which are titled ‘The State’, ‘The PKK’, and ‘The People’. Each of these sections will start off with a presentation of the stories most widely shared among the forced migrants, after which the focus will shift to the stories which were less narratable, the stories which did not conform to the emerging dominant narrative. ‘The State’ comes at the beginning, because for most migrants, the story of why and how they came to Istanbul began with the state. ‘The PKK’ is in the middle, because in most cases the migrants’ relationships to the state were ‘mediated’ by the PKK. In the perception of these migrants, the PKK made them aware of what they could and should expect of a supposedly democratic and modern state. ‘The People’ is placed at the end, because it was in people’s daily relations that their (narrations of their) experiences of and with the state and the PKK took shape. The family or community was where the state and the PKK ‘landed’, and where the narratable and unnarratable emerged. It thus seems the apt ‘site’ to come to some hopefully insightful conclusions.

STORIES AND DOMINANT NARRATIVES: THE NARRATABLE AND UNNARRATABLE

For the philosopher Jerome Bruner (1996:121), a story “has two sides to it: a sequence of events, and an implied evaluation of the events recounted”. Stories may be factual, but they are never neutral, because they extract certain events

from a multitude of happenings: only that, which is regarded worth recounting, is transformed into stories. These stories are communicated in specific contexts with specific aims. The anthropologist Edward Bruner (1986a:145) understands narrative as possessing the key elements of story, discourse and telling: *story* is "the abstract sequence of events, systematically related", *discourse* refers to "the text in which the story is manifested, the statement in a particular medium such as novel, myth, lecture, film, conversation, or whatever", and *telling* (or showing) denotes "the action, the act of narrating, the communicative process that produces the story in discourse". This communicative process does not have to be face-to-face and it can take place anywhere: a living room, a movie theatre, a bus, a political meeting, a television studio and a multitude of other places. Those who listen to, read and watch stories are part of this communicative process.

If stories are understood in Edward Bruner's sense, then "the story is prior to, but not independent of, the discourse. We abstract the story from discourse, but once abstracted the story serves as a model for future reference" (Bruner 1986a:146). This is what I did in the previous chapter. I abstracted stories from discourse and let these serve as a model for reference in my dissertation. In doing this, the telling, the communicative process in which the story was produced was rendered almost invisible. This 'model for future reference' which is created in the process of recounting a story, or of recounting many stories, is what is often also called a dominant narrative. In this chapter I will concentrate on the making of dominant narratives through 'personal' stories.

If some stories were elevated and others were relegated to the margins, the question is not only which stories belonged to which categories, but also who had more 'right' to narrate his or her story than others, who was entitled - or expected - to tell a story? In most societies, participants or witnesses have priority to tell a story, but this is not everywhere and not always the case (Ochs & Capps 1996:34). The opportunity for storytelling is created by other people - in this research by me, but also by those people who took me in tow and the on-listeners. Among the forced migrants, the right to speak was dependent on, among other things, gendered notions of prerogatives and capacities, and a person's perceived potential for exemplifying the 'dominant experience' of war and forced migration. People who occupied positions in the margins of the emerging dominant narrative and those who occupied positions in the margins of the social units - for example, the family - in which stories were told, were not as likely to be assigned the space to tell their stories. To put it concisely, stories which laid bare the 'fuzziness' of war, stories which might jeopardize family relationships, and stories which might jeopardize male and female relations were difficult to talk about.

To start with the 'fuzziness' of war, it seemed that some people's experiences best remained untold, because they were not congruent with the political message of the dominant Kurdish narrative, which was that the PKK wanted the

best thing for the Kurdish people and that Kurds should not expect anything from the state, which was regarded as an inherently violent institution intent on the annihilation of the Kurdish nation, by torturing and killing some Kurds and co-opting others. As might be expected, in this context, stories about PKK violence against civilians were problematic to recount. Although in some families and village communities there was more tolerance of divergent stories than in others, even in the most ‘pluralistic’ of families and communities, there was some pressure exerted to conform to the dominant reading of events. For example, people who did not want to talk about experiences that others regarded exemplary of state repression, were mildly coerced into talking about them. And people who were reluctant to situate their experiences with state repression in the dominant explanatory framework, were encouraged to do this anyway.

It seemed that experiences which were regarded as incongruent with ideal conceptions of the extended family, the unit which was at the heart of the migrants’ most meaningful emotional, economic and social relations, best remained under the carpet. ‘The family’ had long been the basic unit in which villagers lived their lives, survived hardships, and gave meaning to their experiences. It was not only like this for Kurds, for whom it was the extended patrilineal and patrilocal family that was important, but for people in the whole of Turkey (Ataca & Sunar 1999; Delaney 1991; Duben 1982; Erder 2002b; White 1994).¹⁰⁷ While modern educational and economic opportunities have offered many in Turkey a diversity of avenues for ‘self-development’ and social mobility outside the family, decreasing the material interdependence on relatives (Ataca & Sunar 1999), the conditions under which the forced migrants were forced to live their lives in the past decades, have reinforced the emotional value of family relations *as well as* the ‘objective’ interdependency of family members.

Under the dire conditions of war and internal displacement, emotional and economic security could practically only be found in and through the family. The fact that this family had been damaged and strained in the process - it had lost some of its members and had suffered severe financial, material and emotional losses - made it all the more important for the migrants to preserve and invigorate what was left of it. This sometimes meant that relations between relatives were portrayed much more positively than people felt they were, and that conflicts which were highly relevant to an understanding of the impact of war and displacement, remained in the shadows. In one of the families from Alimler, war-related events had caused a major fall out between the children of different brothers who had previously felt they were “on the same side”. Although this fall out surfaced in several conversations, it was something about which most members of the concerned family would have rather stayed silent.

¹⁰⁷ See Dale Eickelman 2002 for a discussion of the importance of kinship in the wider region, the Middle-East and Central Asia.

If the family remained such an important point of reference, it will come as no surprise that the gender relations which sustained 'the traditional Kurdish family', would be regarded crucial to the family's survival, and that stories which jeopardized the gender order which was (to be) at the heart of the family, remained untold. Among the forced migrants, the family's status as emotional, social and economic resort reinforced the often noted tendency among migrants to place emphasis on their 'traditional' culture. As is the case in many situations of migration and other situations of rapid social change, women were viewed as embodying traditional culture, and the incitement to keep gender roles and relations as they - supposedly - were, was strong.¹⁰⁸ Because stories of female victims of repression were deemed more likely to pose a threat to the existing or desired gender order, female victims of repression were regarded less deserving of telling their stories than male victims. Besides, there was little space for personal stories about sexual torture, also those of men. This was so in spite of the fact that such stories would fit the emerging dominant narrative about the ruthlessness of the Turkish state.

Before continuing, I want to make clear that I am drawing rather sharp lines between The State, The PKK, and The People for the sake of clarity, not because I think they are unitary, entirely dissimilar, and easily distinguishable 'phenomena'. 'Turkish state-Kurdish society' relations were - and are - far more complex than appears from this tripartition. A recent issue of the *European Journal of Turkish Studies* edited by Nicole Watts (2009) makes this point about the blurred boundaries between state and society ever so clear. One thing which comes out of the migrants' stories is that the three 'phenomena' were, in fact, not always easily separable. Another thing which comes out of the migrants' stories is why it may have been so important for¹⁰⁹ some forced migrants to 'pretend' that they were easily separable. Drawing on Vivienne Jabri (1996), I believe this was because the physical manifestation of war has an inevitable impact on discourse: a war can not be sustained without a 'discourse of war'.

The discourse of war aims at the construction of a mythology based on inclusion and exclusion. This categorization sharply contrasts the insiders from the outsiders who are the "others", or the deserving enemy. (...) The discourse of inclusion and exclusion cannot allow uncertainty or doubt, so if such are expressed, they must be represented as irrational or even treacherous. Any representation which blurs the inclusion/exclusion boundary breaks down certainties constructed in the name of war and forms a counter-discourse which deconstructs and delegitimizes war and thereby fragments myths of unity, duty and conformity. (Jabri 1996:7)

¹⁰⁸ For the notion of women as the bearers of 'traditional' or 'exemplary' culture, see for example Vijaya Joshi 2000, Victoria Goddard 1987 and 2000, and Joane Nagel 2003.

¹⁰⁹ See Zeynep Gambetti (2005) for an analysis of DEHAP's role in Diyarbakir, where this party won the mayoralty. DEHAP was both part of the state but also somehow outside of it.

The term ‘discourse of war’ may be read as indicating a conscious pro-war stand. This is not what I want to imply. Therefore, building on Jonathan Spencer’s (2000) phrase ‘the politics of certainty’, I will more often speak of the ‘discourse of certainty’.

In this chapter, I am using stories to form a counter-discourse which deconstructs and delegitimizes war. Jabri suggests that this is the right thing to do, and I am inclined to agree. I do wonder, however, if the ‘unrealistic clarity’ which many Kurdish migrants established about the war was not also some kind of life-saving device. After all, establishing clarity where there might not be any, may have helped the villagers to manage the sense of endangerment and panic which could have befallen them under the circumstances at that time: it may have helped them to stay out of the “oneiric geography of fear when trust in conventions has disappeared”, which can be the accompaniment of large-scale violence (Das & Kleinman 2001:17).

STORIES ABOUT ‘THE STATE’

In the dominant Kurdish discourse of certainty, the Turkish state is a unitary agent of aggression with a narrativized long and brutal history. As I will show in this section, the discourse of certainty is neither ‘watertight’ nor omnipresent. As I will also show, by drawing on personal experiences and on those of ethnic or otherwise subaltern ‘brothers and sisters’, the migrants recounted and explained the state’s aggression in a variety of ways, but rarely in ways which upset gendered conventions regarding family honor.

In the Alimler story recounted in chapter 3, before the 1980s, the state was present as the executioner of brave Kurdish rebels, the instigator of anti-Kurdish religious reforms, the tormenter of young Kurdish military recruits, and the sly godfather of the assimilative institution of the boarding school. For the rest, it was virtually absent. However, in the 1980s, things changed drastically: the repressive face of the state seemed to be turning up everywhere. This ‘repressive state’ was not only a recurring theme in the stories of the people from Alimler, but in most of the conversations and interviews I had. In the migrants’ stories, raids, house searches, arbitrary arrests, torture, imprisonment and extrajudicial killings figured prominently, as well as forest fires, food embargoes, and the ban on the use of summer pastures. Every aspect of the repression documented by researchers of human rights abuses in Southeast Turkey,¹¹⁰ surfaced in their stories. There is neither space nor need to document this repression in all its

¹¹⁰ See for example: Mahmut Barut 2001; Vedat Çetin 1999; Füreyâ Ersoy 1992; Etten, Jongerden, Vos, Klaasse, Hoeve 2008; Helsinki Watch 1993, Human Rights Watch 1994, 1995; İnsan Hakları Derneği 1994; 1995, 1998; Zülküf Kışanak 2004; Kurdish Human Rights Project 1996; Mazlum-Der 1993; Mazlum-Der İstanbul Şubesi 1995; Devrim Sevimay 2001; Stichting Nederland-Koerdistan 1995; TBMM 1998; U.S. Committee for Refugees 1999; Kerim Yıldız and Koray Düzgören 2002.

facets here, but it is important to present some of it, if we want to understand ‘where the migrants came from’, both literally and figuratively.¹¹¹

‘A wind of terror’

They show on television now what America does in Iraq, but there was a time when the state did this to the Kurds, in Kurdish villages. At night they ambushed villages, they searched the houses, and they blamed it on the terrorists. But I have never seen terrorists. It was a matter of... When you are at war, you fight each other. It was a war after all. But why doesn’t Turkey show this? Maybe you also read this... there was a man in the newspaper who said: “I have killed many Kurds for the state”, but no press agency circulated that report. What they do show is what America does. But it amounts to the same thing. What America does in Iraq, the Turkish state did to the Kurds. They attacked villages, raped women, and they blamed the terrorists.

These words of Yeliz, the 15-year-old daughter of Mustafa Demir from Ağaçlık village, pretty much sum up the dominant narrative about the state, which is that the Turkish state fought, and is still fighting, a dirty war against the Kurdish people.

Although people from the same village often gave quite different estimates of the time span in which raids and attacks had taken place, in most cases the time period in which the villagers lived in constant fear of raids, attacks and whatever else usually followed these, seems to have lasted a year or a few years up to five years. Army raids often followed violent events in the surrounding area in which Turkish soldiers had been killed or injured, for example, a PKK attack on a gendarmerie post or a fight between the PKK and an army unit. Reports by human rights organizations indicate that this was a pattern all over the Southeast. Recollections of soldiers who participated in these military operations also confirm the existence of a pattern (see Mater 1998). Soldiers might come in small units, but many migrants recalled their village having been swarmed with hundreds or even thousands of soldiers. The raids usually consisted of house searches for weapons and evidence of PKK involvement. In these searches, often the villagers’ personal possessions were confiscated or destroyed: mattresses were torn to pieces, the precious contents of larders were taken or spilled on the floor, and picture frames with photos of beloved relatives were crushed. A commonly used way of incriminating civilians was for the soldiers to put weapons in village houses and accuse the inhabitants of arming or militarily supporting the PKK. This then was a pretext for arresting people.

Often the villagers were humiliated and beaten in front of others. Villagers were scolded for cooperating with the PKK and molested in front of their loved

¹¹¹ The ten narratives published by Göç-Der in 2008 under the editorship of Namık Kemal Dinç provide a more detailed and gripping picture of the oppression experienced by the villagers.

ones and other co-villagers. Migrants from Vadiyeli village near Karakoçan in Elazığ province, which is on the fringe of Turkish Kurdistan so to speak, recalled having been forced to lie down on their bellies in the village square once, after which soldiers walked over their backs. These migrants insisted they had suffered less severe repression than Kurds from the heartland of PKK activity, such as Hakkari, Şırnak, Mardin and Diyarbakir. One extremely violent incident was related by a middle-aged woman whom I met in Taksim district. She told me that after soldiers had summoned all villagers to the village square, they had opened fire on the villagers, killing her brother and five others, and injuring many more. The young HADEP member who had introduced me to this woman, had witnessed this shootout as a ten-year-old. Apparently, these killings were retaliations for the villagers' refusal to join the village guards.

From almost all families, certain members were singled out for interrogations which usually took place in towns or cities in the region, and which almost routinely included torture. Villagers were forced to provide intelligence about ambushes and other PKK activities of which they sometimes had little or no knowledge. Certain categories of people were more vulnerable to repression than others. The location of someone's house could make all the difference: people living away from the rest of the village were often in a particularly vulnerable position. Because the PKK had the ability to contact such people without drawing much attention, the army and police were especially hard on them. Nida, a young woman from a village close to Siirt, lived at a half hour's walking distance from the main village. She recalled that her father was one of the first in the village to be contacted by the PKK and was sometimes assigned the task of taking care of injured PKK members, even after 'the state' had tortured him and forced him into becoming an informant. *Muhtars*, usually middle-aged or older men, were both approached by the PKK and by the state with demands for cooperation, so they could easily fall pray to violence. Also young people, young males especially, were vulnerable to arrest, torture and imprisonment. They were arrested and tortured on suspicion of supporting the PKK, used as 'bait' to incite older relatives to turn themselves in, and young men were rounded up violently to join the army. Whereas some people might be more vulnerable to state repression than others, all were vulnerable in the sense that if the state suspected one person in a family of being *Kürtçü* ('Kurdist'), his or her whole family would be intimidated.

Extrajudicial killings

Raids, roundups, shootouts, torture, threats of rape, this was how the rural police and security forces “blew a wind of terror” over the countryside (“*bir terör havası estiriyorlardı*”). But a particularly salient source of insecurity was the fear of being killed by ‘the state’ and then ‘disappeared’. For some villagers, it was a major - if not decisive - factor in their decision to leave their village or town. This fear was emphasized mostly by people from Diyarbakir province, and by members of the Çelik family who were from a village close to Midyat city in Mardin province. Their fears were incited by the large number of these killings in their own and the adjacent provinces. In September 1992, Nedret Ersanel and Can Karakaş (1992:27-29) published a list of 221 people who had been murdered in the first eight months of that year, 58 of whom were from the province of Mardin.¹¹² Most other killings took place in the neighboring provinces of Şırnak, Batman and Diyarbakir.

Cebbar, a middle-aged father of three, was born in a village close to Kulp, Diyarbakir. He lived in the town of Silvan, also in Diyarbakir province, when the following happened:

Once we didn’t open the door for the police. That was when the chairman of HEP Diyarbakir¹¹³ had been assassinated, in 1991. One night, the police came to our house. “Open the door”, they said. Through the closed door I said: “Get the *muhtar* or give me a warrant. Let me see a warrant first.” They said no. “Open the door, we are police, you are being wanted!” they shouted. We couldn’t open the door. If you open the door in a situation like that, you either start to confess, or you persist in saying that you are Kurdish and that will be the end. We were very tense then. Then the police broke the door. The children had been asleep but they woke up. While they were beating me up, my son [who was four years old] was hiding behind his mother, shivering and shaking. I told the police they couldn’t beat me in my own house. Then they took me with them. When my son woke up the next day, the first thing he said was: “They are going to kill my daddy”. (...)

In the town where we lived, people kept being taken away and tortured. In February 1992, during Ramadan, we were watching a Yılmaz Güney¹¹⁴ film on Turkish television - there was no Kurdish television then. After the film our guests left. We had a two storey house. I was on the second floor. My wife said she was going to bed. I was walking to the sink when I heard shots, twice. I threw myself on the floor. My wife screamed. She had been asleep and it took

¹¹² Nedret Ersanel and Can Karakaş (1992) use figures provided by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV), probably published in September 1992.

¹¹³ This was Vedat Aydın, a human rights activist and the chairman of the local HEP branche, who was killed in Diyarbakir in 1991.

¹¹⁴ Yılmaz Güney (1937-1984) was a legendary Kurdish actor and film maker, who was also extremely popular with large parts of the Turkish public. He spent more than ten years in Turkish prisons, first for the controversial contents of his work and later because he had shot a judge. He continued his film making career from his cell by smuggling scenarios out and having them directed by others.

a while for her to realize what was happening. “Lie on the floor”, I said. The children had been asleep and I went to their side to see what was happening. My father had also jumped up. “Son, what’s happening!”, he yelled. “Our house is being attacked”, I said. I thought the children were both dead - they were covered in dust, rubble, pieces of glass. “They are dead”, I said. Then I grabbed them and pulled them upright. They were both alive.

When neighbors contacted the police, the police informed them that if there were no casualties, they would come round the next day. When Cebbar went to the police station early in the morning, he met two other people whose house had been attacked. After the police had asked him many questions about his possible enemies, Cebbar told them he suspected the contra-guerrilla: “The commander slapped me twice. They never investigated the shootings”. Soner Çelik and his father Mahir from Çanakçı village, and Seyyid from Diyarbakir, also lived in constant fear of being killed by ‘agents’. Many other migrants were not afraid of becoming a victim of a killing themselves, but the killings of fellow villagers instilled a deep fear in them. There often seemed to be some ‘logic’ behind the killings - the victims had become drawn into the conflict between the PKK and the state before they were killed, but sometimes the killings seemed entirely arbitrary: being in the wrong place at the wrong time might be all it took to be killed. Cebbar, for example, recalled that an old deaf man from his village was shot dead by soldiers for not responding to their stop warning. The brunt of the extrajudicial killings was blamed on the state.¹¹⁵

Tracing state repression

Most migrants developed a clear view of the ‘rationale’ behind state repression. This was, in their view, to stamp out with terrorist violence all that it did not understand and could not control. When Cebbar talked about his experiences with torture, he said: “If the tortured person keeps his mouth shut, the government wants to make this person ineffective (*etkisiz hale götürmek istiyor*), by making sure this person becomes disabled (*sakat* - crippled, invalid, maimed). The government wants to destroy people who lead other people the way”. Havva’s husband Melih said:

We don’t accuse the whole of the Turkish people, but the state, the people who work in the state establishment (*kadro*), or people who are on the side of the state. I’m saying this with emphasis, the *ülküçüler* (MHP sympathizers), that’s an institution in the state, they have always been against the Kurds. From the

¹¹⁵ With most migrants, it was the case that when they were sure that the PKK had killed a particular person, they would not regard the death of this person extrajudicial, because the PKK would have sufficient reason to kill him or her and would have repeatedly warned this person to stop whatever he or she were doing against the PKK. People on the ‘right side’ of the divide did not have to be worried about being killed by the PKK.

first wave of Selçuks, they have been behind the killing of Kurds, the state allows it.

As Melih illustrated, the migrants did not regard the repression meted out to the villagers during the armed conflict with the PKK as an anomaly, as occurring only at a certain time in a certain situation. On the contrary, they believed that the Turkish state was founded upon and through repression. Theirs is the ‘rough eyewitness pendant’ of critical social and political science, in which it is emphasized that the roots of Turkey’s largest internal conflicts today are to be found in the exclusionist Turkic discourse formulated after the founding years of the Republic. The historical framework, in which the migrants placed the repression of the previous two decades, was grounded in their personal pasts and in the pasts of the ‘peoples of the region’. The way in which the migrants combined personal and other people’s experiences fits Marita Eastmond’s (2007:256) contention that “in the production of a social memory and a common narrative as a community, personal memories may merge with those of others and draw on previous historical accounts of repression and displacement, some of them learnt in childhood”.

Tracing state violence in personal histories

For some migrants, the Bedrans and Günays, for example, personal experiences with overt state repression went back only a few years before they were evicted from their villages, for others they stretched further back in time. Cebbar was twelve when the following events occurred.

There was a hamlet close to our village. Someone from that hamlet had an argument with someone from a different tribe. Then this person from our hamlet - this was someone we knew - pulled his gun out and shot the other man. This was an argument between two shepherds. Then the gendarmerie came to the village with a list of nine names, all relatives of the killer. The victim’s family had told the police they were responsible. The gendarmerie wanted my father [who was *muhtar*] to deliver them these men. But they had fled because they knew they were going to be tortured and thrown in jail. Then they took the villagers and tortured them. The men had to carry the women on their backs, and then the women had to carry the men on their backs and walk around with them. They also took young women with them. (...)

When the gendarmerie wanted my father to hand over these nine people, my father said he couldn’t, he said the government should do it: “The arm of the state is long, she can find these people, I can’t.” Then they took my father for a month. When my father came back, he decided to leave. He felt his power did not match that of the soldiers... There were also some disagreements with his brothers. They didn’t listen to him when he took decisions, but the state was the main reason we left.

When I later asked Cebbar's father why he had left for Silvan, he first said it was because the land had not been enough. When Cebbar's wife Mine said that surely this had not been the only reason, he admitted having suffered a lot of *hakaret* (insults) from 'the state'. For Cebbar, the incident with the nine people was neither the first nor the last time to be confronted with repression. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he was arrested and tortured several times, sometimes alone and sometimes with friends, for carrying a Kurdish cassette, dancing around a Newroz fire, or attending a funeral of a killed PKK member. Men like Cebbar developed the widely shared aversion of the state, which could be detected among most migrants, much earlier than many others. In the creation of this aversion, boarding school and military service constituted transformative 'moments', at least in retrospect.

Although with İbo Bedran boarding school had initially seemed to reach its objective - he had mocked his fellow villagers for their inability to speak Turkish, other male migrants made it clear that their harrowing experiences at boarding school planted the seed of future rebelliousness in them. Azad, a single man in his early thirties from Eruh, was one of them.

I thought I'd come to hell. The school was so totally strange and terrifying. I have never felt so alone, so forsaken and abandoned by everybody. Everything was strange to me, I could not believe I was there and having to stay there. I was scared to death, I couldn't stop crying. (...)

In second grade I started to run away. Sometimes with a few friends, but often also alone. During the day we went to the mountains - the school was at the side of the mountains. When it was dark, we came down. My parents didn't want me at home. They beat me, tried to make me so afraid I would go back to school. Often they took me back to school. They were worried what would happen otherwise. The state was the boss. Whatever happens, never open your mouth, this was their attitude. Their ideal was for me to become a civil servant, so that I would have a better life and take care of them. That's what all Kurdish parents wanted for their children. But every year I ran away, I skipped so many classes. And I wasn't the only one who did this, lots of children did this. Especially after the summer holidays, nobody wanted to go to school. Then the gendarmerie went to the villages by car to take the children to school whether they wanted to or not. The parents didn't do much against it, there wasn't much they could do.

Azad had spent ten years in prison before I first met him. In the above quotation, he contrasted the rebellious vigor of youths not yet wasted by the regime with the older generations' fright of it. Stories such as these attested to the 'innocence' of the Kurds, and pointed to the 'causal necessity' of the Kurdish struggle: the Kurds had tried to become 'regular' citizens by subordinating themselves to the state, but this had led to nothing: older people's children were aware of their parents' failures and were not prepared to repeat them.

The experiences of male forced migrants in military service did not help, to say the least, to foster a positive attitude toward the state. For older Kurdish men, to enter military service was to enter a wholly new Turkish-dominated world in which they had to suppress the urge to speak their native language, and instead learn Turkish as quickly as possible. A few male migrants did not recall any discrimination of themselves as Kurds during military service, but for many men of the older generation and some of the young, the army was the site where they became more aware of their ‘ethnic difference’. Most migrants who spoke about their military service with me, were not only subjected to the beatings and hardships that all soldiers were subjected to, but recalled that Kurds were routinely discriminated against. Seyyid, a religious teacher (*hoca* in Turkish), voiced the impact of military service on him as follows:

There was a soldier who was in the service with me, an Alevi from Hatay. He liked me a lot. He said: “Let’s make you a *koğuşçu* (‘ward guard’). That’s better, than you can do your *namaz* (prayers) whenever you wish”. As a *koğuşçu* you slept in barracks where there was a weapon storage. So he went to the sergeant major who also liked me. But the answer he gave was this: “It would be a good idea, but the *hoca* is from the Southeast, Mardin even. And to people from there we cannot entrust weapons”. That was what he said! This way it becomes impossible not to become *Kürtçü*. For me it was the first time I experienced anything like that. In the *medrese* we saw each other as individuals, people judged you for your actions. Only in military service did I experience things like that. (...)

One time, we went on a shooting exercise. I aimed and fired a shot. I had no idea where the bullet went, the sergeant keeps track of that. Look, in the East and Southeast we are used to the sound of guns. Everybody has guns there. I had just aimed for the target and pulled the trigger. I didn’t know if I had hit the target. You know what the sergeant says: “How many soldiers have you killed?”, and I was using a gun for the first time in my life! (...)

Something else attracted my attention when I was there... again and again I got the same question: “*Mağara numaran kaç?*” (What’s the number of your cave?) I didn’t understand where it came from. When I was discharged from military service, I looked it up. Turns out that in Tunceli thousands of Kurds were murdered in caves and these caves have numbers. So the question really was: “In which cave was your grandfather killed?” That’s what I think anyway.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ A middle-aged Turkish student of Seyyid intervened to say that he had heard this too in military service: “I thought it came from the idea that if you are a Kurd, you are with the PKK, then you have lived in the mountains and slept in caves”. Other Turks I asked said the expression is used to make clear to the person addressed that he or she is as primitive as people supposedly were when they still lived in caves. In other words, they did not associate this expression with the annihilation of Kurds.

It was implied in most stories that up until the time of the heaviest armed conflict, girls and women were far less exposed to the outside world/the state than boys and men. After all, boarding schools and the army were institutions mostly reserved for men.¹¹⁷

Women's lives, men's lives

In speaking with the forced migrants, I always tried to focus on stories about their own experiences, on situations and events which they had lived through themselves. I noted that men more often than women, tied their own experiences into a larger political scheme of the oppression of the Kurdish people. They tended to seek out those examples which conformed to the dominant narrative, and which thus had a political meaning. Women did this to a lesser extent. It seemed to me that their stories were also formulaic at times - they fitted into a narrative about the life of an epitomic Kurdish peasant woman - but their stories were less 'politicized'. It was sometimes easier to get them to speak about personal experiences and with women, more often than with men, the dualism between the immoral state and the moral PKK became blurred.

In my conversations with women about the time period before the PKK entered their region, the repressive state was a less central theme. Partly because women had less to say about pre-1990s state violence than men, they were sometimes regarded - by men and by themselves - less appropriate candidates for interviews. It seemed that the most valuable kind of knowledge c.q. memory was politically imbued. However, the fact that women, like older men, were 'innocent' in political terms, and that they were physically vulnerable - every pregnancy put their health at risk - made them good candidates for the narration of everyday hardship. Most women concentrated on the hard work and the poverty in which they grew up, the lack of modern facilities such as electricity, and the preventable early deaths of their siblings and their own children. Unlike many other women, Cebbar's wife Mine recalled much state repression against her family, even when she was a child, but she also focused on the extreme poverty in which they lived.

Three or four of my mother's children died when they were still young. I am the oldest girl, the second child that stayed alive. Before me, a few girls died when they were three or five years old, I never knew them. There were no cars, no roads, so when we were ill, we couldn't get out. My younger sister died when I was twelve, she was six. I remember her well, she was blond, she died of the measles. When my parents took her to the doctor, it was too late. He said she could have been saved, if they had come earlier. My mother went mad with grief. It was as if she was going to die. She didn't recognize people

¹¹⁷ There were boarding schools for girls, see Üngör 2005, but none of the women in my research went there.

anymore, she stayed in hospital for fifteen or twenty days. She was mad with grief.

Most women showed themselves aware of the fact that the state was often absent where it should have been present - in the spheres of health care and education, for example - but did not dwell on this when they spoke with me. What women did dwell on, sometimes, was repression by their close relatives and in-laws. Whereas men related stories of exclusion and discrimination while doing their military service, their wives talked about the hardships they suffered in the houses of their husbands’ parents. As Zerrin, a young woman from Aaçlık village, said when I asked her if she recalled army repression/force (*asker baskısı*) from her childhood, she said: “I do not remember so much *asker baskısı*, but there was a lot of *aile baskısı* (family pressure/force)”. And whereas young and middle-aged men deplored having been sent to boarding school, women of the same age complained about being kept out of school. Mine, for example, never forgave her brother for refusing to send her to school:

I never went to school. There was a school in the village. I wanted to go but my older brother didn’t want me to. He lived somewhere else then. My father wrote to him to ask if he should send me to school. My brother said: “We only have one sister, she shouldn’t go to school”. In a way I always stayed angry at him, I have never forgiven him (*helal etmiyorum*).

However, when the armed conflict between the PKK and the state emerged, all villagers - regardless of gender or age - got to see the “real face of the state”.

Tracing state violence in ‘earlier times’

As noted before, the migrants traced state repression (and resistance) not only in their own lives, but also in the history of the region and that of the peoples inhabiting it. Reiterating past events helped them to understand and attach meaning to their own experiences with overt violence, discrimination and exclusion. A villager from Alimler situated the rationale of the PKK’s struggle in the repression of the past, when he said: “There were so many Kurdish rebellions, and every time they were cut down. In those rebellions maybe 600 thousand or 700 thousand people were killed. This is a great source of suffering for the Kurds. Kurds were forced to take up weapons, the way they were neglected”. The migrants from anakçı village close to Midyat, for example, pointed out ties with long-dead Kurdish leaders. They claimed to be descendants from Hajo III, the leader of a subtribe of the Heverkan confederation, who staged a rebellion against the Turkish state in 1926. And Seyyid, by resorting to history to find the origin of the ‘cave question’, established common kinship with previously unrecognized ethnic ‘brethren’.

Another common way in which people imbued meaning to their experiences was to refer to the Armenian or Suryoye Christians. Almost all migrants explained their predicament with reference to that of the Christians. Joost Jongerden (2006:98), who did research in four villages in Diyarbakir province and came to similar conclusions, argues that the past was “a template reanimated in the present”. While the majority of Turks, most of whose grandparents and great-grandparents are likely to have had no personal involvement in the mass killings, vehemently deny that Armenians were victims of a state-orchestrated genocide, Kurdish villagers openly discussed how their grandfather or great-uncle slaughtered Armenians, even children.

The Armenian genocide provides Kurds not only with political ammunition against the Turkish state, but also with an opportunity to dissociate themselves from their ‘backward’ and ‘feudal’ past. Besides, it provides the Kurds with an explanation for why they are where they are today. This is, they believe, because the ways in which the Ottoman empire and the Turkish state dealt with non-Turkish ‘minorities’, are an outcome of one and the same policy of divide and rule, a policy which the Kurds failed to understand then, but have come to understand today. While the Turkish state continues on a path long abandoned by genuine modern democracies, the Kurds have shaken off the remnants of the primitive past and moved into enlightened times. It is clear then that the Kurds identify themselves with the Armenian and Suryoye victims of the massacres, as well as with the ‘ignorant’ and ‘manipulated’ Kurdish perpetrators of the atrocities against the Armenians. Some migrants argued that the Kurds in the present village guard system were co-opted in the same way in which Sultan Abdulhamid co-opted Kurdish tribes in the late 19th and early 20th century to suppress the Armenian resistance and to police other Kurds (Bruinessen 1992:185-186). Although most migrants expressed strong criticism of the village guards, they ultimately regarded the Turkish state and army responsible.

Calling the unitary state into question

In a nutshell, the above contains the migrants’ most widely shared narrative about the state: the monolithic Turkish state was built on and reproduced through repression, and the PKK merely reacted to and battled against this repression. The source of almost all hardship experienced by the villagers was the state. The migrants *did* sometimes distinguish between state politics on the one hand, and the army and police as organizations staffed by individuals on the other. Occasionally, people told me about police officers, army commanders and soldiers who had tried to protect villagers from state repression. Some migrants expressed sympathy for certain soldiers, police officers and prison guards, “who did not have a say in the events either” and whom they felt cooperated with the state unwillingly. This empathy was partly instilled by the fact that many migrants had sons or brothers doing their military service, some of them in the Southeast, but also by the fact that some soldiers, officers and guards showed

kindness and were disinclined to do as they were told. But such officers would never last long, the migrants said. They would be transferred to other posts, “because the state can’t use such people”. Thus, the image of the state as a unitary oppressive body stayed intact.

However, a small group of migrants conveyed different images and narratives: some shied away from efforts to depict the state as a cruel bogeyman, some saw the state not as repressor but as benefactor and protector, some saw the state as mouldable and influenceable to some extent, and some thought the whole idea of speaking about ‘the state’ was quite absurd. Especially among the Alevi migrants from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli village there was quite a bit of variety in how people spoke about the state or state institutions. Some of the Alevis professed an attitude toward the army which I did not encounter elsewhere. An Alevi migrant who moved to Istanbul in the 1970s and who was engaged in activities facilitating the return of villagers to the village, told me that his son was hoping to achieve a good position in the army. When I ventured my surprise, he explained:

It is important for us to have people in there, to have left-wing people in the army. In 1980 the mayor of Kartal was left-wing, CHP. After 12 September [the date of the coup] he was removed from his post and tortured. A high placed Alevi police officer saw how he was tortured for hours. He ordered them to stop, and he gave tea to the mayor. The police officer asked where he came from. After that, the mayor wasn’t tortured again.

Many villagers from Vadiyeli and Dağgölü were less opposed to the army *per se* than many Sunni Kurds, who often regarded the army as alien to their being. An explanation for this relatively positive attitude toward the army lies in the supposedly secular character of the Turkish state. Paradoxically, even though the memory of the Dersim massacres nurtured an Alevi tendency to distrust the state, the secular nature of the state, as proposed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, incited many Alevis to change their attitudes towards the outside world (Kehl-Bodrogi 2003:53). Atatürk’s new conception of the state offered the Alevis previously non-existent opportunities to participate in mainstream society. This induced many Kurdish Alevi (also some from Tunceli) to support the Kemalist doctrine of secularism and populism. Some Alevi migrants regarded themselves as the natural allies of the army in its ‘original’ secular form. İffet was a young woman from Vadiyeli who lived in Istanbul, but who was in Vadiyeli when I visited the village. In the Vadiyeli-based house of İffet’s in-laws, I spotted a poster saying: “Our army, a steel expression of Turkish unity, Turkish strength and dexterity, and Turkish patriotism”.¹¹⁸ She explained that her deceased father-

¹¹⁸ *Ordumuz, Türk birliğinin Türk kudret ve kabiliyetinin Türk vatan severliğinin çelikleşmiş bir ifadesidir.*

in-law had been a great fan of Atatürk, and that the *baskılar* had never been able to change this.¹¹⁹

While some outright denied state repression, others were reluctant to talk about their experiences with state oppression. Mehmet, the former *muhtar* of Dağgölü village, for example, was known by his fellow villagers to have been arrested and tortured, together with three men from his own village and four from a neighboring village, most of whom were in their forties. Ali, the person who introduced me to Mehmet, prompted him several times to tell me his story. In the end, Mehmet did provide the ‘basics’ of his experiences, but he clearly preferred to stay aloof from politics and from efforts to disclose the past. Ali, on the other hand, had formed a political narrative about the meaning of events in the villages, and regarded Mehmet’s experiences as the flesh to the bone of this narrative. For me to come to similar conclusions as him, he thought it would be best to talk to people like Mehmet who had personally experienced the state’s repression in the villages. Mehmet struck me as a disillusioned man who had never recovered from his arrest: “Of the eight men who were tortured there, four have died. The others are ill, I’m ill too. Of the four from Çamurlu, three have died, one is still alive”. When Mehmet diverted from the dominant narrative by saying that in the 1980s there had been no army repression, Ali objected:

But people really wanted to stay away from the *karakol* (police office), though! You didn’t want to fall in their hands. If anybody was maltreated in those days, they wouldn’t talk about it. It happened, but it wasn’t talked about, also because they were threatened not to talk about it.

In the interaction between Ali and Mehmet, it became apparent that although they could more or less come to an agreement about the sequence of events, they had rather different ideas about the meaning of these events in the present.

The notes I took of a conversation at a picnic organized by the Vadiyeli village association in June 2002 illustrate the diversity of political views among the villagers.

A schoolteacher tells me he worked in Diyarbakir for twelve years. There he saw what was done to the Kurds: “Soldiers even cut off women’s breasts”. A tall man who has joined us, tells him not to exaggerate. “How could you ever

¹¹⁹ Until November 2009, when CHP politician Onur Öymen caused an uproar among Alevis, this was a widespread view among Alevis from Tunceli/Dersim who believed Atatürk had not been involved in the Dersim massacres. In response to the argument that the fighting against the PKK should perhaps be brought to an end, because “mothers in Turkey have cried enough”, Öymen argued that many mothers cried during the War of Independence, the uprising of Sheikh Said, the uprising in Dersim, and the conflict on Cyprus. However, the crying of mothers had never been regarded a valid reason to stop fighting, and it was not a valid reason to stop fighting the PKK either. See *Hürriyet* newspaper, November 13, 2009:

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/12938877.asp>, accessed September 29, 2010.

exaggerate what happened there!”, the teacher exclaims. They start to argue with each other. The tall man - a businessman - argues that many awful things (*haksızlıklar*) happened in the Southeast, but that some people exaggerate them. “In the same way that you can interpret a film according to your own views, some people do the same with what happened to the Kurds. Some people romanticize what happened”, he tells me. I smile and ask: “Romanticize?” His point is clear. He is one of the people who tries to be as measured and objective in his judgement as possible. The teacher belongs to the other camp. Then another man passes, thin with a big moustache. “All lies! (*Hepsi yalan!*)”, he exclaims. He has been living in Istanbul for 22 years and works for the PTT. “Village evacuations and all that, it’s all lies”, he says. While the teacher is going on and on about ‘the state’, the businessman gets irritated and says: “Who is the state!? This concept is used far too often, it is far too abstract”.

Interestingly, whereas among Sunni Kurds, villagers with strongly diverging political ideas often hated each other, among the Alevi they seemed to get along rather well. Among them, a strong sense of all-inclusive village solidarity was observable. Active people from both villages had established village associations in Istanbul, and at yearly picnics and dinners, villagers with very diverse levels of education, occupations and sometimes diametrically opposed ideas, ate and socialized with each other. The positive identification with Alevi identity and with progressive politics played an important role in keeping the Alevi village communities together. Surely, it was not all peace and harmony - there was a dragging dispute in the Dağgölü village association, for example - but people had a definite sense of community. This sense of community enabled villagers with very different experiences and political views to coexist.

It was not the case that Sunni migrants only had social relations with people who felt exactly the same as them, but they would not introduce me to people who ‘had chosen’ differently and they did not feel as close to them as they felt to people ‘like themselves’. Even Kurds who complied with ‘the state’ under strong pressure, and who were unlikely to be directly involved in the state’s anti-Kurdish policies, were regarded as apostate by some. İbo Bedran, for example, could not get himself to enquire about the wellbeing of his sister’s husband, when this person was conscripted in the army. İbo sarcastically called his sister’s baby daughter “a small child of the Turkish state”. He hated the army uniform so much that he did not want to have anything to do with his brother-in-law, even though his brother-in-law had tried to evade military service as long as possible and disliked the army as much as İbo himself. İbo and many others ‘tagged’ people as being on the right side or the good side and expected people to always act in accordance with their beliefs. Thus, if a person really believed the state was doing the wrong thing, he should under no circumstance join the army, or become a village guard or informer. In actuality, the relationship between beliefs

and actions was much fuzzier. People who were identified by others as being on the side of or with the state, might very well not regard themselves as such.

Abbas, one of the people I interviewed, was a former village guard. People like him were deeply disliked if not hated by most of the other forced migrants, unless they had repented for their supposed sins. Abbas, however, was not apologetic at all about his past in the village guard system. Although he did not subscribe to the narrative about the repressive nature of the Turkish state and the persistent repression of the Kurdish people, he also did not identify with the state. Abbas:

We neither trust those in the mountains nor the army or the police. Here in this neighborhood lives a man from Samsun. He did his military service in the East. He told me what happened there. One day, three village guards came to the *karakol* to talk to the commander. They said they'd seen PKK members in the vicinity of the village. "Right", said the commander: "Do they bother you?" "No", they said. "So why do you make a fuss then, just leave them where they are", said the commander. "We can't", said the village guards: "If this is how you see it, we should see your superior". "Well done", said the commander: "I can see you are being serious, let's go there". (...)

So the commander went with them to the said place. My neighbor from Samsun was there with other soldiers. I'm telling you what he told me. When they were in the area where the PKK was, the commander said to the village guards that they knew the area better, they should go first, he and the soldiers would come right behind them. (...)

So the village guards went first. When they had reached the top of the mountain, the commander said to the soldiers: "When I give the order, you shoot those village guards". The soldiers said: "How can we do this, they are village guards". But the commander shut them up, what can soldiers do against that. The moment the commander gave the order, the soldiers aimed and fired. All three of them were dead. My neighbor says he fired in the air. He was stupified, he thought it was disgusting. From that moment on, he had no trust whatsoever. If a commander does something like that, you don't know if he will not do the same thing to you one day. The commander reported this as a shared operation against the PKK in which three village guards got killed.

Stories like this would sometimes be employed by pro-PKK Kurds to argue the utter immorality of the state. They would, for example, say that even village guards were aware of the foulness of the state. Yet, such pro-PKK Kurds would show little readiness to acknowledge mutual victimhood (of village guards and anti-state Kurds).

So far, I have argued that most migrants were intent on exposing state repression. The migrants did this by narrating their own experiences, those of their relatives, friends and acquaintances, and by placing the suffering of the Kurds in the 1990s and early 2000s in a long-term historical framework about a monolithic state founded through and built on repression. A small number of

migrants did not participate in the creation of this counter-narrative. In some cases, these migrants did not regard the state as a unitary phenomenon which was either good or bad: they narrated the state in different ways. With other migrants, the anti-state narrative did not resonate (enough) with their personal experiences, or they had not 'processed' their experiences in ways which allowed them to verbalize them in a manner befitting the anti-state narrative. As I stated at the beginning, diversions from the dominant narrative and the discourse in which it was phrased were not always accepted by its proponents. The majority of migrants censored dissension by socializing with people 'holding' similar narratives.

Dissension from the dominant narrative meant different things in different families and communities. In the families of Abbas and Seyyid, for example, the dominant narrative had never taken root, it was neither a norm nor a point of departure. In some other families, however, pressure was exerted to conform to the dominant narrative. The social dynamics involved in this treatment of dissension point to historical differences between different 'communities' of Kurds. Among the Alevi migrants, the shared history of repression as Alevis and the still experienced discrimination by Sunnis in Istanbul had created a sense of togetherness and solidarity which I did not encounter among the Sunni migrants. Besides, some Alevis regarded the state as an organization in which they could also have a stake. The appeal which 'the state' had for some Alevis, because of its promotion of secularism, opened up an option for some Alevis to identify themselves, at least partly, with the Turkish state.

If most migrants wanted to expose state repression, we might expect all forms of gruesome repression to be granted equal attention. This was not the case. Most stories about arrest, torture and imprisonment were stories about men, and it was easier for the migrants to talk about 'general' forms of torture at the hands of the state than about sexual violence.¹²⁰

Exposed versus silenced state repression: the issue of gender

Accounts of torture by Turkish police officers, the gendarmerie, the security forces, and in prison defy most people's worst imaginations (e.g. Cemal 2003). Torture is generally presumed to be a tool in the eliciting of information needed to protect the interests and safety of those who have people tortured. However, scholars have established that torture is largely ineffective in the eliciting of trustworthy information, and that it is more likely to be employed to instill shame and humiliation, to break communal bonds, and to terrorize societies (Robben 2007; Levy 1999). Torture is often gendered in the sense that the aim of the torturers is to attack the gender identity of the victim (to emasculate men, for example) or to 'restore' it in some perverted way (as in rape of women

¹²⁰ I regard sexual violence as a form of torture, but here I have to make a distinction between torture in general and sexual violence/torture.

combatants to bring them back to women's 'rightful' roles), and much of it is sexualized (Robben 2007:227-228; see also Agger 1989).

I am not in a position to assess the extent to which the widespread experience with torture disrupted social bonds, because for me it was impossible to separate the experience of torture from other forms of violence and other drastic changes which had taken place in the lives of the forced migrants. I do know, however, that the experience of torture instilled respect in other people for the victim and that this respect created a space for victims of torture to speak about their experiences. However, this space was limited: torture victims hardly ever went into detail about their experiences, the sexual nature of torture was rarely referred to, and the respect for torture victims seemed to be mainly the prerogative of male victims of torture: female victims of torture and sexual violence were almost invisible. I will try to explain why it was easier for the migrants to talk about non-specified forms of torture than about sexual torture, and why male victims seemed more deserving of attention than women.

According to Veysi Ülgen, a psychiatrist I interviewed at TOHAV, the Kurdish struggle against injustice and torture has helped many Kurdish individuals to cope with torture and other forms of repression. For many Kurds, torture has become a routine aspect of life, doctor Ülgen said. It is almost regarded part of being Kurdish.

Kurds have developed a way of dealing with torture. Like: "I am going to experience this anyway, I will have to deal with this" ("*Nasılsa, göreceğim, uğraşacağım*"). In that sense there is some kind of resilience (*direnç*).(...)

Kurds have learned to struggle against torture. There are all kinds of associations, human rights associations and so on, in which Kurds are the most active. That Kurds have such an important role in these associations has its influence on people. Kurdish victims have more resilience, a higher pain threshold. In fact, it is not right to distinguish between Kurdish and Turkish victims of torture, because torture is the same always. But Kurds are on average more resilient, that's not a genetic thing, it's a social thing. Kurds are more used to suffering (*acılarla ortak yaşamak*). But torture is always negative and influences people negatively.

The associations Ülgen referred to came about as a result of the severe repression after the 1980 coup d'état. In the 1980s, the experience of torture was publicized by a broad range of lawyers, doctors, journalists and intellectuals many of whom were Kurdish.¹²¹ Through the writings and efforts of these

¹²¹ Among them was Mehdi Zana, prominent mayor of Diyarbakir who was imprisoned in 1980 and published a book about his experiences. Zana's book is titled 'Eleven Years in Turkish Jails', see also Edip Polat 1991, Şerafettin Kaya 1982, and Hasan Cemal 2003. Many Turkish and international human rights organizations publish yearly reports and special issues about torture in Turkey, which are often easily accessible on the internet, see for example the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey 2001. See Devrim Sevimey 2001 for an investigation of Turkish torture practices.

people, torture and ill-treatment gained a prominent place in the emerging narrative about the suffering of the Kurdish people at the hands of its oppressors.¹²² The result is that torture is acknowledged as an attack on the body and mind of the individual, as well as an attack on 'the Kurdish people'. Torture is not something to be ashamed of, or to always stay quiet about, that is, when you are a man, and when you do not dwell on its sexual aspects.

Torture and masculinity

Julie Peteet's (1994) work about the Palestinian resistance in the Palestinian Occupied Territories helps us to understand the gendered nature of all this. Peteet argues that violent practices which are meant to paralyze resistance can be turned into the opposite. The public beatings and the practice of imprisonment to which Palestinian youths are subjected by the Israeli forces, have come to be constituted as rites of passage to manhood. Not only does a young man's endurance under torture prove his manliness, the ideological training and the leadership positions which are bestowed on him in prison turn him into a 'learned man' with the capacity to lead the masses. For some young Palestinian men who had never engaged in resistance, their being subjected to repeated detainment and beatings provided them with the stature of adult men who could take leading roles in mobilizing others in the resistance against the Israelis. As the recipients of violence, they acquired "masculine and revolutionary credentials" (Peteet 1994:40). Thus, in the public eye, enduring torture may turn a boy into a man, and a man into a worthier or more honorable man.

A situation similar to that described by Peteet existed in southeastern Turkey in the early 1990s. In the same way that Peteet described for the young Palestinians who joined the resistance after having been beaten and imprisoned, the forced migrants said their relatives or friends had joined the PKK because they had nothing to lose anymore. They might just as well go to the mountains and provide a meaningful contribution to the struggle. Also similar to the Palestinian case, for young Kurds, prison was "a kind of university", a place where they developed close relationships with people more educated and versed in political ideology than themselves, and where they finally learned what their struggle was all about: to be imprisoned was an almost purifying experience. Azad who spent ten years in prison met the renowned Turkish sociologist İsmail Beşikçi¹²³ there. Azad was on a tight schedule of classes and read all the great Kurdish writers as well as the work of foreign academics who wrote about Kurds: he showed me a pile of copybooks covered with spidery written notes

¹²² The work of Başoğlu, Mineka, Paker, Aker, Livanou, and Gök (1997) offers some support to Ülgen's statements. In their study of 55 activists and 34 non-activists who were tortured, they found that the activists showed lower levels of psychopathology, even though they were tortured more severely than the non-activists. The authors argue that political activists show a degree of 'preparedness for trauma' that non-activists do not have (Başoğlu et al. 1997:1430).

¹²³ İsmail Beşikçi (born in 1939) published many books on Kurds and spent many years in Turkish prisons because of his academic interest in Kurds and support of the Kurdish movement.

and summaries (cf. Marcus 2007:112-113). It was argued by the migrants that even those who had no interest in 'Kurdism' changed in prison. Cebbar's *amca*'s son, who had had no interest in politics when he fell victim to an arbitrary arrest, became well-versed in PKK ideology in prison. In the discourse of most Kurds then, torture and imprisonment debased the executioners, not the endurers.

Yet, the victims themselves hardly ever went into detail about their experiences: most said no more than that they had been tortured for so and so many days and some added that they were still suffering from the physical damage inflicted on them. Sometimes a man told me that he had been arrested and taken to the police station, staying silent about what else happened there. He would then be pressed by relatives, often a wife or a sister-in-law, to inform me that he had also been tortured. Thus, although I believe that this discourse concerning torture had an empowering effect, this effect did not stretch as far with the forced migrants as with the political activists. The fact that most forced migrants were not hard-core activists who had been toughened up through years of ideological training, probably meant that it was harder for the forced migrants than for the activists to attach revolutionary meanings to their suffering. Besides, when torture victims returned, it was not a spirit of combativeness which prevailed, but feelings of disappointment that reigned. As Veysi Ülgen stated:

There are people who have been in prison for twenty years, who have been tortured uncountable times, people who have participated in hunger strikes and so on. They come in here and you look and see that they are still believing in something, they still stand for a case. Then they are outside for a month and then you see that people who have showed so much resistance for so many years, change within a month.

Living in exile had relieved some of the tensions prevalent in the Southeast in the early 1990s, but some Kurds also felt as if they had lost their sense of direction. The lives of men who had been imprisoned were hardly heroic: their sense of achievement was gone. After all, they had been driven off their land and the future of the Kurdish movement was undecided.¹²⁴

Men were pressed to explain that they had been tortured, but never to give details. It seemed okay to speak about torture, but in daily life there was little room for its implications. When I asked Veysi Ülgen about the role of family members in coping with the consequences of torture, he said that relatives are

¹²⁴ I rarely asked people to elaborate on their experiences with torture. My research was to be about the impact of forced migration - this was how I introduced the research and what the migrants agreed to talk about - and torture was only one of many relevant aspects. In retrospect, I think my own reticence may have affected people's readiness to talk about their experiences with torture. Perhaps I also wanted to protect myself: I did not know how I would react if people told me detailed stories about their experiences with torture. I could barely bring myself to finish the few detailed accounts which I did read, one written up by the well-known Turkish journalist Hasan Cemal (2003).

unable to provide support to victims of torture, because they are plagued by a multitude of problems: they have often been split up by the military conflict, were forced to settle in unfamiliar places, and have difficulty to survive economically. Besides, relatives do not really grasp the insidiousness of torture: "Relatives of torture victims regard torture almost as normal, as a routine event". It seems plausible that, surrounded by relatives and friends who were unable to deal with the personal dimensions of torture and imprisonment, the victims were incited to remain silent about its many aspects. Nevertheless, by inviting men to relate some of their experiences with torture to me, people made it clear that they valued these experiences.

Torture and femininity

When I asked whether it was men or women who were exposed more often to torture and arrest, people replied that the men were subjected to arrests, torture and imprisonment much more often. Reports on the human rights situation in Southeast Turkey confirm the view that the brunt of the torture perpetrated against 'ordinary villagers' was borne by men.¹²⁵ However, one thing alluded to quite frequently was the rape of women by police officers, soldiers and village guards. People spoke about sexual violence in general terms or as something which almost happened or could have happened to them: not once did I hear anybody say that such and such had been sexually violated. Gülistan, who was nine or ten years old when her family was evicted from Tatlıdere village in the Tatvan region, recalled:

One day the gendarmerie came to the village. All the men and boys had already left the village when they came. My father was in prison then. A lot of men were in prison and many others had fled. I was looking for my mother with my little sister on my arm. I couldn't find her anywhere. I went to my grandfather's house [father's father] because I thought she might be there. My grandfather was on the ground, they had mangled him so badly... I screamed when I saw him. They had kicked him in his belly with the back of a gun or something like that, he was bleeding.

The soldiers had come to the village to rape the women. They had already done that in other villagers, but in our village they couldn't do that because our village was almost like a town. You hear about villages where there was nothing, no provisions you know, but our village wasn't like that. (...)

Our surname is Gürbüz, one gendarmerie officer said he would... I'm sorry for the word... he said he would fuck everybody with this surname. They had locked my sister-in-law, my mother and my grandmother in a house and tried to put it on fire. I saw smoke coming from the house, but I didn't know they were inside until we heard coughing. The house didn't burn easily so they'd gotten petrol.

¹²⁵ Asiye Zeybek Güzel (2003) is one of the small number of women who has written about her experiences with torture, including sexual violence.

The soldiers released Gülistan's mother, grandmother and sister-in-law after the intervention of a young well-spoken Kurdish man who shamed the soldiers for "going after the women now" and demanded their immediate release. Afterwards they set the house and shed on fire.

Some male migrants emphasized the state's cruelty by foregrounding the rape of Kurdish women. However, their acknowledgement of a reality in which Kurdish women are raped with impunity did not imply that they would be able or willing to acknowledge the rape of women in their own family. Zerda Bedran's husband, for example, elaborated to me on the suffering of Kurdish women at the hands of soldiers and village guards. Knowing that he had severely mistreated his wife in previous years, I wondered how seriously he could be concerned with the predicament of women. Examples like this instilled the impression in me that some men employed stories about the rape of Kurdish women to exemplify the suffering of the Kurdish people, especially that of the men, not that of women. This suffering lies in the belief that the sexual violation of girls and women deprives them of their masculinity: sexual violence is regarded as a violation of the *namus* (honor) of the family, a shaming event whose damage is difficult to repair regardless of the person of the rapist. Thus, while enduring torture may turn a boy into a man, and a man into a better man, enduring sexual assault does not turn a girl into a woman, or a woman into a better woman. On the contrary, it defiles her and her family. Understandably then, sexual violence was a much more sensitive topic than torture.¹²⁶

Some time before Gülistan Gürbüz told me that soldiers had threatened to sexually molest everyone with her surname, I had talked with her mother Havva. Gül, a Kurdish woman from Malatya, was translating for me. At some point Gül said to me in a soft voice: "It's better if we talk about this some other time". After we left Havva's house, Gül told me that Havva had talked about sexual abuse by soldiers. However, her husband had asked her to tell me about those events some other time when he was not there: it was too painful for him to listen to. Gül and I were under the impression that Havva had been sexually assaulted, but when I asked Havva about this later, she said there had been no rapes or sexual violence in the village, other than severe threats. I do not know whether Gül had misinterpreted Havva's earlier words or whether Havva had decided to keep quiet about the abuse she had experienced. In the light of the general lack of openness about sexual violence, the latter was certainly possible. I experienced a similar kind of confusion with regard to another sexually-charged form of abuse by soldiers. Some young women from the Demir family told me having been shocked to see that soldiers "inspected" the genitals of a female PKK militant, who was killed in fighting and whom the women had

¹²⁶ Similar processes were at play in the 'national political memorializing' of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh. See Yasmin Saikia 2004 for an analysis of the absence of women's narratives in the memory of the war.

come to bury. Upon hearing about this incident from me, another woman from this family reacted as if I had stuck her with a needle. She vehemently denied that anything like that had ever happened.

Kurdish and Turkish feminists have long criticized notions of honor as depending on the sexual behavior of women.¹²⁷ Recently, in response to the efforts of these feminists, of UN-efforts to protect women's rights, and as part of a project of reforms to adjust Turkish laws to European standards, significant changes have been made in laws regarding honor crimes.¹²⁸ Perpetrators of honor crimes face more serious charges and higher sentences than in the recent past. However, the notion that a woman's sexuality should be controlled by her own or by her husband's family guides the daily lives of many in Turkey.¹²⁹ Amnesty International (2003:1) draws attention to the 'advantages' of the honor concept for perpetrators of sexual and other kinds of physical violence, be they state representatives, acquaintances or relatives: "In a twisted and paradoxical use of the term, the concept of "honour" can be used to attempt to silence women who are sexually assaulted. As a consequence sexual violence flourishes and perpetrators act with impunity". A recent report of the Ministry of Internal affairs estimates that in the past five years 1000 honor killings were perpetrated in Turkey.¹³⁰ Occasional media reports about 'honor killings' of rape victims serve as a reminder of this custom of blaming the victim: many of the victims of the killings in these reports stayed quiet about the rapes until they were found out.¹³¹ Cebbar's wife Mine told one such harrowing story. It was about a young woman from a village nearby who helped PKK members, and who was subsequently raped by village guards.

She was raped and then taken to the village. In the village square in front of the other villagers, the village guards said: "What shall we do, shall we take her to..." you know those dirty places (*pis yerler* - brothel) "or shall we kill her?", they said. The girl explained everything to a human rights organization. She said that if no one protected her - if no one took her in, they would kill her. Her *amca* didn't take her into his house. I don't know if he believed the village guards, or if he was afraid. After that she was found heavily injured, a few days later she died.

¹²⁷ See Şeyhmus Diken 2001:161-165 for information about KA-MER, the major Kurdish women's organization that struggles against honor crimes.

¹²⁸ The UN-report 'The Dynamics of Honor Killings in Turkey', for example, was written to help combat honor killings in Turkey. It can be accessed at: http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/676_filename_honourkillings.pdf, accessed September 29, 2010. Also see the 'Turkey - 2005 Progress Report' of the European Commission 2005.

¹²⁹ Koğacıoğlu (2004) demonstrates that notions of honor as depending on the (control of the) behavior of women persist also in state institutions.

¹³⁰ See a report on: <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=3811426>, accessed September 29, 2010. The report originally appeared in Evrensel newspaper.

¹³¹ Columnist Aynur Özak (2001) provides striking examples of this.

The village guards exploited the widespread conviction that a raped woman was no better than a prostitute, a woman ostensibly without honor, and not worthy of protection. Whether the girl's relatives shared this conviction or were afraid, they failed to protect her. It do not know who killed this girl, but some victims of rape by police officers, soldiers and village guards were murdered by their own relatives (Project Legal Aid N.d.:136).

Taking the danger attached to a disclosure of a rape experience in mind, it is plausible that, if a woman in my research group was raped, she would have kept this to herself, out of feelings of shame, anticipation of turmoil in her family, or fear of repercussions. And if a woman's family already knew about the rape, it is likely that no one would have mentioned it to me either, for as long as a rape stays a family secret, the incentive to 'clean' the family's honor is weaker. If there were women in my research who were raped or otherwise sexually violated, and who wanted to talk about this, the context in which I carried out my research may not have suitable for them to tell their stories. To understand whether a woman might have been raped, it is important to understand the cultural, social or even idiosyncratic codes, which she might have developed to talk about or around her experience. Such an understanding could only be achieved by focusing an extensive amount of my research efforts on the topic of sexual violence, which I did not. Also, for experiences of rape and torture to be discussed, either openly or 'coded', it would be a requirement to do this in private or in the presence of trusted people. However, I usually met women in the company of other women and men. Issues relating to the relationships with their husbands, romantic feelings and sexuality were sometimes discussed, at times openly and with a lot of humor, but more often with some embarrassment - especially when women from different generations sat together. It is not difficult to imagine that traumatic sexual experiences would be imbued with more feelings of shame and would be more difficult to talk about in the company of others.¹³²

The only woman who narrated a rape experience, without calling it so, was raped at the age of ten by her husband-to-be. This woman, Neziye, had lost both of her parents at an early age and had been left to the whims of her relatives. The women who had introduced Neziye to me, knew about her lonely and violent childhood and had invited her to tell me about her life. Although it was not easy

¹³² These explorations of the links between 'honor' and the Kurdish silence about sexual abuse, should be viewed in the light of what we know about how women deal with rape in any society in which patriarchal values dominate discourses about women, men and violence. These include Western-European countries and the United States. Research carried out by sociologist Jocelyn Hollander (2004) among American men and women about perceptions of and experiences with violence, illustrates that women do not talk about rape easily. Next to carrying out a survey, Hollander organized focus groups, some of them mixed, some of them all-male, some of them all-female. Out of the 21 participants in the four all-female focus groups, ten women had reported on the survey that they had been raped. However, *none* of these women disclosed the rape experience in the group interview.

for Neziye to talk about her experiences, she could speak without the risk implied in the narration of a rape by a village guard or soldier, because the prevailing view was that in her case there was no *namus* involved. After all, she was raped by the man whom her relatives had chosen as her future husband.

‘The State’ and ‘The PKK’

The migrants’ stories indicate that although for many Kurdish villagers ‘the state’ was a ‘fact of life’, it remained marginal to most aspects of their lives until the PKK made its entrance in the region. With the encroachment of state repression in the 1980s and 1990s, many people began to view previous experiences with the ‘long arm of the state’ in a different light. Past events which they had previously regarded normal, legitimate or ‘just the way things are’ became indicative of a long history of state repression. Especially people with ‘a political past’, for example, people who had been tortured, were called on to recount the state’s repression. Because the stories of violence suffered by women carried a potential of upsetting existing or idealized gender relations, there was less room for women to tell their stories.

In their stories, the migrants presented the state as a unitary ‘thing’, looming over people’s lives until it came down and nearly crushed the Kurdish people. Although there was a causal relationship between PKK entrance in the Southeast and intensified state repression, almost no one put any blame for the armed violence on the PKK. Most people believed that, in line with old state traditions, the state had annexed a part of the Kurdish population (the weak, the greedy, the deluded, the power-obsessed) into its service.

A common feeling in Turkey is that Kurds who squarely reject the legitimacy of the state unconditionally support the PKK. It was indeed often the case that a wholesale historically informed anti-state attitude was mirrored in an unconditional pro-PKK stance in which the PKK was viewed as the ‘natural’ descendent of earlier Kurdish nationalist leaders. However, in the next section I will show that it was not always the case that those who were very critical of the state, supported this narrative about the PKK.

STORIES ABOUT ‘THE PKK’

This section focuses on the migrants’ perceptions of the PKK, many of which were ‘storied’, that is, constituted through and explained with resort to stories about personal experiences with the PKK. As was the case with the theme of the state, some aspects of the PKK were easier to talk about than others, and some experiences and perceptions regarding the PKK were deemed more legitimate than others. It will become clear that, over the course of the armed conflict, the majority of the migrants developed a strong sympathy for and loyalty to the PKK. They conformed to and drew on a discourse in which the ‘immoral state’ formed the antithesis of the ‘moral PKK’. Even those who were acutely aware of

the incongruence between this discourse and the ‘lived experience of war’ hardly questioned the basic categorizations of the discourse. Only those migrants who did not identify with the PKK in any way, and who felt no need or urge to paint the PKK in a positive light, questioned the dominant discourse in fundamental ways. In this section I will expound these different positions. I will start with a typical story explaining how many villagers came to adopt a pro-PKK position.

Getting to know ‘the true PKK’: monsters become humans

Initially most villagers were afraid of the PKK. They were exposed to anti-PKK propaganda on the radio and on visits to towns. One of my own vivid memories of anti-PKK propaganda is the televised image of blood-covered spaghetti against a background of dead babies, to rebuke Italy for providing refuge to Abdullah Öcalan, when he had to flee Syria in 1998.¹³³ Such anti-PKK propaganda scared many Kurds. Migrants who were children in the early 1990s told me that they used to wonder if these ‘terrorists’ they had heard about were human at all. When I asked Sinan from Ağaçlık village, which is close to Bitlis, whether he had heard about the PKK before its members came to the village, he replied:

Of course. They hadn’t come to our village yet, we hadn’t seen them yet, but the television talked about terrorists, around Şırnak, for example. We had only just bought a television then. We had one and there were one or two more. The whole village came to our house to watch. Everybody was talking about it. They said: “I wonder what kind of people they are”. One person said: “They are monsters”. Another said: “They are as big as giants”, or: “They always have beards, they are very big”. Everybody said stuff like that. We didn’t see terrorists on television, but that’s what people said. If you said ‘terrorist’, they would say things like that, like “They crush the people (*ezmek*), they kill whoever they come across (*gördüğü yerde insanları öldürüyorlar*)”.

Many people recalled having been greatly surprised when they met PKK members in person. Sometimes, they were so surprised that these militants were not monsters but ‘normal and well-behaved’ people that they immediately took a liking to them. Sinan:

One day they came to our village. The first time they came, everybody fled. We were scared. They entered the village at night. There were five women among them. They gathered everybody, they told the villagers to call the others. They said they wanted to introduce themselves. “There was propaganda made about us, that we are this and that. Don’t be afraid, we are not going to hurt anybody, we are not like that”, they said. They treated the people very

¹³³ Syria ousted Öcalan because Turkey threatened the country with military action if Öcalan remained there (Marcus 2007:269-285; White 2000:180-181).

well. The people saw that there were women among them, so they felt closer to them. (...)

The way they talked, their manner, their knowledge... they impressed people. One said, for example: “I’m a teacher”, another said: “I’m an engineer”... They behaved very warmly to the people, they talked good things, they had a good dialogue with the people. That’s why the people liked them. They thought: “Remember how we thought they were, how they were explained to us, with big beards and moustaches... and look how they really are, they are young people just like us. They [the propagandists] really exaggerated about these people”.

Miriam: What did they explain about their ideas?

Sinan: They said: “We are Kurds. There are so many of us. Why shouldn’t we have an identity? We don’t even have one factory, we don’t have schools, we don’t have income. In the metropolises they have all that, why don’t we? Why don’t they invest in our country, why don’t we have electricity and television, are we not people, do we not live in this world? We should have some rights too. All investments are made in other metropolises, on our land, nothing is invested. Our people are being exploited. Some people don’t have bread, some people die of hunger, in the mud. Why should we not be better off, like the people in Europe. Do we really always have to stay like this?” Things like that. People were very impressed by this. They looked at their situation and saw they were right there. Education, for example, was far from perfect. People thought: “Alright, we may not be able to go to high school or university here, but even to go to *ortaokul* (middle school) we have to go to the city”.

Especially the older generation was weary of the PKK for its boldness, its rejection of the old ways, and its willingness to use violence. The elderly rightly sensed that the PKK would get them and their children into trouble. Elder men also sensed that if the PKK - an organization of impassioned young people - made headway, they were bound to lose some of their status and influence.

Because the PKK’s initial anti-religious stance did not go down well with the villagers, in the early 1990s, the organization began to mobilize the religious knowledge of some of its members to win people over. Abdullah Öcalan even went as far as praising the positive aspects of the Islamic revolution (Editorial in *Nokta* 1992). Suphiye from Bitek village close to Tatvan town explained that she used to be a religious fanatic (*aşırı dinci*): she never missed her prayers and was quick to denounce others as *gavur* (infidel): “I knew I was Kurdish, but - excuse me for the words - I knew this as an animal. I lived because I wasn’t dead”. This changed when two PKK members came to her house. They asked her why she read the Quran so often and whether she understood what she read. When Suphiye said she had no idea, one of them started to explain the Quran to her. She was greatly impressed. Then the men handed her a magazine, titled *Özgür Halk* (Free people). They said it was alright if she continued to read the Quran, but she should also have a try with the magazine: “I started reading, and I

realized I was reading about things I understood, things I knew were true. My eyes were opened, and I decided to stop reading the Quran so much”.

Given the PKK's record of violence, it is tempting to consider the stories of the migrants as romanticized. However, a summary of information collected about the PKK by state intelligence services, is along the same lines as these stories: “According to the separatist gang, organizing the people comes through knowing them (...) Instead of little effort, big results, the principle is to prioritize small results, lots of effort. The separatist gang, in all its activities treats the people in a respectful way and sees the people as teacher” (Editorial in İkbine Dođru 1989). The state intelligence documents emphasized the PKK's efforts to use understandable language with the villagers, the care PKK members took not to make the children and women in the house uncomfortable, their prudent stance with regard to the religious feelings of the villagers, and their reassurances that they would guard the villagers' lives, possessions and honor. A predominant feature of the PKK in these documents was *respect*. It was this respect which was emphasized again and again by the forced migrants in their stories about the PKK.

Rationalizing PKK violence: fabricated violence, good violence, bad violence

Human rights organizations have documented many cases of PKK violence against civilians and unarmed members of the security forces (e.g. Human Rights Watch 1995:138-141). However, the most common reaction to my questions about PKK violence against civilians was categorical denial.

According to the migrants, most of the incidents reported in the Turkish press were staged by the army. For example, many migrants had witnessed, or heard from trusted relatives and friends, that Turkish soldiers often posed as terrorists. Feyza from Dađgölü village, for example, related that soldiers whose faces she knew, ambushed their village at night dressed in PKK outfits. The migrants also recalled how co-villagers were arbitrarily killed by soldiers, police or members of special teams, and then proclaimed to have been PKK fighters. To put it simply, if so much of what you know is staged by ‘the state’ as something it is not - for example, if your uncle who has always stayed at arm-length from any form of politics can be proclaimed a PKK militant - why would you believe that the PKK, which has never done you any harm, would kill an innocent family?

Partly because the security situation was not monitored by journalists - they were not allowed to enter large parts of the Southeast, it was difficult to ascertain responsibility for violence perpetrated against civilians. However, reports in the press and of human rights organizations confirm the view that some of the atrocities attributed to the PKK were indeed carried out by village guards, soldiers, special teams or other official bodies, and that innocent people who became the victim of torture and murder were often accused of being

terrorists.¹³⁴ Since most migrants had positive experiences with the PKK, it was difficult for them to contemplate PKK members as ruthless killers. They honestly believed that the PKK only killed or harmed people 'who deserved it', people who could and should have acted differently. The fact that almost all forced migrants had close relatives in the PKK, made it even harder for them to believe that PKK militants would knowingly and 'unrightfully' harm Kurds, or to distance themselves from the organization.

Deserving enemies versus self-sacrificing heroes

The migrants claimed that the PKK only attacked 'traitors' who had inflicted harm on the PKK or their fellow Kurds. Oftentimes people presented me with cases like this:

Imagine, there is this village guard who has done the PKK a lot of harm. He may have provided intelligence about the whereabouts of the PKK, he may even have killed PKK fighters. The PKK has repeatedly warned this village guard to hand in his weapons and to stop his cooperation with the state. Again and again he has refused. Then, at some point, the PKK will come to his house at night, and order him to come outside. If he stays in and hides behind his wife and children, then of course the PKK will fire through the door and kill whoever is standing there. In the dark, they would not be able to distinguish anyone. It may have happened like this, but the PKK never murdered women or children on purpose.

This way of recounting how the PKK might have killed civilians was very similar to Abdullah Öcalan's explanation of such murders in an interview with Doğu Perinçek in İ kibine Dođru (October 22, 1989:23). Thus, if the PKK specifically targeted a child or woman who did not pose a threat or obstacle to the PKK, this would have been wrong, but if women and children were standing in the way of the PKK doing its job, they could be killed. If someone worked for the state, the PKK had the right to kill him or her, even if this person agreed to state cooperation under severe pressure, threat and after torture. After all, for the PKK it was a question of killing or being killed: in the dire circumstances of the time, the criteria for just and humane action that are valid in democratic countries did not apply. Some migrants stated there had been situations in which individual PKK members, who were acting on their own initiative, had carried

¹³⁴ See for example McDowall 1996:422 about the killing of eight civilians in Mardin province, Mazlum-Der 1993 about the killing of 34 civilians in Yavi town in Erzurum province, and Amnesty International 1998 about the massacre of eleven people in Şırnak province. In the first case, it was established that the killers were village guards, in the second case, the authorities had consistently withheld protection to the villagers who lived in fear of such an attack, and in the third case, there existed much doubt about the involvement of the PKK in the massacre. See Amnesty International 2007 for information about the killing of a father and his 12-year-old son in 2004 who were falsely accused of being terrorists.

out cruel massacres, but in these people had been punished - sometimes even sentences to death - by Abdullah Öcalan.¹³⁵ Aliza Marcus (2007) and human rights organizations provide evidence to the contrary. Marcus writes that “the attacks of village guards were haphazard, with little or no attempt to avoid killing of women and children. Sometimes (...) the rebels appeared intent on killing as many people as they could” and afterwards such attacks were trivialized with phrases such as “in every struggle people die” (Marcus 2007:115).

Although some migrants took pains to argue that the PKK took care not to hurt ‘innocent’ relatives of ‘traitors’, I doubt whether they always regarded the relatives of so-called traitors innocent. As I will show later, the migrants oftentimes employed a ‘familist’ logic in which the bad deeds of one person could easily ‘contaminate’ his or her relatives, a logic which is, of course, by no means restricted to the Kurds or Turkey. This tendency to identify the individual with his or her family was probably enhanced during the war, not in the least because both the PKK and state security forces put this logic in practice by killing or otherwise targeting the relatives of ‘suspect’ people. It was also clear from most stories that the PKK’s interests submerged those of individuals or families, and that concepts such as freedom and responsibility were to be viewed in the context of ‘the good’ of the community. Adil Bedran, who had spent quite a few years in prison for supporting the PKK, told me that some of the PKK fighters he had served his sentence with, were ordered by the PKK to rejoin the organization. When I asked if they were forced to rejoin, he said: “They didn’t always want to, no”. “How about the idea of individual freedom then?”, I wondered out loud. “That isn’t possible with us anyway”, he said:

You have a responsibility toward the nation. (...) There are restrictions on individual freedom: if I want to alienate myself from my own culture, that’s impossible. Some things need a long time to change. In thirty years a lot has changed already. Things that were the same for two thousand years have changed [thanks to the PKK], but there is only so much that can be done in such a short time period. So there are restrictions, that’s true, there should be restrictions.

A common sentiment seemed to be that the PKK’s aspirations and interests submerged the ‘immediate’ needs of individuals and families, because the organization embodied the ‘deeper’ and more long-term hopes and desires of many such individuals and families.

¹³⁵ Abdullah Öcalan did indeed have many PKK members executed, among them were people who had ‘merely’ followed Öcalan’s own orders (Marcus 2007:137).

The narrow range of 'acceptable' diversions of PKK discourse

The above stories fed into the dominant narrative about the PKK. People who subscribed to this narrative only tolerated criticisms of, and diversions from PKK discourse and practice, which did not affect the organization's 'core being and business'. The PKK was regarded by most as being ahead of its time. People who regarded themselves ideologically matured believed it was only to be expected that some patriotic Kurds were unable to keep up with its progressivism. They argued that old habits and values die hard, and that this was especially true with regard to religiously inspired ones. Thus, diversions from PKK discourse or criticisms of the PKK in the realm of Islam and male female relations, could be dismissed by the ideologically versed as *yobaz* (bigoted, uncultured) remnants of 'feudal culture': naive but relatively harmless. Once, I noticed Havva from Tatlıdere village swearing at her oldest son for his Öcalan-inspired readings of Islamic history, which in her eyes accounted to atheism. Another time, when she was watching the satellite PKK channel, she got upset at the sight of an anchorwoman whose head was uncovered: "This is not how Kurds dress, is it!", she exclaimed. The others in the room smiled and shrugged. Havva herself did not make a big fuss about such things either: as long as her own daughters behaved properly, she did not care too much.

To scrutinize the PKK on a fundamental level, to talk against the dominant narrative about the PKK, neared blasphemy. People were not to narrate stories which might cast doubt on the moral justice of the PKK's methods, for example, or on Abdullah Öcalan's dedication to the Kurdish people. An event that might have turned attitudes toward the PKK sour was the capture, imprisonment and trial of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. Öcalan's cooperative behavior toward the Turkish state drew much criticism from Kurds, Turks and other observers alike (see, for example, Okçuoğlu 1999). Kurds who worked at NGOs in the Taksim district told me that many Kurds had been deeply disappointed by Öcalan's 'capitulation' to the Turkish state. However, the vast majority of the migrants emphasized that there were no incongruities between Öcalan's demeanor before and after his capture and trial, and they were totally loyal to the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan. Just to speak of 'Öcalan's arrest', as I did once, was enough to make feelings run high: he was kidnapped, not arrested!

Among the vast majority of migrants with PKK sympathies, Azad from Erur was one of the few people who admitted he had felt let down by Öcalan. He was also critical of the PKK's self-imposed cease-fire declared after Öcalan's imprisonment, which he believed did nothing to improve the position of the Kurds, and said he had never quite understood why the PKK had 'excommunicated' (in Azad's words) his idol, the Kurdish folk singer Şivan Perwer who "did as much for the Kurdish people as the PKK". However, overall his loyalty to the PKK was beyond questioning. If the PKK was not quite democratic enough - another of his mild criticisms - it was still more democratic

than other left-wing organizations. Besides, the heroic record of a leader of Öcalan's stature could never be erased.

When people sensed I had a different opinion about the PKK, they did their utmost to convince me of the PKK's humanity and respectability. Sometimes they asked other people present for confirmation of their own experiences in order to convince me. When I asked Azad, who had spent a year in the PKK himself, about PKK violence against Kurds, he said he was deeply disappointed that after all the time I had spend with the Kurds, I was still susceptible to this kind of anti-Kurdish propaganda. I felt that Azad and Adil regarded my probing about this issue, not only as a sign of the pervasiveness of Turkish propaganda, but also as a marker of the difference between the luxurious position of those who can sympathize yet will never truly understand, and those who have no choice but to deal with situations with which people should not have to deal.

The discourse of certainty versus the physical manifestation of war

Above I pointed out the ways in which most migrants discredited reports about PKK violence against civilians. A minority of the migrants did not deny that the PKK had exerted violence against 'innocent' civilians, or that the PKK had not always lived up to high moral standards. Some of these migrants had been subjected to PKK violence after they themselves, or their close relatives, had responded to the state's demands for cooperation. Sinan had firsthand experience of the PKK as a military organization because he had been in it himself. Their personal stories attested to the fact that 'theory' was one thing, but 'real life' was another. Their stories blurred the boundaries of the angel PKK - demon state discourse, but for the most part, also they accepted the dominant discourse of certainty.

Zehra, Leyla and Nida, three young women from villages in the vicinity of Eruh, were quite open about the fact that their respective fathers as well as other relatives had "worked for the state". These women did not seem ashamed of this, as many of the other migrants would have been. As minors and as girls, they had not been personally involved in the 'working for the state, and they did not bear any direct responsibility. I suspect this made it relatively easy for them to talk about these events.

Leyla explained that first her village had established warm relations with the PKK. While the villagers provided the PKK with food, PKK members helped the villagers with manual tasks like mending a fence, building a house, and working in the vegetable gardens. After the gendarmerie received intelligence about the contacts between the village and the PKK, the army started to come to the village and the villagers were told to become village guards. At first they resisted but in the end they gave in. At that point, the PKK started to threaten the villagers. Once, Leyla's mother was stopped in the fields by two PKK members. They ordered her to tell the villagers to resign from the village guard system, and said that the Kurds were brothers (*kardes*), who should not work against each

other. At the same time, the army made it clear to the villagers that they would have to leave the village, if they were to resign as village guards. Often, during the day the army came to harrass the villagers, at night it was the PKK. Leyla and her family used to be very afraid when there were fights between the PKK and the village guards, among whom was Leyla’s father. One night, when the PKK opened fire on the village, a woman got shot by the PKK. Because of continued threats and attacks by the PKK, the *muhtar* gathered the villagers to discuss the matter. It was decided that they should leave the village. After the villagers left, the PKK torched the village as a form of punishment.¹³⁶ Thus, in spite of the villagers’ cooperation with the state, they lost their village anyway. Leyla:

Villagers from neighboring villages saw the PKK set fire to the village. They also put the *türbe* (religious shrine) on fire. A stone from the shrine fell on the head of one of them. He was not dead, but he lost his mind.¹³⁷ Later we went back to the village, but nothing was left of it. Everybody rebuilt his house. The state helped us financially. My father became a village guard again, for a very low wage. I don’t know if he still gets it, but it wasn’t much. My older sister is living in Siirt. Her husbands’ village was also set on fire by the PKK.

During the war, two *amcaoğlus* (father’s brother’s sons) of Leyla, who were both village guards, lost their lives when they stepped on mines while tending their vegetable gardens. Their families received a state pension.

The story of PKK violence which impressed me the most was told by Zehra. She lost her father in the mid-1980s when she was ten or eleven years old. In those years, many of the other migrants had not even heard about the PKK, but Eruh was one of the first areas of intensive PKK activity. In August 1984, the PKK had attacked police posts and military buildings in the towns of Eruh and Şemdinli (Marcus 2007:80-81). Eruh is a sub-district of Siirt province and is situated relatively close to the three border provinces that were most affected by the armed conflict in the early and mid-1980s. Siirt was also one of the four provinces in which martial law was not lifted in 1984, but extended until 1987, when it was substituted by the state of emergency. Zehra recalled how her father died.

My father was PKK first. Then the soldiers came and arrested my father a few times. After coming back, my father stayed away from the village. They took my grandfather away and tortured him. First they took my mother away to the mosque, they sat her down on a stone in the burning son and said she had to stay there until her husband came back. They searched the whole house. My father was too afraid to come home, he thought that if he came back he would

¹³⁶ Mazlum-Der (1995) speaks of PKK efforts to empty villages. See also Yıldız and Düzgören 2002.

¹³⁷ Zehra, a relative of Leyla, regarded this as a supernatural punishment of the PKK.

be beaten in front of the whole village. My mother stayed there for hours. Then the soldiers sent her home, but they took my grandfather with them. When my father came, they had taken my grandfather. They had tortured him. They threw him in cold water, imprisoned him. They told him that if his son didn't turn himself in, they wouldn't release him. Then my father was forced to turn himself in. They told him that if he didn't work with them, they wouldn't leave his family alone. They wouldn't let him live. My father became like them. He told the *ötekiler* [the others - the PKK]: "I come to you, but they torture us, it's not working (*olmuyor*).” In the end my father became from the state (*devletten gibi oldu*).

The family moved to Siirt but returned to the village after a year. Although Zehra's father stayed away from the village as much as possible, at some point he was forced by the PKK to take care of injured PKK members. A few months after the last patient had left the house, the PKK visited again, said Zehra.

One evening my father went to his brother. We were sitting together when my mother asked me to take a look at the baby food we had left on the cooker on the terrace. I went into the living room and turned on the light. The whole room was filled with them, maybe thirty people. It was the first time they came with so many, and that there were women among them. I cried: "Mother, they are with so many!" I was scared. My mother came in and cooked them food. After dinner they asked for my father. My mother said he wasn't home. But my father had heard they had come and came home. My *amca* (father's brother), his brother, told him he shouldn't go. "If you go", he said: "They will kill you. This time they are with so many, they will kill you." My father said that if he didn't go, they would kill us all: "If I go, they will only kill me". He knew he was going to be killed. They had told him that if he was going there [to the state], they would kill him, or his whole family. Yes, I'm sure that's what they said, because my *amca* told him not to go. "I'm going", my father said: "If I don't go, they will kill my whole family".

So my father came home and went to them. He welcomed the women. Then he went to the side of the men. The two women sat with us. The men sat in another room. They told him to come with them. They said: "We have something to discuss with you, after that we'll leave you". I heard this because I was sitting on my father's lap. Then they got up and the women asked my mother for a comb. My mother gave them a comb, they combed their hair and said: "Can we have it?" My mother said: "It's yours". My mother was very scared, because she felt they were going to kill my father. When they left, she said: "He is gone, they are going to kill him". She said to my *amca*: "They are going to kill your brother. You won't see him again." She cried and we waited and waited. He didn't come back. Early in the morning my mother put us to bed. When we got up, my father wasn't there. Two days passed, we didn't hear anything.

A lot of people came, they cried, they said he was dead. They told us they had killed him in another village. They [the PKK] had taken my father to the

mosque in another village. They had made my father talk in the mosque. What kind of things? Well, when the PKK comes to a house, they talk, don't they, they explain what they want, that they want their rights, that kind of thing. They let my father say such things. My father told the villagers: "They are going to kill me, help me." But the villagers were also PKK, they didn't do anything. My father put his hand on the Quran in the mosque. He said: "For the sake of Allah, of this Quran, don't kill me, I have children." They [the PKK militants] immediately took the Quran from him and tore it apart, they beat him. After they had killed him, they put a pill in his mouth so that his body would decay soon. Then they left him there, somewhere under a tree. (...)

Soldiers found him, they brought him to the village. I went to his side and lifted the cloth over his face. I looked at him, he looked as if he was sleeping. They washed him in the mosque. I was there too. His skin was coming off. They said: "Let's bury him now because he smells a lot." Some said: "Let's wait for his mother, let her see him". My *babaanne* (father's mother) was in Eruh then. But they said: "Let's wash him and bury him, otherwise nothing will be left".

Relatives who lived in Siirt found out about the killing because it was reported on the news. Some of Zehra's pro-PKK relatives acknowledged that Zehra's father had suffered severely at the hands of the state. They felt, however, that he was rightfully killed because he had - supposedly - caused the death of one or more PKK members by providing intelligence about them. Zehra herself regarded her father's death as a mistake of the PKK, because he had been left with no other choice but to cooperate with the authorities. But while blaming the PKK for murdering her father, she regarded some other PKK killings as justified. In spite of the cold-blooded killing of her father, she was able to uphold a rather positive image of the PKK and its political counterpart DEHAP, because she 'recognized' that the PKK could and did make mistakes, based on misinformation, for example. Overall, almost all stories about PKK violence indicated that this violence - although sometimes regarded brutal and misguided - was perceived as rational and understandable, rather than random or beyond grasp. The basic tenets of the discourse about the moral PKK and the immoral state remained unchallenged.

Exercising internal censorship

The view that the PKK was flawless was so deeply engrained that those who felt nagged by ambiguous feelings about the PKK did not feel free to talk. They imposed self-censorship. I noticed this most with Sinan, who was conscripted in the PKK when he was thirteen, an age at which he had no idea about what he was getting himself into. Although negative feelings about the PKK filtered through his words, his loyalty to the PKK was strong enough to prevent him from overtly criticizing the PKK. His contradictory thoughts and feelings about

some of his own actions, added to his unwillingness to talk openly about his time in the PKK. When I asked him how he ended up in the PKK at the age of thirteen, he explained that when he was approached by PKK members with the demand to join them, he had just finished primary school. He felt restricted and confined in the village and believed his father was totally insensitive to his needs: “If I said: ‘I want to study’, the answer would be no, if I said: ‘I want to go to the city’, again no. Instead he made us do everybody else’s work”. Sinan and some friends used to herd their families’ animals. While they were out in the mountains, PKK members regularly came to their side to talk with them: “One day, they came and said: “You three are coming with us. You know the paths and springs in the area, you can help us”. When I asked Sinan what went through his mind at the time, he said.

My mind... “Let me escape from my father”, that’s what I thought. For the rest, not that much. It was as if I was going to an *eğlence* (a recreational event) or something like that.

Miriam: And your mother, your brothers and sisters...

Sinan: Nothing, I didn’t think about that, I couldn’t think much. I went with them. I was small and they treated me like that. I stayed with them for some time, in that area, those mountains, the Siirt mountains. We stayed there for a month or so. After that, they took me to Iraq. At that age, I went into something... I saw the way of life... I will not explain that to anyone, even if you want me to.

Miriam: When did all this happen?

Sinan: I went in 1991 and came back in 1993.

Sinan did not say he fled the PKK, but that was what he did in 1993. Considering how difficult it was to escape from the PKK alive, he must have possessed quite a bit of courage and dexterity (cf. Havin 2007).

I came from there [the PKK], but I didn’t turn myself in. I was illegal (*kaçak*). I came to Istanbul. My family was still in Bitlis. I was on my own in Istanbul. I was working in construction. There was a lot of work then. (...)

Nobody knew I was here. I had no life whatsoever, I couldn’t go anywhere. I was a laborer (*amele*), I learnt the job there. I looked around, people were having fun, they were going out to football matches, they had rights, they could do something. I was wondering: If I get caught, will they kill me? I was like that for six months. After that, we got arrested, we surrendered (*yakalandık, teslim olduk*), I stayed in prison, they took my statement. Yes, I explained them everything, because I hadn’t done anything [he hadn’t had any fighting tasks], because I was small... The smaller ones, they stayed in certain places, places that were not dangerous, we were not sent to ambushes... I can’t explain to you exactly. My wife may hear certain things for the first time, she must like it [Sinan smiles]. I don’t find it useful to tell her. I’m not the kind of person who talks a lot about his past...

Although Sinan first used the words “we got arrested” (*yakalandık*)¹³⁸, suggesting that he was caught and arrested against his will, in the course of the interview it became clear that he had ‘voluntarily’ turned himself in, because he realized he could not spend his entire life as an illegal worker. After he turned himself in he was tortured: “They do that to get the statement they want”.

Sinan said he had never talked about his time in the PKK, not even with his closest relatives or friends. He did not want to burden or endanger them, and probably felt they would not understand.

Sinan: I haven’t even told my mother what happened to me then [when he was in the PKK]. I didn’t find it necessary. (...) It’s in the past, there’s nothing they can do about it. There might be talk (*laf*) about it, you never know. I have neither told my parents nor anybody else. (...)

Miriam: Because you wanted to protect yourself or your family or for another reason?

Sinan: It was just something that I felt inside, that it could be dangerous, it could bring people in trouble, and it was in the past anyway.

Miriam: But you were very small then...

Sinan: I was at the age when you start to understand certain things. When we were there... [in the PKK] we thought we would never get out. If we went back, we’d get shot by soldiers. For example, if I came back, the people would say: “He’s a bad person”. You have done something that is wrong or right or wrong, no matter what, you have done it, you have done something together. But if I came back, the people would see it as bad... or as good. Perhaps they would say: “Good that you came, that you got out of there”. But some would see it as bad. I thought it would be better to die.

Miriam: Did you expect a very strong reaction then from other people?

Sinan: Of course. Not so much from the village... But it would create tensions. If the state came to check on the village... Now even if you want me to, I won’t explain. Because I can’t do that, I haven’t done that to anyone. It was so paradoxical (*çelişkili*). Then you think, if I were dead it would be better. It took a month for them [the authorities] to get my statement. Some soldiers asked: “Why did you come? No matter how guilty the people are that you were with, you were with them, you were friends with them, why did you come?”

Miriam: What do you think about that yourself?

Sinan: If a person does something, no matter how right or wrong... if he has a certain environment around him, then he shouldn’t go against that. That’s not right. I don’t think it’s right... What I have done... I feel guilty, yes. Of course there are things I can’t explain to people, if I could, then everybody would see I was right [to come back]. But I still feel that... if I have eaten bread from someone, even if he does things that are wrong... then I still don’t want any harm to come to that person.

¹³⁸ He was talking in the first person plural, which is not uncommon in Turkish, but often signifies some detachment from what is being said.

Sinan made it clear that he had experienced or witnessed things in the PKK which could not bear the light of day, but was unwilling and unable to talk about these.¹³⁹ He felt he had no other option than to leave the PKK, but still struggled with a sense of guilt about ‘betraying’ the PKK. When I suggested that perhaps he had been too young to be burdened with the responsibilities that the PKK and the state imbued him with, his response made it clear that he did not regard his youth, or the fact that he was more or less forced to join the PKK, as an excuse. His story provides an inkling of insight in the conflicting loyalties and contradicting demands imposed on some Kurds by the warlike circumstances; loyalties and demands which did not only affect their physical integrity and social lives, but also their peace of mind for years to come.

Questioning the terms of the discourse

Only those migrants who had never identified with the PKK, were not consumed with loyalty issues. This means that only former village guard Abbas, religious teacher Seyyid, a few other individuals and some of the Alevis spoke quite freely. They rejected the dichotomy of the moral PKK versus the immoral state, but they did so for different reasons.

Alevi distrust of the ‘Sunni PKK’

Identification with the PKK never seemed to be as complete among the Alevis from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli village as among most other migrants who happened to be Sunni Kurds. A part of the population of Dağgölü and Vadiyeli village openly supported the PKK. They regarded the Alevi Kurdish community as the cradle of the PKK, and called to mind that many PKK members of the first hour had been Alevi Kurds. Leading PKK member Mazlum Doğan, for example, who became a legend after he died in 1982 in a prisoner’s protest in Diyarbakir prison, was highly respected by the Alevis from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli. Doğan’s family fled Dersim during the military operations in the late 1930s and resettled in Karakoçan, thus providing a ‘natural connection’ to the PKK. Middle-aged men who had moved to Istanbul in the 1970s and had become politically aware in Istanbul were the most pro-PKK. They were often the same people who focused attention on the existence of army oppression even before 1980, and who stressed the necessity of unity among Alevi and Sunni Kurds. Their analysis

¹³⁹ Possibly, Sinan’s unease had something to do with the atmosphere of chaos and fear in the PKK in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as described by Aliza Marcus (2007:135-139). In this time period, tens if not hundreds of new, well-educated PKK recruits who came from the big cities were executed on suspicion of being ‘agents’. One of the PKK militants interviewed by Marcus said: “Everyone was viewed as a [potential] agent” (Marcus 2007:135), and another: “Groups of people came from universities, cities... Many were stamped with being an agent. You would look around, and the next day, these people would be gone” (Marcus 2007:136). People suspected of being agents were sometimes tortured to get them to admit their ‘crimes’, and those whose guilt was determined in hasty trials would often be executed directly after their ‘trial’.

of events in the past decades may well have been subscribed to by some of the other villagers, but no one else presented their ideas in a similar way to me.

According to Michiel Leezenberg (2003), in the region in which Vadiyeli village is situated, support for the PKK on the whole was limited. Also in Vadiyeli and Dağgölü there seems to have been little support for the PKK. Many villagers from Vadiyeli and Dağgölü preferred not to talk much about the PKK, but some of them were openly scornful of the organization. They made it clear that they had suffered quite a bit from the PKK. Riza, a solitary old man whom I met briefly in the work place of one of his fellow villagers in Istanbul, acknowledged an Alevi link with the PKK, but made it quite clear he did not see much good in the PKK. When I asked him about the impact of the armed conflict in the village, he said:

We suffered a lot from both sides... We were beaten up a few times. [He didn't want to go into detail] The other side... [the PKK], there were a lot of us among them. Later a lot of foreigners [*yabancı*, here: Sunni Kurds] joined. We were caught in between... You're asking what I think about their [the PKK's] leader. He's a man who says: "Kill your brother", we do not have to expect much from him, do we.

Taha, a friend and fellow villager of Riza, dismissed Riza's comments about the PKK by saying they were inspired by the memory of the Dersim campaigns in which Sunni Kurdish soldiers had participated. While Taha preferred to emphasize the PKK as a movement rooted in an Alevi-dominated left-wing activist past, for Riza the PKK embodied Sunni Islam. In Vadiyeli village I met an old lady who swore at the PKK for "seducing innocent young men" like her son into joining their ranks. One of her sons had died in PKK service. Both Riza and this lady were elderly people, but also among young people, support for the PKK was far from automatic. PKK supporters often 'reprimanded' their 'less enlightened' fellow villagers, whom they felt were led on by a distant past which did not reflect actual circumstances. Sometimes they reacted with contempt to the arguments used by people opposed to the PKK, or they threw doubt on their validity. One of the surviving sons of the old woman who scolded the PKK for killing her son, exclaimed that the village did not have room for foolish women like her.¹⁴⁰

To summarize the villagers' perceptions of the PKK in terms of a slightly worn anthropological vocabulary, among these villagers, both the state and the PKK carried highly contested meanings. As I showed in the section about the state, the image of the 'immoral state' was contested among some of the Alevi. The same turned out to be the case with 'the moral PKK'. The Alevi did not

¹⁴⁰ Back in Istanbul, the next thing I heard about this outspoken son was that he was arrested and jailed for supporting the PKK.

have a problem with the PKK's leftist ideology, as some Sunnis did, but were distrustful of the organizations' intentions and critical of its methods.

Sunni distrust of the 'atheist PKK'

Abbas used to be a village guard and was also the *muhtar* of Çekirdek village, a village close to Şirvan in Siirt province. In a PKK attack on the village minibus, nine people were killed, he said.

In the end we fled. It's a miracle I got out of that attack alive. I was the only one who wasn't hurt. There were perhaps fifteen people on that bus, seven were killed instantly, one died in hospital, the rest was injured, some of them are handicapped now. I was the only one who didn't have as much as a scratch. My four month-old grandson wasn't injured then, but he died later. The doctor said he died because he had swallowed blood from the injured passengers and that was why he died.

Abbas had become a village guard as early as 1985 or 1986, when the PKK was not yet active in his region and when village guards did not yet receive salaries. Abbas said he accepted the weapons offered by the state because the villagers lived high up in the mountains, where they needed weapons to protect themselves against "all kinds of people who wandered the area". The villagers had always carried weapons, but after the 1980 coup these had been confiscated: "We had an eagerness about guns to be honest (*silahla hevesliyedik*). We took the guns. We said: 'If anything happens, we will have guns'. After that, the wages started, the PKK came, the problems began (*olay çıktı*)".

Abbas and his son-in-law, Seyyid, argued that the PKK disregarded the deeply religious nature of the Kurdish people. They accused the PKK, and DEHAP as well, of employing violence and intimidation, and they very much despised the PKK's gender discourse. Both Seyyid and Abbas practiced strict sex segregation in their house. Seyyid complained that the PKK had brought men and women together, in the mountains and in the villages, and said this had naturally led to adverse reactions among Kurds: "If you do not believe in God, if you do not believe in hell, you have no morals. (...) The Kurds are a religious people. They say: 'Why would I vote for people who neither now about faith nor *ibadet* (worshipping), why would I vote for someone who doesn't even pray?'" Seyyid much preferred parliamentarians of the religiously inclined parties, AKP or Saadet, to take up the Kurdish issue.

'Kurdish' distrust of the 'statist PKK'

The criticisms of Kanun, another acquaintance of Seyyid, had nothing to do with religion. For him, the PKK was the antithesis of what it claimed to be. He accused the PKK of cultivating warm relations with the state intelligence services, which was something to which Seyyid had also alluded. Kanun was a

former militant of a competing Kurdish organization and, although almost anti-religious, a friend of Seyyid. Reflecting on the results of roughly 25 years of PKK existence, Kanun said:

What the PKK did... the Kurds have a history of 14 thousand years. In the Islamic time period, they suffered four big strikes, the PKK was the fifth. The reasons are, if you fight for your country, for your people, you don't allow to happen what happened. It was as if they consciously.... thousands of villages and hamlets are empty now.(...)

The PKK worked with the state. I lived in Syria, the PKK accepted the conditions laid out by the Syrian state. Öcalan gave himself up to the Syrian secret services. Öcalan came from JİTEM¹⁴¹ (intelligence body of the gendarmerie), they thought out a scenario with him. When he was arrested in Kenya, there were only two girls with him, no one else. (...)

The PKK was in the intelligence services up to its ears. Wherever they were, they worked with the intelligence services. In Syria, Iraq, wherever. I am not criticizing PKK members who gave their life. I had a good friend from Bingöl. He was thinking about joining the PKK. I said: “Don't go”. Not even a hundred days passed, or he was killed. (...)

The PKK is part of a scenario and it's not in the interest of the Kurdish people. Seven million Kurds were dispersed over the country, the world. If Öcalan was truthful, he wouldn't have said what he said in his statement: “I am ready to serve the Turkish people”.

Kanun's litany tapped into long-circulating rumors about a working relationship between Öcalan and the National Intelligence Services (MİT¹⁴²). In an interview in the Turkish newspaper Sabah, a politician of the small Kurdish party Hak-Par, argues roughly the same as Kanun.¹⁴³ However, most well-informed outside observers of the PKK do not regard the organization as a puppet of the intelligence services. Kanun's lamentation that thousands of villages and hamlets are now empty because of the PKK may have been more to the point, but this was something to which almost no one else referred.

As shown, also most of those who cast doubt on the validity of the divisions drawn in this discourse and the supposedly unquestionable rightness of the PKK, for example, those who questioned the division of people in good PKK supporters versus bad state supporters, upheld the discourse by-and-large. The minority of migrants who slammed the elevation of the PKK in this discourse,

¹⁴¹ Jandarma İstihbarat Teşkilatı.

¹⁴² Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı.

¹⁴³ View the article, which originally appeared in Sabah newspaper (October 27, 2008) at: http://www.turkei.net/news_detail.php?id=46071, accessed September 21, 2010. Kemal Burkay, a well-known Kurdish activist, prolific writer and founder of the PSK (Kurdistan Socialist Party - Partiya Sosyalista Kurdistan), who lives in Sweden, analyses the relation between the PKK and the state in similar terms. See his article (August 11, 2010) on the PSK-website: http://www.kurdistan.nu/psk/psk_bulten/kemal_burkay_siyam_ikizleri.htm, accessed September 29, 2010.

often did subscribe to the negative reading of the state. Only some of the Alevis and a former village guard were sometimes positive or more or less neutral about the state, but even the village guard - who 'served the state' for many years - not entirely against his will - and who suffered greatly from the PKK, expressed a large degree of distrust of the state.

The 'moral PKK' in the practice of everyday life

With the intensification of the armed conflict, the PKK came to be viewed, not only in terms of right and wrong, but also as a *fait accompli*: it did not really matter what people felt about the PKK, the PKK was there and people just had to deal with this. This was not how most migrants told it to me. They tended to explain their respect for and loyalty to the PKK in terms of being true to oneself and of doing the right thing: they supported the PKK because it was fighting for a just cause, *their* cause. In short, the villagers did not support the PKK because the PKK forced them to, but because for Kurds who wanted to live in dignity, it was the only option. They claimed that the PKK did not only fight for the freedom of the Kurds, but also for peace and justice among Kurds. Evidence of the PKK's justness was its protection of the weak against the strong, and its seeking justice where there was none. Often was I told that, before the PKK established control of a region, feuds and other conflicts were the order of the day. However, when the PKK was in power, "not even a chicken could be stolen".

Such stories point to an important dynamic of PKK power. By intervening in conflicts, the PKK satisfied a basic need for justice and order, a need which was in more urgent demand of fulfilment because of rampant insecurity. Intervention in conflicts had for long been a tried way for traditional leaders to increase their prestige and thus their manoeuvring powers. Often, their intervention had been aimed at preventing a blood feud from developing, or at putting an end to a blood feud (Bruinessen 1992:67-71). However, the PKK adorned itself with wider competences. The organization intervened in conflicts between villagers, ranging from adultery and domestic violence to theft and murder. Reber, a young Kurdish man who worked closely with the PKK in the early 1990s, when he was living in Southeast Turkey, accompanied PKK guerrillas on many mediation efforts.

The guerrillas would say: "You borrowed money from your neighbor, but you haven't paid it back. That's not right, you have to pay that money back". Within two days this man would pay the money back. If a man beat his wife, and the PKK would hear about it, they would come to his house and tell him it is wrong to beat your wife, and he should stop. And he would stop.

These mediating activities might have remained invisible to those not directly concerned. However, when the PKK was in almost full control of certain regions

in the Southeast, the organization held semi-official court hearings, fully in line with its aspirations for self-rule.¹⁴⁴

In 1992 or 1993, Emine, a young Kurdish woman from Cizre who lives in The Netherlands, attended a court hearing organized by the PKK in a Cizre mosque.¹⁴⁵ The trial was convened in response to the murder of a pharmacist who was a PKK sympathizer. The murder suspect was found guilty, sentenced to death and executed shortly after the trial, while his accomplice, his brother, was exiled from Cizre. According to Emine, the PKK got involved in this case because the victim of the crime was '*yurtsever*', a Kurdish patriot: had he been a village guard, the PKK would not have interfered. On instigation of intelligence provided by '*ajanlar*' present during the hearing, within days after the trial many of the attending Kurds were arrested and jailed by the Turkish authorities. Asked why the authorities did not break up the trial while it was taking place, Emine said that the state was not strong enough to raid such a meeting, because heavily armed PKK fighters guarded the trial: "At that time, the PKK controlled almost anything in Cizre. The PKK were like the security forces of the town".¹⁴⁶

The PKK could negotiate settlements because it had gained significant prestige and legitimacy by its continued rebellion against the state. The fact that the PKK was a military power which could punish and kill as it saw fit, is likely to have played its part also. When I asked Reber whether people complied out of fear of violent reprisal, he said:

I don't think so. But there was a belief among the people that the PKK wanted a child from every family to join the PKK. I never saw or heard that the PKK kidnapped young people to become guerrillas - in the early years, I think it happened, but I never saw or heard about it.¹⁴⁷ Still, there were rumors like that. So there was a feeling of guilt and maybe also fear in families that didn't have children in the PKK. When we came to the houses of people who were afraid, we never saw any young people around. So in those cases, maybe it was fifty-fifty respect and fear.

The likelihood that fear of the PKK's long arm induced some people to submit to the PKK's rulings, does not negate the fact that the PKK's practice of conflict resolution transcended the volition-force dichotomy. By offering real - though not uncontested - solutions to a host of problems, the PKK accumulated meaningful forms of symbolic capital, not only among those who were outright supporters, but also among some of those opposed to, or with ambivalent feelings toward the PKK.

¹⁴⁴ Within the PKK, this was an older practice. PKK members suspected of misbehavior were judged and sentenced, see Marcus 2007 and White 2000:220-221 for such in-PKK trials.

¹⁴⁵ Cizre is a town near the Syrian border.

¹⁴⁶ A news report by Aliza Marcus (1994:19) neatly corroborates the stories of Reber and Emine.

¹⁴⁷ See Imset 1993 and Marcus 2007:117 about the forced conscription of young men and women.

Comments about the PKK preventing theft and resolving arguments were not made by the migrants from Çanakçı village close to Midyat, nor by those from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli village. This probably implies that the PKK had less legitimacy or manoeuvring power there. The migrants from Çanakçı village, for example, lived in a village with a large number of heavily armed village guards who were loyal to a local tribal leader named Süleyman Çelebi. Çelebi has been a member of parliament for decades - first for the True Path Party (DYP¹⁴⁸) and in later years for ANAP. In Milliyet newspaper¹⁴⁹, he was referred to as one of the heavy-weight candidates (*ağır toplar*) of ANAP, with an influence reaching as far as Kamishli and Amude in Syria. Clearly then, the extent to which the PKK was able to play its mediating role, differed from village to village and from region to region.

‘The PKK’ and ‘The People’

As argued above, the dominant narrative held that the Kurds had been repressed for so long and so severely that they were left with no other choice than to take up weapons against an illegitimate state. The PKK embodied ‘the Kurdish will’ to break the chains of subjection. Yet, it was clear to everybody that there were Kurds who did not subscribe to this view, or who did not act in line with it, for example, the over 60 thousand village guards. The narrative solution to this ‘aberration’ entailed that while the PKK came from an illustrious tradition of rebellious Kurds, those Kurds who allowed the state to dupe or ‘buy’ them - the weaker segments of the Kurdish population - came from a long tradition of corruptible people.

In the discourse about the angel PKK and demon state, it was important to distinguish ‘us’ who did the right thing and did not constitute a risk to ‘our’ safety from ‘them’ who did the wrong thing and who did constitute a risk to ‘our’ safety. Distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ had always existed, but were now argued in different terms. Before the war, ‘us’ might have been a family, village community, tribe or religious group, and ‘them’ might have been other families, villages, tribes or religious groups. The new ‘us’ became the ‘enlightened Kurds’, those who had woken up from their state-induced winter sleep, and the new ‘them’ were those who continued dozing, and those who set their cards on the state out of misguided self-interest.

Narratives about ‘us who did the right thing’ versus ‘them who did the wrong thing’ obscured the fact that the PKK-State dichotomy often (partly) overlapped previous fault lines between families. It also obscured the fact that the positions that people had occupied in the ‘old system’, impacted greatly on their ‘decision’ to support or not to support the PKK. As I stated in the introduction to this dissertation, war and displacement were added on to, and at the same time fed on, local struggles for dominance within and between families, factions, villages

¹⁴⁸ Doğru Yol Partisi.

¹⁴⁹ See: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1999/03/25/haber/hab04.html>, accessed May 7, 2006.

and tribes. Where the armed conflict sharpened tense local power relations, the ties between villagers who had been able to maintain strained relations for decades were sometimes severed to such an extent that there remained few people around to cultivate disagreements with. The quotidian dimensions of the circumstances in which people ended up on the side of the PKK, and the injustices suffered by people 'on the other side', remained largely invisible in most narratives, especially in those offered by people from Alimler and Çanakçı. I will attend to both cases in the last major section of this chapter, which is that of 'The People'.

STORIES ABOUT 'THE PEOPLE'

Speaking metaphorically, already existing, easily inflammable local constellations of power were set on fire by the bullets from PKK assault rifles and the bombs dropped by army F16's. In this section, I will employ stories about two different villages to exemplify this point, and to reveal the narrative politics involved in the telling of painful stories about (people's changing social relationships during) the war.

In the previous sections about The State and The PKK, I moved from dominant renderings of these 'institutions' to more marginal ones. In this section I will employ a similar approach. It begins with the more narratable story of the two. This is the story of the encroachment of the armed conflict on the lives of members of the Çelik family who are from the village of Çanakçı near Midyat town. In extending the dominant Kurdish narrative about war and displacement, this story is a narratable story. With the people from Alimler village, however, my focus is on the unnarratable, that is, the story-behind-the-story. Earlier on in this chapter, I argued that those stories which jeopardized family and community relations were problematic to narrate. This is what I will show with the Alimler example. The Alimler story-behind-the-story will also illuminate the fact that, even though most of the conflicts surfacing in conversations had their roots in a past before the armed conflict, the migrants tended to portray their hampering relationships with other villagers through the lens of events during the military conflict in the village and vice versa. Interestingly enough, in the case of Alimler, the deepest fault lines were not so much between PKK supporters and villagers who supposedly sided with the state, but between families who all attested to being PKK sympathizers.

Narratable intra-village conflict: "The village guards expelled us"

The Çeliks from Çanakçı village lived in a sub-district of Pendik. I mainly spoke with two brothers (Mahir and Selami), their older sister (Süreya), and their spouses and children. Çanakçı village is situated northeast of Midyat city in the region of Tur Abdin. Tur Abdin is the cultural and monastic heartland of the 'Assyrian' Christians - who call themselves Suryoye and are called Süryani in Turkish - who used to populate this region in large numbers before their massive

outmigration (Anschütz 1985; Schukkink 2003). After having finished my field research in Turkey, I established contact with some members of the Suryoye community in Enschede in The Netherlands. Coincidentally, I was put in touch with a middle-aged man who happened to be an old acquaintance of my family, and who turned out to be from Çanakçı village. In the late 1970s, my parents participated in a ‘host family program’ organized by the church to support refugee families from Turkey. We were assigned a family consisting of a father, mother and their 17-year-old son Barem. Twenty-five years later, Barem was kind enough to give me his version of events in Çanakçı village.

The members of the Çelik family referred to themselves as ‘Hajo’ or ‘Hajolar’ - a *kabile* belonging to the Heverki tribe.¹⁵⁰ They recalled the decades before their outmigration as a time of almost perpetual hostility between themselves and the İsoki, a *kabile* of the same tribe. In combination with oppressive state policies, this ‘age-old’ internal strife seems to have resulted in the displacement of two groups of villagers, first of the Suryoye - most of whom are living in Western Europe today - and later also of part of the Kurdish population.

Prestigious connections with a distant past

Selami and Mahir assigned an important role to the local aghas, Şehmuz and Süleyman Çelebi, in the oppression they suffered at the hands of the İsoki, and later, the state. Judging from their stories, the Çelebi’s were oppressive aghas, who manipulated their following to increase their political power and vice versa. According to Selami, Çelebi was supposed to be their agha as well, “but he never cared about the Hajo”. Mahir and Selami claimed descent of an earlier tribal leader named Alike Bate. “A long time ago”, said Mahir: “There were two big men in the area, İbrahim Gebru, a Christian, and Alike Bate, a Kurdish Muslim who was from our *kabile* and who was supported by the Christians as well”. Selami explained the connection between Alike Bate and Çelebi as follows:

Alike Bate and Çelebi were *amcaoğulları*. Alike Bate was on the side of the poor. He always had conflicts with Çelebi. Çelebi brought him to court and he was convicted, then he fled to Syria. That was probably in the time of Hüseyin Çelebi, the *abi* (older brother) of Şehmuz Çelebi. Hüseyin Çelebi was involved in the reconciliation of two Süryani who had a fight. Then by accident he was hit by a bullet in the arm. Then Şehmuz took his place.

¹⁵⁰ A tribe (*aşiret*) can be understood as a socio-political unit “based on descent and kinship, real or putative, with a characteristic internal structure” (Bruinessen 1992:51). A clan (*kabile*) is a smaller unit, which consists of people related ‘by blood’ (lineal and collateral relatives). Marriages are supposed to take place within the *kabile* (Beşikçi 1992:76).

The names Hajo, Çelebi and Alike Bate are also referred to in an historical account of the struggle for leadership of the Heverkan tribal confederation (Bruinessen 1992:101-105). Hajo III, a rebel leader who came after Alike Bate and with whom the Hajo identified themselves, not only proved himself a pain in the neck for the Turkish authorities, he also systematically attacked villagers who supported his rival Chelebi in order to bring them under his control. Describing the years of Hajo III rule, Bruinessen states:

In many villages, a part of the population was for Hajo, part for Chelebi. In such villages nightly shoot-outs often took place between the two factions. These were usually villages that had been divided before, and where the power struggle between Hajo and Chelebi intensified existing conflicts. (Bruinessen 1992:103)

Important about these stories is not whether there actually is or is not a genealogical connection between the Çeliks and Hajo III, but that the observation that *already existing* conflicts were *intensified* by the struggle between rival powers could still be made today. However, whereas in the early 20th century, competition between villagers was probably mainly viewed in tribal terms, in the late 20th century, rivalry between villagers along tribal lines came to be defined in political and ideological terms as well.

Conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s

The Çeliks spoke of at least two large conflicts before the PKK entered the area, one in the 1970s and one in the early 1980s. The following quotes about the relations between the İsocki and Hajo are taken from a long tape-recorded interview with Mahir’s oldest son Soner, a 30-year-old construction worker, and with Selami’s wife Resime who was in her forties. Although Soner and Resime did not know the ins and outs of these conflicts, they drew a line of continuity in the hostilities from the 1970s until the present. Asked about feuds with the İsocki, Resime said:

It would start with really small things. A child would walk on somebody else’s field or an animal would trample someone else’s vegetable garden. If my child walked on someone else’s field, the owner of the land would come to my door and he would start shouting and swearing, I would shout back and it would soon become worse.

After a long time period of fighting with victims on both sides, in the early or mid 1970s, people from other villages managed to get the Hajo and İsocki to reconcile. For some reason, Resime’s *amca* remained exempt from this reconciliation. The İsocki persisted in thinking that Resime’s uncle had killed some of them: “First my *amca* was the target - when he left, it was Soner’s

father. He resisted, he didn't want to leave the village. But my *amca* couldn't take it, he left with his family. After that, it was our turn," recalled Resime. In response to the question as to why the İsoki had singled out her brother-in-law Mahir as a target, she said: "Perhaps because he was such a hardworking man, because they were jealous". Mahir himself recalled that the İsoki had turned their wrath on him because they suspected him of involvement in the murder of an İsoki.

Around the time of the departure of Resime's *amca*, many Suryoye also left. Resime and Soner were not sure why they had left. Resime recalled that many of the possessions of a family she felt close to, had been stolen out of their house one night. But she was not aware of intimidation of Suryoye by fellow villagers. However, her husband Selami and her brother-in-law Mahir did speak of harassment of Christians. Selami, for example, recalled that the Christians left due to religious and political differences with the İsoki: "Some villagers put their threshing-floors on fire, people were making life hard for them (*millet onlara sıkıntı veriyordu*). After that they left for Europe, to join their family there". Some Hajo, and probably İsoki as well, bought houses or land from the leaving Süryani, presumably for low sums of money.

Nur, Mahir's wife, believed that the Suryoye had cursed the village when they left. Resime said: "The Süryani - they say that history is in their hands, these people... they were very intelligent, aware of things, some looked like scientists. They knew what was going to happen. They knew this would happen first and then that and then that". The christian Barem smiled when I told him this: "It didn't take a genius to understand that these two would never be able to live together. Before I was born, they had already killed each other off, they had killed at least twenty men". According to Barem, the Christians had always been forced to align themselves with either the Haciki, as he called the Hajo, or the İsoki in order to survive. As long as they were divided, the Christians had felt safe: "But when the Haciki and Isoki reconciled, the problems started." It was only to be expected, in his view, that once most of the Christians had left the village, conflicts between the Haciki and İsoki would flare up again.

Judging from the stories of the Çeliks, the villagers had little interest in any other politics than their own: they only voted to get a stake in local issues. The Hajo recalled that until the late 1980s, almost all villagers voted for right-wing parties, but that the Hajo tended to vote for whichever party the İsoki did not vote for and vice versa. An occasional exception to this 'rule' was the Islamic Party of National Salvation (MSP¹⁵¹) which in the 1970s was regarded "a ticket to heaven" by both the İsoki and the Hajo. Soner recalled that when he was around ten years old, he temporarily moved to another village because of a blood feud between "our party and their party", that is, between DYP and ANAP. This conflict crystallized in the election of the *muhtar*, the village headman.

¹⁵¹ Milli Selamet Partisi.

Officially, *muhtar* candidates were not affiliated to a political party, but in practice candidates in *muhtar* elections were almost always associated with a party, and they had their own tribal or otherwise important benefactors on higher political levels. When asked about intra-village fighting, Soner said:

Soner: They fought about all kinds of things, about the orchards, about... they always found something to fight about. Twice they fought about the *muhtar* seat. We had won the *muhtar* seat. Then, when one of them [the *jsoki*] died, it became a blood feud.

Miriam: Did the Hajo kill that man?

Soner: A stone fell on his head. He worked in construction, there a stone fell on his head. Because of that stone he died. Nobody knows what happened exactly. They accused us, the Hajo, but it isn't clear what happened and who killed him. They filed a complaint.

Resime: After that, we gave them the *muhtar* post. (...) We didn't leave then, when those people died. Many years passed. Then all that started with the village guards and the terrorists as they are called. One [faction] was on one side, the other on the other.

When tensions rose very high, the adults stayed in the village, but most children were sent away and the school was closed down. After the children returned, they still had to wait for more than five months for their teachers to assume work again. During these months of heightened tension, the gendarmerie regularly patrolled the village to prevent another outburst of violence. Reportedly, the relatives of the Suryoye who were still in the village, sent a large amount of money to the gendarmerie in exchange for police protection.

Interestingly enough, when talking about the 1970s and the early 1980s, the Çelik family did not bring up the topic of state oppression, which did exist in the Midyat region (Democratic Resistance of Turkey 1972:162-164). Indirectly they referred to the state negatively, for example, when they said Kurdish conscripts were discriminated against in the army and that villagers did their best to evade military service. Also the Kurdish movement was virtually absent from their historical accounts. When asked about Kurdish organizations, Selami said that they had not exerted much attraction on the villagers, because they were "only busy fighting each other".

Becoming village guards and PKK sympathizers

After the conflict in the early 1980s had blown over, the villagers had some relatively quiet years, said Soner and Resime. However, trouble resumed when three of their relatives were murdered under mysterious circumstances. This threefold murder, which must have taken place in 1985 or 1986, seems to have marked the beginning of a period of intensified oppression in which the villagers became acquainted with the PKK and the village guard system. The PKK was initially viewed with the same degree of disinterest as other Kurdish

organizations. “But after 1990”, said Selami: “The people woke up (*millet uyandı*). PKK members came to the village, they explained what they were doing. I remember that well. I also talked with them. In 1992 many villagers voted HEP.” The males of this family were arrested and tortured many times, often after they had been denounced by fellow villagers. They blamed the state for what had happened to them, but bore a special grudge against the agha and their fellow villagers, who, they said, kept making unfounded denunciations about them. The Çeliks repeatedly argued that since then little had changed.

Resime: Still today, the same people still live in the village, they are still the same.

Soner: They are still perpetuating that blood feud.

Resime: I went to the village this year, but I didn’t go to their houses. They said “*hoş geldin*” (welcome), but it was clear enough that they weren’t happy that I came back.

Soner: They don’t want us to come to the village. They say “*hoş geldin*”, but in fact they do not want to see us.

Miriam: Are those people Çelebi’s men?

Soner: Usually they were in his party.

Resime: I don’t know that man, I never met him. Like I said, I went to the village this year. Soner’s father had sown a field of water melons for me. One night, they came and cut all the melons with a knife and left them there to rot. When Soner’s father came to check on them, they were all rotten. All for nothing, I just want to say, nothing has changed.

Mahir explained that the agha had tried to bribe him when he tried to return to the village: “When he heard I wanted to return to the village, he said he would back me if I delivered him the votes of five or ten families. I refused”. On a later occasion, Selami said that Şehmuz Çelebi had reported Mahir to the authorities as a terrorist who should not be allowed to return to the village, and that as a consequence Mahir’s application to acquire an official document (*tapu*) confirming his legal rights over his land had been turned down. One commander said to Soner that he could not help arresting him and other members of his family, because the denunciations kept coming in.¹⁵² The commander presented the situation as one against which he or ‘the state’ could not do anything. To some extent, the Çeliks seemed to ‘buy into’ such explanations: they blamed their fellow villagers more severely than the army and gendarmerie. Or perhaps their statements to this effect merely reflected a sense of wartime realism: being informed on resulted in arrest and torture.

To summarize and comment on the above, many authors have called attention to the incorporation of Kurdish village communities into the clientelist system, and the ways in which the state and the PKK capitalized on the ‘Kurdish heritage’ of tribal and other types of communal conflict (Bruinessen 2000a:241; Gürbey 2000:72-74; Özer 1998:311-316). I have tried to provide some insight in

¹⁵² Stathis Kalyvas (2007:336-343) provides many examples from civil wars in other countries of officers complaining about malicious denunciations.

how this looked from the inside. This insight is only partial - I am not in a position to 'judge' the Çeliks' truth claims, but it is not hard to see who lost out in the end. The Çeliks were displaced while their rival fellow villagers remained in the village, and even today, years after the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan after which fighting subsided, the village guard system is still in place. In all villages there were conflicts, and in most, if not all, there were 'informers'. The fact that in Çanakçı village the conflicts occurred between clearly demarcated factions enabled the Çeliks to talk about them relatively openly. It is noteworthy that unlike many other forced migrants, the Çeliks did not place their own predicament in the context of the previous sufferings of religious minorities, even though many Christians in Çanakçı village were killed in massacres: the Christians from Çanakçı published a booklet about this.¹⁵³ I assume that the 'naive' (because not historically informed) way in which the Çeliks aligned themselves with the Suryoye in the 1970s, would have been difficult to combine with the role of Muslim perpetrator.

I will now turn to a story of intra-village and inter-village conflict which was thornier to narrate.

The Story-behind-the-story: unnarratable intra-village conflict

In chapter 3, I related the story of the people from Alimler village. In the first months of meeting with the Bedrans and Günays, I developed an image of Alimler village as an island of peace, a moral beacon in a roaring world, until the Turkish state turned life into a living hell. In chapter 3, I employed this 'peaceful haven story' as an epitome of a classic Kurdish story about war and displacement. Some of the Bedrans and Günays left the story at this. Others, however, sketched a picture less clear-cut than the one I drew in this chapter. To keep their accounts in line with the stories of the people who portrayed the village as a haven of peacefulness, and the state as making life hell, I slightly censored these 'dissenting' accounts. This censorship on my part reiterates and exemplifies the situations in which the migrants censored themselves.

In the previous chapter, readers may have noticed a few slightly accusative or resentful references to other villagers. When the Bedrans and Günays first started to make such remarks, I was not aware of the existence of a Pandora's box filled with distrust, alienation and conflict, to which such statements cut the key. For example, when Adil said: "We didn't have an oppressive tribe. In a village nearby this was different. There it was normal to offend others, to beat them up", I did not know how well he knew these other villagers, or if he felt that their supposed malpractices had anything to do with him. One thing which became clear to me quite soon, was that, by stressing the unique character of Alimler village and their superior role in the region, members of the Bedran and Günay families positioned themselves above the other villagers and inhabitants

¹⁵³ I cannot refer to this document, because the village would no longer be anonymous if I did so.

of the surrounding villages. After a while, some Bedrans and Günays, but especially the Bedrans, became more open about the damage they believed fellow villagers and villagers from other villages had done them.

In chapter 3, I cited Adem, a cousin of İbo and Adil Bedran, to illustrate some of the dilemmas with which the villagers were faced. Adem spoke about the PKK policy of punishing families whose sons joined the army. Actually, Adem had used this example to clarify the bad relations with a family that he accused of having been partly responsible for the onslaught of state repression. The following quote contains information that I left out first.

In 1992 a call came from the mountains [from the PKK]: “Don’t send your sons to the army. We don’t want to kill our brothers.” But *the Yıldırım family* sent their sons to the army anyway. Then they were fined, I think it was 50 million per person that joined the army [more than 2000 Euro] *They moved up in the direction of the state ever more. It’s largely because of them that our village was emptied and burned. Most of the denunciations against our family came from them. They could have just not joined the army, or they could have joined when they were rounded up. But they went themselves. In our family alone there are maybe thirty kaçak (people who evaded military service).*

As far as I am aware, I did not speak to any of the Yıldırıms. But some Bedrans differentiated between members of ‘enemy families’ who were okay and members who were totally in the wrong. And some maintained a limited degree of contact with fellow villagers “with very different views on the state”. Thus, I may have unknowingly met members of the Yıldırım family in the houses of Bedrans. If I did speak to Yıldırıms, they left me in the dark about who they were exactly.

While the above statement of Adem undermines the image of the relations *within* Alimler as marked by respect and friendship, many of the covert and overt accusations of the Bedrans and Günays were also directed at people from neighboring villages. In the following, I will focus on the relationships of the Bedrans and Günays with people from Fidanlar. Fidanlar was the village of Asiye, the little girl who could not go to school because she did not exist in state records, but who went anyway (see page 62).

The murder of a great man

İbo Bedran’s image of his native village as one of geographic and strategic importance was endorsed by members of some other families. Some also supported the Bedrans’ and Günays’ view of themselves as people to turn to for moral guidance. Other villagers, however, were less than charmed with the Bedrans’ and Günays’ rendering of events. One of the families that disputed the moral leadership of the Bedrans and Günays was the Tancay family, the family of Asiye. Although Asiye was on speaking terms with İbo Bedran who had

The assassination of a traitor

introduced me to her, many members of their respective families were not. Neither was Asiye’s family on friendly terms with the Günays. The hostility between these families crystallized around the killing - probably by the PKK - of three men in the early 1990s. The victims of this extrajudicial killing were Mustafa Tancay, who was a prominent member of the Tancay family, the *muhtar* of Fidanlar, and a third person. The killings caused a rift between several families, but mostly between the Tancay and Günay family, because the Tancay family suspected certain members of the Günay family of complicity in this murder. This killing seems to have spread - not planted - a fertile seed of disruption in the relationships between fellow villagers and people from the three villages.

Whereas Asiye and her husband Hüsrev were quite open about the killings, members from the Günay family shied away from discussing them. Ahmet Günay, for example, one of whose *amcas* was suspected of complicity in the murder, stayed silent about inter- and intra-village violence, when I asked him about possible conflicts between villagers. Adil and the other Bedrans were slightly more willing to talk, perhaps because they were not directly targeted by the Tancays.

To convey how the Bedrans and Tancays argued their cases, I will rely on long quotes. The reader should not let him or herself be too distracted by the question who is who, who did what, and who was married to whom. The emotions expressed and arguments invoked are far more important than the exact plot or the sequence of events.

The Bedrans’ side of the story

The Bedrans stated that Mustafa Tancay was rightfully killed - not murdered - by the PKK without interference of local villagers. In their eyes, Mustafa Tancay was the ‘big man’ of a family who had tried to dominate the surrounding villages at all cost. They acknowledged common kinship with the Tancays. Three or four generations back, they had carried the same surname. The Bedrans accused Tancay’s grandfather of having changed his surname as the state demanded, only to stay in a position of power. The Tancays exemplified the typical cruel agha. Adil explained that Mustafa Tancay’s father forced newlywed young men who worked in his service to ‘lend’ him their wife: “He raped the wives but no one could do anything about it”. Apparently, Mustafa Tancay did not dare go that far but “he also acted as if he were the local agha”. According to the Bedrans, for a long time, the Bedran and Günay families were not in a position to challenge Mustafa Tancay.

With the numerical increase of the Bedran and Günay families (they consisted of many brothers who all had many sons) and the entry of the PKK in the region, the power balance between the families shifted. Halil Bedran, recalled the assassination - also he objected to the word murder - as follows:

The three people who were killed in Alimler were Mustafa Tancay, Hakan Mavi (the *muhtar*), and Molla İbrahim. He was visiting the others, he wasn't supposed to be killed, but he wanted to come when the others were taken away. He wanted to reconcile the two parties. Mustafa Tancay is also related to us, four generations back (*dört babadan birleşiyoruz*). The PKK had repeatedly told him he should stop squealing on them to the state. They had warned him several times already. Mustafa Tancay said he would always follow in the footsteps of his father. His family knew what he was doing and told him to stop. They knew he would be killed one day. He received money and protection from the state for what he did. He was in the drugs trade. Before he was killed, a nephew and a partner were already killed. Tancay had taken drugs from people but he hadn't paid for them. These people cut his way, they stopped his car and opened fire on it. His nephew and partner died. Tancay's father was worse than him even. Always ready to inform the state about anything that clashed with its interests. Nobody liked him. People were forced to respect him, because he had so much power. They were a big family with control over the smaller ones. It went on like that for at least three or four generations. People pretended to respect them (*misali saygı vardı*). Because they were in a certain trade, they needed the state. Because they wanted to keep the protection of the state, they provided intelligence. And they used the name Bedran to open doors in other regions. The Bedrans were famous in Van, Hakkari, Mersin and other places. People offered them hospitality because of their name, but their hopes were deceived.

Although Asiye, the wife of a close relative of the murdered Mustafa Tancay, told me that her family suspected only two or three people of the Günay family of being involved in the killings, some Bedrans thought the accusation included them as well: "The killing of Mustafa Tancay, they accuse us of it. Even though they know we haven't done it".

The Tancays' side of the story

As could be expected, members of the Tancay family had diametrically opposed views on the killings. Asiye said:

The Günay family, they are my father's *teyze çocukları* (children of father's sister). We are distrustful of them, we are suspicious. Not because they support the PKK, but because they may have murdered my husband's *amca*. The men who were killed were well-known and respected people. The people in the region, the state, the PKK all knew them well. The Günay family didn't like them for that reason. Yeah, you could say they were jealous. And when the state was about to launch an operation in a neighboring village, my [her husband's] *amca* wanted to prevent it. But the Günay family misinterpreted this, like: 'If he has the power to deal with the state, then he must have more to do with it'. They didn't like it. Before that time we got along very well, but from 1994 onwards, relationships cooled off. We used to exchange daughters

with them. They didn’t like my *amca* that much, but they never said it openly.(...)

The uncles in Kaynarca [the Günay family] swore they had nothing to do with the murder. One of them wanted to make peace with us. But we have our doubts. We say hello when we run into each other, but we don’t socialize. I mainly socialize with my father’s family. But they live in Van, Bitlis, and Bitez mainly. Our distrust is for the family of my *nene* (grandmother - the mother of the Günay brothers).

Our family is so big, it’s like a vein running through the country. We have relatives everywhere. We also have other family here, besides the people in Kaynarca. We socialize with them. We go to their weddings and at religious holidays we go there. The son of Selahattin Günay got married to the daughter of Abdülaziz Günay last Sunday. You know them, don’t you. They didn’t invite us, they invited us to the previous wedding but we didn’t go, so they probably thought: We won’t invite them again. Selahattin Günay has a daughter in alt-Kaynarca. We see her on special occasions. We have nothing against them [the family she married into]. They are distant relatives of us, they’ve been here for thirty years. There was no PKK then. When someone is sick we go to them, but nothing on a daily basis. I do visit Zerda (Bedran-Tancay) and her husband and father. But my husband’s family wouldn’t go to them. There is so much distrust. If we were sure, we would have taken revenge. But we can’t be sure. The family has stopped so to speak. If we get the evidence, even if it’s in forty or fifty years, we will take revenge. Maybe they are completely innocent, we don’t distrust all of them, only two or three people. Whenever they used to run into my *amca* it was all “*oy ağam*”, full of respect and all, but behind his back they were digging his grave. If you could see the kind of people my *amcas* were! People with charisma. My *elti* (husband’s brothers wife) had photographs of them, but she took them with her when she moved out, so I can’t show them to you. It was always that kind of people who got murdered. People were jealous and they killed them. The moment the PKK and the village guards set foot in the villages, the cold started, the villages got divided.

Neither Asiye nor her husband was totally negative about the PKK, but they criticized the organization severely. Asiye’s husband who was very religious - he was an admirer of Sait Nursi - criticized the PKK for its stance toward religion. In Asiye’s view, people used to trust each other much more before the PKK stepped up its attacks and the state followed in its path. In her view, people who had always held a grudge against others, could act on it now: “Everybody did as they pleased. A lot of people exploited the situation (*çok fırsatçılar vardı*). Families who never got along became each other’s worst enemies”. Asiye disputed a statement of Elif Günay, who had told me that people from Fidanlar had always made life difficult for those in Alimler. Elif recalled having been afraid to go to school in Fidanlar, because children from Fidanlar used to harrass those from Alimler over some earlier violent conflict about land, to which - by

the way - many Bedrans also alluded. Asiye was adamant that nothing like that had ever happened.

Some Bedrans regarded the Tancays with suspicion, not only because of the unsavory events around the death of Mustafa Tancay, but also because some Tancays had joined the village guard system after the killings. These Bedrans felt that the Tancays had sold their souls to the devil: in a craving for money and power, the Tancays had aligned the primitive and exploitative feudalism of the past with the ethnic selfhate and self-seeking flattery of the authorities, which the state demanded of the Kurds. For the Tancays it was a bit simpler. They believed that members of the Günay family, who were overtaken by ungrounded jealousy, had succeeded in luring the PKK - which had lost track of its initial ideals - into doing their dirty work. And they felt that the Günay family had managed to drag many of the Bedrans with it, in its moral fall. The theme of Kurds selling their self-esteem and ethnic pride for money also circulated among the Tancays. Zerda Bedran's husband who was a Tancay, for example, reserved this diagnosis for Kurds who voted for the *Akparti*.

Istanbul repercussions

In Istanbul, some members of the Bedran family maintained relations with members of the Tancay family, but the Tancay and Günay families had cut off almost all contact. Bedrans who felt close to the Günay family also refrained from having contact with the Tancays, even though several members of the Bedran family were married to Tancays. A marriage which took place in Istanbul further complicated relationships between and within the Bedran and Tancay families.

It had started with a certain Suat Tancay falling in love with Aleyna Bedran, a younger sister of İbo and Adil. Aleyna did not know Suat well, but she was flattered and at least a little bit interested in him. Apparently, Suat's older sister Suphiye, the wife of Aleyna's older brother Hayri Bedran, was intent on arranging a marriage between the two. However, many of Aleyna's older brothers and cousins were vehemently opposed to this marriage. They forbade Aleyna to marry Suat and instead arranged for her to marry a boy from the Günay family. When Suat found out that Aleyna was engaged to someone else, he suffered "a nervous breakdown", as Aleyna said. Aleyna's favorite sister Derya, her brother Hayri, and his wife Suphiye blamed her for giving in to the pressure - even though Aleyna herself felt she had had no say in the matter. They avoided contact with her for a long time and did not attend her wedding. According to Halil Bedran, a son of one of İbo's *amcas*, Suphiye was so determined to snatch a girl away from the Bedrans, that she continued her efforts with Aleyna's older sister Derya. Aleyna believed that Derya had her own reasons for complying: she wanted to get back at Adil for rejecting the boy she loved as a suitable marriage partner, and married Suat out of frustration and revenge. Although Hayri and Adil Bedran - brothers - had never spoken since,

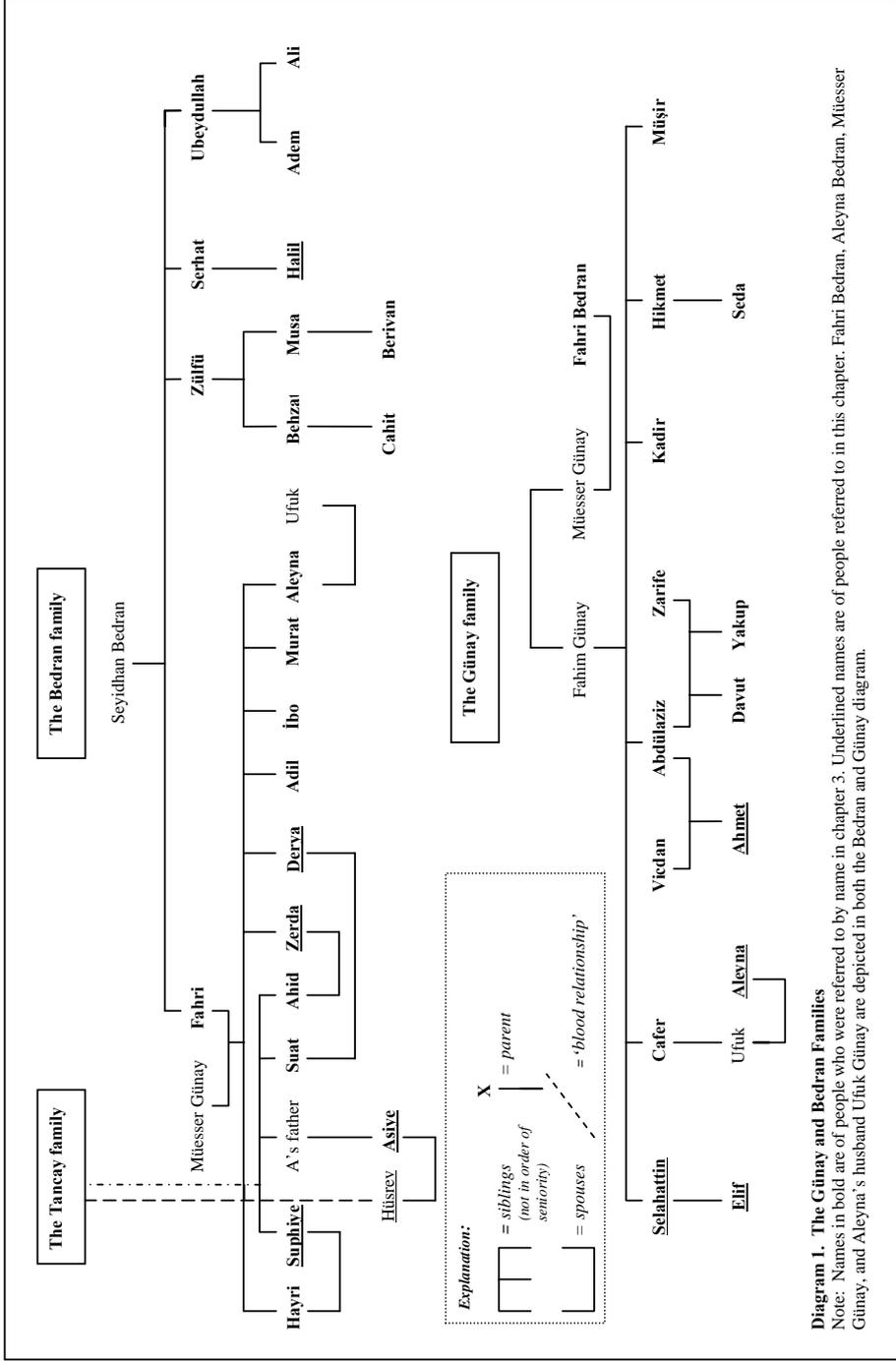
Aleyna and Hayri did sometimes see each other. Certain other people - mostly those who were married into the other family - also managed to retain a degree of contact with both or all ‘sides’.

Whereas the conflict analyzed thus far clearly had pre-war antecedents, another rift seems to have been an outcome of the armed struggle entirely. This rift occurred in a family whose members all shared a deep sense of commitment to the PKK. It was shrouded with even more secrecy than the killing of Mustafa Tancay, because the people by whom the narrators of this conflict felt ‘betrayed’ were closer to their hearts. The conflict was about a young man, X, who got killed in the Southeast. According to one of the narrators, his paternal cousin X died as a result of X’s own brothers’ ‘betrayal’ of the PKK. The narrator believed that X’s brothers had turned their backs on the PKK, because they thought they would be better off without it: as an unforeseen consequence of their actions, X was killed.

Look, the forced migration, being active politically, it really wore us out. After we left the village, the only thing we ate for a whole year was leeks, so to speak. Every family had a few people in prison, very few people could work, we were incredibly poor. When you are politically active you stay behind economically. At some point they decided to make it economically. That’s why they pulled out [of the political struggle].

The narrator believed that the ‘betrayal’ of the PKK by X’s brothers, was instigated by a desire to rise above the misery in which war and displacement had ensued. However, from comments made by the brothers of X, I deduced that in *their* eyes, the death of their brother had nothing to do with a desertion of, or disloyalty to, the PKK. On the contrary, they claimed he had died while acting ‘in the spirit of the PKK’.

In speaking with me, both ‘parties’ established their integrity with reference to their commitment to the Kurdish cause and to the PKK in particular. Those who talked about the reasons for the rift felt uncomfortable when they realized that the information might get written up. This is why I will not expand on it further, suffice it to say that this was yet another example of the way in which the armed conflict became a focal point as well as a prism in people’s narratives about themselves. It was one of the situations which brought home to me that the prolonged armed conflict sometimes took its toll by turning relations sour between people who used to be very close.



'The People' invoked and torn apart

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the village community was where the actions and discourse of the PKK and the authorities 'landed'. People had to make sense of and were drawn into the armed conflict by 'virtue' of their positions in local communities. There were major differences between regions and villages in how the villagers were conscripted into the village guard system, for example. Abbas seemed to have accepted weapons from the state in a situation in which there was no immediate internal enemy and no PKK. This was a very different situation of that in Çanakçı village where the villagers had a long history of tribal conflict, and where one faction was ostensibly patronized by a powerful tribal leader. Thus, the options of the Çeliks were quite different from those of Abbas. Whereas many villagers were faced with pressure to become village guards, for the Çeliks it was difficult to actually become village guards, even if they had wanted to, because if they were armed by the state, they would become stronger competitors with the İsoki. Although the Çeliks explained their adherence to the PKK in moral terms, adherence to the PKK was also an outcome of local power politics. For the Çeliks it was relatively easy to narrate intra-village conflict, because they could fit their experiences in a long tradition of repression by other Kurds, and because they had very little contact with and chance of running into members of the 'enemy side'.

In recalling the circumstances of their migration, for the Bedrans, Günays and some of the other migrants from Alimler and the surrounding villages, there seemed to be more at stake. Their internal enemies lived in the same Istanbul districts and tensions between families living in Istanbul and elsewhere had a profound impact on the villager's narration of events. With fellow villagers with whom the conflicts could be attributed to older schisms, it was relatively easy to draw clear-cut lines, and these could be talked about. But with closer relatives, who had all been in 'the same camp' in the recent past - the 'ingroup' so to speak - newly emerging divisions were harder to make sense of and to narrate. With the conflict that I was not to write about, the evidence discrediting the 'faulty' part of the family did not seem 'hard', it was all circumstantial. This conflict did not just revolve around morality, but also reflected the growing apart of sections of an expanding family. It seems that with the passing of time, the pattern of war being added on to local struggles, was repeated but in even smaller circles. The phenomenon of expanding clans and families falling apart into smaller units was nothing new: the lines between 'us' and 'them' had always changed location with the passage of time and while families expand. But a similar 'growing apart' had occurred in a situation in which there was no war, it would have been argued in different terms.

Reflection: ‘The State’, ‘The PKK’ and ‘The People’

At least until the 1970s, for most people I studied, being Kurdish was not a staple of identity politics but a tacit aspect of life. The villagers’ daily lives were filled with concerns about food, fields, cattle, work, school, religion, family and friends.

Even though in the 1970s, some Kurds did well economically and many forced migrants were quite satisfied - in retrospect - with the fact that they could satisfy all their subsistence needs, the region as a whole was extremely poor and the level of state provisions was low. ‘The state’ was perceived as distant, mostly present in the person of the gendarmerie officer, the teacher at the local school, and the nurse at the local health post - if there were schools and health posts. Incidental negative experiences with the gendarmerie combined with narratives of past state repression to create an undercurrent of fear of the state. Although the state was regarded with suspicion and fear, its supremacy was regarded as a fact of life. And while the state was to be kept at a distance, it was also viewed as an institution of progression.

In many areas, there was much inequality between and within families. Families were hierarchically organized and governed. Young people often had as little say about the directions which their lives would take, as their parents had had about their lives when they were young. In many families it was regarded normal, within certain boundaries, to beat children and wives into obedience, not unlike the way it was in many other parts of Turkey. Daughters-in-law and ‘unowned’ children (for instance children whose parents had died) tended to be at the bottom of this ‘immoral economy of the family’, which was not touched by the authorities, other than that some Kurdish children were taken away to Turkify them in boarding schools. ‘Leading’ families were in competition for land, moral authority, and - sometimes - political leeway in the shape of the *muhtar* seat. The lack of opportunities for social and economic mobility and, in some areas, the state’s alignment with the ‘traditional’ leaders reinforced conflicts between families and dependence within families.

Villagers had few opportunities to better their living standards or to get away from the small world in which they were born. Nevertheless, in the 1970s and sometimes earlier, some members of some families started to move away from their villages. There was a multitude of reasons for these migrations. Economic neglect of the region was a major one, escaping conflicts between families another, escaping a narrowly defined village life yet another. One opportunity for economic betterment upon which quite a few young men seized was presented by doing seasonal work in the cities of southern and western Turkey or by going abroad. These young men established connections with urban Turkey, some of which would turn out to be of use when, much later, their families were forced to leave the village because of armed violence and political repression. Still, most Kurdish villagers remained almost completely dependent on their land for their social lives and economic survival.

In 1984, the PKK attacked Turkish military bases in two Kurdish towns. In subsequent years, the Turkish state tried to stamp out the soft identifications of villagers, which the PKK hoped to harden. Some forced migrants related having been confronted with state repression such as interrogations, roundups and torture even before they knew the PKK, a repression which many initially found difficult to make sense of. In as far as the PKK was known it was admired by some but feared, or even despised, by others. When the PKK established relations with the villagers, often this fear subsided. The PKK offered a compelling explanation for much of the violence and deprivation people experienced.

The state and the PKK both capitalized on familial relationships: they tried to provide themselves with shortcuts to 'the people' by establishing relationships with relatively powerful individuals, and both the state and the PKK often held families and sometimes whole village communities accountable for the actions of one or a few of their members. This meant that some family or community ties were strengthened and others became (more) strained. Both the state and the PKK placed people in opposing camps. The Turkish state institutionalized its divide-and-rule-politics with the installation of the village guard system to which the PKK quickly responded by targeting village guards as prime enemies. Many villagers started to render previously peaceful or antagonistic relations in the new terms imposed by the state and the PKK: conflicts which used to have been experienced in terms of kinship or economic interests now became political or ideological conflicts. Also new conflicts emerged, for example, where some families adopted the village guard system while other villagers refused to join. In short, the 'domestic' became politicized and the 'local' became 'nationalized'.

Whereas the 'familistic' logic of the state was abhorred by the later forced migrants, the PKK's approach to families and communities was judged differently. The PKK tried to harden - not stamp out - the villagers' soft identifications by tapping into and capitalizing on their social relations in ways which were positively perceived by many people. The PKK appealed to people's conceptions of themselves as rooted in their daily relations, as disenfranchised members of a family, a community, an emerging nation even, and many people established 'organic' connections with the PKK through their relatives who joined the organization.

For most forced migrants, the state's repression far outweighed that of the PKK in terms of brutality and indiscriminate violence. Whereas the state was regarded inherently violent and immoral, people argued that the PKK killed measurably, discriminately and justly. Pro-PKK Kurds regarded themselves as true Kurds and 'those who sided with the state' as traitors who could be killed when it came to the push. With regard to PKK violence that was not selective, the organization still managed to generate a "credible perception that they were selective in their violence" (Kalyvas 2007:174). Any PKK act of violence which might be understood as indiscriminate or immoral was viewed as a regrettable yet human

'mistake'. While speaking about their sympathy for the PKK, the forced migrants foregrounded moral convictions and political motivations. Whereas those who had supposedly sided with the state were viewed as ignorant or consumed with immoral greed, they themselves were motivated by moral grievance.

Many people were aware on some level that other people's actions did not always reflect 'real' choices (villagers were forced to become village guard or PKK supporter), that people's choices were not always ideologically motivated (villagers aligned themselves to the state or the PKK to get something done), and that people sometimes maneuvered between the state and the PKK. However, this was hardly acknowledged in the discourse about 'true' and 'traitor' Kurds, nor in the narrative about a people undoing the chains of an alien repressor and being punished for it, but still holding its ground. In daily life it was sometimes difficult to uphold the angel-demon distinction, for example, because there were people who were connected to 'the good side' by one family tie and to 'the bad side' by another. Sometimes, 'discursive totalitarianism' simmered down in daily interactions: some people did maintain relations with their 'internal others' and managed to leave the war out of these. However, most forced migrants conformed to the 'discourse of war' (Jabri 1996), or what Jonathan Spencer (2000:134) calls 'the politics of certainty', even when this had certain personal costs. Thus, ambivalence was experienced more than it was verbalized.

The belief in the PKK took on the qualities of a new religion: what could not be understood had a deeper meaning inaccessible for those still too much immersed in worldly affairs, and criticism of the PKK was not explained in the terms of everyday life, but in terms of dissension from the True Path. In the circles of the forced migrants, to claim PKK backing was a strong argumentative weapon. As with religion, one of the ways in which sceptics like Kanun, who adhered to a rival Kurdish organization, discredited the 'puritans' was by arguing that they were actually only pursuing their own banal agendas. It was highly revealing of the stature of the PKK that most major conflicts among the forced migrants in my research were argued in these terms.

While the forced migrants aimed to expose state violence, there were limits to what they wanted to or dared to narrate: the discourse of certainty necessitated position-taking on one side - the 'right' side - of the divide. People could speak about others informing on them, but they did not speak about themselves denouncing others or about the names they might have given under torture. What people spoke about was also informed by gendered conventions about what counts as political, and about honor and shame. For example, sexual violence was less narratable than other kinds of torture. Although wartime Kurdish lives were not all about ethnicity and politics, especially male forced migrants tended to narrate their lives as if Kurdishness and politics had virtually been their only concerns. While the tellers of 'political' experiences were empowered by their venturing out into the wider world, whether this was prison,

the PKK, or some place else outside the village, those who had lived more confined lives, the elderly, or women, for example, were regarded less fit narrators.

It should be clear by now that over the bygone decennium, the armed conflict became a focal point in the migrants' narratives about themselves as individuals, as members of a family, and as members of a broader community. The forced migrants rendered their own suffering intelligible as part of a larger scheme. This subsuming of 'small' into 'large experiences' provided one way for people to deal with their past experiences. Besides, this emphasis on 'the fate of the Kurds' in the face of state repression forged bonds between people from different regions and backgrounds. This new sense of community was wider in some senses, and narrower in others, because it downplayed some of the other bases for community, *hemşerilik*, for example. The narrative rendering of past experiences thus seems to have created new 'ingroups'.

One of the things I hoped to do in this chapter was to clarify how the armed conflict impacted of people's social relations when they were still in the region, and how the ways in which people recalled the armed conflict continued to impact on their social relations ten years after migration. In later chapters, I will provide some more evidence for this. However, my focus will be primarily on how the migrants were hindered by, and dealt with, structural phenomena other than war and displacement.

CHAPTER FIVE

Leaving the Village and Settling in the City

Some forty years ago, a shabbily dressed young man from the Anatolian countryside arrived in Istanbul. He kneeled to the ground, grabbed a hand of dirt, and ran it through his fingers. “Look here!”, he exclaimed in disbelief: “This is not gold. This is just earth, the same we have in the village!”

So much for the cinematographic disappointment of a rural migrant who took the famous saying about Istanbul’s soil being gold a tad too literally.¹⁵⁴ That is, this is a description of a scene from an old Turkish movie as it was recalled by several friends. However, none of them could remember the title of the film nor the actor’s name. Whether there really exists such a film scene or not, the figure of the farmboy expectantly testing the Istanbul soil constitutes a powerful image, which is as telling of the elevated place Istanbul used to occupy in the minds of many in Turkey, as of the amused disdain with which the city’s ‘original’ residents viewed newcomers.

Also for people from Turkey’s Kurdish villages, Istanbul city long was a place with near-magical allure. Yet, as readers might have guessed from the previous chapters, Kurds who were displaced from their villages in the early 1990s did not exactly expect a golden future in Istanbul: they had learned too much about Turkey and the world to still believe such rosy tales. Not only did these Kurds migrate for different reasons than the ‘average’ rural migrant from Middle or East Anatolia and the Black Sea region, they also migrated to a different Istanbul than previous rural migrants. Whereas in previous years, Istanbul had been full of promise to almost everyone, in the 1990s Istanbul had become quite inhospitable and highly competitive. And whereas previous migrations had been of people striving to improve their economic situation or wanting to broaden their horizons, the migration of the Kurds in the 1990s was forced upon them by armed actors. The fact that the Kurdish migrants of the 1990s were not ‘just ordinary rural migrants’ as many people in Turkey believe they were, but that they had fled political violence, placed them in very different circumstances than previous migrants.

The way in which the forced migration process unfolded was dependent on factors such as the intensity and form of repression by the state or the PKK,

¹⁵⁴ The saying: Istanbul’s stones and soil are gold - *İstanbul’un taşı toprağı altındır*.

emotional and economic attachments to the village, and the presence or absence of contacts in Istanbul and elsewhere. Within the margins allowed for by the armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK, the villagers had varying degrees of control over the timing of migration, the routes along which to migrate, and the choice of destination. Thus, while the incentive to leave should be understood mostly in the context of the constraint of 'ordinary life' by armed violence and divide-and-rule politics, the timing of departure and direction in which to move should be understood more in terms of agency enabled by the villagers' degree of urban contacts and experiences: forced migrants with urban experience and networks were 'preset' to migrate in certain directions. Just knowing they had some place to go if push came to shove, equipped them with capacities to influence their situation which villagers without urban connections did not have.

In this chapter, I will link the ways in which people migrated with the types of repression to which they had been exposed in the village, their previous positions in the wider village community, and the extent and nature of their pre-migration ties to Istanbul. In doing so, I will go beyond inventories of the forced migration of Kurds in terms of proportions of people migrating directly or via intermediary settlements, and proportions of people with and without previous ties to their settlement destination. I will also provide insight in the circumstances in which the migrants had to pick up the pieces of their working and social lives.

The first section consists of a concise effort to conceptually disentangle processes of forced migration. *Out-migration* from the village, the *route by which people migrated* to Istanbul, and the *migration into Istanbul* will be treated separately as much as possible.

In the next section, I will focus on the mass migration from village to city which started in the 1950s. This section sketches the differences between the 'life chances' of the forced migrants and those of the earlier rural migrants, and provides insight in the nature of the ties which already existed between the Kurdish countryside and Istanbul, when the forced displacement of the early 1990s occurred.

The following section is dedicated to the migration stories of the forced migrants. While the situation of the Kurdish migrants of the 1990s was different from that of 'ordinary' rural migrants because the Kurds were forced migrants, by taking a closer look at individuals, families and communities, I will make clear that the 'forcedness' of migration did not amount to the same thing for everybody, and that Istanbul created different obstacles and opportunities for different forced migrants.

The last section focuses on how people managed in the first months after their arrival in the city. I will describe how the migrants found a roof over their heads and how they ensured their economic survival. The end of this chapter constitutes a transition to the Istanbul lives of the migrants in the early 2000s,

when I regularly visited them, and which will constitute topic for the subsequent chapters.

Disentangling processes of forced migration

Out-migration can be characterized as a ‘one-time event’ or a ‘long-term phased process’. If members of a family or community all moved out at roughly the same time, it was a one-time event. If they moved out in smaller units over a longer period of time, it was a long-term phased process. Secondly, the *route by which people migrated* can be characterized in terms of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ migration. After having left their village or town, many people migrated to Istanbul directly, but some lived elsewhere before settling down in Istanbul. In the first case, they took the ‘direct’ route, in the second case they came to Istanbul ‘indirectly’ or ‘by de-tour’.¹⁵⁵ Thirdly, like out-migration, *in-migration* can be envisaged as a ‘one-time event’ or a ‘long-term phased process’. When an entire family or community migrated to Istanbul as one unit, in-migration was a one-time event. When different parts of the family or community migrated to Istanbul at different times, it was a long-term phased process. It seems logical to expect that a family or community that moved out in phases would also move into Istanbul in phases. However, it was possible for a family or community to move out in smaller units, realign in intermediary settlements and then move to Istanbul with the entire group. The following table constitutes some information about the migrations of the families I studied, which will be elaborated on in this chapter.

Family/ village	Out- migration	Migration process	In- migration	Main cause of moving out	Connection to Istanbul
Seyyid’s fam. Nuclear	One-time	Direct	One-time	Fear of being killed (state)	Multiple ties
Abbas’s fam. Extended	One-time	Direct	One-time	Fear of being killed	Few very close family ties

¹⁵⁵ Indirect migration was a long-term phased process in the sense that people moved from one place to the next, but I will not use the term ‘phased’ with regard to indirect migration.

				(PKK)	
The Demir family Extended	One-time (mostly) ¹⁵⁶	Direct	One-time (mostly)	One-time expulsion by soldiers	Some close family ties
Cebbar's fam. Nuclear	One-time	Indirect	One-time	Fear of being killed (state)	Few ties
Havva's fam. Nuclear	Phased	Indirect	One-time	One-time expulsion by soldiers	Husband had worked in Istanbul
Vadiyeli village	Phased	Direct (mostly)	Phased	Mounting pressure + expulsion by soldiers	Many family and fellow- villager ties
Dağgölü village	Phased	Direct	Phased	Mounting pressure	Many family and fellow villager ties
The Bedrans/ Günays Extended	Phased	Indirect	Phased	Mounting pressure + expulsion by soldiers	Many family ties
The Çelik family Extended	Phased	Indirect	Phased	Mounting pressure + expulsion by guards	Almost no ties
Azad's fam. Extended	Phased	Direct (mostly)	Phased	Mounting pressure	Some family ties

Whether forms of migration should be classified as one-time events or long-term phased processes depends on the unit of analysis. I investigated how those people who ended up in Istanbul and acted as a family or a community had come to this city: the constellation in which the migrants lived in Istanbul was the basic unit of analysis. Thus, when almost all members of a family in Istanbul migrated into Istanbul at the same time, I would call their in-migration a one-time event. However, this family might have relatives elsewhere in Turkey who were thinking of also coming to Istanbul. If this were to happen, the migration of this family would suddenly become long-term or phased.

¹⁵⁶ Sinan, who had half willingly joined the PKK (see chapter 4), was in Istanbul already.

THE EXODUS FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE: 1950s – 1970s

Large-scale migration from the countryside to the cities was incited by the mechanization of agriculture in the 1950s (Smit & Velzen 1982:58-61). Mechanization allowed large farmers to monopolize the means to work the land. As a result, large numbers of Anatolian sharecroppers, and many small farmers as well, lost their access to land and became earners of very low wages. Because machines took over much of the work, these workers could only be employed a fraction of the time which they had used to spend in agriculture (Hinderik & Kıray 1970). In much of the Kurdish Southeast, the only people able to cash in on mechanization were members of the tribal elites who had the resources to acquire machines and technology. The fact that these tribal chiefs, who became ever wealthier rent-collecting landlords during the time of mechanization, often obtained high positions in political parties consolidated their exploitation of the peasants (Keyder 1987:158; McDowall 1996; Özer 1998:311-319).¹⁵⁷ Also in areas where small peasants continued to employ labor-intensive methods, as was the case in parts of the Southeast, there was rural poverty because there, the profits on the yields of the land were very low.

Most of the migrants of the 1950s and 1960s were single men with few social ties with the city when they arrived. (Şenyapılı 1982:238). Most of these men left their villages to find jobs elsewhere, others left the village to relieve the burden on their relatives: because the rural population was growing at a much higher pace than in the past, more and more people had to be fed of decreasing incomes. Many of the early migrants worked in regional towns before taking the leap to the big city, and often they first arrived in the city as seasonal workers (Karpat 1976:85-86). To find jobs or relieve the burden on families were not the only motivations for migration. Sometimes, feuds between families or village factions, or the lack of medical and educational facilities in the villages, motivated individuals or families to move to the city (Karpat 1976:59).

Far from adhering to the image of the dispossessed who were trapped in a ‘culture of poverty’, the migrants were full of hope and aspiration for the future. They were better educated than the Turkish average, worked hard, and were determined to achieve their dream of economic success (Şenyapılı 1982; Turan 1987). To keep their spendings low, they shared a room with six or seven others. Initially they had great difficulty finding jobs in the city because the urban industrial sector was still small and largely dependent on foreign investments: in the words of sociologist Mübeccel Kıray (1970), Turkey went through a phase of “fast de-peasantization and slow workerization”. When the migrants were lucky enough to find work, they worked - not in large factories, but in small workshops, in construction or as street peddlers, and they sent a large portion of their wages to the village. When job opportunities increased, they called for

¹⁵⁷ This provided the central state with an excellent mechanism of political control over the peasants who were loyal to or dependent on - which practically amounted to the same thing - these tribal leaders.

able-bodied relatives to join them, first a brother or son perhaps, later their families. The solidarity between *akraba* (relatives) and *hemşeri* (people from the same region) greatly enhanced the migrants' chances to survive in the city.¹⁵⁸ A few relatives always stayed in the village in order to preserve an active connection with it, so that when times were difficult they had somewhere to turn to (Karpas 1976:86). Contacts with the village also served as a safeguard against urban alienation (Levine 1973, see also Kartal 1983:233).

Because a gender perspective is absent from most studies about rural migrants in Turkey, relatively little is known about differences and similarities between the experiences of male and female migrants (İlkkaracan & İlkkaracan 1999:305). Kemal Kartal's 1983 study is a case in point. He does not denote whether the 402 permanently settled migrants he interviewed were male or female. The fact that one criterion for permanent settlement was that the migrant had brought his wife and children to the city, and that 394 of the 402 interviewees worked outside the home, makes it likely that only men were interviewed (Kartal 1983:71,90). Kemal Karpas (1976), on the other hand, did involve women in his research. He argues that the actual decision to migrate tended to be taken by men, but that almost forty percent of the women in his study made it clear they had also wanted to migrate themselves (Karpas 1976:76). The women in Karpas's research had much clearer views on the advantages of urban living conditions than men: they wanted to live in the city to escape the difficulties of agricultural and house work in the village, and to create better opportunities for their children.

Housing the migrants

The government and local municipalities did not develop housing schemes for the migrants, so the migrants constructed their own *gecekondu* (literally 'placed/settled overnight') on state-owned land, one storey buildings pieced together from a diversity of cheap and second-hand building materials with a small plot of land around them. In the early 1960s, 64 percent of dwellings in Ankara, 48 percent in Adana, and 40 percent in Istanbul qualified as *gecekondu* (Karpas 1976:11).

Critical students of Turkish urbanization processes and economic policy, argue that in the longer term the inability or unwillingness of the government to house the millions of rural migrants cost Turkey a great deal. One of these costs was the normalization of an 'immoral economy of housing' with spillover effects in other areas of life (Buğra 1998). The migrants had come to Istanbul with the dream of building their own house there, starting with a one storey shack and slowly adding on storeys to provide accommodation for their expanding families. The newly migrated tenants, in their turn, pursued the same

¹⁵⁸ *Hemşerilik* (literally 'sameness') only took on meaning outside the village or region of origin, and is more obviously a construction than *akrabalık* (Dubetsky 1976; Hersant & Toumarkine 2005:§ 41)

dream: as soon as their financial position allowed for it, they built or bought their own *gecekondu*, adding on storeys, and then, if possible, moved on to a second house. The land on which they tried to realize this dream was not legally theirs. Because much of the available land was neither privatized nor being used for social projects, it could be easily appropriated (see also Keyder 1999). Already in the 1960s, the appropriation of land had become commercialized: the squatters bought their plot of land from a 'professional invader', someone who had done this before and knew how to deal with the authorities, such as who to bribe and when. Sometimes this was a relative or someone from the same region who expected little in return, but there were also people who made big profits selling land which was not theirs. The latter soon came to be referred to as the *gecekondu* mafia.

Once the migrants had settled, they were looked upon by the municipal authorities and political parties as a voting reservoir, which could be lured into voting for specific parties or people in exchange for infrastructural services or the promise of legalization (Finkel 1990). A 1966 law attempted to seriously deal with the housing shortage and the issue of illegality, by improving the condition of specified *gecekondu* neighborhoods and issuing titles to the land. However, instead of seriously tackling the housing needs of the poor, state authorities erected obstacles for acquiring infrastructural services and left the squatters in uncertainty about the future of their neighborhood, yet seldomly resorted to the drastic policy of demolition. At the same time state funding for low-income housing often ended up with high-income groups (Buğra 1998). In the end, amnesty laws almost always endowed the squatters with some kind of property title to their house and land (Sönmez 1996:92).

An important group besides the squatters which operated on the housing market of the 1960s and 1970s, was that of small contractors. These contractors managed to monopolize an important part of the housing market by establishing a unique relationship with the owners of real estate. In exchange for the opportunity to construct apartment buildings on a plot of land, the owner of the land typically received one or two floors in the apartment building (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001:109). Much of the land utilized this way was not acquired in any sense more legal than the land invaded by the squatters. Often corporations of (middle-class) aspiring home owners invaded large plots of land, in much the same way as the poorer squatters, the only difference being that the corporations were more successful in acquiring infrastructure and other urban services from the municipal authorities.

Economic and political developments

To deal with the risks involved in the building process, the contractor relied on the low-skilled and flexible labor of rural migrants (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001:105). As these migrants were new to the city and had not yet severed their ties with the village, they were less demanding than the established working

class. The low-skilled construction workers received low wages without any job security, insurance or benefits. In a time when their labor was almost in constant demand, this was not such a bad position to be in, because construction provided the uneducated migrants with an easy opportunity to find work and develop their skills so that they might move up to better positions (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001:109). Many of these construction workers were Kurds.

Between 1965 and 1975, import substitution had been adopted as an industrial strategy. The strategy of import substitution was largely centered on the assemblage of parts which were imported from abroad, requiring few laborers but guaranteeing large profits for both local and foreign investors (Ahmad 1977:279-280). Two primary concerns accompanying this strategy were the protection of the Turkish industrial elite and the establishment of an internal consumer market. In the late 1960s, the growth of the economy allowed for the delicate balance between the economic elite and the organised section of the working class to be kept (Keyder 1987; Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001). The high profits made by the industrial sector allowed workers to negotiate higher wages, job security and benefits. However, only one-third of the workers was organised (Zürcher 1995:337).

In spite of the relative success of the import substitution strategy, the 1960s were years of increasing segmentation of Turkish society along the lines of class and political doctrine. The relatively liberal political climate of the 1960s allowed for the expression of social and economic grievances in political terms. Both the modern Kurdish movement and militant leftism originated in this decade. A major factor bringing about political radicalization was the 'democratization' of higher education.¹⁵⁹ Educational aspirations and opportunities increased, but the population grew faster. The vast majority of young people who set their minds on going to university was unable to attain a place. And those who did make it into university could not be turned into loyal Kemalists with the same ease as the generations of students before them. Radicalization resulted in street violence between armed left-wing and right-wing groups, and a number of bombings and bank robberies for a 'higher cause'. After the military intervention of 1971, some of the newly formed militant organizations went underground for a while or regrouped. They found a fertile ground in the *gecekondu* neighborhoods in which the migrants lived. These neighborhoods contained large numbers of disaffected young people - men especially - of small town and rural origins with few career prospects. Radical ideologies being promoted in village associations and coffeehouses, these youngsters began to phrase their dissatisfaction with their position in political terms. Thus, many *gecekondu* neighborhoods came to be divided in blocks inhabited by mutually hostile political and religious groups.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ The following paragraph is based on Zürcher 1995:313-327 and on Mardin 1978. See also Magnarella 1982.

¹⁶⁰ See also Martin van Bruinessen and Rudy Koopmans 1982:49, and Paul Magnarella 1982.

Establishing ties between the Kurdish countryside and the Turkish city

In chapter 3 we saw that many men from Alimler had lived and worked in Istanbul before their forced migration. Most families I studied resembled the migrants from Alimler in this respect: some of their members possessed substantial knowledge of and ties with the city. Only a minority of the forced migrants that I spoke with possessed no or very few ties with Istanbul. Later in this chapter, I will analyze the outcome of differences in degree and quality of the ‘pre-forced migration ties’ with Istanbul. This section, however, focuses on the ways in which the existing pre-forced migration ties were established. As I will show, early Kurdish migrants did not differ greatly from the majority of rural migrants. Most of the stories of forced migrants who had lived in Istanbul before the forced migration started, and of Kurds who migrated to Istanbul before their relatives and fellow villagers were displaced, were typical rural-urban migration stories.

Kurdish labor migration

Quickly expanding families tried to secure their financial well-being by sending younger members to the cities to work, not only to Istanbul or only in Turkey, but sometimes also to the surrounding countries. Mahir from Çanakçı village, for example, worked in Libya. Individuals had their own motivations. Some men, like Adil Bedran, wanted to escape from the ‘narrowness’ of village life. Others, like Selami from Çanakçı village, had always disliked the work on the fields and with the animals. However, from a familial point of view, the aim of this seasonal and permanent migration of family members was to enable the family to stay in the village.¹⁶¹ Villagers without land had to do wage work to survive, and construction work outside the village was a much better paid option than to work on the fields of fellow villagers. Even families like the Bedrans and Günays, who owned considerable plots of land, were faced with land scarcity, because generation after generation, land had to be divided in ever smaller plots. Halit from Ağaçlık village near Bitlis town, who came to Istanbul in 1980 and who later assisted his displaced relatives with finding their way in Istanbul, explained how this migration occurred.

From our village there were maybe five families in Istanbul [before the forced migrants came]. People were afraid to go to Istanbul. They didn’t speak Turkish well, didn’t have a profession. They thought, if I can hardly survive here, how will I be able to make it there. Until a few people went to Istanbul and saw that if you work, you get paid what you deserve. This wasn’t always

¹⁶¹ See Suzan İlcan 1994 for a multi-faceted analysis of migration processes from a Turkish village. Migration was locally regarded as a strategy to preserve traditions and kinship ties. In actuality, these had changed and continued to change through migration. For example, internal differentiation increased and gender hierarchies changed.

the case in the village. There you worked for three months and you had to eat of that for nine months. That didn't always work out, then people got into debt, and the next summer, they worked to pay off their debts first. When a few people went to Istanbul and achieved something, others also came. They moved close to their relatives. If we hadn't lived in Yakacık, certain people (forced migrants) would not have come here.

Many people recounted that villagers who went to work in Istanbul or other cities, had left the village because of a feud. As shown in earlier chapters, in the early 1970s, an *amca* of Resime, Mahir Çelik's sister-in-law, had left their village because of a feud, and also the *dayı* of Halil Bedran had migrated to escape from a feud. While the feud was mentioned regularly as a migration motive, exploitation by tribal or religious leaders was not. The system of 'landlordism' resulted in exploitative practices of which many migrants provided examples, and many had strong negative feelings about aghas and sheikhs. Yet they hardly mentioned exploitation by tribal or religious leaders as a factor motivating their early move away from the village. Migration in search of a better education was also mentioned rarely.

Because the forced migrants with the closest ties to Istanbul were those from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli village, I will attend to their history in some detail.

Early migration from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli

Migration from Dağgölü village dates back to the early 20th century. In the 1950s out-migration increased and in the 1960s and 1970s the pace of out-migration accelerated even more. In line with the villagers' stories, General Census records show a strong decline of the population of Dağgölü between 1970 and 1990. Many boys and young men from Dağgölü both worked and studied in cities like Istanbul in the 1970s. Other destinations in Turkey were Konya, İsparta and Hatay whereas outside Turkey, people mainly migrated to Germany, France and the United States. Migration from Vadiyeli village developed in a similar manner, albeit that migration from Vadiyeli may have started later. Ali, a retired teacher from Dağgölü village who had been living in Istanbul since the 1970s, said that in the 1970s every family from the village had members in Istanbul or elsewhere: "They first rented a house, then bought a piece of land and built a house on it".

Harun from the village of Vadiyeli was twenty and newly-wed when he went to work in Istanbul in the late 1960s. A year later, when their firstborn child was six months old, his wife Esma joined him. Harun recalled that in his early days in Istanbul, almost all villagers from Vadiyeli lived in Kasımpaşa, an old settlers neighborhood on the European side of the city.

Everybody went to Kasımpaşa, about fifteen or twenty people I guess - with their wives. My *amca* was the first to go to Istanbul with the son of a friend of

ours. The rest followed one by one. Kasımpaşa was an old settlers neighborhood, Alevis were a minority. It didn't look like the *gecekondu* neighborhoods now. It was small and there was lots of space. It was beautiful then. There weren't many migrants. From every village maybe ten or twenty people... Istanbul was gold in that time. (...) From Kasımpaşa we moved to Ümraniye [a district on the Asian side]. There we built a *gecekondu*.

While Harun set his first steps on the road to entrepreneurship, he also developed an interest in left-wing politics.

In 1975 I opened a workshop in Istanbul, we made plastic items. I was completely ignorant then. That was still in Kasımpaşa. I had worked in construction first, then in a factory where they made buttons, then in a pipe-factory. I came straight from the village and did not have much knowledge of life. And then you have to adapt to the city, that was difficult.¹⁶² (...) At first we didn't know anything. We were villagers, ignorant, uneducated. It was only later that we learned to read and write. We had no idea what this struggle between left and right was about.

His wife Esmâ recalled having been very sad when Deniz Gezmiş and the others were hanged. Deniz Gezmiş was a very popular student leader and the founder of the People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO - Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu), a small left-wing organization that engaged in street violence, guerrilla activities and kidnappings of, among others, American state employees.¹⁶³ He was executed in 1972 at the age of 26 and is still regarded as a hero by many in Turkey. Esmâ's remark about Gezmiş indicates that, like most left-of-center Kemalists in the early 1970s, they had sympathy for left-wing activism, but as Harun made clear, they had little clue as to what it was all about. At some point Harun started to go to meetings at Istanbul University in Sultanahmet. As he said: "I started to understand certain things. One or two years later I moved to Ümraniye. All villagers were revolutionaries, a lot of villagers came to live in the 1st of May neighborhood".

Unlike most other neighborhoods which were established through reliance on patron-client relations, the 1st of May neighborhood was founded as a result of the social and political struggle of the 1970s (Aslan 2004:13). It was *the* 'revolutionary neighborhood' in Turkey. Harun moved to this neighborhood on instigation of his 'revolutionary friends' (*devrimci arkadaşlar*). When asked what the ethnic background was of these friends, Harun said: "It didn't matter what you were, those people didn't distinguish between people. In that neighborhood there were Alevis, Turks, Kurds... but only leftists. A lot of people

¹⁶² See Alan Dubetsky 1976 for a detailed depiction of the small factories and factory organization that form the backdrop to Harun's story.

¹⁶³ See Lothar Heinrich 1989 for a detailed study of Kurdish and pro-Kurdish left-wing organizations in the 1970s and 1980.

died there. That neighborhood... rightists couldn't set foot in it". Harun participated in union activities and demonstrations. Sometimes he closed his workplace for a day to join a demonstration with his workers, but he said he did not join in the street violence between left-wing and right-wing groups which claimed so many deaths.

Encounters with discrimination

Many Alevi Kurdish migrants related being discriminated against as Alevis, a form of discrimination which seems to have been less rampant in neighborhoods marked by leftist solidarity such as the neighborhood in which Harun lived. However, discrimination of people as Kurds seems to have been virtually absent. Almost all migrants who spoke about the 1970s agreed that Kurds were not discriminated against and that 'Kurdishness' simply was not an issue. What mattered was the divide between left-wing and right-wing extremists and old and new settlers. Adil Bedran - as stated in chapter 3, his family was proudly Sunni - said:

I spent a lot of time in Turkish areas (...) In those times there was nothing going on between Turks and Kurds, Turks weren't anti-Kurdish. Until 1980 there was the struggle between left and right. The Kurdish problem hadn't surfaced much. There was *Apoculuk* [as the PKK was called], but we didn't understand much of that. Especially students were into that.

In a similar vein, the Kurdish *muhtar* of a Kartal neighborhood, told me:

In the 1970s and 1980s there was a *sağ-sol çatışması* ('left-right conflict') and a *yerli-yabancı meselesi* ('local-stranger issue'). There was some migration from the East and Southeast then, but not much. In the 1970s there was no racism, but there was this *yerli-yabancı meselesi*. If I went to a coffeehouse of someone who was born and raised here, he would look at me strangely because I'm from Siirt. There was a nationalistic consciousness among some Kurds, but not among most Kurdish people.

In emphasizing the political struggle and *hemşerilik*, the migrants' stories fit seamlessly with the literature about rural migration and the politization of Turkish society. Neither Adil Bedran nor the *muhtar* were leftists or Kurdish nationalists. Being Kurdish had not yet become a political identity, and as Sunni Kurds, they had felt unattracted to leftist politics. Sunni religion was such a 'natural prerogative' that also religion could hardly be defined as a marker of their identities.

The migrants' stories point to two related developments. The religious dimension of the political struggles ("Alevis are anarchist leftists", "Sunnis are bigoted rightists") facilitated the assimilation of Sunni Kurdish migrants into the mainstream, but incited many Alevis to adopt the position of radical underdog.

In situations where Kurdish migrants travelled regularly between city and village, experiences and ideas were exchanged between village-based and city-based 'villagers'. The anti-authoritarian attitudes fostered by the urban Alevi had an impact in the village - villagers became aware of leftist politics through fellow villagers in the cities, and created a sensitivity among early Alevi migrants to the anti-Kurdish repression experienced by those villagers after 1980. In contrast, quite a few early Sunni Kurdish migrants seem to have 'opted' for assimilation or to have embraced a 'public' - if not political - form of Sunni religion. Thus, early Sunni migrants did not 'carry' much anti-state feeling to the village, and they did not exhibit the sensitivity to rural *baskı* which many Alevi exhibited.

This development dissolved some of the opportunities which later Sunni migrants could have had for support, had they migrated under less adverse migration conditions. To give an example, the Bedrans and Günays explained having very little contact with villagers who had migrated in the 1970s and were sympathetic to the AKP. This being said, Sunni Kurds who stayed in regular contact with the village, did not always close their eyes to state repression, and some of them did assist their forcibly migrated relatives.

By focusing on the social and economic positions of early rural migrants to Istanbul and on the establishment of pre-war connections between the Kurdish countryside and the city of Istanbul, I have tried to draw a context in which similarities and differences between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migrations become apparent, and to flesh out pre-war constellations of relationships which affected the outcome of particular forced migrations. I will now return to my analysis of the processes of forced migration.

FORCED MIGRATIONS

When out-migration from the village was a one-time event, when migration to Istanbul was direct, and when everybody migrated into Istanbul at the same time, the facts of migration can usually be fitted in a few lines. I will attend to such relatively 'simple' migrations first.

'One-time event' migrations

With Seyyid and Abbas, both out-migration and in-migration were one-time, and their migration to Istanbul was direct. With the Demirs, this was the same. For Cebbar and his family, out-migration and in-migration were one-time events, but their migration to Istanbul was not direct. Havva's situation was similar to that of Cebbar, but the out-migration of her family was slightly phased in the sense that her husband had been 'taken' from the village earlier - he was in prison when she and her children were expelled with two other families. In all these cases, the heads of the families felt that they and their families were personally targeted by the state or the PKK. Seyyid was afraid of being killed by death

squads working for the state. Village guard Abbas feared a PKK attack on himself and his family, and Havva was expelled by soldiers who burned her house at the spot. These people did not leave because everybody else left, because they could not make a living anymore, or because they were worn-out by a diffuse sense of fear: they feared for their lives.

The story of village guard Abbas was different from most of the other stories: whereas the authorities were keen to see many other Kurdish villagers go, they were eager to see Abbas stay. After the PKK attacked the village minibus and killed nine villagers, Abbas received a letter from the PKK with the order to resign as a village guard, or else he would be killed. Abbas wanted to leave but was afraid the authorities would not allow him to. He employed a rather cunning tactic so that he and his family could slip quietly into the night.

Miriam: If you had stayed, what would have happened?

Abbas: I would have been killed for sure. So we fled. After nine years of service I asked for a leave. They asked me why I wanted it. I told them that my sons in Istanbul had had an accident and that I had to go to Istanbul. In all those years of being a *muhtar* and *korucu*, I had never taken any leave. They accepted it. I handed in my weapons and signed for them. I was supposed to take the same weapons when I got back.

Abbas loaded the carpets, beds, duvets and pots and pans of four families - his own, that of his older brother and two other families from the village - on two hired minibuses and drove straight to the house of his brother's son who lived in a largely Kurdish neighborhood in Sultanbeyli. He handed in his resignation from there.

One day, I received a telephone call at the neighbors. The *kaymakam* (administrative head of a district) from Şirvan was on the phone. "What the hell are you up to", he said: "You go on leave and then hand in your resignation. This is not how things work". Then I said: "My children want me to stay here, they are not letting me go. The president can resign, the governor can resign, I should be able to resign too". He didn't agree and called a few more times. After a while I didn't hear from him anymore.

In my research, his story was exceptional, but there are many more former village guards in Istanbul who probably had similar experiences. The story of Seyyid - the religious teacher who had lived and worked in different parts of the Southeast - was more typical. When Seyyid was a teacher at a *medrese*¹⁶⁴ in a

¹⁶⁴ Although *medrese* education is said to have disappeared among Kurds in Turkey, some people did speak about present-day *medreses*. Seyyid ran a kind of *medrese* in the apartment building in which he lived in Sultanbeyli. He had students - only youngsters, not small children as in the old *medreses* - from different parts of the country who lived there as well. He and his students survived on donations of well-to-do religious people. Also some older people who lived in Sultanbeyli viewed

village close to Diyarbakir, he was arrested on suspicion of being a PKK-member. During his detention, soldiers told him they knew he was not a PKK sympathiser, but that he, being a separatist and religious zealot at the same time, was even more dangerous than the PKK. Some time after his release, said Seyyid, Hizbullah came for him. Hizbullah was a militant Kurdish Islamic movement with a strong base in Kurdish cities like Batman and Diyarbakir, part of which cooperated with counterinsurgency forces in the police and gendarmerie (Bruinessen 1996:22). When Hizbullah members attacked and injured a colleague with the same name but without any interest in politics, Seyyid understood he was listed for assassination.

When I came to Istanbul I stayed with friends who had come earlier, people with a certain wealth and status (*'işi gücü olan'*), people from the Southeast. Both in Fatih and in Güngören I had these contacts. My contacts with people from the East and Southeast are wide. I stayed with people who had been in the *medrese* with me, or people that I had taught, some had become lawyers and so on. After a few days, I started looking for a house, then I got my family.

Abbas and Seyyid were family heads with wives and children, who left when many others stayed and whose coming to Istanbul was facilitated by the close personal connections they already had with the city. Their out-migration might be seen as a self-chosen method of dealing with problems which were even worse. However, in situations in which villagers were violently ousted by soldiers, it is more difficult to regard migration as a strategy.

When Ağaçlık village, the village of Mustafa Demir, was emptied by soldiers, he left with his entire family. Mustafa had been a *muhtar* for over 25 years and had never been too interested in politics. Like most people of his generation, he would have preferred to be left alone both by the state and the PKK. Because he was not prepared to join the village guard system, he had been subjected to several rounds of arrest and torture.

In the end the commander gave us one week to leave the village. The whole village was to be evacuated. I left together with my father and brothers. We sold our animals for a few liras, as good as nothing. We came here with two hired trucks and a Peugeot minibus. I hadn't told anybody that we were coming. (...)

I brought a cow and an ox from the village, hoping to sell them better here. We also thought that at least we'd get fresh milk and yoghurt for free. But we could hardly find a place for ourselves, let alone for the cow! The first night we spent in a building which was still under construction. It was owned by the *amca* of my son-in-law. We stayed there for a month. It didn't have any windows, electricity or water. The cow was trespassing in the neighbors'

Seyyid as their religious teacher. I have no knowledge about the content of education at his school and do not know to what extent it resembles traditional *medrese* education.

gardens, eating their plants. They [the neighbors] kept complaining to us, like “This is no place to keep cows!” Then we sold it for a very bad price. And if you consider all the extra spendings on their transport and stuff... and the butcher who bought the cow from us swindled us. We lost a lot of money there too.

Whereas Mustafa and his relatives had seen the forced migration coming and had been ‘allowed’ a little time to pack up, Havva Gürbüz from Tatlıdere village was taken off guard by the events of migration. Her family was suspected of actively supporting the PKK and her husband was in prison at the time of her eviction. The day described by Havva’s daughter Selma in chapter 4, when Selma had walked around erratically with her baby brother in her arms to find out that her mother had been locked in a shed which the soldiers threatened to set on fire, was the family’s last day in the village. Havva was one of the first villagers to be expelled. When she and her family left, their house and a few others were burned, but the rest of the village stayed intact: it was never completely evacuated. Havva’s family had been under a lot of pressure for quite some time, but she could not have anticipated being forced to leave her village in the way in which it happened. However, villagers who remained in the village and witnessed Havva’s expulsion, could envisage what might happen to them if they resisted the authorities. They could act accordingly: make preparations for departure or emphasize their ‘allegiance’ to the state, for example.

Havva and her children took their animals and whatever they could carry to Tatvan, where they moved in with Havva’s brother, the *dayı* (mother’s brother) of her children. As her son explained:

He had a second house which was totally dilapidated. He had abandoned the house because it was about to collapse. That’s where we lived, our family. We didn’t pay rent, we couldn’t. I was thirteen then, I worked with my *dayı* and took care of the family. My *dayı* had a piece of land in Tatvan. We built some kind of barrack on that land, a little house. Then we lived there. When my father was released, he went to Istanbul. An *amca* of mine lived here already. We sold our animals half price in Tatvan, we had taken them from the village. When my father had found us a place to live, we all came to Istanbul.

Initially, Havva had neither had the desire nor the means to move to Istanbul at that time. She spoke no Turkish whatsoever, had no personal contacts in Istanbul, and she wanted to wait for her husband to be released from prison.

From the four cases described, it follows that there was quite some variation in the degree of anticipation of events and that the degree of preparation also varied. Although all these migrants experienced a sense of defeat, the move out had different meanings for different people. For Abbas and Seyyid it meant a new start in more favorable conditions. Abbas moved in with his son, and Seyyid had lived and worked in several different villages: he was used to being

on the move. For Mustafa and Havva it was different. For Mustafa, although he also wanted to escape violence and torture, the migration constituted a break with everything he knew, it threw him into a new kind of daily struggle for survival. Havva was in limbo for a long time. It was not clear where she would live and how her family would survive. For her the move out did not constitute a fresh new start either.

Long-term phased migrations

In most families' migrations there was a large degree of 'phasedness' involved. Many nuclear and extended families, as well as village communities, migrated in smaller units. Such phased out-migration often attested to a significant degree of anticipation of what was coming, and of adaptation to changing circumstances. The story of the Bedrans and Günays which I recounted in chapter 3 showed that there was rather intensive traffic between the village and other places, and that the villagers constantly adapted themselves to changing circumstances. In the previous section, I recounted the early settlement of some Alevi villagers from Dağgülü and Vadiyeli in Istanbul. I will now extend this story to the later time period.

Forced migration from Dağgülü and Vadiyeli

Villagers from Dağgülü and Vadiyeli had the best connections with the city. With life in the village becoming increasingly insecure, one family after another decided to leave. In the mid-1990s, Ceyda and Emrah, a young couple with three children, decided to settle permanently in the Şifa neighborhood of the Tuzla district. They moved out of the village, but only when the house they were building in Şifa together with Emrah's brother Ali, was nearly finished. Unlike many displaced families who lost almost all their possessions - either because they were seized or because they were burned along with their houses - Ceyda, her husband and children, were able to take some of their belongings with them. A year later, they were joined by her Emrah's parents. Ceyda:

My husband loved the village, but when the problems started and the fights began, his love soon cooled. Everybody started to dislike the village. My husband was a farmer and he also worked for the grocery store. We went through a lot in the village, but financially we did quite well. We had thirty sheep, maybe twenty or twenty-five goats, three cows... We sold most of them - with that money we built this house. Otherwise we wouldn't even have had money for the bus. We came to this neighborhood rightaway. It was the first time for me in Istanbul.

Emrah's brother Ali and his wife Gül had lived on the European side of Istanbul for years. They had been tenants in the neighborhood of Zeytinburnu, where large numbers of villagers from Dağgülü resided. When Ali and Gül had saved

up enough money to buy a house, Ali selected the Şifa neighborhood in Tuzla because the cost of building was low there. It was a new settlement area with lots of space, but lacking basic facilities such as running water, electricity and roads. Tens of other villagers had moved or were planning to move to this part of Istanbul too. Three brothers of Ali and Emrah were already living in Şifa, a three-minute walk from the spot where Ali and Emrah built their house. A few months before Ceyda and her family arrived, Gül and Ali had moved to Şifa. Other migrants from Dağgölü told similar stories.

That the attachment of the migrants from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli to their respective villages was strong, could be deduced from the enormous amount of energy spent on making a return possible. Yet, it was clear that Istanbul meant something very different to the villagers from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli than to Seyyid, Havva or Mustafa. Going to Istanbul was already in their books. To a lesser extent, this was also true for the Günays and Bedrans, who knew that sooner or later, they would have to expand the living area of the family to the city. I could perhaps argue that in successfully preparing themselves for what was bound to come - in making the best of the worst - the migrants from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli, as well as many others, exerted a significant degree of agency. The trouble was that at the time nobody knew for sure what was going to happen when. Had the villages of all these migrants remained intact, the same or a larger degree of ‘success’ could perhaps have been imputed to those who stayed. Although it is easier to discern anticipation and preparation in long-term phased stories of in- and out-migration than in one-time event stories, the experiences of the Çelik family from Çanakçı village show that phased out- and in-migration did not always signal a great deal of agency.

The forced migration of the Çeliks

Unlike most other migrants in my research, the Çeliks were evicted by their fellow villagers. The Çeliks recalled that with the onslaught of the armed conflict, they had lived in constant fear of villagers informing the authorities on them. Every time soldiers ambushed their houses or took a member of the family away for questioning - thus torture - the Çeliks were told that their fellow villagers had complained about them.

In November 1992, Mahir Çelik went to Antalya to receive medical treatment for his torture-induced injuries. He was accompanied by his brother Selami and a few other villagers. For Mahir, his departure for Antalya turned out to be the beginning of a life in exile. In Antalya, he stayed with one of his *amcas* who had been living there for a long time. During Mahir’s absence, the pressure on the people still in the village increased. Selami’s wife Resime (Mahir’s sister-in-law) said the following about this time period:

People from our village had filed a complaint about Mahir, my brother-in-law.
“That man is a terrorist, he went to the mountains”, they said. When we heard

about this, we sent Mahir a message saying he had to return because the state didn't leave us alone. My husband's parents were still in the village then, and the gendarmerie took Mahir's father, my father-in-law, away. He told them (the gendarmerie) that his son had gone to Antalya. They didn't believe him. Mahir was in the hospital in Antalya then. My husband, who was in Antalya too, collected all the medical reports, test results, bills, prescriptions... anything which could prove that my brother-in-law was receiving treatment in Antalya, and went to Midyat with these. He showed them everything. Only then did they believe us.

According to Mahir's son Soner, the sergeant-major then said: "You have to leave here. You cannot live peacefully here, they will not leave you alone". While Mahir was still in Antalya, his son Soner was arrested. After his release, Soner was too afraid to go back to the village: "I never set foot in the village again. I didn't take anything with me from the village, only the clothes I was wearing". Soner stayed with a sister-in-law in Midyat for a few days. Then he moved to Nusaybin where his *dayı* lived. For three months he worked as a porter, loading and unloading trucks with his *dayı* and several other relatives. In Nusaybin, his *amca* Selami called to say he found work in Istanbul through an acquaintance from a neighboring village who he had worked with in Antalya. Soner decided to join Selami in Istanbul: "The first weeks we stayed with this acquaintance of my uncle, the man he had met in Antalya. The house next to this man's house was empty. We called the owner and he rented the house to us. He said: 'I will only rent to you if your wives are coming,' so we called our wives to join us".

In the meantime, the wives of Mahir, Selami and Soner had been expelled from the village. Initially, they had stayed behind when Mahir, Selami and Soner left the village. However, one morning in November or December 1992, village guards came to Mahir's house and ordered his wife Nur and children to vacate the house and leave the village. A week later it was Resime's turn. The village guards occupied their houses and fields, as Soner said: "We prepared everything for them, so to speak, they just sat down to eat it". Resime recalled:

It was the beginning of the winter. Every house was stocked to the roof with food supplies. People took with them whatever they could, but that wasn't much. The rest was taken by the village guards. Soner's mother gave all of her six children something to carry, that was all they could take. She left before me. She couldn't go to Midyat right away. It was winter... cold, muddy, rainy... She walked with her children to the house of my *dayı* in a neighboring village and stayed the night there. (...)

She didn't understand why she had had to leave the village. The next day she went back to the village, without her children, and said she wanted to come back. "You can't come back, because you didn't become village guards", the villagers said. She wanted to go to her house but they stopped her. I was still in

the village then. A week later, the village guards also came to our house. "Tell your husband to come to the police office", they said: "He has to become a village guard. Otherwise you'll have to leave". But my husband wasn't in the village, he was in Antalya. How was I supposed to fetch him? Then they expelled us ("*bizi çıkardılar*"). If my brother-in-law had been in the village, perhaps we would have stayed, he would have stood up against them. I also went to the house of my *dayı* with my children. He had two rooms, they gave us one. After about a month we went to Midyat.

Resime stayed with relatives in Midyat for a few months. When she was in Midyat, Soner called her and urged her and his own wife to come to Istanbul as soon as possible. Otherwise they would lose the house and the job. So she travelled to Istanbul with her children and Soner's wife. Soner's mother Nur stayed in another village with her relatives, where she worked on the cotton fields with her children. After his medical treatment, Mahir went back to the village to fetch his wife Nur and the children. Upon finding out that they had left, he set out for Midyat. Apparently, upon his return to Midyat, he was arrested and put in a car with several other detainees. Fearing that he would be assassinated, he managed to escape from the car. Immediately after, he went to Istanbul where some months later his wife joined him, as well as his older sister Makbule. Another villager arrived three years after Soner and Selami.

Even though Soner, Mahir and some of their close relatives were aware of the dangers of staying in the region, they still seem to have been taken off guard by the events that displaced them. Similarly, Mahir's wife Nur was so robbed by the behavior of the village guards that she went back to the village the day after they had expelled her. Thus, it seems that the Çelik family had little choice with regard to the process of migration. Resime appeared to believe that, if Mahir had stayed in the village, the village guards would not have been able to expel her and Nur. However, she and Nur had felt helpless against the village guards: they had no choice as to the timing of their departure, and had not made plans about where to go in the eventuality of a forced eviction. Before the actual migration in the winter of 1992, some family members *had* been talking about leaving. Had they left then, they would have been able to exert some control over the migration process. However, Mahir, the head of the family, had always categorically refused to leave, saying that if he stayed in the village, at least - if anything happened - his body would be buried there.

Mahir found it particularly difficult to leave the village because he had arrived at a point in his life where he had started to enjoy the fruits of his year-long hard labor. Mahir had started off landless but had managed to build a house and accumulate large plots of land. Because Mahir so much wanted to live a better life in the village, he had worked in cities for extensive periods of time: he knew 'the city' and had made his mind up about not belonging there. In his village there was no imminent shortage of land, as had been the case with the

Bedrans and Günays, who had started to spread their wings long before the actual forced migration. And unlike the Bedrans and Günays, Mahir and Selami were not the fathers of ‘scores’ of able-bodied young men in the family who could venture out to the cities. Selami had no adult sons and Mahir’s only adult son was Soner, whom he hoped would one day take his place in the village. Undoubtedly, the fact that he had not ‘built’ anything for his family outside the village made it harder for him to leave. Besides, the Çeliks knew that if they left, it would be extremely difficult if not impossible for them to return. They had witnessed how their Christian fellow villagers had been displaced for good in the 1970s and 1980s, and they knew that whatever they would leave behind would be eaten/occupied/confiscated by their fellow villagers who had the support of a powerful agha.

In stories about long-term phased migrations the incitement for migration was likely to change over time. At different times, different circumstances incited people to leave. For those who left early, it was economic difficulty or the lack of safety, their unwillingness to put up with the extremely restrictive regime, curfews, the food embargo, the impossibility to herd the animals, the schools being closed, or the tense atmosphere. Some feared for their lives. Yet others were evicted under armed threat with a strict time schedule. People who left before most others were often people under great personal threat, or people who were able to make practical preparations for a life outside the village which they could more or less envision. People who were determined to stay and least expected to be under serious threat had least time to prepare. Most people tried to leave before continued threats of expulsion were put into action, except for the Çeliks who were more determined to stay than many others.

On the fringes of agency

The Çeliks’ experiences contrasted strongly with those of the migrants from Dağgölü and Vadiyeli, whose migration was the most planned and the ‘smoothest’ of all. Nevertheless, on the fringes of all this anticipation and preparation there were the same hopelessness, uncertainty and lack of control as there were in the story of the Çeliks. This was noticeable in the stories of villagers from Dağgölü who had tried to stay put, in spite of deteriorating living conditions. Often these were elderly people whose children lived in Istanbul or Europe.

Old people from Dağgölü recalled that the soldiers had always treated the villagers fairly well, but that things went sour when the police office was shut down. Apparently, the soldiers made their superiors believe that the police office in which they lived was on the verge of collapsing, because the soldiers wanted to be transferred to a less isolated place. When the soldiers received permission to vacate the police office, they only left the police dogs behind. Shortly after, the villagers started to be intimidated. According to the people I spoke with, the authorities reasoned that, now that there was no one left to police

the village, the village should be emptied. One night, soldiers whose faces the villagers knew, but who were dressed as PKK fighters, knocked on people's doors and intimidated the villagers. The next morning, soldiers in military garment came to the village and ordered the villagers to leave. The soldiers took large quantities of foodstuffs with them, and people who had still been in the village at that time recalled that the police dogs had been roaming the village looking for food. Left without other options, the remaining villagers, except one old lady, loaded their most rudimental possessions on a donkey, and started walking to a neighboring village.

Feyza, an elderly woman from Dağgölü recalled having thrown the hungry dogs some food so that she could sneak out of the village with the daughter of her neighbor, an old woman who was not yet prepared to leave. During this time, Feyza's husband was in Karakoçan on business. Upon return he found the village virtually empty. The old lady who was still in the village, told him that his wife and her daughter had gone to a neighboring village. Feyza's husband decided to follow suit. A few days later, the daughter of Feyza's neighbor returned to the village to fetch her mother. Feyza and the others all stayed in a neighboring village for months, hoping that they would be able to return. When they realized this would not be possible in the foreseeable future, they joined their relatives in Istanbul and other cities.

In my research, migrating 'by detour' as the Çeliks did was quite common. As shown above, of the ten (extended) families or groups of villagers six had migrated to Istanbul directly. In the other four families, all or most of the members that I met had lived in intermediary settlements. By contrast, Mahmut Barut (2001) found that less than four percent of his 2,139 respondents moved to an intermediary settlement area before arriving in the place where they were living at the time of his research. This low figure may be due to the fact that around forty percent of Barut's respondents lived in Diyarbakir, Batman and Van at the time of the research - they had stayed relatively close to home, which reduced the likelihood of them having moved to an intermediary settlement. Although I do believe that Barut's figure of four percent is much too low for forced migrants in Istanbul, from his as well as from related research done by other NGOs (Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı 2004; İnsan Hakları Derneği 1998¹⁶⁵), it can be deduced that a majority of the displaced Kurds in Istanbul migrated to the city directly.

One of the few investigations into the situation of forced migrants on the Asian side of Istanbul – which included some of 'my' respondents - reported that 152 out of 500 respondents (around 30 percent) had migrated to an intermediary settlement before settling down in Istanbul (Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı 2004:

¹⁶⁵ The latter report does not give figures, but from the migration stories it can be deduced whether the interviewed migrants moved directly to the city or not.

39-40¹⁶⁶). Out of these 152 people, 100 had migrated within the Kurdish regions. Of the 52 people who had lived outside the Kurdish regions before coming to Istanbul, 33 had resided in the Mediterranean region, nine in the Aegean region, another nine in the Marmara region, and one person in the Central Anatolia region.¹⁶⁷ The Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı (2004) states that the overwhelming majority of the 500 respondents had relatives who were forced migrants as well, most of whom did not live in Istanbul. If any of those 673 relatives moved to Istanbul in search of work or a spouse - a kind of internal mobility which I often observed - he or she would also become a migrant 'by de-tour'.¹⁶⁸

Whether the migrants lived somewhere else before moving to Istanbul or not, whether they arrived practically alone or with a great number of relatives and fellow villagers, whether they arrived earlier or later, all ended up in Istanbul. The following section about the economic and social conditions of the migrants' arrival elucidates the precariousness of their situation.

How Istanbul had changed

The military coup of September 1980 had marked the start of a new economic policy in which state institutions played a much smaller role than in the 1970s. The economic restructuring after the coup created a highly competitive environment in which production for export was encouraged and the power of labor unions was curtailed so that wages fell (Eraydın & Erendil 1999:261). At the same time, high inflation incited families to employ more of their members - often women and children - in the workforce. Public services which had existed for the benefit of all workers were privatized, bringing the masses of workers on the verge of despair. With the withdrawal of the state, new actors entered the economic scene. "From now on, the play that was staged provided bigger opportunities and was more ruthless, with rules and outcomes that changed according to the power of the actors and the characteristics of that specific place" (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001:126, my translation). The growth of the economy, which mainly benefitted the middle and upper classes, spurred an unprecedented demand for land and resulted in enormous land speculation. In a curious twist of fate, this enabled many rural migrants to become home owners and live of *rant*, the rewards of their property. As the rich became richer year after year, a sizeable part of Istanbul's population had to resign itself to the prospect of a future in extremely low-paid jobs without any security, and many

¹⁶⁶ The 500 respondents were between 12 and 30 years old and were from 500 different families in the districts of Sultanbeyli, Üsküdar, Ümraniye, Maltepe, Kadıköy, Kartal, Pendik, Tuzla and Beykoz.

¹⁶⁷ In (statistical) research Turkey is often divided in seven regions: Southeast Anatolia, East Anatolia, Central Anatolia, Marmara, Aegean, Mediterranean, Black Sea. Istanbul is in the Marmara region. Only the Black Sea region did not receive any of the 152 respondents that participated in the research by Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı.

¹⁶⁸ Of course, migration also occurs the other way around, that is, from Istanbul to other Turkish or to the Kurdish regions.

others were completely excluded from participation in the formal economy. In the early 1990s, the wealthiest 20 percent of the Istanbul population commanded 64 percent of the city's income, while the poorest 20 percent received only 4.2 percent (Sönmez 1999:102).

During this time, political activity and civil society organizations came to be organized increasingly on the basis of religious, ethnic and gender claims which prioritized 'newly discovered' group identities and experiences (Güneş-Ayata 1997; Göle 1996; Çamuroğlu 1998; Pusch 2000; Toprak 1996:104). The politics of identity were not necessarily more exclusive than the particularistic concerns on which previous 'coming together' had been based, but they did reinforce ideological tensions between large opposing segments of society. A major force behind these developments was the military government's deliberate policy to strengthen conservative Islam, in an effort to neutralize radical Islam and pose an alternative for the left. This policy allowed Sunni Islam to become a dominant factor in the cultural, social and political domain. Not only did religion acquire a larger role in people's everyday life than before, Islamists - people who held that Sunni Islam should play a central role in politics - were allowed to emerge from their marginalized status.¹⁶⁹ These developments spurred a growing political consciousness among Alevis. While they had previously mostly identified themselves with secularism, now their Alevi identity - whether they viewed this identity in religious, political or different terms - took on new significance.

During the same time period, with the inception and intensification of the military conflict between the PKK and the state, Kurds started to demand rights on the basis of their ethnic identity in defiance of state efforts to erase the Kurdish movement and identity. The increased international attention for Turkish Kurds and European Union support for minority rights, also served to strengthen Kurdish demands. With Kurds and Turks becoming more and more 'ethnicized', different parties in the conflict again started to employ religion as a political tool. For example, at certain times, to undermine PKK-efforts to attract Kurdish-speaking Alevi to its side, state authorities attempted to incorporate the Alevi's into mainstream society by heralding the Alevi religion as a truly Turkish form of Islam (Bruinessen 2000c:38; Çamuroğlu 1998).

During this time of ethnic and religious differentiation, established city-dwellers began to view Istanbul as overflowed with uncivilized newcomers who wanted to profit from the city, but were unable to contribute anything to it themselves, who - worse even - attacked urban civilization from the inside.¹⁷⁰ Some even promoted the implementation of a visa policy: people from rural areas would only be able to enter the city after obtaining a visa (Erder 2002a).

¹⁶⁹ See Chris Houston 1997:5 about the "free trade between Islamic and [Turkish] nationalist identities".

¹⁷⁰ See Necmi Erdoğan's 2002 edited volume for discussions of the 'culturalization' of poverty also from the point of view of the poor.

Whereas previously, poor rural migrants had been denoted as *gecekondu*, a concept with a connotation of harmlessness, in the 1990s the derogatory term *varoşlu* started to gain common usage (Demirtaş & Şen 2007). *Varoşlar* (squatter neighborhoods) were associated with disorder and barbarism.¹⁷¹ Violent conflicts in *gecekondu* neighborhoods played an important part in the emergence of anti-migrant sentiments. One such violent incident occurred in 1995 in the Alevi-dominated Gazi neighbourhood in Istanbul. After unidentified actors opened fire on a local coffeehouse, riots ensued in which seventeen people were killed, mostly by police bullets. Ironically, many of the conflicts in squatter neighborhoods stemmed from the same economic liberalization which had been so beneficial to the critics of the *varoşlar*, the new elites who had retreated in their fenced *siteler*, or gated communities (Ayata 2002). Serpil Bozkulak (2005) traces the emergence of the term *varoşlu* to the public's negative perception of three marginalized social categories, namely Alevis, radical Islamists and the forced migrants from the Southeast.

Before the armed conflict, the word 'Kurd' had not meant much to most Turks. At worst, it was associated with backwardness. A childhood memory of my husband Göksel, whose parents were Kurds but who raised their children as Turks, suggests that in earlier decades 'Kurdishness' went unacknowledged. Göksel recalled that when he was small (in the early 1970s), schoolchildren used to take home-cooked food to school to share with their classmates. When it was his turn, his mother prepared some delicacies with great care and put them in a box. When he proudly opened the box to share his treats with his classmates, they refused to eat and called him *çingene* (gypsy).¹⁷² "I'm not a gypsy, I'm Kurdish!", he exclaimed in distress. They still would not eat. Being Kurdish had never meant much to him, but he was surprised to see that his classmates did not regard it as anything better than being a gypsy.

Fifteen years later, these schoolchildren might have said: "You can't be Kurdish, there are no Kurds", and twenty years later: "You're a terrorist, Kurds are terrorists". At least, that was the situation when the forced migrants arrived. During the military conflict between the PKK and the state, the word Kurd had become synonymous with 'terrorist' and 'murderer'. The anti-Kurdish MHP saw its votes booming during those years, especially in regions from where a large number of soldiers and police officers were sent to the Kurdish areas. Also in areas which did not have any 'martyrs' (Turkish soldiers killed in the conflict) anti-Kurdish sentiments increased (Can 2002). The journalist Şengün Kılıç

¹⁷¹ Serpil Bozkulak (2005), who studied a *gecekondu* neighborhood in the Maltepe district of Istanbul, provides a striking example of the *varoş* as viewed in the media and by the inhabitants of the neighborhood.

¹⁷² Roma in Turkey have a long history of being excluded and discriminated against. Suat Kolukırık and Şule Toktaş state that it is estimated that around 100,000 Roma in Turkey do not hold Turkish identity cards, and refer to the Law on Settlement No. 2510 enacted in 1934 which stipulates: "Anarchists, spies, nomadic Roma and people who were expelled from the country cannot be accepted as immigrants to Turkey" (Kolukırık & Toktaş 2007:763).

(1992) documented several cases of conflict between Kurdish newcomers and older residents of large cities, such as Adana, Konya and Mersin, and a town in Çanakkale district, which is rather close to Istanbul.

FORCED MIGRANTS: FINDING HOUSING AND JOBS

As argued earlier, in the decades before the forced migration, many rural migrants had come to the city with the dream of building their own house there, starting with a one storey shack and slowly adding on storeys to provide accommodation for their expanding families. Until the mid 1980s, Istanbul provided ample opportunity for the invasion and appropriation of land by rural migrants, offering these migrants a roof over their heads and a base from which to expand their social and economic lives. When the forced migrants arrived in Istanbul in the early 1990s, opportunities for land invasion were nearly depleted (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu 2001). Thus, unlike the earlier migrants, most of the displaced Kurds did not build shacks in the margins of urban land which over time were transformed into decent multi-storey housing furnished with all modern comforts (see Keyder 1999:157). They were forced to try their luck on the market for rented accommodation.

After having found temporary shelter with relatives or co-villagers, they became tenants of humid basements or tiny apartments in upgraded *gecekondu* without much chance of greatly improving their housing situation. A small minority of migrants moved in with relatives and stayed with them on a permanent basis. Azad from Erüh fell in this category. After having been released from prison, he moved in with his *amcaoğlu* (father's brother's son) and lived in his house for several years. Later, when Azad's brother came to Istanbul with his family to work, Azad moved in with him. Sons and daughters who had lived elsewhere or had been imprisoned for some time during or after the forced migration, sometimes moved in with their relatives once these had established themselves in Istanbul. It was also common for unmarried brothers, sisters and cousins, usually males, in search of work, to stay with their relatives for several months. For nuclear families, however, it was hardly ever an option to stay with earlier settled relatives permanently. Only Cebbar and Mine from Diyarbakir lived with relatives, Cebbar's *amcaoğlu*, for a whole year before renting a house themselves.

The story of Zeynep Demir about how she managed to house her family was exemplary. As I mentioned earlier, Mustafa Demir and his two brothers from Ağaçlık village came to Istanbul with their entire families. Zeynep, the first wife of Mustafa's older brother Abdullatif, explained that she had moved to Istanbul with eight children of her own, five of her husband's second wife, two daughters-in-law and four grandchildren. Halit, Mustafa's son-in-law who helped them to get started in Istanbul, said: "It wasn't just them. My other *dayılar* (mother's brothers) also brought their families. This family was 21

people, the other was with seventeen or eighteen, and then there was one with twelve". Zeynep recalled that they had camped in tents on the streets for two weeks while Halit and her husband were roaming the neighborhood looking for an apartment. Apparently, no one wanted to rent them a house because they were with so many. After two weeks they managed to rent a house from a man from Kastamonu, a city on the Black Sea Coast. The apartment had three bedrooms and a living room and measured 80 to 90 square meters. Zeynep:

We hadn't told him with how many we were. First we moved in with a few people. The rest of the family stayed at Halit's house. Slowly the rest of us also moved in. Until we were with 22 people. The house was maybe 80 or 90 square meters. It had three bedrooms and a living room. We slept like sardines in a tin.

Soon after, the landlord evicted them for being too crowded and Zeynep had to start all over again, often employing the same tactic of slowly moving the whole family in - a strategy which was at one time or another employed by almost all other large families.

One classic image of the displaced Kurds is that of over-crowded families in ragged tents. Gülay Kayacan (1999) describes a group of 63 forced migrants from Kızıltepe village in Mardin province who lived in tents on the European outskirts of Istanbul. The tents, which were made of cloth and wood, could not protect their inhabitants against rain and cold. One had a cement floor, the others had a base of earth and clay. The nine families had been living in this 'tent village' for time periods between two and nine years. Most migrants in my research were more fortunate in finding relatively decent housing. Only some members of the Demir family stayed in tents and in buildings under construction for a while. For Nuri Demir, whose close relatives had lived in tents, the thought of having to live in a tent was a total apparition. This becomes clear in his wife's story about their quest for accommodation.

One day my husband went to the house of a Turkish woman who had a house for rent. She asked how many children he had. He said: "Six". She said: "How could I ever rent my house to you?" My husband was so frustrated he said he would go live in a tent then with his family. Then he said: "You know what, I will cut the throats of three of them and then I'll come and live in your house with the other three". "That will be fine", she said! "Right, I will get down to it right now", my husband said. "No", she said: "Wait until the day you are moving". When he came home, he told me: "I'm going to cut the throats of three of them, you decide which ones". I asked him if he had gone mad. He said he would go to the police. He would put up a tent right there on the hill, he would stay in the tent, or else demand permission to return to the village. He didn't go to the police, but he did tell this woman the truth, he completely disgraced her.

In the end, Nuri managed to find a *gecekodu* owned by a man from Siirt. When three years later, the landlord brought his own family to Istanbul, they had to move out. This time, Nuri's wife Melek looked around for a place to live.

At some point I came to a house. The woman asked me how many children I had. I told her I had three school-going children.¹⁷³ She didn't ask if there were any more and I didn't say. Technically speaking I didn't lie. When we moved in, she asked: "Are all those children yours?" I told her yes. She said: "Why didn't you tell me, I asked you how many children you had!" I told her I had no choice. She said it was impossible. Her husband had just gone off to Germany to work. She really went crazy. She said the house was too small, that she felt sorry for the children, that it was really impossible for us to live there. True, the house was really moist, all our stuff got busted, we all got ill. It was incredibly small, a living room and a bedroom, a tiny kitchen and a shower plus toilet.

She called her husband to tell him what happened, that I had six children. That we were good tenants, but we were with too many children. She looked how it went and it wasn't so bad. My children are polite. They didn't do any harm to anyone. Later she told me: "If you had six more, I wouldn't mind". This was how happy she was with us. But at first it was different. When the children went out, she threw water on them from her balcony. I got really angry. "We are paying rent, my children don't harm anyone. Should we live in tents!" I told her. "Don't do it again", I said: "Their father doesn't know, but if he hears... Don't you do it again". She said it wasn't right for the children if they got used to the street. She didn't deny doing it. The children used to get scared and go inside immediately. I never told me husband, if he had known...

When the landlady found out that Melek had twisted the truth, she must have felt rather powerless. The fact that her husband lived abroad implied that he could not back her up. When the landlady tried to pester Melek into leaving, Melek's allusion to her husband's temper was quite effective. Such an allusion fitted Turkish stereotypes about the barbaric nature of Kurds, which must have made the strategy of moving large families into a new dwelling in stages a little more viable. Zeynep's landlord from Kastamonu may have lost no time over evicting them, but for many landlords, to expell a large Kurdish family would be a daunting prospect. As Davut Günay had said: "People are a little afraid of us because we are Kurds, and a big family".

¹⁷³ She said: "[I have] three who go to school" ("*Üç tane okula gidiyor*"), instead of "Three of them go to school" ("*Üç tanesi okula gidiyor*"). Perhaps Melek did not mean to hide anything but because she put it this way, the landlady did not ask about any other children, and Melek probably felt no need to volunteer to say that she had three more.

“We don’t rent to strangers”

Whereas in the previous examples, the size of the family was presented as the largest problem, almost all forced migrants related being discriminated against on the housing market for being from the East or for being Kurdish. This made the search for a house a painful process in which they were constantly reminded of their supposedly inferior status as ‘others’ and ‘Easterners’. Cebbar related the discrimination he experienced in a particularly emotional way, but his words were echoed in my conversations with dozens of other forced migrants.

Here they think we are ordinary Kurds who came out of their own free will. If they heard what happened to us, that our house was raided, what we lived through.... We can’t talk about that. When we were new here, we were looking for a house. We were completely excluded, as if we are not people. There is so much discrimination. I looked for a house for two months. I went to so many addresses, where it was written that the house was for rent.

I ring the bell, the landlord says he’s coming with the keys. Then he looks at my face - I just happen to look Kurdish. Then he asks: “Where are you from?” And I may speak Turkish better than him, but I see him looking at me and thinking, then he says: “I’m sorry, but we don’t rent to strangers”.

To this landlord [of the house he was living at the time of the interview] I said: “I’m a Kurd, if you give me a house, it should be on the ground floor, I get a lot of guests”. He said he didn’t mind, as long as people behave as people (*insan insan olduktan sonra*). Now I’m responsible for almost everything here [the landlord lived elsewhere], I collect the rent, watch over things. The landlord knows what we went through, but even he doesn’t know too much. We didn’t just look in this neighborhood, but also others. Everywhere the same kind of discrimination. In Balıkesir it was the same. We can never talk much, we can’t express ourselves. We have to lie, otherwise we won’t have a roof over our heads. If people knew more about us, they would immediately go to the police.

In the end most people managed to rent a house from someone who did not care too much about where they were from. As Resime explained:

Resime: We used to go look for a house. They would ask at the door: “Where are you from?” We couldn’t say we were from Mardin, they wouldn’t give the house. This totally destroyed us.

Miriam: Who gave you the first house?

Resime: The owner gave it to the men [of the family]. He didn’t live here himself, he was caretaker in Göztepe. The men rented the house from him. He still comes here sometimes. “They really tried to scare me”, he told us. “You gave your house, they won’t give it back to you, they will never leave your house, they won’t pay the rent”, they told him. But not even a day did our landlord have to complain about us.

Havva's husband Melih recalled that some people told him to his face that they would not rent him a house because "you are terrorists". In the end, he rented a dilapidated *gecekodu* without running water from a Turkish landlord, whom they thought was unable to rent this place to anybody else. Because of the difficulties with non-Kurdish landlords, many people tried to rent houses from Kurdish landlords. Sometimes they managed to do this through the help of Kurdish relatives and friends, sometimes they just happened to bump into a landlord who turned out to be Kurdish. Cebbar's landlord, for example, was an Alevi Kurd. As Cebbar said, this landlord had some idea of what he and his family went through. One of the few people who did not complain about discriminatory practices was Abbas from Siirt. Apparently he had no trouble finding a house, probably because he lived in a neighborhood in Sultanbeyli where a strong adherence to conservative Sunni Islam had the effect of downplaying ethnic differences. Upon arrival in Istanbul, Abbas stayed with his married son for one night. The next day he rented a house. Over the following eight months he and his son added a second storey to his son's house, and once it was finished, Abbas moved in with his wife and children.

To summarize, from the first day of their displacement, the forced migrants were left to their own devices. No systematic attempt was made by the Turkish government or by international or national nongovernmental organizations to resettle the forced migrants in other parts of the country. There were no trucks sent to help them move their belongings, no bus tickets distributed, no aid organizations waiting to assist the migrants, no refugee camps set up, no public housing projects for which the migrants could register, and no medical services provided. Only when comparing this internal forced migration of Kurds with that of many other forcibly displaced groups both in and outside Turkey, the lack of involvement of governmental and nongovernmental organizations becomes conspicuous.¹⁷⁴ Because of this blatant lack of institutional support, the displaced villagers travelled to Istanbul with their own means. With the support of relatives, fellow-villagers and friends, most of them managed to find a sleeping place. Subsequently, the migrants employed a number of strategies to procure accommodation for themselves and their relatives: they told partial truths about the size of their families, slowly moved in the whole family, mobilized other Kurds, tried to hide their background, and in a few cases, they used implicit threats.

¹⁷⁴ For example, Bosnian Muslims in Turkey (Erder 2002a), displaced people in Sri Lanka (Brun 2000). Forced Migration Review, a practitioner journal on refugee studies, provides many examples of developmental and humanitarian action by NGOs among displaced groups. When people are forced to move across state borders, often the United Nations are involved in their resettlement, see for example the contributions to the conference "House: Loss, refuge and belonging" in Trondheim Norway, 16-18 September 2004 (Supplement to FMR May 2005), at: <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/Supplements/osloidp.pdf>, accessed February 2, 2010.

Finding work and getting by

First, people got by on what they had taken with them from the village and on the income generated by those who found work soon after arrival. Some people had savings or some unmovable property which they could sell. Mustafa Demir was co-owner of a house in Adana: “A fellow villager wanted to buy a house there, but didn’t have enough money. Then we bought it together. I sold my share in the house when we came here because we needed the money”. Most migrants made some money by selling their animals. Because they were often in a great hurry to sell their animals and economic conditions in the warzone were bad, they received little money for them. Many brought as much food (dried wheat, beans etc.) from the village as they could. If soldiers had not destroyed, confiscated or wasted people’s stocks and the yields of the land, the migrants would have been able to take many more valuable things with them. Nuri:

If we had been able to sell everything, we would have been in clover. But we couldn’t under the circumstances. We only received half of the price for our animals. And we had tobacco that was drying and beehives. My father had sixty or seventy beehives. They were filled with honey. The soldiers set our houses on fire with the honey and the tobacco and everything else. We were in Bitlis then. We went to Bitlis first and then I went back to the village to get the tobacco and honey. Then I saw that everything had been arsoned. A soldier told me that two commanders had argued about the hives and the tobacco. One of them had apparently said it was a waste to burn those too. He said: “Let’s take these out, they might still be of use to the villagers”. The other had got angry and said: “Are you one of them or what”. This was a whole year’s work, the hives and the tobacco. They could have made good money.

Mustafa and some others tried to keep cattle in Istanbul, a practice which did not please their neighbors much. And to make ends meet, several nuclear families shared a house.

Almost all forced migrants I spoke to found irregular employment in the lowest echelons of the clothing industry and construction sector or tried to get by in the expanding informal labor market, which covered a range of occupations from drivers of illegal taxis, to street peddlers, carpark watchmen and sellers of *simit*¹⁷⁵ and lemonade. The clothing industry fared particularly well in the after-1980 economic climate. In 1990, almost half of all laborers in manufacturing were employed in the clothing industry (Sönmez 1996:61). To be able to respond swiftly and cost-effectively to international demands for cheap clothing, large clothing producers engaged smaller *atölye* to perform part or all of the work to which they had committed themselves. This practice of subcontracting resulted in a segmentation of the clothing industry, the bottom of which was populated by rural migrants who worked long hours for very low wages, without

¹⁷⁵ Circle-shaped bread roll sprinkled with sesame seed.

any form of social security (Eraydın & Erendil 1999). Although this restructuring of the clothing industry ensued in exploitation, it also offered opportunities for jobless poor rural migrants to enter the job market and to move up the socio-economic ladder. Whereas educational qualifications gained importance in most sectors of the labor market, the clothing industry demanded only flexibility, hard work and a readiness to learn. The same was true for the construction sector, which in 1990 provided employment to one out of ten Istanbul-based workers (Sönmez 1996:69).¹⁷⁶ Still, many rural migrants were unable to find paid employment and diverted their efforts to the informal labor market.

The Demirs found employment at the market, some worked in construction, a few others in factories, one tried to carve out a living as a musician playing at Kurdish weddings. The Bedrans and Günays were mostly employed in clothing and construction. Some migrants worked as house painters, others as porters, movers, plumbers, etc. Villagers from Dağgülü worked in the leather industry in Tuzla, and in a number of other factories. The husband and brothers-in-law of İffet from Vadiyeli village worked at a slaughterhouse, others started a small shop. Those who had come before them were factory workers, teachers and businesspeople. Abbas from Siirt found work as a watchman (*bekçi*) and as a truck driver. One of his sons worked in a small agency which sold intercity bus tickets. The Çeliks from the Midyat region worked in different factories and did odd jobs in construction, one person worked as a cook. Azad from Eruh worked in a coffeehouse, among other things. His cousins worked in construction and specialized in laying and polishing marble floors. Azad's *amcaoğlu* Ferhat had arrived earlier than some of his relatives and had done quite well in the construction sector. He acted as a middle man between employers and his relatives. Melih sold simit, his children worked in the clothing industry. Seyyid started an unofficial *medrese*, he was funded by religious dogooders.

Almost all women stayed home, but many older children were sent to work. To find jobs, the migrants joined a relative, fellow villager or friend who worked somewhere, mobilized ties with older acquaintances, or they went to workplaces and factories directly. They sought out Kurdish employers as much as possible. Asiye: "My husband has been here for eighteen years. Most of the time he has work, he knows a lot of people, and he is *usta* (skilled worker), then you get work more easily. Contractors know him, people in Kaynarca know him... He always works with Kurds, if he needs people. This is how people help each

¹⁷⁶ The economic liberalization of the 1980s had impeded the growth of the industrial sector. Industrial sites were relocated - among other reasons because land prices had rocketed - to areas outside Istanbul: in their stead came the offices of the fastly developing finance, trade, tourism and services sectors. In spite of the demise of heavy industry, the percentage of the Istanbul work force employed in the industrial sector decreased only slightly from 33,6 in 1980 to 32,8 in 1990, because the light industry sector showed significant growth (Sönmez 1996:61).

other”. Halit also helped his uncles to get going. As Mustafa Demir, Halit’s *amca*, explained:

After a month I rented a house from someone from Siirt. His father knew my father. We started selling vegetables on the market. Halit and his family told us how to do it, where the markets were etc. With three brothers we bought a small *kamyonet* (pickup truck), on old wreck. The police stopped us loads of times with that wreck. We had brought some money from the village, we finished that in the first year. We were greenhorns, we went through so much. We would go to the auction to buy fruit and vegetables. If the price was 5000, they would tell us 10,000. After the first year, things got better. Two or three years we were doing quite well, then things went down. We came here in June 1994. Count a year in which we had to learn the trade, June 1995. A few years it went well, but after the earthquake in 1999 it only got worse. Then I had just bought this house. After the earthquake we moved. When we bought the house it was still bare. We worked on it a lot.

While looking for jobs, the migrants experienced discrimination, but less than when looking for houses. I assume this was because in the lower echelons of the job market, employers had no other option than to work with Kurds. Besides, workers go to their own houses in the evening, not to the house you - as a landlord - own and rent out. Especially the Çeliks from Midyat said they were being discriminated against on the job market. They said the situation of Kurds from the heartland of the war, such as Mardin and Hakkari, had a much harder time finding a job than those from other parts of the Kurdish region.

Nobody employed us then. Because we were Mardinli, they didn’t take anybody in the construction sector. They were afraid of us. We would go to a workplace, on the door it would say: “Workers Wanted”, we would apply for the job, we would go inside. “Where are you from”, he says. Because we are from Mardin, he tells us “You can go now, we will get back to you later”. I mean, he doesn’t say it openly: “We are not employing you”. We would ask friends from other towns and cities to go there and apply for a job. The guy says: “Where are you from?” Our friend says another place, Kars, Ardahan, Van, Bitlis... “Okay”, he says: “Come back tomorrow, we’ll give you a job”.

Resime had a similar experience when she took two girls of her family to a textile factory to apply for jobs. Most people agreed that for Kurds it was more difficult to get a steady contract, and almost all provided examples of bigotry at work.

Forced migration and employment: some statistics

Within a few months or a year after the migrants’ arrival, some kind of provisional *modus vivendi* was reached: most young children went to school,

older children worked - boys more often than girls, most men worked on and off, and virtually all women stayed at home to take care of the children and the household. Some figures collected in survey research among forced migrants and in *gecekondu* neighborhoods, which was carried out just before or around the time of my research, provide background information to the economic situation of the forced migrants in my study. The statistics provided below are based on research of the sociologist Mahmut Barut (2001) and the political scientist Sevilyay Kaygalak (2001).¹⁷⁷

	Migrants before 1990	Migrants 1990 and after	Migrants East and Southeast	Locals	'Good side' neighborhood	'Bad side' Neighborhood
formal sector	38	15,5	27	77	41	28
informal Sector	47	51	53	10	42	50

Derived from Kaygalak 2001.¹⁷⁸

Type of employment	All household heads
unemployed	29,1
agriculture	5,1

Type of employment	Istanbul household heads
Unemployed	29,3
day laborer	29,9

¹⁷⁷ Mahmut Barut, whose study was carried out between 1999 and 2001, was concerned with studying the socio-economic consequences of forced migration. His 2,139 respondents resided in one of six major cities: Diyarbakir, Batman, Van, Istanbul, İzmir, or İçel, and provided information about 17,845 household members. To investigate the spatial dimensions of urban poverty and the relation between poverty and migration, in 1999, Kaygalak carried out a study of a Mersin neighborhood inhabited by migrants from the Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, and the East and Southeast, and also a population of *yerli* (locals). She surveyed 253 household heads.

¹⁷⁸ Some of the populations were smaller than hundred and Kaygalak uses real numbers. The percentages are mine.

living of <i>rant</i> or retired	2,8	Peddler etc.	22
highly-skilled wage earner	1	unskilled service worker	11,4
civil servant	0,7		
blue collar worker	0,5		
unskilled service worker	9,5		
peddler etc.	21,1		
retailer, employer	3,7		
other	25,9		

Compiled from Barut 2001:39-40.

Kaygalak points to the especially disadvantaged position of migrants from the East and Southeast, and of migrants who arrived in or after 1990. Of the migrants who arrived before 1990, 38 percent worked in the formal sector, and 47 percent in the informal sector. Of those who arrived in or after 1990, 15,5 percent worked in the formal and 51 percent in informal sector. Of migrants from the East and Southeast, 27 percent was employed in the formal sector and 53 percent in the informal sector. These figures compared unfavorably to people from Central Anatolia and the Mediterranean, and especially to the 'locals' of whom 77 percent worked in the formal sector and 10 percent in the informal sector. She also points to important differences between the 'good side' and 'bad side' of the neighborhood. In the older and more urbanized section of the neighborhood, 41 percent worked in the formal and 42 percent in the informal sector, as opposed to 28 percent in the formal and 50 percent in the informal sector in the newer section of the neighborhood, see tabel 2.

In Barut's study, of all household heads 29,1 percent was unemployed, 9,5 percent were unskilled services workers, 21,1 percent worked as peddlers, street

sellers, and 25,9 percent was working in other occupations, possibly manufacturing. About five percent was involved in agriculture, roughly three percent lived of unearned income such as rental income or was retired, and 3,7 percent were retailers and small or larger employers.¹⁷⁹ The percentages of civil servants, skilled wage earners, and blue collar workers were one or less than one. Among all working household members, the percentage of agricultural workers was higher, and nearly 53 percent worked in manufacturing or industry, see table 3. Of the household heads in Istanbul, one-third was unemployed, one-third worked as day laborers (for example, in construction), roughly twenty percent worked as street sellers and the like, and 11,4 percent was unqualified service worker, see table 4. Only 4,3 percent of the female and 4,9 percent of the male population had workrelated social security, and only 12,1 percent of all household members had health insurance (Barut 2001:36,145¹⁸⁰). Nearly 12 percent of all working people were children, but Barut's research assistants thought the actual percentage was higher because parents had a variety of reasons for hiding that their children were working. Considering that in the late 1990s, blue collar workers, civil servants and teachers had much more difficulty getting by than in the 1970s - their salaries hardly lifted them above the poverty line, it is not hard to imagine how difficult life must have been for the forced migrants.

The impact of the economic crisis

The migrants went through a rough time at the beginning, but started to pull themselves together after a year or two. Ceyda and her husband were privileged in owning a house. Yet, where they lived, there was no work. Her husband was unemployed for two years: "We had nothing then. We slept on the bare concrete floor. We only had a washing machine and a cupboard, and our own duvets. After a year or two things got a bit better. But it still isn't much, I don't have bedroom furniture, and the carpets are not much either..." And Resime from Çanakçı village recalled:

When we came here the neighborhood looked very different. We couldn't find anybody from Mardin here. We didn't have contact with the neighbors yet. One or two years it was very difficult. I arrived here with three beds (mattresses), I had nothing else and the children were still small.

Miriam: Did you receive support from anyone, maybe from DEP (Kurdish party)?

We received support from no one. I never went to DEP. After a year or two or three I went to Pendik, to the party, sometimes. There was one person we

¹⁷⁹ Those involved in agriculture mostly worked as seasonal laborers, but a few individuals were wealthy farmers.

¹⁸⁰ The report contains some small (possibly typing) mistakes. For example, on the same page, it is stated that 12,1 percent had health insurance, but also that 12,4 percent had health insurance. The first number fits better with the other statistics provided.

knew, a villager in Gülsuyu. We talked to him over the phone. I called him from the *bakkal*. After a year or a year and a half, they were moving. The factory he worked went to Bursa, and they moved with it. Then they gave us the furniture they didn't want to take with them.

At first I didn't have any *halı* (carpets). The landlady came over once. She said: "Why don't you put *halı* on the floor, the children will get sick like this". I didn't say anything. Then I put carton on the floor. I couldn't tell her: "*Yenge*, I have nothing to put on the floor". When I could afford it, I bought two *halı* from an *eskici* (junk dealer). Our house was completely empty then. Only the son of my brother-in-law had bought a bed for himself. We paid the rent together. My brother-in-law had ten children and a *gelin* (daughter-in-law), we had five children, we were with more than twenty people. We were musing about our problems all day long.

Just when the migrants had become a tiny bit less uncomfortable, the 2001 economic crisis put a spoke in the wheel. By taking a heavy toll from work and family life this crisis constituted "a social crisis unparalleled in recent Turkish history" (Aytaç & Rankin 2008:182). Recent Kurdish migrants were among those most adversely affected by the crisis. The educational sociologists Işık Aytaç and Bruce Rankin (2008)¹⁸¹ examined the effect of the 2001 economic crisis on family life. The economists Fikret Adaman and Oya Pınar Ardiç (2008)¹⁸² report on research carried out in 2004, which had the aim of understanding social exclusion from the perspectives of the residents of *gecekondu* neighborhoods.¹⁸³

In the sample of Aytaç and Rankin, one-fourth of male breadwinners, and one-third of working males with primary education or less, lost their jobs during the three years following the crisis.¹⁸⁴ While the average time period of unemployment was nearly twelve months, among men with primary education or less, it was thirteen months. Unemployment created economic strain: people were unable to pay their bills, they felt forced to reduce or skip meals, and so on. Such economic difficulties were associated with high levels of stress, emotional suffering, physical health problems, and marital problems. Families which had been in financial trouble even before the crisis, families in which the husband or

¹⁸¹ For the study on which they report, carried out in 2004 in urban settlements all over Turkey, 1,201 respondents in urban married couple households between the ages of 21 and 58 were interviewed.

¹⁸² In interviews with 1,863 representatives of households in Adana, Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Diyarbakir or Gaziantep, information was collected about 8,673 individuals.

¹⁸³ The statistics are used as illustration. This section is not a full-fledged analysis of all relevant statistics.

¹⁸⁴ They interviewed either the husband or wife in married couples with children or other dependents. They only looked at unemployment of the husbands "because only 16 percent of women in urban areas were in the labor force at the time of the economic crisis" (Aytaç & Rankin 2008:190-191). Other research (e.g. Adaman & Ardiç 2008) suggests that to fully understand the impact of the crisis, female employment and non-work related efforts to attain support should also be investigated.

father was unemployed for an extended period of time, and families which lived in a rented house, were more likely to perceive a lack of control over their lives, to suffer emotional distress, to experience physical health problems, and to be faced with marital conflict. It can be deduced that forced migrants must have suffered from the crisis disproportionately: they had little education, had already had difficulty making ends meet before the crisis, and many lived in rented houses. This is indeed one of the findings of Fikret Adaman and Oya Pınar Ardıç (2008) who pay specific attention to internally displaced Kurds. They found that the rate of both short-term and long-term unemployment was much higher among displaced Kurds than among the 'general' population.

The demise of the building sector was a major drawback for the forced migrants. As noted, many of the migrants worked in construction. They all stated that the sector was nothing like it used to be. The first blow to the construction sector was delivered by the 1999 earthquake, the second blow was delivered by the economic crisis of 2001. In the earthquake whose epicenter was just southeast of Istanbul, more than 17 thousand people were killed, 20 thousand people went missing and are presumed to have died as well, and over 280 thousand homes were destroyed (Akinci 2004; RMS Reconnaissance Team 2000). Whereas we might expect the construction sector to have boomed in this situation, the opposite happened, for one thing because the building sector was regarded a main responsible for the devastating impact of the earthquake. Soon after the earthquake, it was established that most of the collapsed and damaged buildings had not fit building criteria set forth by the government, due to corruption in which contractors and government officials had played leading roles. Pending discussions about stricter building regulations, large numbers of applications for building permits were put on hold. In 1999 then, the building sector shrank with 12,7 percent. In 2000 the market picked up a bit, but the decrease was still eight percent in comparison with 1998. The economic crisis of 2001 solidified this downfall.¹⁸⁵

As noted, some of the migrants in my research were engaged in the food business. A few people from Dağgölü village, for example, were *bakkal*: they owned small neighborhood grocery stores. Initially, they were not as heavily affected by the crisis as many others, because people who could not afford to go the market or supermarket anymore, bought their daily shopping on credit at the local *bakkal*. Still, in spite of the crisis and of government efforts to protect small retailers, the encroachment of large supermarkets and 'hypermarkets', which had started to spring up all over Istanbul in the early 1990s, continued (Tokatli & Boyacı 1999). Especially the Demirs, who sold vegetables and fruits at the market, suffered from this development. Thinking that the construction

¹⁸⁵ The statistics are based on statements of Doğan Hasol, the chairman of the board of İMSAD (Association of Turkish Building Material Producers) in ODE Pusula Dergisi January 2002, on his personal website http://www.doganhasol.net/Articles/kriz-ve-insaat-sektoru_10900.html, accessed October 14, 2009.

sector was on its return, Halit had directed his relatives to the vegetable market. “The construction sector died”, he said. Unfortunately, in the words of one of his displaced relatives: “The market died too”.

Until recently, we had a stall at Rahmanlar market. We could just about make a living from that. But they opened a few supermarkets there too. There is nothing to be earned there anymore. Supermarkets couldn't sell fruits and vegetables first, it was prohibited. But now they can. The market is over, because of all the supermarkets, because of the crisis.

The garment industry, still offering temporary employment to many young people, formed a buffer. Yet, many forced migrants were unable to eat well, to buy good shoes or new clothes when they needed them, and to pay their bills. When an electric appliance broke down or someone fell ill, they were in real trouble.

Clearly then, the macro economic findings of the above-mentioned authors hold true for the forced migrants in my research. Aspects of the social lives of *gecekondu* inhabitants that are emphasized in the above-mentioned research, for example, the observation that a characteristic of *gecekondu* living is geographical immobility and a lack of ‘integration into urban life’ (Adaman & Ardiç: 2008) also applied to the lives of the people I studied. They hardly ever visited friends and relatives in other parts of Istanbul or other cities, because they could not afford the travelling expenses, and most of them had never seen downtown Istanbul. In the study of Adaman and Ardiç, thirty percent of all respondents and 44 percent of displaced Kurds had never visited the city center, and 71 percent of respondents stated not being able to visit friends and relatives as often as they liked. The respondents stated the cost of transportation and their inability to buy presents as the main reasons for not visiting friends and relatives. In the two months before the survey interview, only one percent of respondents had visited the theater, two percent a concert, three percent a neighborhood gathering, four percent a festival, five percent a public training meeting, and fourteen percent had been to a religious tomb or shrine, places visited to find relief in situations of illness and other hardships, but also for recreation. Asked if they felt excluded, due to a set of listed reasons, 46 percent answered feeling excluded for being poor. Kurds were among the people who felt most excluded, and people who lived in Istanbul were more likely to feel excluded than people who lived in other provinces, which the authors suggest might be due to the high level of socio-economic inequality in Istanbul province.

Education

In these adverse conditions, quite a few children and youths placed their hopes on getting an education. School-going children and youths were often highly critical of the schools they were attending. They complained about the shortage

of teachers, the low quality of lessons, the lack of materials and extracurricular activities, they complained about the classes being too crowded and the lack of discipline among the students, and some felt discriminated against as Kurds. However, in almost all families, there were some very ambitious *ortaokul* (middle school) and *lise* (high school) students, who had set their minds on going to university, and some of the youths who had dropped out of school early very much regretted this. To get an education was quite widely regarded as an avenue for social mobility - not a guaranteed road to success, but one of the best ones to try - even though few young people were likely to make it into university, and people were aware of this. Young people had to work to support their families, and the university entrance exam system was extremely competitive. If teenagers could go to high school, usually there was not enough money to send them to private institutions for after-school education (*dershane*): additional education which is widely regarded as a precondition for a successful career in higher education. Especially in the early years after migration, many parents had no idea how to support their children in the labyrinth of educational institutions. Initially, most parents were not willing to submit to great sacrifices for something of which the outcome was so unsure.

In spite of the diverging aspirations of (some) young people and (most) members of the older generation, the majority of young people demonstrated a deep sense of loyalty to their parents and their families. While the position of members of the elder generation had been shaken through displacement, and it was often the young people who sustained their families, the elderly still had a strong say in decisions such as whether children should continue their education, where they should work, and who should marry when and whom. There was some resentment among young people about this state of affairs, but most of the time they kept this to themselves.¹⁸⁶ It was strikingly clear that the shared and recounted experience of repression had created a strong bond between children and parents, that many youths took care not to put their parents and other older relatives through additional trouble, and that in spite of the exclusionary mechanisms with which they were faced, many youths had hope for the future.

Reflection: forced expulsion and agential migration?

Istanbul was only one of many possible destinations that were sought out as a settlement area by displaced Kurds. Cities such as Diyarbakir, Batman, İzmir, Mardin, Mersin and Adana also took in hundreds of thousands of forced migrants (Barut 2001; Kurban et al. (TESEV) 2007; Göç-Der (N.d)¹⁸⁷; Kaygalak

¹⁸⁶ Some youths who regretted not having studied, used their position as wage earner and as one of the older children in the family to plead for and support younger brothers and sisters in their educational careers.

¹⁸⁷ Their report about İcel province was available at: <http://www.gocder.net/rprlr/icelililigoc.htm>, accessed September 30, 2005.

2001). Notwithstanding the poverty that many of the Kurds in Istanbul were living in, I was told over and over again that Istanbul still provides better economic opportunities than Kurdish cities such as Diyarbakir and Batman and also better than some other Turkish cities. In more favorable circumstances a majority of the forced migrants might not have chosen Istanbul as a city of permanent residence: many would have preferred to live in a Kurdish town or city. Yet, they generally agreed that Istanbul is one of the best places to live, because it is the kind of place where people can always make a few liras.

In Istanbul, I often heard people say that the inhabitants of *gecekodu* neighborhoods had just ‘picked up’ their villages and planted them back in the city: it was believed that whole village communities re-established themselves spatially in Istanbul. This spatial ‘transplantation’ of village communities did occur, but it was not the way in which most forced migrants moved and settled. In the early 2000s, Istanbul simply did not anymore offer the opportunity to settle this way: the opportunities for building and renting accommodation in specific places and the ties the forced migrants possessed were just about enough to get one or a few nuclear families going, not half a village. Therefore, people migrated in units of up to ten or twenty relatives, with the hope of restoring as much as possible of the old social set up as possible. In short, most forced migrants neither migrated as atomic individuals nor as ‘complete’ extended families or communities.

Even though most displaced families included two or three persons with experience of urban life and work, most of the displaced were complete strangers to this city where they felt less than welcome. In some ways, the forced migrants resembled the early migrants of the 1940s and 1950s more than those of the 1960s and 1970s. Some aspects of Tansı Şenyapılı’s depiction of the migrants of the 1950s come quite close in capturing the situation of the forced migrants in the 1990s.

The migrants were unwanted elements in the urban economy. There were no economic functions that could be performed by the quality of labor they provided; they were uneducated, unskilled, with no experience of urban economic and social life. Thus, the odd, periodic, unskilled, unorganized jobs they could find now and then were marginal in the economic sense of the word. (...) Yet even these marginal jobs were scarce. The migrants lingered in coffeehouses and informal ‘labor markets’ on side walks and bus stops waiting for jobs (Şenyapılı 1982:238-239).

However, even if they resembled some of the earlier migrants, there were vast and important differences between them and the earlier migrants. Some of these resulted from the changed political and economic conditions in Istanbul, others were to do with the particular character of the Kurds’ migration. The forced migrants were unable to preserve economic, social and cultural ties with the

village of origin, as rural-urban migrants had always done before them. As I mentioned when writing about previous rural migrants, contacts with the village were significant not only for people's economic survival, but also in a social and spiritual sense. It was and is quite common for people from rural areas in Turkey to return to their place of origin in situations of mishap or illness, to visit religious healers or graves of deceased religious leaders which supposedly have healing powers. The forced migrants were unable to preserve such ties with their villages.

Another striking difference between the migrants of the 1950s and the Kurdish displaced of the 1990s is that, in the latter case, Kurdish males did not migrate on their own but with their wives, parents and children. When the men arrived first, which was sometimes the case, there was relatively little time between their arrival and that of their wives and children. They did not, like the earlier migrants, wait until they were economically secure with summoning their families but only a few weeks or months until the absolute basics were procured. Sometimes families migrated without the male family head because he was in hiding, imprisoned or had been killed in or due to the military conflict between the PKK and the army. Thus, whereas the earlier migrants were mostly single men, the Kurdish migrants of the 1990s migrated *en masse* in families. Often they were unable, or had much less time and opportunity to prepare themselves, than previous migrants.

The migration process

I started this chapter by disentangling different aspects of forced migrations. I stressed the need to analyse out-migration, 'the in-between' and in-migration both separately and in relation to each other. I will now summarize the regularities I discerned in the whys and hows of the forced migration of Kurdish villagers. My findings can not be extrapolated to all forcibly displaced Kurds in Turkish cities, because there were a great many 'variables' in a relatively small 'sample' of highly versatile migration 'units'. The migrations of people from different localities, with different constellations of political and armed actors and different kinds of economic and social relations, may well have constituted different patterns.

Out-migration was mostly in the form of expulsion and in response to repression. This being said, the circumstances and agents of expulsion varied. Most migrants were expelled by the gendarmerie or army, one family was displaced by village guards, and another fled the wrath of the PKK. Although the main ingredients of the stories of villagers displaced by soldiers were always more or less the same - mounting pressure, house searches, arbitrary arrests, and torture, until the soldiers ordered the villagers to leave within a few days or a week - few stories were the same. Apparently, in some places soldiers had treated the villagers quite well until the order came to evacuate the village, in other places the villagers had been intimidated and abused by soldiers for years.

In some regions the PKK had been all-powerful before the army and gendarmerie retook control, in other regions the PKK had played a lesser role. In some cases entire villages were expelled, in other cases only certain families. And whereas some people were targeted personally - they were accused of supporting the PKK - and feared for their lives, against other people the authorities' only grudge seems to have been that they still lived in the area when the government wanted it to be 'cleared'.

The kinds of threats and the kinds of constraints of 'ordinary life' with which the villagers were faced ensued in different kinds of migrations (for example, relatively organized or haphazard) and impacted on the composition of the migration unit, as did the nature of ties which already existed with other regions and cities. People who left before most others were often people under great personal threat. Those who were under great threat (usually men) and were not embedded in an extended family or larger community, or tied to one special place (the village), migrated with their nuclear family to a pre-established place. Only if they had no spouse and children they migrated alone. Those who were under a similar (personalized) threat, but were firmly embedded in a village-based extended family or community, often migrated as individuals. People who feared an attack on their lives often had little time to prepare, but if they left on their own or in small units, as was often the case, they managed to find a roof over their heads and a way to make some money because they only had themselves to take care of. The children, women and elderly followed when the situation in the village worsened. Those who did not feel threatened personally or profoundly, either left 'early' with their nuclear families to create a better and safer life elsewhere, or stayed in the village until the whole village was ousted. The first option was only available to people who were able and willing to make practical preparations for a life outside the village which they could envision because they had 'urban experience'. Thus, when and whether people actually did leave was influenced by the manoeuvring space they perceived having - their perceived chances of being allowed to stay - and their investments elsewhere.

Unsurprisingly, nuclear families migrated to Istanbul all at once and directly more often than extended families. All direct migrations to Istanbul were of people with close family ties (a daughter, son, brother, paternal cousin and so on), except for Seyyid who commanded a tight-knit religious network. All four families who lived as nuclear families in Istanbul, left all at once (one-time), and three of them moved to Istanbul directly. Two large families also migrated at once and directly - the Demirs and Abbas' family formed extended families - but most large families or communities moved out in phases and came to Istanbul via other destinations. With large families, whether they migrated directly or indirectly depended on the quantity and quality of their ties with Istanbul relative to their ties with other cities.

The 'disintegration of families' has been mentioned as one of the more invasive effects of the state's policy of forced displacement. Mahmut Barut

(2001) found that 1001 out of 2139 respondents had experienced some kind of family break-up. In my research, Havva and Cebbar experienced an almost total breakup of the extended family. However, most families in my research managed to remain, or get back together with at least two or three siblings or cousins, their spouses and children. The Günays and Bedrans, for example, succeeded in restoring much of the old setup of the family - though less of the village community. If we compare this situation with people's living arrangements before migration this still amounts to a considerable loss of ties. The breaking up of families was a strategy to deal with, but also an outcome of the war. It was one of the most painful effects of war and forced migration which colored the migrants' narrations of their experiences.

In his contribution to a survey of involuntary migration worldwide, Jon Bennett (1998) argues that in many cases: "flight is not an individual choice, but one made by community leaders. Women, children and the elderly are often the first to flee, leaving able bodied men to protect home and property. This was the case in Bosnia, for instance. Alternatively, the family breadwinners may move first to seek a relatively safe area to move the family, as in Afghanistan" (Bennett 1998:11). Bennett's observation that flight is often not an individual choice but one made by community leaders, points to a differentiation in the ability to make choices among different members or sections of a community - a differentiation informed by gender and generational factors: whereas some individuals may have significant room to make decisions as to when to leave and where to go, decisions that do not only affect their own lives but also those of others, other individuals just have to follow suit.

In almost all Kurdish families I studied, middle-aged and older males seem to have decided on the timing and destination of the migration. Primarily capitalizing on their own social capital and on that of their sons, older males took the lead - in as far as things did not just evolve from one 'small' action into another. Taking into account the fact that most women did not speak Turkish and had never lived outside the village before, this was hardly surprising. Because I often talked with men and women at once, and male views tended to dominate conversations in mixed gatherings, I might have been led to overemphasize a male-dominated version of the events. Still, when I spoke with women alone, they told similar kinds of stories. There was disagreement and discord within families about many things, but not about how they moved out of the village. Only Soner Çelik made it clear that, had it been up to him, his family would have moved out much earlier.

Although I found it useful to delineate different ways of leaving, travelling and arriving, it should be noted that out-migration, 'the in-between' and in-migration can only be pinpointed in retrospect. When villagers were in the middle of the process of leaving their village and settling down elsewhere, they experienced their move as disruptive, yet not necessarily as definite. Initially, many villagers expected to be away until things had calmed down: they did not

know they would not be able to return to their village for years on end. In earlier blood-feud type conflicts, it had been quite common for families to leave the village temporarily, and some migrants recalled how, to avoid mounting state or PKK pressure, their families had temporarily lived in a nearby town, but had returned to the village at the first opportunity which presented itself. Only when villagers received the news that their villages had been set on fire, many of them started to realize that their displacement was going to be permanent.

Forced migrations and agency

In highlighting the diversity among migrations and the ways in which they responded to war, forced expulsion, discrimination and poverty, I have situated the migrants as differently constrained and capacitated agents of their own lives. Some of my analysis may be understood as a celebration of the migrants' agency. However, both during and after my research I continued to mentally vacillate between a view of war and forced migration as reducing people to a situation of almost total non-control, and a view of forced migration as reflective of the migrants' desire to remain themselves, to protect what they cherished most, and to pursue their culturally scripted projects, also in unfamiliar ways. I would like to be able to draw clear-cut conclusions about relations between migration patterns and degrees of agency. However, there are no easy causal relations to be discerned.

As I have shown, how people migrated does not necessarily say much about the level of anticipation and preparation, or agency. In one situation phased migration may be a sign of agency (the Bedrans and Günays), in other situations it might spell out the level of unpreparedness (the Çeliks). And yet again, also the story of the Bedrans and Günays can be read in different ways. Their migration may be read as a testimony to the capacity of the forced migrants to make the best of adverse conditions, or it may be read as an epitome of defeat. After all, one of the villagers' major 'culturally scripted projects' was for their families to remain rooted in the village, and they clearly failed to sustain productive relationships in and with the village. Then again, if we accept this 'failure', it should be noted that the migrants did give themselves the opportunity for other culturally scripted projects and that their desire to socially and morally reproduce their respective families overarched their desire to stay put as a village-based community. Clearly then, the migrants were neither fully in control nor entirely dispossessed of control, they were neither total winners nor absolute losers: their perceptions of their lives incorporated feelings of loss, disillusionment, and defeat as well as a sense of resilience, achievement and pride.

Looking to the future - from the past

In recent years, increasing numbers of social scientists in Turkey have acknowledged the forced uprooting of at least one million Kurds. A growing

body of literature now exists about the impact of the forced migration on those who lived and still live it. What's more, the displacement of Kurds is increasingly being recognised as a phenomenon determining the course of Turkey's social, political and economic life. Little attention, however, tends to be paid to the political causes of forced migration.

The Turkish Foundation for Economic and Social Studies (TESEV - Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı), whose work I have referred to repeatedly under the names of its researchers¹⁸⁸, is probably the most widely-known organization carrying out research about forced migrants. The anthropologist Murat Güney (2009) reprehends TESEV for disregarding the political dimension of the forced migration of Kurds. For Güney, in focusing almost exclusively on the *impact* of forced migration, in emphasizing the need for reconciliation between the forced migrants and the state, and in urging the PKK to renounce the armed struggle, TESEV reinstates the state as the ultimate moral and political authority. If the root causes of the forced migration - denialist politics, militarism, and exploitative neoliberal capitalism, according to Güney - are not tackled, any intervention to alleviate the symptoms of this misrecognized problem is bound to fail (Güney 2009:94).

It seems to me that TESEV made a political choice which is perhaps defensible and certainly understandable in the Turkish context. I regard the information gathered by TESEV as extremely valuable. It offers a baseline about a large number of facets of the lives of forced migrants - as does Mahmut Barut's (2001) earlier research for Göç-Der - against which other researchers can present their findings. If TESEV's recommendations were to be fully implemented this would amount to little less than a social and political revolution, and the lives of many forced migrants would be greatly improved. However, with Güney, I do think that the better choice is to tell 'the story' from the beginning to the end, to analyse the aftermath of migration with repeated reference to the pre-migration period, as well as the 'in-between' time period. This implies that the political causes of the forced migration need to be investigated - if not by TESEV then by others - because the past indeed has, as I have tried to show and as Güney (2009) also states, a perpetual effect over the present. Thus, in this and the previous chapters I have attempted to link the 'before' and 'during' to the 'after' which will be the topic of the next chapters. Now that the migrants were settled, the question was: what next. What were their living conditions like, who or what might have helped them to pull their daily lives together, to cope with feelings of alienation, and to re-establish a sense of community? These questions will be answered in the next chapters.

¹⁸⁸ For example, Kurban et al. 2007. See the organization's website: <http://www.tesev.org.tr/default.asp?PG=DMK04EN01>, accessed September 24, 2010.

CHAPTER SIX

Urban Troubles, Urban Support?

In the introductory chapter I argued that to address problems related to displacement, the forced migrants needed allies, possibly charities, political parties, or prominent members of other ethnic groups. I maintained that to acquire allies a shared understanding about the nature of the problems faced by the forced migrants was needed, and that considering the fact that such common ground was almost nonexistent in Turkey, it was hardly surprising that the forced migrants had - and have - few allies.

The concept of 'allies' implies a focus on organizations that aimed to address the problems of displaced people *as such*. However, if we think of the forced migrants *as 'urban poor'* we can place the term 'allies' in a broader perspective. As urban poor they might have acquired allies in a number of realms or on a number of levels, one being the creation of a decent living standard. After all, the fact that governmental and nongovernmental organizations were absent in the early process of settling, does not rule out the possibility that they played important roles assisting the migrants in putting their social and economic lives on track. There are indeed state institutions and NGOs in Istanbul whose duty or mission it is to offer basic assistance such as 'food support' to poor and disadvantaged people regardless of their 'origins', and to help people to improve their living conditions. To put it in terms of an often used Turkish saying, organizations that give people fish, and organizations that teach people to catch their own fish. These organizations might be viewed as potential allies. In this chapter I will show that they did not realize their potential as allies.

This chapter is divided in two main sections and a smaller third one. The break between the two sections is informed by the processes through which Kurdish forced migrants are deprived of support. It is *not* informed by the difference between governmental and nongovernmental organizations. I will analyse the 'performance' of governmental and nongovernmental institutions in tandem, for one thing, because both formally and informally the governmental world is intermingled with the nongovernmental world (Gönel 1998; Tekin 2000)¹⁸⁹, for another thing, because the primary mechanisms which create a distance between the forced migrants and organized efforts (governmental and nongovernmental) to support them are quite similar. I use the term nongovernmental organizations or NGOs to refer to organizations that more or less fit classic definitions of civil society as "a realm of free activity and

¹⁸⁹ This is of course not only the case in Turkey. See, for example, Aretxaga 2003.

association that is not organized by the state”.¹⁹⁰ I am adding ‘more or less’ because in the past five decades, Turkish civil society has flowed with the highs and lows of army intervention in politics.¹⁹¹ At the time of the research, the “state’s traditional approach of encapsulating and battling with civil society in every way” still applied (Gönel 1998:1).

The first section concentrates on institutional procedures and practices which exclude, disempower or disenfranchise the forced migrants *as* recently arrived poor migrants. I will start with a sketch of the Turkish social welfare system and the position of NGOs in the field of the provision of support to the more vulnerable segments of society. It will become clear that the social security system in Turkey leaves many sick, unemployed or otherwise disadvantaged people almost entirely at the mercy of relatives, friends, NGOs and ‘the community’. I will then focus on the provision of incidental support by the municipal government in ways that can best be termed as charitable, and on the obstacles for the establishment of productive relations between the forced migrants and governmental and nongovernmental organizations which aim to offer more substantial support. In short, this section is about factors impeding

¹⁹⁰ This definition is from the Dictionary of the Social Sciences edited by Craig Calhoun (2002). Gordon White (1994) provides a similar but slightly more elaborate summary of current uses of the term civil society. I do not go into a discussion of political theory and philosophy because I employ the term civil society for its practical value, or as an ‘empirical shorthand’ (Beckman 1997), in explaining the peculiarities of the social context in which the forced migrants had to rebuild their social lives.

¹⁹¹ The relatively liberal constitution adopted in the wake of the 1960 military coup gave rise to an unprecedented number of political parties, interest groups and civil associations. However, after the military intervention of 1971, a whole range of political parties and other ‘suspect’ organizations was outlawed. Organizations which relieved the demands of citizens on the authorities were sometimes left in peace. Among these were associations for ‘social assistance’ and the preservation of ‘local culture’ (the so-called ‘hometown associations’). Although these organizations were sometimes viewed with suspicion by the authorities, they answered to the pressing needs of the hundreds of thousands rural migrants in the city (Turan 1998:205). Besides, the political activities of most hometown associations were restricted to carving a place for themselves in the existing clientelist political system (Çelik 2005). Sports clubs also proliferated, partly because they were actively encouraged by the authorities who viewed them as a safe outlet for the energy of young men, which would deter them from engaging in violence (Turan 1998:214). After the military coup of 1980 virtually all associations and foundations were shut down, and the 1982-constitution laid down this control in legislation. The extraordinarily strong hold of the state on civil organizations was exerted by restricting participation in civil society on the one hand, and enforcing membership in certain civil organizations on the other hand - members of the legal profession, for example, were obliged to be members of the bar association (Gönel 1998:3). In spite of the restrictions, in the 1980s Istanbul started to thrive with associational activity. This was partly due to the economic changes of the 1980s which resulted in an opening-up of Turkish society to the outside world: Turkey became linked to global communication networks and Turkish citizens became exposed to alternative opinions, values and tastes (Toprak 1996:100-103). Some of the restrictions on associational activities were lifted over the past few years.

the chances of getting support which have little to do with the Kurdishness of the forced migrants and the forcedness of the mass migration of Kurds in the 1990s.

The second section focuses on the discourses and practices within institutions and organizations that created or reinforced the exclusion, disempowerment or disenfranchisement of the forced migrants *as* Kurds. I will show that dominant discourses about Kurds/‘the people from the East’ and their accompanying narratives constituted constraints on the interaction and communication between the forced migrants and organizations that were not at play in the relationships between non-Kurdish rural migrants and support organizations. I will begin this section with an exposé about professionals who did not acknowledge or only barely acknowledged the existence of Kurds. This will be followed by an analysis of why even the professionals who *did* acknowledge the existence and the forced migration of Kurds, remained bound to state discourse about the Kurds.

In the third section about the migrants’ contacts with Kurdish NGOs, I will show that the prime obstacle for the migrants’ interaction with ‘Kurdish NGOs’ was geographical distance. However, I will also demonstrate that the fact that the objectives of the forced migrants and these organizations did not always concur, sometimes resulted in miscommunications which resembled some of the miscommunications occurring in the contacts between Kurds and professionals of non-Kurdish organizations.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SUPPORT: THE GOVERNMENT AND THE NGOS

Looking from a government policy point of view, both ‘giving fish’, and ‘teaching people to catch fish’ fall under the rubric of ‘social policy’. In social policy research, social policy tends to be understood as aiming at the improvement of human welfare - in whatever way this may be defined - and thus refers to more than the fulfilment of people’s subsistence needs (Midgley 2000:4; Clasen 2004:91). Concepts like the ‘welfare state’, the ‘rights based approach’ to welfare, and ‘structural violence’ can be expected to create disturbance in the neoliberal political circles that have stamped governmental policy in Turkey since the early 1980s. It is therefore noteworthy that certain articles of the Turkish Constitution, which was drawn up in 1982 at the inception of Turkey’s transition to neoliberal capitalism, are fully in line with the idea of the welfare state and even breathe an awareness of the insidiousness of structural violence. The fifth article of the Turkish Constitution is as follows:

The fundamental aims and duties of the state are ... to secure the prosperity, peace and happiness of individuals and society; to strive to remove political, economic and social obstacles that limit persons’ basic rights and freedoms in ways which are not in accordance with the principles of the ‘social law state’

(*sosyal hukuk devleti*) and justice, and to strive to arrange the necessary conditions for the advancement of people's material and spiritual existence.¹⁹²

According to the Constitutional court 1988/33 numbered ruling, the Turkish state, again defined as a 'social law state', is obliged to establish true equality, social justice and societal equilibrium by protecting the powerless from the powerful. Clearly, 'the state's' ambitions go much further than making sure people do not die of hunger and cold. This being said, a large chunk of this chapter will be concerned with the procurement of basic social security. Considering the government's limited achievements in this field, governmental institutions may be expected to fall short in the field of broader social policy as well.

Social policy in Turkey centers on a combined health and pension scheme for the formally employed and their dependents, and the procurement of free education up until university level. In the early 2000s, education was free only in theory. School supplies such as books and uniforms, school outings, and the cost of living for university students were all paid by the parents. Recently, this has changed. Now all school children receive school books and other supplies from the government (Buğra & Keyder 2006; Grütjen 2008). Kurban et al. (TESEV) (2007) argue that this has resulted in a significant improvement of the educational position of children of forced migrants. However, exclusionary mechanisms are still in place. To provide one example, education at most state schools is regarded of such low quality that after-school education in the *dershane* (private teaching institution) is widely viewed as a precondition for a successful career in higher education. The better *dershanes* can only be attended by the children of relatively affluent parents and by exceptionally successful students who get scholarships. I will not expand on the topic of education, suffice it to say that there was no institutionalized effort whatsoever to ensure the universal right of Kurdish war-affected children to education, and that war and forced displacement left close to an entire generation of Kurdish children without even the most basic educational qualifications.¹⁹³

At the time of my research, the combined public health and pension system existed in three forms. These were the Social Insurance Institution (SSK¹⁹⁴),

¹⁹² This is my translation of the original text, accessed 26 August 2010:

<http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/index.php?l=template&id=188&lang=0>. For a slightly different translation see:

http://www.anayasa.gov.tr/images/loaded/pdf_dosyalari/THE_CONSTITUTION_OF_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_TURKEY.pdf, accessed 26 August 2010.

¹⁹³ See for more information Barut 2001, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre/Norwegian Refugee Council 2010 and Kurban et al. (TESEV) 2007. The position of Kurdish children is precarious for other reasons as well. The official language of education is Turkish, Kurdish is absent from the curriculum at the primary, secondary and (until recently) tertiary level of education even as an optional subject, and also informally the Kurdish language is 'othered'. This indicates that even if all children in Turkey had equal access to the education system, Kurdish children would still be in a position of disadvantage.

¹⁹⁴ Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu.

established in 1945, for private sector and blue-collar public sector workers, the Pension Fund¹⁹⁵, established in 1949, for white-collar workers in the central government, and the Social Security Institution for the Self-employed¹⁹⁶, founded in 1971. Agricultural workers, the urban unemployed and the informally employed were expected to take care of themselves. As Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder state:

This system co-exists with a labour market structure where self-employment, unpaid family labour, and informal employment practices are very important. Given these features of the labour market, the formal security system remains grossly inadequate in its ability to provide social protection. In the absence of meaningful social assistance schemes, many have no choice but to rely on family ties in risk situations. (Buğra & Keyder 2006:212)¹⁹⁷

Buğra and Keyder (2006:223) continue to say that “family solidarity as well as mechanisms of charity, mobilized by municipalities and the NGOs, are seen as the proper means of dealing with destitution, a problem regarded as being beyond the reach of the state’s responsibilities”. In social capital terminology, the government counts on people’s bonding and bridging capital for softening the sharp edges of poverty.¹⁹⁸ For example, elderly and disabled people are only entitled to a meagre pension if they have no close relatives to take care of them, and the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity¹⁹⁹ or ‘the Solidarity Fund’, a scheme set up in 1986 for the distribution of cash and in-kind assistance to the most needy, was envisaged as a mixed public-private enterprise (Buğra & Keyder 2006:222). This way, government spending on social security could be kept low.

Since the early 1990s, government spending on social security schemes has increased and in the early 2000s, a rights-based approach entered the political agenda. In spite of increased spendings and major improvements (among them free access to health care services for all under 18²⁰⁰), social security policy remains centered around the family and community. Not in the least because there still is, both in and outside the government, much aversion to a system based on minimal social security for all (Buğra & Keyder 2006:223; Grütjen 2008:117-118,126). That the supporting function of family and kinship networks has abated over the past two decades, that in some places there are no or few NGOs, and that the existing NGOs often only ‘cater to certain clienteles’ seems

¹⁹⁵ Emekli Sandığı.

¹⁹⁶ Bağ-Kur.

¹⁹⁷ In 2003 the share of informally employed workers in total employment was estimated to be 50 percent (Grütjen 2008:113, based on OECD figures).

¹⁹⁸ These terms will be elaborated in chapter 7. Very concisely, bonding capital is ‘inward-looking’ and refers to ties with ‘like people’, bridging capital is ‘outward-looking’ and refers to ties with ‘unlike people’ (Putnam 2000).

¹⁹⁹ Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışmayı Teşvik Fonu.

²⁰⁰ This was not the case at the time of the research.

to be disregarded. The extended family has become rarer, connections between village and city were severed - certainly in the case of the forced migrants, and the often vast spatial distance between relatives makes it difficult for them to support each other on a daily basis. In Istanbul, there are plenty of NGOs who have taken over certain functions of 'the family', but they are unevenly spread over the city. Besides, the widening gap between rich and poor and the rise of identity politics described in the previous chapter had a major impact on civil society: civil society is highly divided and politicized (Göle 1996; Seufert 2000). Many organizations benefit only people with the 'right' qualities or identities, and most civil society organizations do not endorse a rights-based approach to social security. Those who are included in the present social security system - among them formally employed workers - protest against the erosion of their accumulated benefits through corporate organizations (Buğra & Keyder 2006).

Charity from the local government

With the increase of government spending on social security, resources were channelled from the central to the municipal governments. This meant that the municipalities became visible in the field of social security. They offered a number of services for poor people without steady jobs or insurance. Applicants for support had to fit strict criteria which were almost impossible to objectively verify. Asiye Tancay was well-informed about the range of facilities:

If you are really *mağdur* (here: disadvantaged) you can apply at Pendik Municipality. Then you can get coal, for example. I know a widow from Elaziğ, she has two children that go to school and two that work. She applied for support to the municipality, they gave her forty sacks of coal. She also asked for *gıda yardımı* (food support). Then some people from the municipality came here to investigate. They asked the neighbors about her situation. A neighbor woman said she was doing alright, that two of her children worked. Then her application was rejected. A relative of mine has six or seven children, she receives coal and food support. They bring it by car.

Miriam: It seems to me that many people don't know about this kind of support...

Asiye: Not everybody knows, that's true. And not everybody who knows applies for it, people don't like doing this. Our people are proud. Even when they are starving, it is still hard for them. They don't ask for help easily. (...)

If the municipality thinks you are *mağdur*, you get support. If your situation is very difficult, but your children work, they say you will just have to manage like that. And they don't give money. Only when in a poor family a working son goes to the army, then they give his salary. My *elti* is ill. She gets 100 million for her son who is doing her military service. Her husband works but has no SSK. If he were insured, she wouldn't get this money.

Many migrants said they had never applied for assistance. Those who had applied sometimes received support, but most of the time their efforts were to no avail. The Demirs from Ağaçlık were quite ardent in applying for support. Edibe Demir, a daughter of Zeynep and Abdullatif, who had a handicapped daughter, received 200 million lira, at least once. Hilal, a daughter-in-law, received ‘coal support’ when three other women of the family did not. Hilal had applied for support when she was seriously ill, and she thought that this was why she received support when the others did not: “They already knew me”. Melek Demir who regularly received assistance said: “The *muhtar* knows our situation. He sends us support. This year he sent us some and last year too. He calls and says: “Come and pick it up”. When I asked the *muhtar* of their neighborhood about facilities for poor people, he replied:

Muhtar: I have some friends with whom I have been collecting *erzak* (food supplies) for years. We do this with a few rich people from here but also from outside. We collect and distribute the *erzak* together. And every year during Ramazan there is *erzak yardımı* (storable food support) of the Büyük Belediye (Greater Municipality). There is also *sosyal yardımlaşma* (social aid) for medicine, money, operations, coal, food. To be eligible you have to have a *fakirlik kağıdı* (‘poverty paper’). If you don’t have Bağ-kur or SSK (insurance), and no possessions, then you can be eligible for *sosyal yardımlaşma*. People can send a request to the Kaymakam and then they can get food supplies.

Miriam: How many people apply for a *fakirlik kağıdı* per day?

Muhtar: I can’t say how many come daily, it changes a lot. Sometimes one, sometimes three. Yesterday, for example, two people applied, sometimes four or five, today no one has come yet. Look, there’s a man who works in a factory, he makes 250 million, the rent is 100 million. You can say: “He’s insured, so he won’t get *sosyal yardım*, but this man is not able to make ends meet. Also someone like him might be eligible in certain situations, for an operation, for example, if there is a problem with the children, if there is a marriage. Someone without any insurance would, for example, get 100 million, someone with insurance would then get 50 million. For a marriage there is the possibility to apply for *çeyiz parası* (trousseau money²⁰¹), no one has ever applied for it really.

Generally, it was not difficult to obtain a *fakirlik kağıdı*, as long as the applicant was registered at the *muhtarlık* (*muhtar* office) where he or she applied for it. To register at the *muhtarlık* of a particular neighborhood, people needed to be registered at the Population Register of the region, town or city in which the *muhtarlık* was located. However, some forced migrants were still registered in

²⁰¹ Girls are expected to prepare a *çeyiz* for their wedding. It should be filled with a large collection of hand-crocheted, hand-embroidered and hand-painted napkins, towels, headscarves and so on. These can be made by the bride and her female relatives, but many brides-to-be buy other women’s handwork.

the Population Register in the home region. Besides, a great number of marriages and children went unregistered. This lack of interest in registration stemmed from the village past.

Until recently, population registration in the Turkish countryside was extremely deficient. The fact that registration was a necessary condition for access to the education and health care systems did not serve as much of an incentive for registration in areas where educational and health care institutions were relatively scarce and understaffed, as was the case in much of the Southeast. Child mortality was high in Kurdish villages. This undoubtedly had a negative effect on the parents' motivation to register their children. It was quite common for children to be registered as newborns when they were toddlers, so that their actual age was higher than the records showed. Sometimes this was done to ensure that sons would be older when they were summoned to fulfill their military duties. When children who were recorded at the Population Register died, unregistered younger brothers and sisters would sometimes assume the place of the brother or sister who passed away, so that their actual age was younger than their registered age. Some of the migrants I spoke with were still not registered in government records when they were teenagers. Not only was registration defective, so too was the inspection of registration. Several people told me they had not received their primary school diploma, because they were not registered at that time. This may seem an 'innocent' administrative problem, but it has deeper social and political roots.

Faulty registration could sometimes be remedied but this needed time. It seemed that people often waited with asking for a *fakirlik kağıdı* until they were in very urgent need of support. On my visits to the five *muhtars* that I interviewed, several people came to the *muhtar* office to ask for a *fakirlik kağıdı* because they were in urgent need of medical treatment: a *fakirlik kağıdı* was required to be able to apply for free medical services. However, those who were not registered in the neighborhood were turned down. When I was talking with the *muhtar* to whom I was introduced by Fuat, an ex-board member of DEP, a shy young Kurdish man in workclothes came in to ask for a *fakirlik kağıdı*. His child was ill and needed to be accepted to the hospital. When the *muhtar* told the young father he would first have to transfer his registration from his village to his new neighborhood of residence, the man replied that the document was on its way but might take a while. The *muhtar* was inclined to send him away, but Fuat said he knew the man and vouched for him, after which the *muhtar* started the procedure for the application of a poverty paper.

The politics of charity

The *muhtar* quoted above did not only provide insight in the type of support granted, his words also underlined the intersection between his private charitable efforts and those of the municipality: do-gooders who wanted to help poor people in a certain neighborhood often went to the *muhtar* to ask who they should deliver support to. Buğra and Keyder characterize municipalities as ‘brokers in charity’ who administer resources provided by charitable donors. They argue that municipal support is *ad hoc* and unreliable without any systematic criteria of eligibility, which opens the door to corruption, arbitrariness and nepotism (Buğra & Keyder 2006:224). During the time of the research, I observed that municipalities were indeed viewed as administering charity in line with their own political interests, in ways which would maximize their chances for re-election. I was often told that the AKP gave out coal, food and even refrigerators to people who promised to vote for the party. According to a recent news report, one of the IMF conditions with regard to a major IMF loan which was under discussion in October 2009 was that the government would stop channeling national resources to local municipalities which were then used to acquire votes.²⁰²

The politics of charity were well observable at the neighborhood level. Because all first applications for assistance went ‘through’ the office of the *muhtar*, the elected neighborhood official, much of the brokerage referred to by Buğra and Keyder was effectively through the *muhtar*. Unlike the Demirs who were rather positive about their *muhtar*, who was neither Kurdish nor a forced migrant, most forced migrants either did not know much about the *muhtar* of their neighborhood or did not like him. They believed that he only looked “after his own people”, and accused him of not pushing hard enough with the municipality for better facilities such as playgrounds and marketplaces. When I asked Ceyda about the *muhtar* in her Tuzla neighborhood, she said: “I don’t know his name, but I know he’s not good for us”. A neighbor from the same region as the *muhtar* (the Black Sea) added: “It’s true that he is mainly good for his own environment. He sometimes tells us assistance is coming, but we never see any”. Ceyda went on to say that the *muhtar* owned a building with five

²⁰² Bram Vermeulen in Nrc-next, October 6, 2009. Such accusations are also voiced in parliament. To give two examples, on November 19, 2008, DTP parliamentarian Bengi Yıldız accused the government of using the Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity as a means to preserve its power. In his questions to the prime minister Yıldız suggested the formation of a committee which would define objective criteria for entitlement to assistance, reminded the government of the fact that many well-to-do people receive in-kind support which they subsequently sell, and demanded to know how many factories could have been built in the East and Southeast with the money set aside for the Fund. See: <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d23/77-5888s.pdf>, accessed October 8, 2009. A day later, a parliamentarian of DSP (Demokratik Sol Parti), a left-wing party, demanded figures regarding the distribution of social assistance in Istanbul, asked why not all people in possession of a document proving their neediness received food and coal, and whether perhaps only people who had voted for the AKP had received support. See: <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=4440726>, accessed February 1, 2010.

floors and that he gave things to people “on his side, not to people who need it. He gives it to his own family”. She also complained that he had not looked out for jobs for them when they asked him to. When I wondered out loud if such a thing could be expected from the *muhtar*, Ceyda’s sister-in-law said: “But you do expect him to do his best, to ask around, to talk with people... We have a marketplace here now, but there’s nothing there, it’s hardly a market!”

Although the office of the *muhtar* is not supposed to have anything to do with party politics, in the neighborhoods where I carried out my research, during election time, different religious, political, ethnic and *hemşeri* (‘regional’) groups often pushed their own candidates to the forefront, and *muhtars* tended to be viewed as being of and for a certain group. An interview with the *muhtar* of a neighborhood brought out how the election of the *muhtar* could become a catalyst in struggles between opposing groups. I was introduced to this *muhtar* by Fuat. When I asked the *muhtar* about the relationships between neighbors, he replied that they were good. When I asked him about relationships between Alevis and Sunnis, he said that they were also good. When Fuat intervened to say that there were not too many tensions but that “on both sides” (Kurdish and Turkish) there were people with an extremely nationalistic agenda, the *muhtar* objected, saying that this was perhaps one or five out of 1000. Then he said:

Now that we are talking about this, I want to tell you this... about me they say I’m an *ülkücü* (pro-MHP). This is because I talk passionately, that’s just the kind of person I am, I’m not very quiet. Sometimes people who don’t know me think I am arguing when it’s not the case... There are people who think that from someone’s color, or look, or posture you can say what he is. About me they say I’m *ülkücü*, but I have voted for ANAP all my life, and once for Akparti.

Fuat: But this is because... MHP members have said: "This is our man, our candidate". Other people reacted to that.

Muhtar: I can tell you how that happened. The *ülkü ocakları* (local branches of the MHP) organized a diner once, lots of people were invited, me too, and I went. I was introduced to the provincial chairman of Trabzon there. “*Bizim adayımız var*” (We have a candidate), they said. Then the chairman said they should all support me, he thought I was the candidate for the *ülküçüs*, but this was a misunderstanding. It was difficult to correct this. Later there was a meeting of MHP members in a wedding saloon. All the *muhtars* of the area were invited... Look, if loving this country means you are an *ülkücü*, then I am *ülkücü*. I love Atatürk, this is true, I am *Atatürkçü*, if this makes me an *ülkücü*... Later they [the *ülküçüs*] formed a front against me. Look, I am *muhtar*, then you are in politics, certain things you have to use, otherwise you can never win.

I understood this as the *muhtar* saying that every *muhtar* candidate has to find his way in the jungle of competing demands and ideologies, and that it was

‘natural’ for him to establish relations with the *ülküçüs*, among others. Fuat seemed to confirm this interpretation when he said: “We have to set an example for other people, we should create relations with everybody”. “Absolutely”, nodded the *muhtar*, to then add somewhat mysteriously: “People have become dispersed over the earth a long time ago, they got different colors and languages... But there are people who are very oppositional (*zıt*), who want to destroy things, who want to make this country collapse”. Later I asked Fuat if the *muhtar* had convinced him when he said he was not close to the *ülküçüs*. “Not really”, Fuat replied:

There was something else the matter which I didn’t want to bring up. Before the elections the *muhtar* had promised the *ülküçüs* that if he were elected, he would install an *ülkü ocağı* (a meeting place) in this neighborhood. Our side was against this and told him he shouldn’t do this, that if he did this, he would come to regret it.

Miriam: They threatened him with violence?

Fuat: Yes, right. Then the *muhtar* decided to drop the idea. He adopted the idea (*benimsedi*) that it would be better if there would not come an *ülkü ocağı* in this neighborhood

Miriam: Adopted the idea? You said he was threatened...

Fuat: Yes, okay, but he could see things would get out of hand here and that, being the *muhtar*, it would all land on his plate, and he wasn’t particularly eager for this to happen. When he didn’t keep his promise, the *ülküçüs* went against him of course. Then he sort of ended up between a rock and a hard place.

The multiple ways in which the residents of the different neighborhoods could and often did identify themselves (religious, ethnic, political etc.), sometimes accounted for interesting twists in election outcomes. As the Kurdish *muhtar* of another neighborhood in Pendik told me with a broad smile: “This is the neighborhood in Pendik with the smallest number of Kurds, but they have a Kurdish *muhtar*! Many Turkish Sunnis voted for me because they didn’t want to vote for the Alevi”: he had been up against a left-wing Alevi Turk. Besides, in spite of his being Nurcu²⁰³, many Kurdish Alevis voted for him as well, he said.

Although people generally preferred to have ‘their own’ *muhtar*, I also heard stories about *muhtars* not going the extra mile, or worse, not fulfilling the minimum requirements of the job, in spite of their being a *hemşeri*, co-ethnic or religious compatriot. If a *muhtar* carried out the work he was supposed to without asking for extra money - the *muhtar* gets a small fee for every administrative task - this was sometimes regarded more important than his background or beliefs. To give an example, the Demirs, who were quite positive

²⁰³ A follower of Sait Nursi (1878-1960). See chapter 1, note 44.

about the Turkish *muhtar*, much disliked the Kurdish *muhtar* of an adjacent neighborhood because he did not put in the necessary effort.

The *muhtar* functioned as a gatekeeper to piecemeal and incidental forms of monetary and in-kind support provided or channeled by the municipality.²⁰⁴ Bearing in mind the severity of social and economic problems in the *gecekondu* neighborhoods, the ambitions implied in the institutionalized conception of the Turkish state as a ‘social law state’, and the AKP’s repeated promises to deliver social justice, it might be expected that both governmental and nongovernmental organizations employed initiatives to ‘tackle problems at the root’, to combat poverty with employment schemes perhaps, and to improve education levels with long-term policy measures. To gain insight in how governmental and nongovernmental organizations might be trying to do this, I interviewed several representatives of organizations on the Asian side of the city, most of which were not known by the forced migrants I studied, but which were likely to have internally displaced Kurds among their clientele. Important organizations were the so-called Community Centers in Kartal and Sultanbeyli²⁰⁵ and the Counseling and Research Centers²⁰⁶ in all four districts. Among the NGOs studied were the TİSK: Working Children Desk²⁰⁷ in Pendik and the Lokman Hekim Health Foundation²⁰⁸ in Gebze (an industrial town bordering on southeast Istanbul).²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ For other social assistance schemes than those mentioned here, see Kurban et al. (TESEV) 2007:260-264. Most of the facilities mentioned in this report had no relevance to the lives of the migrants in my research.

²⁰⁵ Toplum Merkezleri.

²⁰⁶ Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezleri.

²⁰⁷ TİSK: Çalışan Çocuklar Bürosu. TİSK stands for Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Turkey Confederation of Employer Associations).

²⁰⁸ Lokman Hekim Sağlık Vakfı.

²⁰⁹ The bulk of the 1597 NGOs in Istanbul province that is listed by the Ankara-based Centre for the Advancement of Civil Society (Sivil Toplum Geliştirme Merkezi) is located on the European side of the city. This center receives funding from the European Union. This list was available at <http://www.stgm.org.tr/stklist.php>, accessed June 26, 2008. An inventory of the NGO Training and Research Centre (Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Eğitim ve Araştırma Birimi) at Bilgi University in Istanbul, lists hundreds of NGOs on the Asian side of the city, but only ten of these are to be found in the neighbourhoods where I carried out my research. Six of these ten are located in Kartal and four in Tuzla, while Sultanbeyli and Pendik do not occur in the inventory at all. However, in 2006 the website of Pendik Municipality listed 54 civil organizations catering to the needs of engineers, army officers, rural migrants, bakers, minibus drivers, sports fans, music lovers, aspiring home owners, Alevis, Sunnis and many other groups. These organizations formed only a fraction of the total number of NGOs, because many prestigious NGOs, among them the Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği (Association for ‘Ataturkic’ Thought) and less prestigious NGOs, political parties and hometown associations which were active in Pendik were not included in the list. Kartal is likely to contain more NGOs than Pendik because it has been part of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality for much longer, is larger and more ‘urbanized’ than Pendik. Although due to their size and longer history, Kartal and Pendik probably have more associations and foundations than Tuzla and Sultanbeyli, the latter districts also had a rather broad range of NGOs. Considering that Pendik alone contains many more NGOs than the 54 listed by the municipality, it seems safe to say that Pendik, Kartal, Tuzla and Sultanbeyli boast hundreds of NGOs. Many of these receive funding from the European Union or from other foreign sources, but I did not come across any international NGOs.

The severity of problems versus the lack of resources

A number of factors impeded the forced migrants' use of existing facilities. Some were specific to the forced migrants, others were more general. The perceptions of the forced migrants about their relationships - or lack thereof - with governmental and nongovernmental organizations sometimes coincided with and sometimes collided with those of the professionals who worked at such organizations. I will start by focusing primarily on 'professional perspectives'.

I became aware of the existence of the Sultanbeyli Community Center²¹⁰ when I was thinking about ways in which the access of women to health care institutions could be improved. A doctor I had met in an NGO referred me to a social worker at the center. The center offered a number of courses and facilities, for women and children especially. It was located in a huge, sparsely decorated building with a computer room, a room for sewing and embroidery, a kitchen, a playroom for the children of the mothers who attended courses, a library, and so on. The enormous kitchen was not fit for cooking because there were no taps. The center resorted under Social Services²¹¹ and received funding from the office of the Kaymakam. The social worker that I spoke with was quite pessimistic about the impact of the center. She, as well as a few other professionals, used the phrase 'learned helplessness' to explain that people had become unaware of their own capacities to improve their situation, or had lost faith in them. She observed that many *gecekondu* residents were hardly inclined to seize on opportunities to improve their situation. When I asked her why this might be so, she said:

I kind of feel that in the villages people were more inclined to improve their own situation, but in the city this became less. In the villages living circumstances were difficult, people expected things to be different here, but here they live in very bad conditions too. After a while, I think this sense of hopelessness is rendered permanent, people think it will always stay this way. Perhaps people expect everything from the government because they live in such miserable conditions. They don't realize they have to make an effort themselves. We organized a course about health and hygiene, for example, we started with 25 women and were left with eight. People always want something concrete when they attend something, toys for the children or a certificate or whatever. It is difficult to interest them for activities. You have to really convince them that it will be useful to them, that it is good for them to come... If I look at ourselves critically, I can't say we have achieved much in the past few years, also not extremely little but it goes very slowly. But maybe you shouldn't expect such projects to give results in the short term. Certain things will only bear fruit after twenty years or more perhaps.

²¹⁰ Sultanbeyli Toplum Merkezi.

²¹¹ Sosyal Hizmetler.

None of the women I knew in Sultanbeyli had attended courses or made use of the facilities at the Sultanbeyli center. Considering the fact that neither Seyyid nor Abbas, two strict Muslims who lived in Sultanbeyli with their families, allowed their wives and daughters to go out ‘unguarded’ unless they had very ‘good’ reasons, this is hardly surprising. At the time of my research, there were no community centers in Pendik and Tuzla, but some of the Demirs from Ağaçlık village had attended courses at the Yakacık Community Center.²¹²

Another governmental organization dedicated to improving people’s living conditions, was the Counseling and Research Center²¹³, resorting under the Ministry of Education. Through schools, these centers tried to spot, coach and counsel children in need of educational, psychological and medical support. According to Hale and Çiğdem, two young staff workers I interviewed at the Pendik Counseling and Research Center, their center was seriously understaffed and lacking in resources, even though Pendik was plagued by higher than average incidences of specific problems. As Hale said:

There are about 450 thousand people in Pendik. There will be a change of staff here soon, but normally we are here with four people. We do tests with children from Tuzla too, because they can’t take tests there. There are large numbers of children here who need special education. Pendik has one of the highest percentages.

Miriam: Why is that?

Hale: It is difficult to say... Pendik has a lot of migrants and there is a lot of poverty, people do not have the means to raise their children. This influences children’s intelligence, as intelligence is partly determined by environmental factors. (...)

Miriam: How many files do you have at the moment?

Hale: Over 600, that we are working on or have to start working on.

It was not only a shortage of work force, but also a shortage of many other resources that made it hard for the workers to do their jobs as they wanted to do them.

Çiğdem: We have a shortage of everything. When there is no money for things, we sometimes collect money ourselves. We hardly have any receivings. Some Counseling and Research Centers are associations. They have income but we don’t. For example, we want to create a playing room, we do need one. The state sent us toys, and there is a room, but it has to be furnished and decorated, the floor needs to be carpeted... This can only be done if a *hayırsever* (charitable person) pays.

²¹² In recent years Pendik has opened a community center, the informative and attractive looking municipality website about the center features a picture of an unmistakably Kurdish woman - judging from her delicate white headscarf - attending a course, sending out a message that the center is open to everyone.

²¹³ Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezi.

As with the brokering and channeling of charity by the municipalities, also here we see the intermingling of public and private funding in services which would probably function more effectively and in less arbitrary ways if they were strictly public services. Hale continued to say that other reasons for them being unable to reach people in need of assistance was that the parents of children in trouble did not always speak Turkish, that some parents did not understand the need for intervention, and that many parents could not afford the cost of transportation to their office or did not have the energy to sustain the long diagnostic and remedial proces.

The lack of staff, funding and facilities at the institutions, the geographic distance between the institutions and those regarded in need of support, the sheer breadth of the problems, the perceived lack of insight, interest and energy on the part of the 'target population', and language differences were often mentioned as obstacles for the effective provision of support. Some of these factors also played out negatively in the establishment of relationships between Kurdish organizations and the forced migrants. Whenever I told the migrants about organizations which might be able to offer them occupational training, psychological treatment, or opportunities to socialize with other people, they would complain about the distance and the cost of travelling. Ayça, who lived in the sparsely populated mountains above Kartal's Yakacık neighborhood, had a teenage son who was traumatized as a small child when he witnessed his mother being robbed and beaten on the deserted road leading from their house to Yakacık center. For years after the incident he panicked when had to go to the toilet - or even the kitchen - on his own, he stuttered badly and lagged behind at school. Feeling helpless and not knowing how to react, when he was screaming with terror, Ayça and her husband would often beat him into obeying. They mocked him for stuttering and, too impatient to hear him out, they often used to finish his sentences for him.

When I told Ayça about an organization specialized in psychological treatment for victims of violence - an organization acutely aware of the needs of Kurdish forced migrants - she hardly took it into consideration. Apart from the fact that her son felt deeply ashamed about the stuttering and that Ayça thought she would be unable to persuade him into seeing a doctor, the prospect of travelling to the other side of the city on a regular basis put her off the idea. Not only did she have three other children to look after, she had serious health problems herself and her husband, although out of work most of the time so that they had great difficulty making ends meet, did very little around the house and with the children. The suggestion that she could send her son to a *çıraklık okulu* (a school for training of manual workers), an initiative of the TİSK: Working Children Desk, she dismissed with a reference to the costs of travelling there everyday. One forced migrant did go through the hassle of travelling back and forth between the two ends of the city, in order to obtain medical treatment at an

NGO. Yet, he was forced to discontinue the treatment because he could not afford the regular trips to the European side.

Besides the lack of money and time, many people - most of them women - felt ill-at-ease outside their immediate living environment. Travelling to another district let alone the other side of the city was a large undertaking, as I will exemplify in the next chapter. However, the problems posed by long distances, the apprehensiveness some people felt about travelling, the lack of resources in the institutions, and the severity of people's social and economic problems could not fully explain why there was such a vast distance between the often well-meaning professionals and the forced migrants. In the next section, I will argue that an 'over-identification' with the Turkish state in belief, practice or expectation functioned as a major obstacle for the establishment of relations between the migrants and the institutions.

THE POWER OF STATE DISCOURSE ABOUT KURDS

At the beginning of the first section of this chapter, I quoted article 5 of the 1982-constitution. What I left out in this quotation was the first stated 'aim and duty' of the state, which was "to safeguard the independence and integrity of the Turkish Nation, the indivisibility of the country, the Republic and democracy". These lines give a clear indication of the core tenets of state discourse about the people of Turkey and their relation to the state. The 'state as guarantor of the Republic', the 'integrity of the Turkish Nation', and the 'indivisibility of the country' are aspects of discourse which people in Turkey can dish out even when woken up in the middle of the night. The common belief is that 'the Turkish Nation' is a civic nation: it includes all those with Turkish citizenship. However, both in written and unwritten state discourse, there is a tendency toward ethnic and religiously oriented conceptions of the Turkish Nation (Yeğen 2007). This implies that some people are called Turkish against their will, and that others, Jews, for example, have to 'work' much harder than others to be regarded full members of the nation.

In chapter 2, I stated that oftentimes, members of immigrant and minority groups are expected *not* to dwell on their pasts but to identify with the present. I also argued that the memories of these people are censored in both 'hard' ways - as encoded in law and enforced by visible violence - and 'soft' ways - as engrained in systems of health care and education. Regarding the required identification with the present, I argued that when people are silenced - or branded 'the other' - this does not always have to be done by discrete, specified persons and institutions, but that it can happen implicitly through the power of dominant discourses and narratives. The exclusion or denigration of certain categories of people can be brought about by 'willful law' and engrained procedures, but just as much or even more, it is engendered in the hearts and minds of those who are expected to support others and those who are expected to

accept support, as well as in the communication between the two ‘sides’ in this exchange.

I found that many professionals identified with the state to such an extent, and that dominant discourses and narratives primed the bilateral expectations of professionals and ‘potential assistance-seekers’ in such a way, that the space for communication between the people in need and the professionals was narrowed. In some cases, government or NGO workers were so deeply convinced of the truth of state discourses about ‘the people from the East’ and the symbiotic tie between the Turkish Nation and the Turkish State that there was no room in their minds for any other way of seeing the world. In other cases, government or NGO workers were aware of and sensitive to different ‘ways of seeing’ the Nation, the State and the Kurds, but still felt unable to incorporate this awareness and sensitivity in their daily work practice. And in all cases, the forced migrants expected the government and NGO workers to have internalized dominant discourses and narratives about the Nation, the State and the Kurds. It follows that even in cases in which people were critical about dominant discourses and the accompanying narratives, they oriented themselves on these discourses in their daily interactions. These discourses affected what they thought ‘the other person’ was, did and believed, and affected what they chose to say and not to say.

Believing in state discourse

An organization which should in my view most certainly be aware of the particularities of the situation of forced migrants was the TISK: Working Children Desk. Its head office was located close to the center of Pendik on one of the narrow streets of the Pendik Car Industry Zone²¹⁴. The Working Children Desk had a mobile clinic which visited working teenagers at their industrial workplaces to do health checkups, prescribe medicine and perform minor medical interventions. It also had an office located in a squatter neighbourhood named Veli Baba where the NGO workers provided training and counseling as well as health services to working children and their parents. In charge of the Working Children Desk was doctor Haluk. He was a busily engaged middle-aged man, a university teacher with good connections and a strong desire to improve the lot of people less fortunate than himself. While he was describing the activities of the Working Children Desk to me, he was busy making phone calls trying to find a children’s home (*yuva*) for a seven-year-old girl in Kartal whose mother was a prostitute and could not take care of her. At the same time he was mobilizing his contacts in the educational sector to get a teenage girl accepted to a prestigious high school.

Although Haluk was very committed to the children and his charity work, there existed such a gap between his perception of what was going on in Turkey

²¹⁴ Pendik Oto Sanayi Sitesi.

and that of the forced migrants that the latter would find it extremely difficult to relate to him and his organization. Haluk was a dedicated Kemalist and Turkish nationalist who was not particularly taken with my interest in the Kurds. Whereas at the time of the interview (2002), the Kurdish issue was widely debated in the media and the word Kurd had gained common usage, many people still refused to think of the Kurds as a separate ethnic group. So did Haluk. He preferred to speak of *Doğulular* ('Easterners') instead of Kurds, and was adamant that the Kurdish language had never been outlawed.²¹⁵ Taking his opinions into account, it seemed wise for me to avoid the word *zorunlu göç* (forced migration). Nevertheless, our conversation strayed off to the then widely-reported hunger strikes in Turkish prisons with which leftist prisoners protested prison conditions (Oguz & Miles 2005). Contrary to a host of empirical evidence documenting abuse and torture at the hands of the authorities, Haluk claimed that, in his capacity of a medical specialist, he was absolutely sure that no human rights violations had taken place in or outside Turkish prisons.

Haluk also claimed that there were almost no Kurds in Pendik. To prove this last point he said that forty percent of the children in their administration were from the Black Sea Coast and only two percent were from the Southeast. However, when we later drove to the organization's office in Veli Baba neighbourhood, İsmail, a psychologist who also worked at the Working Children Desk, told me that there were "a lot of Easterners" living there. At the organization's office in Veli Baba neighborhood we were joined by Eda, a Turkish sociology graduate who hoped to continue her studies with a Masters in social psychology and considered doing voluntary work at the Working Children Desk for some time. She expressed a critical stance toward Turkey. While discussing the career prospects of social psychologists, she called Turkey a Third World country, much to the dismay of İsmail and Haluk. İsmail exclaimed that she could not in all seriousness compare Turkey to countries like Nigeria, Sudan or Malaysia.²¹⁶ When Eda enquired if language was not a problem in the communication between the migrant families and the aid workers, Haluk and a female doctor present at the office explained that many people in Veli Baba did not speak Turkish well - they seemed 'afraid' to speak Turkish. They also found many families very 'inwardlooking'. Eda asked why this might be so, and I had

²¹⁵ In fact, many Kurds would agree with Haluk that the Kurds are not an ethnic minority, but for different reasons than Haluk. Nationalistic Kurds regard the word minority as derogatory because, among other things, it plays down the fact that Kurds form the majority in their 'homeland' - Kurdistan.

²¹⁶ It would be wrong to look for too much in this statement but it is perhaps worth noting that, while Nigeria and Sudan are much poorer than Turkey, Malaysia has a larger GNI per capita and a longer life expectancy than Turkey:

<http://ddp->

ext.worldbank.org/ext/ddpreports/ViewSharedReport?&CF=&REPORT_ID=9147&REQUEST_TYPE=VIEWADVANCED&HF=N/CPProfile.asp&WSP=N, accessed June 12, 2008.

the impression that Haluk felt obliged to acknowledge some of the issues raised by Eda and me, because he said:

A psychologist would have to look into that, that inwardlookingness - whether it is mainly pressure from the outside or whether it is something in the people themselves. As doctors we think it is more something that originates from the people. Miriam probably thinks it is more to do with the pressure from the outside, but in our position we see it as something that comes from inside the people.

The staff members of the Working Children Desk dedicated much of their free time to their voluntary work because they deeply cared for the working children and their parents. However, none of them showed a particular sensitivity to the specific needs and problems of Kurdish forced migrants. The psychologist seemed unaware, unable or unwilling to acknowledge that the Kurdish residents of Veli Baba might have lived through traumatic experiences of a different kind and magnitude than those of other rural migrants.

People at other organizations reacted in similar ways as Haluk when they heard I was studying Kurdish migrants. Among them was a worker at the Street Children Volunteers' Association²¹⁷ who disapproved of the label 'Kurd'. On explaining that, to my knowledge, many street children in Istanbul are of Kurdish origin and that I was interested to know why, he replied indignantly: "No, that's not true at all, there are children from the East here but many of them speak Turkish. Children from Bingöl and Tunceli, for example, they all speak Turkish".²¹⁸ He demanded to know why I felt the need to study Kurds as a separate group and stated: "We don't differentiate between children", suggesting that by speaking of Kurds and Turks, I was assigning people to irrelevant slash undesirable non-native categories. His reasoning reminded me of the often invoked '*insan insandır*' (we are all humans) logic with which some Turks try to silence discussions about ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey. By stressing our shared humanity, they relegate minority groups to the camps of those who can not get over primitive, particularistic, primordial sentiments. In this way, they deny any native of Turkey the right to *not* feel part of the Turkish nation. Even linguistic differences were discussed without reference to anything Kurdish. People would say: "They don't speak Turkish", but not: "They speak Kurdish".

²¹⁷ Sokak Çocukları Gönüllüleri Derneği.

²¹⁸ This man did not acknowledge anything special about the 'children from the East'. According to Abdullah Karatay (2000:441) who works with street children, 47 percent of the families of children who work on the street in Tarlabaşı (Taksim) migrated because of '*terror*' which translates as 'terror' or 'terrorism'. He leaves unspecified who inflicted this terror, but makes it very clear that the situation of these families is quite different from that of most other migrants in the city.

Some of the Turks who could not deny that there are Kurds in Turkey, for example, because they just knew too many Kurds who were flagrantly non-Turkish in their eyes, had a slightly different take on things. One of them was a staff member of the Tuzla Counseling and Research Center. While explaining that he always tried to convince Kurdish parents to speak Turkish with their children, he said:

Families sometimes think we are making nationalism (*milliyetçilik yapmak*), but I am not doing this for *Türklük* (Turkdom). Every kind of nationalism is illogical to me, because you can't choose your nation, neither Turks nor Kurds. I'm looking from the point of view of education. You shouldn't approach such a topic with your feelings.

Probing for his views on possible differences between migrants from the Black Sea region and the Kurdish regions, I said that "some villages in the East" had been depopulated entirely. His reply belied his statement about any kind of nationalism being illogical:

In the East of course you had terror... But migration from the East was also a little useful (*faydalı*), I think. There are people from here (*bizden*) who go to the East as teachers, to places like Hakkari and the like. They say that the people there know no Turkish whatsoever. Now they [Kurds] are trying to found a state in northern Iraq. If this migration hadn't happened, if these people [Kurdish migrants] hadn't learned Turkish, maybe they would give more support to that state. Now they feel Turkish, they don't want to separate from Turkey. To leave great riches (*zenginlikler* - wealth, resources) behind and go back there is not a realistic approach. For example, in Tunceli you had this very inwardlooking different kind of Alevism. They were very hostile toward people who were not Alevi. They came here and realized "Sunnis are very good people". My mother always had this thing: "Stay away from Alevis". Here she saw what a good person her Alevi neighbor is. We have a saying in Turkey stating that there is something good about everything (*her işte bir hayır vardır*). God has a plan, I think, with this migration. If this migration hadn't happened, there wouldn't be this much of a merging (*kaynaşma*). If they had stayed there, they wouldn't have learned Turkish. If we said now: "Found a state, but you have to go there", they wouldn't go.

He clearly favored the assimilation of Kurds, and showed himself to be insensitive to the violation of the citizenship rights of Kurds. While Haluk would not even acknowledge a Kurd when a Kurd looked him in the eye, Emre *did* seem to believe in the 'future-Turkability' of people he recognized as Kurds, if only they wanted to.²¹⁹ It was this lack of awareness and sensitivity that the

²¹⁹ The term 'future Turk' is used by Mesut Yeğen (2007).

Kurdish migrants claimed to come across frequently in their dealings with neighbors, officials, and teachers.

Scorning Father State, sacralising the nation and its jealous protector

Emre, Haluk and some of the other professionals showed themselves to be unknowledgeable about and/or insensitive to Kurdish suffering. From Haluk, a fierce Kemalist for whom the Turkish state in-its-true-Ataturkist-form equalled the Turkish Nation, I would expect such an attitude. With people who were much less convinced of Kemalist truths and who were less pro-state than Haluk, it was harder to understand. I sometimes wondered why many in Turkey were ready to criticize the government, politicians, and the police at almost every occasion, but were unwilling to acknowledge some of the most basic 'Kurdish realities'. Over the past decade and a half, the state has come under an enormous amount of criticism, but the most common response when I told Turks about my research - which I only did when prompted - was one of uneasy non-response. A few people squarely denied that the Turkish state could be capable of violently displacing so many of its citizens - Haluk would have most certainly denied it had I told him, but most people refrained from a blunt denial of the possibility of such a forced displacement. While I noted a mixture of disbelief and suspicion toward my motives in people's reactions, most of all, people seemed reluctant to accept that this might be another of Turkey's painful truths (*acı gerçekler*), a truth that - if it were accepted as real - would have to be accepted as the gravest breach of the rights of Turkish citizens in recent times.²²⁰

The anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002) argues that most people in Turkey do not believe in the state (*devlet*) and are fully "conscious of the deceitful and violent social relations of power and interest that go into the manufacture of the notion of the Turkish state" (2002:171,185). Turks express their disgust of the "immoral, violent and diseased" state through ridicule and cynicism which she, following Slavoj Žižek, defines as "doing as if one doesn't know" (2002:163). She argues that the only reason for the state remaining as strong as ever is that, for the sake of survival, people act as if the state were real. In their daily lives, they "go through the motions of state practice": they attend national celebrations at the schools of their children, work for the state as civil servants, negotiate with municipal officers and doctors and solicit social benefits (2002:71). And in going through the motions, the state is constantly being reinstated. I agree with Navaro-Yashin that being scornful and cynical are common ways of dealing with 'the Turkish state'. However, I noted that when it came to the Kurdish issue, many people threw their cynicism overboard.

²²⁰ My being a foreigner might have influenced people's reactions. However, my husband who worked at a private university noted the same reactions when he discussed the internal displacement of Kurds with his colleagues. He told me: "It is as if they know that what you're saying may be true, they know the state is capable of many bad things and possibly also of this, but they cannot take it in. It is too unsettling for them perhaps, so they'd rather not hear".

While Navaro-Yashin (2002) distinguishes between those who believe in the state (for example, the ultranationalists of the MHP and hardcore Kemalists like doctor Haluk) and the majority who does not, it seems to me that while most people do not believe in the state (*devlet*) most of the time, most people do believe in it some of the time. We should distinguish here between the state as the supposedly ‘natural protector’ of the *vatan* (the motherland - Turkey) and other capacities of the state. When people in Turkey remark that Turkey deserves better than the state it gets or, in the reverse, Turkey gets the state it deserves, there is never any ambiguity about ‘Turkey’, the *vatan*. A Turk interviewed by the anthropologist Jenny White (1994:67) described the state and the *vatan* as follows: “The state, like God, is a father, is strength. *Vatan* is like a mother, it gives refuge”. While Father State (*devlet baba*) demands complete obedience, the *vatan* invokes emotional loyalty. While Father State has been under a rising tide of criticism, the *vatan* lives on. There is little ambiguity about who should be regarded the rightful inhabitants of the *vatan*: these are the people who wholeheartedly embrace the Turkish *vatan* and the state’s armed prerogative to protect the *vatan* at all cost. When the *vatan* is at stake, *vatan* and *devlet* become inseparable like Siamese twins, and *devlet* in this context is not the state which can be criticized or joked about.²²¹ This close association between the *vatan* and the state created problems for the forced migrants who often claimed that they did not have a problem with the Turkish people but only with the Turkish state.

“We only have a problem with the state”

In the chapter about the Günays and Bedrans from Alimler village, I showed that they blamed the state and the media for Turkish anti-Kurdish sentiments, and emphasized having no problems with the Turkish people, who could “not help being indoctrinated”. Many other migrants made statements with the same purport. However, in their daily lives, the migrants kept being confronted with Turks who fully identified with the state’s anti-Kurdish stance. The migrants had been confronted with this upon arrival and these sentiments resurfaced along with political and economic developments. As many authors argue, the economic crisis fertilized the already existing ground for group conflict (e.g. Adaman & Ardiç 2008; Erman & Eken 2004). Both in *gecekondü* and ‘better’ neighborhoods, I noticed a widespread aversion against recent migrants. Especially migrants ‘from the East’ were regarded as uncultured and dangerous. To give an example, in describing the supposed degeneration of the city, Bilal who worked as a ‘computing assistant’ in one of the *muhtar*’s offices, said:

²²¹ The notion of what comprises the *vatan* is of course not self-evident. At some point in history it was imposed by the state and subsequently it was reproduced by state discourse and state practices, see Altınay 2004.

The old Yakacık was fantastic. People respected each other, the surroundings were beautiful. Women could go out on their own in the evening, they had nothing to be afraid of. Because of the newcomers (*yeni gelenler*) all this has changed. Together with anarchy, they brought *kapkaççılık* (pursesnatchers²²²), theft here. Everybody is afraid now. People don't even keep their own street clean, it's a mess. (...)

Kurds like crime, they're hoodlums. If there's an argument between a Kurd and someone else, in no time, nine or ten Kurds will be ready to fight, they're like: "Let's hit it". At the market, they argue about market stands [who stands where], and there are arguments about the water from the *çeşme* (drinking fountain). This is because they have no culture and are ignorant (*cahil*). They try to appropriate things for themselves. If twenty Kurdish women go fetch water at the same fountain, they won't give water to others. But everybody is allowed to use the fountain, even if you were from Kadıköy. I'm in the board of the *Ulu Camii* (Supreme Mosque) association. I take care of the finances. We made a fountain, the fountain is there for everybody, but you should only fill a few bidons. You just don't go fill too many. But some people do this, some people come with twenty bidons! Once, I was sitting in front of the *yazihane* (writing and information booth), across from the fountain. There was this old lady who was patiently waiting until it was her turn. This person before her started to fill twenty bidons. In the end, I got up and told him this was no way to behave. He said: "What business is it of yours, do you own this fountain or what?" I told him that indeed I did, that we made this fountain with our association, that I was to decide who could take how much water, and that he'd better get lost very quickly.

When I asked him if he thought a lot of people in Yakacık supported the PKK, he said: "Oh yes, you have thousands of militants here". In response to my surprised reaction, he replied:

Bilal: People who are with them (*onların tezgahında*), people who would hide them in their houses, that kind of thing.

Miriam: You mean they vote for DEHAP?

Bilal: Yes, but as far as I'm concerned, DEHAP is not a party, it is an *örgüt* (organization, here meaning terrorist organization²²³).

Miriam: So, there are thousands of DEHAPlı here.

Bilal: Yes, HADEP is a breeding ground for militants, there is no difference whatsoever with the PKK.

²²² Media reports focused on the violent methods and disrespect for human life of the *kapkaççı*. They were reported to snatch people's bags while driving past on scooters, and, if the victim became entangled in the strap, to drag the victim with them in full speed, with severe injuries and sometimes death as a result.

²²³ See Altınay 2004, last chapter.

As argued in the previous chapter, from the perspective of most forced migrants, the world looked entirely different: many regarded Istanbul as a dangerous and hostile place. As Cebbar's wife Mine said:

It happens sometimes that a neighbor comes here late at night, around one a.m., and asks: "Have you seen my son?". Then I wonder why they don't know where he is. You can never know what happens, where he goes, what he does, he could be murdered and be left by the side of the road. I'm not happy in this neighborhood. Maybe it's because this is not my own *memleket*. Maybe that's why they are not scared. Maybe they say: "What can happen to us?" For us it is strange here. If anything happens to us, there will be no one to ask what happened, no one who will care about us. If I were in my own land I would be less afraid perhaps, but still, I would watch after my children better than here. In Diyarbakir I wouldn't leave them as free as people do here. I wouldn't want them to stay outside until midnight. Children can get used to bad things. Don't get me wrong, I don't want *baskı* for my children, I'm saying this for their own good. But I have often heard that things happened to children. On television you see that children live on the streets, it happens a lot on the other side (The European side of Istanbul). Ninety percent of those children is Kurdish, most end up on the streets because of poverty.

And Melih, a middle-aged father of eight children, said:

That's why... you left your own *memleket* and you came to theirs. It's like, you put a piece of liver under the mouth of the cat and you say: "Don't eat it". We were like that, we came here, we went into their mouth, and we were always awaiting in fear, because these people can always attack us any time, we have no sense of safety (*can güvenliğimiz yok*). (...)

We are the oldest people in the region where we are from, thousand years ago the Turks came. Relations were always good, in every war we fought together. But still they have this *yasakçı zihniyet* (forbidding mentality).

In practice then, it was difficult for many forced migrants to differentiate between 'the people' and 'the state', and many migrants had developed a cynical attitude toward Turks. Adil Bedran, for example, felt that Turks made fools out of themselves with their 'primitive nationalism'. Smiling scornfully he said: "Turks have an interesting character. You know they say a Turk is worth the world (*Bir Türk dünyaya bedeldir*). How many liras makes a dollar these days? The way it is today, you need two million Turks for one American".²²⁴ Like Adil, many migrants belied their claim of "having no problems with Turks" with sudden outbursts of criticism of 'the' Turks. Others made implicit remarks indicating a belief that Turks will always regard themselves superior to others and are - with few exceptions - not to be trusted. This cynical attitude was

²²⁴ One dollar was roughly 2 million Turkish liras at the time.

fuelled by the hurt most migrants felt over the disinterest of Turks in their plight. Although they blamed the Turkish lack of awareness on the Turkish media and state indoctrination, they also sensed that many people preferred not to know, they acted as if they did not know (cf. Navaro-Yashin 2002:163). Like the Bedrans and Günays, few migrants talked about their forced migration with Turks because they anticipated that even the most critical of state critics would jump to the defence of the state when the Kurdish issue was at stake. This imposed silence drew an invisible line between many of the internally displaced and the members of the surrounding communities, including governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

State discourse in practice and expectation

Although the views expressed by doctor Haluk, Emre and some of their colleagues were widespread, it would be incorrect to generalize their opinions to those of workers at all other governmental and nongovernmental institutions. I did encounter professionals who were critical of the dominant narrative about the Turkish Nation and who acknowledged the forced migration of Kurds.²²⁵ The point I want to make here is that also in situations in which professionals displayed at least some awareness of and sensitivity to the predicament of forcibly migrated Kurds, the space for communication between them and the forced migrants was narrow.

The man at the Street Children Volunteers' Association may have stated that there were no Kurdish street children, but a staff member at a governmental institution for the protection of working children, who was Kurdish himself, said: "Ninety percent of the children here or their parents are from Siirt or Mardin. We hardly ever see Turkish children here". And while the staff member at the Tuzla Counseling and Research Center may have exhibited an almost total neglect of the pain of migration, Hale and Çiğdem at the Pendik center were far more sensitive to the situation of Kurdish migrants. They were aware that the situation of migrants from the Southeast was especially dire, that it was not only economically instigated or their 'own fault'. Hale said:

People from the East did not just come here for economic reasons, but because of *baskı* from the state and terror. The idea existed that they had created this terror. This was why they were excluded, like: "That child is Kurdish, don't

²²⁵ Whether such criticisms extended into the realm of the state as the natural protector of the *vatan* I do not know. In chapter 2, I referred to Murat Somer's (2005a) distinction between state discourse and mainstream discourse about Kurds, neither of which were entirely separated and both of which were in flux, to some extent at least. One tenet of both the 'traditional denialist' discourse and the newer 'accepting' discourse is that, when push comes to shove, the Turkish state needs to protect Turkey against its enemies, and that non-Turkish nationalisms endanger the country. Ayşe Gül Altınay (2004) shows that also many people who are critical of the 'othering' involved in Turkish nationalism have internalized the notion of the Turkish army as *the* institution suited and able to safeguard the endangered *vatan*.

“speak with him”. I don’t know if it is still like that, but it was like this ten years ago. (...)

In this country, people are always talking about ‘the other’. The concept of the other is very developed. I am white, the other is brown, I am a girl, he is a boy, I am a Kurd, he is from the Black Sea. They say, for example: “People who live in our country” (*bizim ülkemizde yaşayanlar*) or “They are also of us” (*onlar da bizden*). That says it all really. It’s always about ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Çiğdem agreed: “Oh yes, the *Karadenizliler* (Black Sea people), for example, they look very negatively at the *Güneydoğulular* (Southeast people, Southeasterners). This also has to do with the terror of a few years ago”. “But”, said Hale: “It already existed before that”. Both said that it was sometimes difficult for them to communicate with Kurds, because they could not understand each other. Çiğdem implied that they should actually have interpreters when speaking with newly-migrated Kurds, but smiled at the absurdity of this idea in the Turkish context. All staff members of organizations, be they state or nongovernmental, were forced to stay within the frames set by the law and the dominant discourse. This meant that also people who did not mind speaking about ‘Kurds’, sometimes used terms like ‘Easterner’ or ‘Southeasterner’, and that they could not express all what they deemed relevant. When I asked the staff member who stated that almost all working children are Kurdish, if in his work he addressed issues relating to the reasons for the migration of children who ended up working on the street, he said: “I’m a civil servant, I can’t talk about the reasons of their migration, I can’t talk about burned villages”.

When I asked if they spoke about the language differences, Hale said no: “If you ask if people speak another language, they feel excluded. We can’t say of course that people shouldn’t speak their language. Just like we can’t say: ‘Why did you marry a relative?’ We don’t have that right”. I did not observe Hale and Çiğdem interacting with Kurdish parents. It may very well be that their cautiousness was received well and helped them to establish a relationship of trust with migrants. They, however, emphasized that the distance often could not be breached. This situation shows that the space for communication between professionals and forced migrants was quite narrow: not only because professionals were all bound to the dominant discourse - they were not allowed to address certain problems or to speak Kurdish, for example - but because the dominant discourse about Kurds constrained the grounds on which professionals could establish meaningful relationships with the forced migrants. Thus, even in situations in which professionals were critical of state discourse and the accompanying narratives, bilateral expectations of professionals and Kurdish migrants were primed by these discourses and narratives. The work conditions of professionals were not such that they could invest time and energy to make it clear to Kurds that they were really there for them to help.

The forced migrants would only be inclined to approach the above-mentioned organizations and other governmental and ‘mainstream’ nongovernmental organizations, if these organizations offered direct and tangible rewards which would be worth swallowing their ethnic pride. The Lokman Foundation, for example, aimed to improve health conditions among the urban poor. It resided in an apartment building in a Gebze squatter neighbourhood, the tidy interior of which resembled a small private hospital, where patients in the possession of a Green Card²²⁶ received treatment by medical specialists for a symbolic amount of money. Although the Lokman Foundation was much closer to Pendik than most of the Kurdish NGOs on the European side, it was still too far away to be of any significance to the Kurds living in Pendik and the surrounding areas. Otherwise, the Kurdish migrants, who often expressed the lack of easily accessible and affordable health care as one of their most pressing problems, would undoubtedly have made use of its services.

So far, I have focused on exclusionary mechanisms active in ‘general’ organizations. I will now focus on nongovernmental organizations which specifically aim to support Kurdish forced migrants.

‘SYMPATHETIC’ NGOS

In the late 1980s and 1990s a number of ‘Kurdish NGOs’ - NGOs which are mainly staffed by Kurds and mostly target a Kurdish audience - were established (see chapter 1). The activities of these NGOs range from the encouragement of the scientific study of Kurds to the protection of human rights by documenting human rights abuses, campaigning and lobbying. I also came across NGOs that were not focused on Kurds only, but were sensitive to the needs of internally displaced Kurds, such as the Education and Health Anew Foundation²²⁷, which provided counseling to people with trauma, the Accessible Life Association²²⁸, which offered economic perspectives to the rural and urban poor, and Mazlum-Der, an ‘Islamic’ human rights organization which did much to promote the rights of Kurds²²⁹. Some of these NGOs were and are under continued and severe state pressure.²³⁰

Many of the forced migrants were familiar with the work of Göç-Der and the İHD and some of them had recounted their experiences to them in an effort to

²²⁶ People earning less than a minimum income may apply for a green card (*yeşil kart*). The green card provides access to medical care at state and some university hospitals, but does not cover the cost of medicine outside the hospital.

²²⁷ Yeniden Eğitim ve Sağlık Vakfı.

²²⁸ Ulaşılabilir Yaşam Derneği.

²²⁹ See Plagemann 2000 for information about Mazlum-Der.

²³⁰ See for example reports on Kurdmedia.com:

<http://www.kurdmedia.com/article.aspx?id=4637>, accessed February 1, 2010. Mahmut Barut, whose work I frequently refer to in this dissertation, was indicted for ‘inciting hatred and hostility’ with the publication of his research about forced migrants. The chairwoman of Göç-Der was indicted for publishing the research.

get their stories known and to file for compensation for the material and psychological damage resulting from their expulsion from the village. Members from the Demir family in Yakacık recalled that several years before I came, representatives of the İHD or another human rights organization had interviewed them and given them a small sum of money.

A few years before we had to leave the village, we had built a house in the village. Our houses and trees were burned. The village guards cut our trees. I did everything I could to get *tazminat* (compensation). I had four lawyers. I went to Beyoğlu [where there are many NGOs]. Eren Keskin gave me 50 dollars for a trip to Ankara. I appeared on television with my story, but to no avail.

In 1996 I went back to the village to see if we would be allowed to return, but they wouldn't let me in, it was forbidden area. I persisted and finally they let me in for an hour. In 1997 I went again. In 1999 I appeared on television and radio. We were with six or seven families, we all lived in the school. This was april 1999. There were no doors or windows in the school, there was nothing there, it was freezing cold... We went through a lot, we slept with the whole family as sheep in a shed, side by side, my wife, children and gueast. Eren Keskin really helped me, they took my statement, I told them everything, the torture, the threats, the insults, everything. They told me to write a *dilekçe* (request). I told Eren Keskin that I couldn't afford the lawyers. They would take care of it, she said. That it didn't work out is because of Fatih Sakal, the chairman of DEHAP *ilçe* (local party organization). He did help at first, but later... I had paid money to the notary, I had four lawyers. I told Eren Keskin I couldn't afford it but she said they would take care of the costs.

For the rest, the forced migrants were mostly unaware of the presence of NGOs in their neighborhood or the broader area and they claimed they had never received any support from any organization other than HADEP/DEHAP. NGOs other than the İHD and Göç-Der rarely came up in conversations, and I rarely saw or heard anything from which I could deduct that NGOs of any kind had a meaningful impact on the lives of the forced migrants. The only exception was the Başak Foundation for Culture and Arts²³¹, founded toward th end of my research, which worked on the behalf of women, children and teenagers in squatter neighbourhoods and specifically aimed to improve the living conditions of forced migrants.

Pro-Kurdish NGOs might recognize the specific background and problems of forced migrants, but this did not imply that the objectives of the NGOs necessarily concurred with those of the forced migrants. Başak, for example, was dedicated to the emotional, social and creative development of children and to the establishment of some measure of equality between the sexes. Başak workers told me it was difficult to establish rapport with the *gecekondu* residents

²³¹ Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı.

- be they Turkish or Kurdish - and to convince them of the use of their activities. The fact that some of their activities were limited to girls, for example, aroused suspicion among certain parents. The director of Başak recalled how she managed to win a mother over who initially disliked the idea that certain computer facilities were just for girls. She asked the woman whether her son ever went to an internet café. The woman replied affirmatively. When she then asked whether the woman allowed her daughter to go there too, the woman said: "No, no, I understand". Not all parents were persuaded that easily though. An encounter I had with Havva, a mother of eight children from Tatlıdere village close to Tatvan, exemplifies this obstacle for participation in NGOs.

On one of my visits to Havva's house, her relatives told me that she had gone to a meeting arranged by Göç-der. Apparently, DEHAP had informed the Kurds in the neighborhood about the meeting and some eleven or twelve Kurdish women had joined. Havva returned home in a particularly bad mood. "I didn't understand a single thing", she said with a disdainful look on her face. The organizers of the meeting had spoken Turkish as well as Kurdish, so the reason that she had not understand much was not that her Turkish was poor. Havva explained that she had been having headaches often and that she had joined the meeting in the hope of being taken to a doctor. To her disappointment, no one did. Instead, the organizers of the meeting had asked her all kinds of questions about her children, their health and how they were doing at school, questions which Havva found irrelevant under the circumstances.

While we had dinner together, Havva aired her dissatisfaction with the meeting in Kurdish, judging from her agitated manner of talking. At some point, the rest of the family burst into laughter. Her son turned to me and explained that the organizers of the meeting had told her that if her daughter came home with a boyfriend one day, she should not get mad at her. Havva found this outrageous. "These ideas don't fit my mother, she doesn't want to hear that kind of advice", her son smiled. Havva added that the organizers had also said that if a child lagged behind at school the parents could send it to 'the other side' (the European side), because they had computers there and other facilities to help children, and a psychologist as well. Havva made a waving gesture with her hand as if to express the stupidity of the idea: "If you want to send your child there, it may cost you fifteen or twenty million lira, where do we find that kind of money". It turned out later that the organization in question was not Göç-Der but the Kadıköy-based Başak and that Havva had misunderstood where parents could send their children, even though some of the NGO workers had spoken Kurdish.

I did observe some small successes as well. Havva's neighbor Rana, for example, was younger than Havva, her Turkish was better and she was more open to new ideas. She had two small strongwilled daughters who were very close in age and whom she found it difficult to cope with. "I slapped them sometimes and I felt bad about it", she said. When she heard about Başak, she

decided to go there to talk with their psychologist. After a few sessions she said she stopped hitting the children and started to feel more at peace with herself, her husband and children. Rana remained one of the very few forced migrants who benefited from support of NGOs.

Reflection: urban troubles, urban support?

Reporting on her study among forced migrants in Tarlabası, which is close to Taksim, Bediz Yılmaz (2008) describes how Kurdish forced migrants came to rely in large part on services provided by the state and other organizations. In the past few years, the forced migrants in my study may have become more active in and skilled at mobilizing governmental and nongovernmental support. As argued above, in the districts of my study, I was never made aware of any nongovernmental organization besides those close to HADEP/DEHAP that might have had an impact on the lives of the migrants, and the migrants received very little support from the government, be it national or local. The fact that the situation of the migrants I studied was different from that in other parts of Istanbul and in Kurdish cities points to the importance of a localized focus. As I argued in the methodology section of chapter 1, Taksim and its surroundings constitute a unique case in Istanbul, being extremely close to one of the main cultural, economic and touristic centers of the city and to a large number of political parties and organizations.

I found that governmental and nongovernmental organizations should fit at least two of three criteria for Kurds to make use of their services or to engage themselves in their activities. These criteria pertain to geographical closeness as well as closeness in a different sense - an ideological, but more even an emotional sense - and the obtaining of direct benefits. Ideally, governmental and nongovernmental organizations and services are *quick and easy to reach*, offer *direct rewards* such as cheap medical care, and *show sensitivity* to the ethnic background of the forced migrants as well as to their experiences with state repression. At the time of the research, there were no nongovernmental organizations and few governmental services in Pendik, Kartal, Sultanbeyli and Tuzla that fitted these criteria. With regard to Kurdish cities such as Batman and Diyarbakir it is observed that a vast percentage of people benefits from different types of state-provided support (Kurban et al. (TESEV) 2007). One facilitating factor here must be that in regions where almost everybody is Kurdish, including most of the *muhtars* and the civil servants who staff state institutions, the threshold for the application for services will be lower than in Turkish-dominated settings like Pendik, Kartal, Tuzla and Sultanbeyli.

If it is a duty of 'the Turkish state' to "secure the prosperity, wellbeing and happiness of individuals and society; to strive to remove political, economic and social obstacles that limit persons' basic rights and freedoms", and "to establish true equality, social justice and societal equilibrium by protecting the powerless

against the powerful”, over the past three decades, the Turkish authorities have left far too much of their responsibility in the field of social security to the ‘family’, the ‘community’ and nongovernmental organizations. I argued that the government makes a distinction between giving fish and teaching people to catch their own fish, that is, between providing unconditional grants and helping people to help themselves through educational policies, the provision of microcredit and so on. In fact, much of what ought to be expected from governmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations, falls in neither category, for example, the procurement of affordable housing services and decent health care. In as far as the state does provide support to poor and disadvantaged citizens, the fact that these are often incidental handouts relegates citizens to legitimate beggars and deprives them of a basic sense of security. The widely-shared discourses about the family, community, and ‘deserving people’ which sustain this way of ‘not doing welfare’ cause harm to all poor and disadvantaged people regardless of their ‘origins’, and the clientelist politics behind the provision of charity on the municipal level add another level of unfairness.

The nationalistic discourse which sustains the Turkish state and which saturates many spheres of everyday life has the effect of some people being excluded more easily and more profoundly than others. It renders possible the unequal treatment of citizens who should be treated equally. Many Kurds and Alevis, for example, are deprived of rights which others do enjoy. The nationalistic discourse also renders possible, as well as necessitates, the glossing over of ‘objective’ differences in terms of language and experience between groups of people. For example, there is little acknowledgement of the particularities of the situation of Kurdish forced migrants. The interviews with NGO workers and state employees, notably that with the two young women working at Pendik Counseling and Research Centre, and the forced migrants’ perceptions of the way in which ‘others’ approach them, suggest that state discourses loom over the interactions between themselves and others - neighbors, colleagues and professionals - so that interaction between the forced migrants and these others is impeded. Mutual expectations of forced migrants and professionals seem to be colored by state discourse, also when professionals do not actually ‘believe’ in this discourse, and the procedural logistics of their work - constraints of time and other resources - make it extremely difficult to break the barriers between the forced migrants and professionals.

Clearly, there were young professionals, and possibly also many members of the older generations of people working in the social security sphere, who were much more open to the idea of plurality than professionals like doctor Haluk. However, during the time of my research they did not seem to be in control or to have reached a ‘critical mass’. Murat Somer (2005a) uses this term with reference to swift changes in the early 1990s in the Turkish mainstream discourse regarding ‘the Eastern question’. In these years, Turkish ‘moderate-

nationalist' journalists and other opinion makers started to speak of Kurds instead of Easterners, even though at the time this was both illegal and 'not done'. Somer points to a number of internal and external political and societal factors which enabled these moderates to extend their numbers and to consolidate a drastically different use of terms in the mainstream discourse. The recent changes in discourse to which Somer refers did not seem to have made inroads in ways of 'doing social security'. Or better said perhaps, it was difficult for people who supposedly belonged to the mainstream to 'apply' discourses - both discourses in which ethnic diversity is denied and discourses in which ethnic diversity is regarded a central feature of human relations - in ways which did not exclude or stigmatize people who were regarded 'different' in spite of, or due to, dominant discourses.

Getting ahead: The promises of social capital

Having established the marginal impact of state organizations and NGOs on the lives of migrants, to see what else might have been constitutive in the realm between the family and the vast impersonal city, in the next chapters, I will turn to the benefits of the migrants' 'everyday forms of engagement' (Varshney 2001). It was obvious from the start that 'old' ties with relatives, fellow-villagers and friends and 'old' affiliations - such as those with specific regions, families and religious figures - remained crucial for forced migrants.

As argued in the introductory chapter, internal migrants in Turkey tend to rely on relatives, fellow villagers and people from the same region for support. Among Kurds, the extraordinary economic losses they suffered, the forcedness of their migration, the memories of state repression, the confrontation with discrimination, and the experience of indirect or 'soft' forms of exclusion, made the practical necessity and the emotional need to rely on such relationships even greater than among other forced migrants. However, the migrants' social ties had shrunk in some ways, were damaged in other ways, and were transformed in yet other ways: some people were at large, others in prison, and some old relatives and friends might not be regarded trustworthy or able to offer support anymore.

I wanted to know how the migrants' 'old' bonds were reconstituted in the urban setting, where these 'old' ties and affiliations got the migrants in the city, and how they were combined with newly established relations and affiliations, that is, I aimed to understand the workings of the migrants' social capital. I was always hoping to spot 'social capital in action', but where was I to look? After all, social capital can be generated anywhere and everywhere, in locations such as living rooms, coffeehouses, party buildings, sweatshops and class rooms, at social occasions such as political meetings, weddings, funerals, *altın günleri* ('gold days')²³² and *mevlüts*²³³, and in more or less imagined institutions such as

²³² Women who participate in the 'gold day' agree to get together on a regular basis, usually once a month. All the women contribute the cash equivalent of a small amount of gold to the meeting and

komşuluk (neighborliness), *hemşerilik* ('samecityness') and ethnicity. We can think of these realms as physical, social and conceptual spaces for the production and mobilization of social capital. There is quite a wide-ranging literature about the 'instrumental' value of such spaces in Turkey (Alakom 1998:163-165; Beeley 1970; Benedict 1974; Bellér-Hann & Hann 2001; Güneş-Ayata 1991; Karpat 1976; Kartal 1982; Levine 1973; Suzuki 1964).

Because the array of possible interest was so vast, initially, I had problems deciding what to focus on. I steered away from the party because I did not want to be associated with it from the start, but besides HADEP/DEHAP/DTP there were few obvious 'sites'. The migrants were not engaged in informal political activities other than those of HADEP/DEHAP, the 'gold days' were primarily a middle-class thing or something older migrants participated in, and most migrants did not participate in religious meetings other than *mevlüts*, which were rare because they were expensive. The villages of Dağ and Vadi had village associations, members of the Demir family and other people from Bitlis sometimes went to one particular coffeehouse, for some school was important, and for others work. I carried out interviews at several coffeehouses, but was not prepared to spend my time sitting around there, loading various kinds of male attention and suspicion on me, waiting for something interesting to be said or happen. I considered working in a sweatshop, but also in this case the investment did not seem worth the effort. I was a guest at five weddings, four meetings organized by village associations, one circumcision ceremony and four *mevlüts*, and I accompanied DEHAP members on a condolence visit. Observing these told me something about the migrants' social relations but not enough.

I believe that social capital can best be studied by assessing what people believe their relationships should 'do' in times of need, and by analyzing what they actually *do* do in times of need. Therefore, I focused my attention on the migrants in times of crises. Most of the time, people could just about manage their everyday lives, but what did they do in times of illness and conflict? These

the women take turns in hosting the meeting. During the meeting, which may be filled with singing, dancing, gossiping and eating, all the money is given to the host to spend as she sees fit.

²³³ *Mevlûts* are religious ceremonies which are held at important family and social events, for example, after a death to ask god to have mercy on the deceased person, to thank god for the safe homecoming of a child from the military or from abroad, or to underline the importance of a marriage or circumcision ceremony. During *mevlûts* poems about the life of prophet Mohammed are recited (Tapper & Tapper 1987). At three of the four *mevlûts* I attended, a woman known for her religious knowledge and piety recited poems, prayers and/or verses from the Koran which were regarded appropriate for the occasion. The other women read along with her from small booklets. It seemed to me that sometimes the learned woman gave a short speech or added some thoughts of her own in Turkish or Kurdish. At one occasion the woman reciting stated that there is only one god and that when Muslims can not find a mosque to pray, they should go to the church to worship. I do not know if she said this for my benefit. At another, when it was becoming too noisy, the woman reciting tried to discipline the others by relating how the prophet once reprimanded a woman who did not know the virtue of listening. At one *mevlût* there was no woman reciting. The women, gathered in a room on the first floor of the house, were supposed to listen to the recitations of the imam who was sitting downstairs with the men, but no one paid attention. After the *mevlûts*, food was served to everybody present.

were poignant forms of crises, which hit everybody sometimes. These were 'occasions' when the absence of 'the state' was felt in particular, and on which it became clear what the significance of different affiliations actually was.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Health Matters: The Benefits and Drawbacks of ‘the Social’

Berivan was eight or nine months old. My mother-in-law had gone to the other side, to visit her father’s family. The water had been cut off for five days, the whole house was dirty, there was no water left.... I’m all alone, the girls are out working, our house is crowded, it’s very big, right? I was so tired of cleaning that I lay down for a while... That morning, the water had returned, it had just started to run and I said, let me tidy up before the water stops. I had a coal stain on my dress. To remove it I put it in water with some chlorine. I put it in the bath tub. Then I cleaned the bathroom and the toilet. Because I was so tired I lay down. I got up after five minutes, I thought, but when I looked at the clock, it was half an hour. Berivan wasn’t there. I got up, I had cleaned the bathroom, the toilets, collected water, put it in buckets, then I lay down... When I got up and looked, she wasn’t there. I screamed for her but she didn’t answer. I went to the spare bathroom, there she was, she had drunk the water from the bath. She was on the floor, her belly was swollen, her eyes bulging, her tongue was out, she couldn’t speak, what can I say.... My mother-in-law wasn’t there, I had no money, my husband was in the army...

I went down to the two wives of my husband’s *amca*, my *amca*’s daughter and my mother’s *amca*’s daughter. It was one thirty in the afternoon, they’d eaten their afternoon meal and had stretched out on the couch. I shouted, I told them what happened: “Get up!”, I told them. “Give her yoghurt”, they said. We did. Her stomach was very swollen. Then my *amca*’s daughter said: “I have thirty million, if you want, I can give it to you to take her to a doctor, but I want the money back in one or two days”. But I said: “If I take your money, take her to the doctor, where am I going to find the money to pay you back?” I didn’t take my daughter to the doctor. Her stomach was all swollen, she stayed like that all day. After that, Berivan never grew much, she doesn’t gain much weight, she doesn’t eat, only very little. Did she burn her stomach? I don’t know, I still don’t know what happened. She was nine months old, she was just starting to walk, since then she never grew much. Later my father-in-law came home. I said to him: “Let’s take her to a doctor, her stomach is all swollen”. He shouted at me: “If you had looked after her better, she wouldn’t be like this”. I never took her to a doctor.

This chapter deals with the embeddedness of forced migrants in social networks, or, their social capital. It is about their successes and failures in mobilizing the support of their relatives, neighbors and acquaintances and in dealing with problems exceeding their individual capacities. The words of Aleyna Bedran-Günay, the woman quoted above, highlight one of the main points argued in this chapter, namely that social capital is crucial yet unreliable. Although Aleyna was a member of a large and close family network - her husband’s family was closely related to her own - she missed the good understanding with her in-laws to be able to rely on them in times of need. Aleyna’s

account shows that embeddedness in a dense social network is not sufficient to deal with serious problems such as those related to health.

I will explore the interrelations between social relationships and a number of other factors through the ‘health lense’, not only because limited access to health care was one of the most pressing problems that the Kurdish forced migrants were faced with, but also because problems related to the procurement of health care offer the clearest illustration of the benefits as well as the limitations of social capital.

The first section of this chapter focuses on relevant aspects of social capital theory, including theory about the link between social capital, public health and access to health care. At the end of this section, I will explicate my own approach to social capital.

In the second section I will narrow the topic down to the study of forcibly migrated Kurds in Istanbul and their health problems. A short outline of the Turkish health care system and of the position of Kurdish forced migrants in this system is also provided.

The bulk of the chapter, however, is devoted to the ways in which the forced migrants and the people around them managed to support, but even more so, proved unable to support each other in their search for betterment of their situation. Section three deals with the ‘successes’ of people’s social capital in the procurement of health care, and section four deals with its ‘failures’. The different factors at play in the failure of social capital to improve health conditions will be drawn out from case studies of three different families.

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF ‘THE SOCIAL’

When people take care of their neighbor’s plants during the holidays, attend coffeehouses, or join human rights groups, they tend not to do this with the aim of finding a better place to live, improving their health, or advancing the career prospects of their children. Yet, how people fare socially often has an effect on their achievements in the spheres of education, health, work and politics, even in ‘modern’ societies in which institutions play a primary role in the channeling of resources. Social capital theory tries to make sense of links between the social and other spheres of life, by drawing attention to the significance of the information exchanged, meanings inferred, trust generated and norms shared in social networks (Fukuyama 1996; Portes 1998; Putnam 1993). Theorists generally agree that social capital refers to social networks²³⁴ plus a ‘something else’ which is part and parcel of the human practice of creating and preserving social relationships, but this ‘something else’ is defined in a variety of ways. Tom Schuller, Stephen Baron and John Field (2001:1) define social capital broadly as “social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them, and the value of these for achieving mutual goals”.

The characteristics of social capital can be brought out best when, following Pierre Bourdieu in one of his most influential works on social capital, we contrast social capital with other forms of capital such as cultural and symbolic capital. In ‘The Forms of

²³⁴ The idea of networks has been important to studies of families, neighborhoods and more generally urban social life, see, for example, Elisabeth Bott 1957, Ulf Hannerz 1980, J. Clyde Mitchell 1969 and Diane Singerman 1995. For research on social networks with regard to migrants and migration, see, for example, Monica Boyd 1998, Estela Rivero-Fuentes and Sara Curran 2003 and Kathryn Spellman 2004.

Capital' Bourdieu (1986) elaborates on three basic forms of capital: economic, cultural and social capital. In his discussions of these three forms of capital, symbolic capital also occupies a central position (Bourdieu 1977, 1986). Bourdieu's rationale for speaking in terms of different kinds of capital is that social and cultural characteristics present an avenue to the pursuit of economic capital.

I shorthand economic capital as wealth and financial capital, and will focus here on Bourdieu's understanding of the other kinds of capital. Cultural capital represents educational achievement (such as intelligence and qualifications) and "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body", as for example, 'elite pronunciation'.²³⁵ The concept of human capital as used by James Coleman (1988) is close to Bourdieu's cultural capital. Symbolic capital denotes a person's standing in society as informed by his or her prestige and honor - attributes that can derive from a number of sources. Like cultural capital, symbolic capital inheres in individuals. Social capital is different from economic, cultural and symbolic capital in that it inheres in relationships:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - in other words, to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu 1986:248-249)

Although theorists agree that social capital is "embodied in relations among persons" (Coleman 1988:S119), and most theorists would endorse Robert Putnam's (2000:20) viewpoint that social capital can both be a 'public good' and a 'private good', some tend to view social capital primarily as an attribute of individuals, and others treat it more as an attribute of groups or societies. Alejandro Portes (1998), for example, regards social capital as an individual property, whereas Francis Fukuyama (1996) and Putnam (1993, 2000) focus on social capital as an attribute of societies. Bourdieu is credited by some as a theorist who regards social capital as group property (Macinko & Starfield 2001), and by others as a proponent of the individual approach (Portes 1998). Although his definitions tend more toward social capital as collective property, the individual is far more visible in his work than in that of, for example, Fukuyama and Putnam.

Health and social capital

In research about health, social capital is investigated as one of the mechanisms by which the frequently encountered association between unequal income distribution and health risk might be explained. Robert Waldmann (1992), for example, found that in developed as well as developing countries, higher income disparities between the rich and poor were associated with higher infant mortality rates and lower life expectancies. Research suggests that once societies have reached a certain threshold, "health status becomes determined more by social (dis)advantage than by material scarcity" (Macinko & Starfield 2001:399). Lack of social trust, cohesion and control, and more broadly of social

²³⁵ It is more, but there is no need or space here to explain cultural capital in full.

capital, have been referred to as possible explanations, and correlations between low social capital and poor health have indeed been found (Wilkinson 1996; Yen & Syme 1999; Macinko & Starfield 2001). Richard Wilkinson (1996) postulates that among people with low incomes, perceptions of relative income result in low self-respect, stress and negative emotions. These translate into distrust, reduced reciprocity and eventually into less social capital, and it is this ‘social reworking’ of the psychological effects of relative poverty which negatively affects health. In response to such findings, Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner and Prothrow-Stith (1997:1495) argue that “disinvestment in social capital appears to be one of the pathways through which growing income inequality exerts its effects on population-level mortality”.

Health researchers observe that research into the link between income inequality and public health has sparked much interest among health promoters in the concept of social capital, the hypothesis being that to improve health, social capital should be promoted (Hawe & Shiell 2000; Macinko & Starfield 2001; Lynch, Due, Muntaner & Davey Smith 2000). Lynch, Smith, Kaplan and House (2000) are vehemently opposed to this idea. They argue that material conditions, such as the availability and quality of schools, transportation and housing, *directly* affect health. In similar vein, for Lynch, Due, Muntaner and Davey Smith (2000), the source of the problem of the unequal distribution of health is *not* a lack of social capital on the part of the poorer segments of society, but the unequal ‘distribution’ of material conditions. They state that both “absolute and relative income difference may represent the unequal distribution of material conditions that structure the likelihood of possessing and accessing health protective resources; of reducing negative health exposures; and of facilitating full participation in the society” (Lynch, Due, Muntaner & Davey Smith 2000:406).

Nevertheless, the anthropologists Vinh-Kim Nguyen and Karine Peschard (2003:449-450) state that the “correlation between socioeconomic inequality and health has proven to be robust”, indicating that “poverty is not the only factor accounting for adverse health outcomes”, but that there are social factors at play too. Examples such as Klinenberg’s study (in Szreter & Woolcock 2004:662) of vastly differing mortality rates during the 1995 Chicago heat wave in two poor districts, make it likely that there is a ‘thing’ called social capital which plays an important role in protecting people against health risks. The two neighborhoods were comparable in terms of material conditions, but had a very different social set-up. In one of the neighborhoods, old people were so fearful of their neighbors that they did not dare to sleep outside in the open air. In this neighborhood, some people died because they slept inside their non-airconditioned houses. In a case like this, the impact of the lack of social capital - coupled with material deprivation, of course - suddenly becomes very concrete.

The downside of social capital

Generally, social capital is understood as referring to the *advantages* generated by sociability, it is regarded as a kind of safety net for difficult times and an invaluable resource for economic and societal achievement. This optimistic notion of social capital has been embraced by researchers, policy makers and politicians alike. However, detailed case studies suggest that social capital is not always ‘good’ for the individual - social

isolation might sometimes be a better strategy to get ahead in life than strengthening social relationships - and that what is 'good' for the individual may not be 'good' for the community (Caughy, O'Campo & Muntaner 2003; Silvey & Elmhirst 2003; Ögdül 2000).

Most social networks are not undifferentiated aggregates of people who are all striving for the same goals and achieving the same out of their efforts. Instead, most networks are hierarchially ordered, and within them, struggles about meanings and resources are the order of the day. The feminist critique of conceptualizations of households as undifferentiated black boxes (González de la Rocha 1994; Wolf 1992) is also applicable to social networks. Rachel Silvey and Rebecca Elmhirst (2003), for example, in their analysis of the urban-rural networks of young female labor migrants in Indonesia, make it crystal clear that social capital is positive from the perspective of the group, but not so much from the perspective of individual women. As they point out: "Attention to the gendered power dynamics reveals the ways in which network relationships are themselves sites of struggle, contest and negotiation" (Silvey & Elmhurst 2003:866). Struggle, contest and negotiation indicate agency, a concept which might be minimally defined as "the capacity for autonomous social action" or "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Dictionary of the Social Sciences 2002; Ahearn 2001:112).

As social historian William Sewell argues, agency exercised by different people is far from uniform. The kinds of desires people can have and the intentions they can form "vary dramatically from one world to another depending on the nature of the particular structures that inform those social worlds" (Sewell 1992:20).

Without a notion of heaven and hell a person cannot strive for admission into paradise; only in a modern capitalist economy can one attempt to make a killing on the futures market; if they are denied access to the public sphere, women's ambitions will be focused on private life. Agency also differs in extent, both between and within societies. Occupancy of different social positions - as defined, for example, by gender, wealth, social prestige, class, ethnicity, occupation, generation, sexual preference, or education - gives people (...) access to different kinds and amounts of resources and hence different possibilities for transformative action. (Sewell 1992:20-21)

The position people occupy in networks will have a strong effect on their actions and social claims. Social capital then, holds different promises and has different outcomes for people in different positions. Surely, it provides individuals with a much-needed minimum sense of belonging and is often crucial to their - again minimum - economic survival. Besides these minimum provisions, however, there is little inherently positive in what the term social capital denotes. Strong relationships, norms and trust may just as well be turned against the individual as employed to his or her advantage.

Refining the concept

To enhance our understanding of the different ways in which social capital operates and to respond to the criticism that social capital is not all 'nice and cosy', in 'Bowling alone' Robert Putnam (2000) distinguished between two forms of social capital, namely bonding and bridging social capital. While bonding capital is inward-looking, tends to reinforce exclusive identities, and favors homogeneous groups in which internal power differences

may be disguised, bridging capital is outward-looking and encompasses people from different social backgrounds (Putnam 2000:22). This analytical distinction between bridging and bonding capital is close to the ‘weak-tie-strong-tie’ distinction coined by Mark Granovetter (1983), who argued as early as 1973 that weak ties are central to people’s societal advancement. Putnam lists ethnic fraternal organizations, church-based women’s reading groups and country clubs as falling in the bonding category, and characterizes the civil rights movement, youth service groups and ecumenical church groups as bridging networks.²³⁶

As Putnam states, while bridging networks are good for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion, bonding social capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. “Dense networks in ethnic enclaves, for example, provide crucial social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community, while furnishing start-up financing, markets, and reliable labor for local entrepreneurs” (Putnam 2000:22). It will be clear by now that dense networks can also have negative effects for the individuals or the society concerned (or effects unanticipated or undesired by policy makers). Immigrants being exploited for their labor by co-ethnics and the strong sense of groupness in the mafia form cases in point (Portes & Landolt 1996).

Bridging capital, supposedly, has little to do with particularistic identities (Szreter & Woolcock 2004:654-655). It is debatable whether this is so, because also people engaged in bridging associations, say a multi-ethnic student union, are likely to feel that they are alike in some socially relevant way. Nevertheless, in line with the idea that bridging capital is ‘open’, bridging capital tends to be viewed as more socially and ideologically inclusive and as more likely to generate gender equality (Putnam 2000; Norris & Inglehart 2006:77). Such a view of bridging capital is a little too simple and optimistic. Madeleine Leonard (2004), for example, argues that the ‘outreaching’ bridging capital of some members of a marginalized close-knit group may well increase inequality within the original group. Such can be the case when the better-connected members of the group keep the benefits of their own bridging capital to themselves. Besides, there is no reason to believe that bridging networks are necessarily more balanced or equality-promoting in terms of gender, as Norris and Inglehart suggest (2006:77). Not only is it difficult to differentiate between bonding capital as more likely to be ‘negative’ and bridging as more likely to be ‘positive’, it is also difficult to maintain a sharp distinction between ‘bonding’ versus ‘bridging’, and between ‘strong’ versus ‘weak’ ties. As Putnam argues, networks may bridge along some and bond along other dimensions. The gathering of Kurds with diverse regional, linguistic and religious backgrounds in one political party - HADEP/DEHAP/DTP - is a case in point. Besides, over time weak ties may become strong ties and strong ties may ‘devolve’ into weak ties.

With both ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ there is much focus on groups. The group dimension also plays a central role in Bourdieu’s 1986 definition. However, in refining the notion of bridging capital, Simon Szreter and Michael Woolcock (2004) move away from the emphasis on groups and on membership in more or less formal associations.

²³⁶ In Turkey, a village association such as the one created by villagers from Dağgözü described in chapter 5 would be an expression of bonding capital.

They remark that “especially in poor communities, it is the nature and extent (or lack thereof) of respectful and trusting ties to representatives of formal institutions - e.g. bankers, law enforcement officers, social workers, health care providers - that has a major bearing on their welfare” (Szreter & Woolcock 2004:655). To such ties between the poor and the rich or between the powerless and the powerful, they refer with the concept of linking social capital. This is the capital constituted through “relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal and institutionalized power or authority gradients in society” (Szreter & Woolcock 2004:655). Contacts between a poor Kurdish migrant and a Turkish manager or university professor would fall in this category.

This refinement seeks to incorporate a distinction among all those social relationships that would otherwise be grouped together in the ‘bridging’ social capital category, namely between those relationships that are indeed acting to ‘bridge’ individuals that are otherwise more or less equal in terms of their status and power (‘bridging’ is after all an essentially horizontal metaphor) - e.g. ethnic traders seeking counterparts in overseas markets, participants in artistic activities, or professionals of different nationalities exchanging business cards at international conferences - and those that connect people across explicit ‘vertical’ power differentials, particularly as it pertains to accessing public and private services that can only be delivered through on-going face-to-face interaction, such as classroom teaching, general practice medicine, and agricultural extension. (Szreter & Woolcock 2004:655)

In centering on a ‘sense of rough equality’ among different kinds of people in the same society, linking capital would be the capital the furthest removed from any particular social identity.

My understanding of social capital

Social capital theory suffers from a lack of clarity and consensus about its basic ingredients. The very diverse ways of indexing and measuring social capital illustrate this point. Summarizing research about the relations between social capital and health, as indicators or components of social capital, Macinko and Starfield (2001) list: sense of self-efficacy, inclusion and exclusion from networks, social support, social integration, trust in neighbors and government, voting rates, membership of organizations, sense of identity, perceived lack of helpfulness, newspaper readership and even strikes. In my understanding of social capital, newspaper readership, voting rates or strikes are not indicators or components of social capital. They might somehow emerge from social capital, in the same way that sense of self-efficacy or high health risk might emerge from social dynamics. However, none of these phenomena are likely to emerge exclusively from social capital.

I understand social capital as: *the potential instrumental benefits for individuals of their embeddedness in webs of social relationships* (or social networks). Better perhaps, social capital is a *vehicle* of potential instrumental benefits for individuals, a vehicle which is driven by people’s embeddedness in webs of social relationships. This definition is close to that of Bourdieu (1986), but I foreground the individual more than he does. It has no political optimism or moral judgment written into it, and necessitates an

explanation of the dynamics within and between webs of relationships in a wider political context.

I regard the adjective ‘potential’ necessary to escape the inherent optimism of the term social capital as it is often used, especially by political scientists and policy makers. In fact, all forms of capital are characterized by potentiality. Although capital is productive by definition, it can be mobilized in productive, ‘neutral’ and counterproductive ways. Financial capital, for example, can be invested profitably but can also lead people into bankruptcy. The fact that capital is productive is not to be confused with the question whether the investments and outcomes of capital are positive or negative, good or bad, or moral or immoral. The disadvantage of the use of the adjective ‘potential’ is that it makes the definition rather elusive. One way to concretize the concept is to pinpoint components or indicators of social capital, for example, patterned interaction, solidarity, trust, feelings of obligation and expectation, value introjection, dependence, peer pressure, information exchange and so on. All of these are features of human interaction in enduring social relationships which have an impact in other spheres of life than ‘the social’.

The term ‘instrumental benefits’ refers to people’s success in obtaining the objects of their desires. These ‘objects of desire’ do not have to be financial or economic - they may be located in the sphere of education, health, politics, or elsewhere. I should note that benefits as experienced by the individual might not be benefits as defined by a social scientist or policy maker, and benefits for the individual may not be regarded positive or negative by or for members of the groups or society that the individual belongs to.

Although the potential instrumental benefits of ‘the social’ accrue to individuals, by virtue of the individual’s insertion in social structures, his or her potential may accrue to the groups that he or she belongs to. Whether this happens will depend on the individual’s negotiations with ‘the cultural stuff’ by which his or her social relationships are sustained. After all, webs of social relationships are culturally mediated. Questions like: what is decent behavior, what does it mean to be trustworthy, who is to be looked up to, who is to be taken care of, who feels obliged to who, who dares to have expectations of who, who is included and excluded and on what basis, are negotiated in cultural terms. Considering the obvious fact that culture is dynamic and adaptive, in studying such cultural aspects, the wider societal, economic and political context should be taken into account.

There has to be some ‘substance’ to a relationship for it to constitute social capital. Onetime anonymous interactions with shopkeepers, for example, are unlikely to produce much social capital. Only relationships “of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu 1986:248) with some kind of history and future, relationships which are informed by, as well as generative of expectations and feelings of obligation, constitute social capital. Some relationships may be characterized by friendship and solidarity, while others may be characterized more by an expectation of mutual gain. Because different kinds of relationships have different features and thus differing potentials, it is important to distinguish between weak ties and strong ties, and between bonding and bridging capital, including linking capital. Well-connected people are likely to command much social capital, but the direction in which they realize their potential remains to be studied. Isolated people are likely to command little social capital, but this does not

necessarily imply that they can not get ahead by mobilizing the little they have: one bridging contact or one weak tie might have far-reaching consequences.

KURDS, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

My purpose here is to gain an understanding of the ‘content’ of the social capital of Kurdish forced migrants as well as of the ways in which this social capital functioned in Istanbul. Had the migrants not been able to mobilize a significant ‘amount’ of social capital, their forced migration would have become an overt humanitarian disaster. However, as I will show in this chapter, their social capital had sharp limits, both in terms of quantity and quality. The migrants’ experiences with repression in their villages, and the rifts within village communities and families, had decimated their social capital to almost the minimum needed to survive in an environment in which structural inequality reigned.

I am concerned with situations in which an individual or a family had a problem which could only be solved with the help of others, that is, by trying to realize the instrumental potential of social relationships. Unfortunately, problems which can only be solved with the help of others are far more abundant in Turkey than in countries with less repressive regimes or/and countries with a more egalitarian distribution of social and economic resources. In chapter 6, I showed that reliance on the family is built into the social security system. This insight is relevant when looking at the state of affairs regarding social welfare in general, and it is especially relevant with respect to health care.

Kurdish forced migrants are by no means the only category whose access to health care is below acceptable standards. During the time of my research, health problems, the health care system and the medical profession were recurring topics of everyday conversation among people belonging to the lower and middle classes. Dealing with the medical bureaucracy was so tedious that many people, middle-class Turks included, postponed visiting doctors as long as they could. However, Kurdish migrants faced more problems in this field than most others, because they were poor badly-informed recent migrants who were easily identifiable as Kurds. For many of them, the health care system was an almost impenetrable bastion.

It is important to investigate what the forced migrants did when faced with health problems, not only because health problems carry a unique urgency - lack of medical treatment might result in physical damage, disability and even death, but also because health problems were more difficult to deal with than many other problems. Finding a job or a place to live was a relatively easy task in comparison to finding long-term treatment for a serious illness, and social networks were especially useful in ‘quick fix’ situations as finding a job or a house. Relevant information about health care was more difficult to obtain than information about jobs and housing. Besides, information about health problems and health care was of a different quality than information about jobs and housing: the first kind was more difficult to put to direct use than the second. It might be equally valuable to learn the name of a skilled medical specialist as that of a constructor

looking for workers, but it was much more difficult to follow up on the information about the doctor than that about the constructor.

Furthermore, it was easier to intervene on behalf of a friend to find him a house or a job, than it was to try and procure medical care for a friend. Although unemployment rates were - and are - high in Turkey and there was a shortage of decent housing for poor people, jobs and houses 'went around' constantly. Medical facilities, on the other hand, were understaffed and short of budget. While employers and home owners always needed workers and tenants, the medical system did not need poor patients in that same straightforward way.²³⁷ Therefore, a request for help in health matters took on the character of a request for charity much more easily. A request to employ a friend or rent out an apartment to a relative did not solely appeal to the charitable inclinations of the employer or home owner, because the worker offered his labor and the tenant paid rent in exchange. A poor ill person however, had no monetary or labor value. The ill person who received a gift of money, time or expertise aimed at improving his or her condition could only offer gratitude, appreciation and homage in return. Although the indebtedness of the receiver to the giver might have plenty of benefits to the giver (White 1994:98-102), I found that most of the time, for people who did not deeply care for the ill person, these benefits came at too high a price.

I will not explore the health situation of the Kurdish migrants per se. It has been established in a number of reports and academic studies that the Kurdish migrants as well as the Kurds in Southeast Turkey are disadvantaged in the field of health and health care, for example, child mortality and many kinds of (children's) diseases have a very high occurrence in the Southeast (Akçura 2008:285-295; Aker 2007b; Barut 2001:143-170; Hancıoğlu & Alyanak 2004; Koivunen 2002).²³⁸ The only thing I want to point to in this respect is the fact that the inability of the migrants to maintain ties with their villages of origin decreased their access to non-biomedical ways of combating illness and misheaval, for example, in the form of visiting religious shrines. Non-biomedical remedies were sometimes sought for and tried, but less often than used to be the case in the village, and were less conspicuous in my research than concerns with bio-medical treatment and care.

I let myself be guided by the situations in which health concerns occupied a central importance in the lives of the migrants. Cases in which it was difficult to achieve the desired or appropriate care and treatment came to my attention more often than those in which people successfully dealt with doctors and medical institutions. Sometimes people

²³⁷ Any health care system needs patients. Not only do poor uninsured patients who get 'free' medical examinations at state hospitals comprise an important part of the total patient population - ensuring that the doctor keeps his or her job at the hospital - they are also inclined to buy at least some of the drugs the doctor prescribes. However, here I want to stress that the cost and benefit analysis in matters related to health is a different one from that in the job or housing market.

²³⁸ Under five mortality (number of children who die before their fifth birthday) is an important indicator of health conditions in a country, and is often also used as an indicator of a country's or region's level of development (Hancıoğlu & Alyanak 2004:107). According to Attila Hancıoğlu and İlknur Yüksel Alyanak (2004:111), in 2003/2004 under five mortality was 30 per 1000 in the 'West' and 'South' of Turkey, the regions which scored best in this respect, 48 in the 'North' and 49 in the 'East' which were the regions scoring worst. In Barut's study, nearly 22 percent of displaced families was faced with the death of a child either during or after migration (Barut 2001:169). For research into the mental health dimension of the forced migration of Kurds, see, for example: Aker 2007a; Aker, Ayata, Özeren, Buran & Bay 2002; Arslan 2000; Barut 2001.

approached me with their problems because they hoped I might be able to assist them in their dealings with the medical bureaucracy, especially after I had occasionally tried to help people whom I thought were in a particularly difficult or urgent situation. My efforts to assist some people helped me to better understand the difficulties involved in the procurement of medical care, for example, to understand that genuine concern and affection for the person needing help is hardly enough to find the energy to tackle the medical bureaucracy.

Next, before venturing into the migrants' strategies aimed at procuring health care, I will provide a description of the Turkish health care system.

The Turkish health care system

Apart from the care provided by health centers (*sağlık ocakları*) and family planning centers, there were different kinds of state funded hospitals and a large number of private practices, clinics and hospitals. Although health care is organized in primary, secondary and tertiary health care, at the time of the research, most people were free to choose where to apply in case of health problems. Access to health care could be classified in four categories: private insurance, social insurance, green card system, and no insurance.

As I will explain below, most forced migrants either held green cards or were uninsured. Under law 3816, which was put into effect in 1992, people earning less than a minimum income can apply for a green card (*yeşil kart*). At the time of the research, the green card provided access to medical care at certain hospitals but did not cover the cost of medicine outside the hospital. Unlike people with social insurance, holders of green cards were obliged by law to apply to health centers before they could be referred to a hospital. Until 2004, green card holders only had access to state hospitals (*devlet hastaneleri*) and university hospitals, while the access of holders of a card of the Social Insurance Institution (SSK) was restricted to (state funded) SSK hospitals and university hospitals. In 2004, in anticipation of reforms in the health insurance system, the differential access to hospitals of green card holders and holders of social insurance was undone.

Insurance among the migrants

Few forced migrants were covered by the Social Insurance Institution or the Pension Fund for Civil Servants and there were no holders of private insurance. Three older men who had been *muhtar* in their village were entitled to a pension and health insurance under the Pension Fund scheme. An older man from Dağgölü village had been insured when working in Istanbul in the 1970s and had voluntarily continued the payment of the monthly premiums when he was back in the village. His tiny pension was his only income. A small minority of the people with regular jobs, for example, in the garment industry, had SSK insurance. They worked at companies that more often than not circumvented the legal obligation to pay monthly premiums for their workers' insurance policy. Some employers claimed to pay the monthly premiums but did not do so, as the workers found out after some time. Sometimes employers promised to insure new workers after six months or a year, but this promise was often broken. In many companies, a percentage of the workers was insured - mostly the more experienced personnel, while the majority was uninsured. Workers under eighteen, some of whom had

been working since they were twelve or thirteen, were not entitled to SSK. The number of SSK holders fluctuated because workers changed jobs and businesses changed their policies or closed down. Kurdish clothes manufacturers I knew - two of whom were forced migrants themselves - claimed their businesses would be unable to compete with others if they insured all their workers.

Not all workers minded being uninsured. A few of them - for example, young unmarried men and women - were covered by the insurance policy of their parents, or by that of their brother serving his time in the military. Several young women were not too concerned about being uninsured, because they were healthy and regarded their work as temporary. Workers sometimes weighed the salary promised by a potential employer against the employer's disinclination to pay insurance fees. A slightly higher wage partly compensated for the employer's refusal to insure his workers. However, for most workers and their families, being uninsured was distressing and gave rise to feelings of insecurity.

Because 'under-insuring' was endemic in the low-paid sectors of the job market, members of all ethnic groups suffered from the inadequate reach of the Social Insurance Institution. Among the many examples Kurds shared with me of discrimination by Turks, there was never one of an employer who did not insure a worker because the worker was Kurdish. However, since internally displaced Kurds were concentrated in the lower echelons of the low-paid sectors of the job market, the number of uninsured workers in these Kurdish families was much higher than in the average poor family in Turkey.

The Green card

The first requirement for a green card was proper registration at the Population Register. However, as I argued in the previous chapter, many forced migrants showed little interest in proper registration. When the armed conflict between the PKK and the state broke out in the 1980s, Kurdish inclinations to register births, marriages and deaths were still limited. Most adults were registered in the Population Register, but many marriages and small children were not. The state repression of the 1980s and 1990s did little to increase people's desire for proper registration, on the contrary, many people preferred to stay away from state institutions altogether. The disinterest in population registration of a mostly rural illiterate population living in relative isolation from the rest of the country was augmented by a well-founded fear of state institutions and a desire to keep away from them.

In spite of people's wariness of registration, most of the forced migrants were registered at the Population Register and should therefore have been able to apply for a green card. Still, only a small minority had a card. One reason for this was that many poor people were exempted from the right to a green card. For people who owned some real estate or a car it was extremely difficult to acquire a green card, regardless of the condition and use of those possessions. Members of the Demir family, for example, told me that they were not eligible for a green card because they owned a small dilapidated truck for the transport of vegetables to the marketplaces where they worked. While the Demirs may not have been eligible, many of the migrants who *did* fit the criteria for the card also refrained from applying for it. An important obstacle deterring people from applying was the fact that many forced migrants were still registered in their villages of

origin. To apply for a green card, people had to ‘transfer their residence’ to Istanbul. This necessitated some effort to get in touch with the village *muhtar* who had to send a fax with certain details about the applicants to the *muhtar* of their Istanbul neighborhood. For forced migrants from uninhabited villages it was practically impossible to do this.²³⁹

For people who wanted to apply for a green card and had taken the hurdle of transferring their registration to Istanbul, there were other obstacles. One was the bureaucratic bastion. The application for a green card took several days of traveling to a range of government offices, waiting for hours in long lines and being faced with grumpy underpaid civil servants. And when the application was finally submitted, people had to wait for weeks before they received their card. The time-consuming tours of these government offices were dreaded by any Turkish citizen, but even more so by Kurds with little command of Turkish who always ran the risk of being subjected to condescending remarks of civil servants or fellow applicants. Many Kurds could only produce the stamina to endure the bureaucratic procedures when the need for a green card was acute, that is, when a relative was sick. And then, the procedure took far too long to wait for the result. When the card came through, the patient might have recovered, worsened, or even worse, he or she might have died.

A typically ‘Kurdish’ reason for refraining from application for a green card was the sometimes well-founded fear of rejection or the attraction of security attention to themselves. Kristiina Koivunen (2002), a Finnish researcher who studied the health situation in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, argues that the Kurdish wariness of state institutions strongly affected their access to health care facilities in the region. Applications for green cards could only be done through the police station and people suspected of having links with the PKK were exempted from treatment altogether. Doctors and nurses who treated patients with (suspected) links to the PKK could receive long prison sentences.²⁴⁰ Also in Istanbul, the green card system worked to exclude certain parts of the Kurdish population.²⁴¹

According to article 7 of the law concerning the green card, applicants for a green card and their household members were liable to an investigation of their situation based on information provided by social security institutions, agricultural credit and selling cooperatives (*satış kooperatifleri*), banks, professional organizations and other public and private (*resmi ve özel*) organizations.²⁴² Before granting a green card, the information provided by the applicant about his or her personal situation, for example, income and composition of the household, was checked with the *muhtar*, the Population Registration Directorate, the Tax Department, the municipality, the Cadaster, the Traffic Registration Office, and if regarded relevant, the Gendarmerie or the Police Headquarters. It may

²³⁹ I was told that some uninhabited villages still had a *muhtar*, but it would be difficult to get hold of this person.

²⁴⁰ Health care facilities were already limited in the Kurdish regions, but the war brought the health care system to the verge of collapse. Koivunen describes the deteriorating health situation in the Kurdish regions as a method of low-intensity warfare against the Kurds, which concurs with the perceptions of some of the forced migrants.

²⁴¹ See Kerim Yıldız, Rachel Bernu and Julianne Stevenson 2010 for recent observations of the exclusion of Kurds by/in the Green Card system.

²⁴² See the website of the Istanbul Health Directorate:

http://www.istanbul saglik.gov.tr/w/mev/mev_kan/yesil_kart.pdf, accessed 12 August 2010.

come as no surprise then that the applications of people who served time in prison, people with relatives in prison, and people with relatives in the PKK were often turned down. Some of the forced migrants reported having been subjected to questioning by civil servants with regard to their ‘terrorist’ activities or relatives.

Besides the deterring effects of tiresome bureaucratic procedures and the desire to keep the state at a distance, the rather persistent idea that the green card was of limited use also dissuaded people from applying for it. The fact that the cost of out-patient drugs were not covered by the green card contributed to this view. The migrants’ complaint that expensive or long-term treatments were not covered by the green card, was corroborated by media coverage of desperate holders of social insurance and green cards who were left to their own devices because the treatment of their illness was deemed too expensive.

THE SUCCESSES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Most of the support mobilized to help people in need of medical care was the result of the spontaneous efforts of individuals: it was not collectively organized. The only collectively organized effort I was able to observe was a fund-raising event to support a chronically ill person and his family. This event was organized by a village association from a village close to Karakoçan, the Sunni village of Yeşilmezra.

The Istanbul-based village association sold tickets for a ‘*gece*’ (literally an ‘evening’) to support a 22-year-old man who suffered from a chronic muscle disease and had been in an Istanbul hospital for over four years. His treatment cost ten thousands of dollars a year. His parents had been forced to sell their house and other possessions to pay for his treatment, and they were at their wits end. Tickets were distributed in Istanbul but also in Germany, where a sizable part of the village population lived, the wedding hall only charged the wages of the waiters, and - as on most weddings - there was no food served, but there was live Kurdish music. Part of the village of Yeşilmezra was destroyed during the armed conflict and migration from the village was partly induced by the military conflict. However, large-scale migration had started long before the armed conflict. The people attending the *gece* were more highly educated and in a better economic position than most other forced migrants I studied, and many of them had never lived in the village. The organization level of ‘villagers’ from Yeşilmezra was comparable to that of people from Vadiyeli village and Dağgölü village, but was higher than that of the other forced migrants I studied. The organization of the *gece* demanded much planning by and commitment from the board of the village association and was a rather special event. Board members of village associations were more likely to go round collecting money for someone who had suddenly fallen ill, than to organize such an event. DEHAP members also collected money for ill people sometimes. However, as I stated earlier, most support for ill people was not collectively organized.

Among the forced migrants, there was an expectation of family members to help out with time and money in situations of illness or pregnancy. Young people would take their parents or younger brothers and sisters to the doctor when the need arose. If parents had enough money for the examination and treatment, they would pay, otherwise their working children would pay. When someone had to be operated, close relatives would

stay with and nurse the patient. Sometimes neighbors or more distant relatives would offer to take a sick child or woman to the doctor. Although the expectation was that everybody should contribute to bettering the situation of ill people, the bulk of the work rested on the shoulders of a few close relatives, those of Zeynep Demir from Ağaçlık village, for example.

When Zeynep's grandson was diagnosed with tuberculosis, she did all she could to ensure his treatment. When she had managed to get him admitted to a good hospital on the Princess Islands, she spent many days and nights there to keep him company and look after him. The boy's parents were unable to care for him the way his grandmother did, because his father had returned to the village and his mother looked after his younger brothers and sisters. Had his grandmother been unable or unwilling to devote virtually all her time and energy to this boy, his situation would have been extremely difficult. Every now and then, relatives and neighbors would offer a small gift of money, food or books, but nothing which resembled Zeynep's dedication. Zeynep was a vigorous and resolute woman, who gave her life meaning by supporting her children and grandchildren in any way she could. In the absence of her husband, who spent most of his time in the village with his second wife, she was regarded the 'master' of the house. Her Turkish was better than that of other old women: having undergone seven operations herself, she had spent a lot of time in hospitals where she had been forced to speak Turkish. Her extended stays in hospitals had made her 'hospital-wise' and made her feel less incompetent than many other women felt they were.

A quite effective and less time-consuming way of helping others, was to loan green cards or insurance cards to relatives in need of medical care. Edibe Altan was a daughter of Zeynep and Hüseyin Demir. She was a mother of two, who had also lost two babies late in pregnancy. Right before her first miscarriage, she had been taken to hospital by her relatives because she was losing a lot of blood. Being uninsured, she went to the hospital with the green card of her sister-in-law. Edibe recalled that the doctor had asked her about Hakan Demir, the brother in whose name the card was issued: "He was supposed to be my husband, but I couldn't get it over my lips to say that my brother was my husband, so I said nothing". A relative 'saved' her by telling the doctor her Turkish was too poor to understand his questions. After her recovery, her relatives arranged for her to be picked up by a brother-in-law. On the morning of her dismissal, Edibe heard him come in and ask for Edibe Altan, which was not the name on 'her' green card. Edibe's brother-in-law was told that there was no patient of that name, but Edibe managed to attract his attention. Before the nurses had time to investigate the ins and the outs of the confusion, Edibe and her brother-in-law had fled the premises.

When Edibe's husband found a job with health insurance, she was able to reciprocate the support she had received from her brother's wife, albeit to her husband's relatives. One day, when Edibe and I were on our way to see a doctor who would examine her youngest daughter Mine, I asked to see the girl's insurance card. I was stunned to see the sheer number of doctor's recipes and signatures in the little booklet. "Does Mine use this much medicine?", I exclaimed. Edibe lowered her voice so that the taxi driver could not hear her and said: "My brother's husband uses it for his child". Edibe explained that her husband's brother often borrowed her daughter's insurance card for his little boy. When I

asked her whether the nurses and doctors did not notice that the girl under examination was actually a boy, Edibe said her sister-in-law took great pains to dress the child up like a girl and no one had ever found out. Clearly then, the notorious lack of interest of doctors in their patients - I had often heard complaints that 'state doctors' hardly looked at the patient, let alone examined him or her - was not entirely without advantages.

This ad hoc way of helping others carried a small risk, but required little effort on the part of the person loaning his or her insurance card. The reason I did not come across many cases of this exchanging of insurance and green cards was most likely that only a minority of the migrants possessed an insurance or green card. Besides, these cards could only be used by people with the same sex (unless they were small children of course) and roughly the same age as the card holder. Such a cunning circumvention of rules and evasion of laws was not restricted to health matters: some people tapped off electricity or water from the central network, for example. Edibe was a little embarrassed by the way she and her relatives circumvented the rules, but other forced migrants were not at all abashed. They saw no harm in taking something from the state, after the state had taken so much from them. Although the 'deceit' of Edibe and her relatives was instigated by their lack of financial means and legitimized by the exclusion and discrimination they experienced, it can also be understood in the context of a wider practice of 'working around state institutions'. Circumventing the rules and exploiting the lacunas in the system are accepted practices among parts of the broader population as well - also among the middle and upper classes - and express the lack of confidence Turkish citizens have in formal institutions. Işık and Pınarcıoğlu (2002:343-344) even argue that Turks have become conditioned to working around the system instead of trying to change it.

The vast majority of the support extended to ill people and pregnant women came from other Kurds. However, I also heard about support from Turkish neighbors and other Turks. Women who had close relations with their female Turkish neighbors sometimes received support from them, ranging from child care to money-lending. One woman told me that when she went to a pharmacy with a doctor's recipe for her youngest child, the Turkish pharmacist offered the medicine on credit without demanding payment any time soon. This woman lived across from the pharmacy so the pharmacist might have noticed how she took pains to feed and cloth her children well and send them to school every day.

THE FAILURES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

I argued that Edibe and her relatives successfully procured health care by enlisting the support of others. Nonetheless, when Edibe was faced with health problems requiring a long-term strategy and involvement, she and her husband were unable to mobilize support from their relatives. In the following, I will first describe how Edibe and her husband tried to obtain medical help for their handicapped daughter. Then, to highlight other relevant factors related to both the advantages and the limitations of networks in the procurement of health care, I will focus on the stories of other forced migrants.

I will focus most of my attention on women because the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth made women more dependent on health care than men. Women, young women especially, were thus in need of extra support. Yet, for many of the young mothers participating in my research it was difficult to enlist other people's help. They were

dependent on husbands and in-laws who were unaware of or uninterested in their health condition.

I first met Edibe in 2002 when she was eight months into her fifth pregnancy. Edibe was sitting in the living room of her mother's house. She looked heavy, tired and very sad. Her older sister explained that four or five months earlier, the state hospital had put her on the waiting list for an ultrasound. When setting the date, the hospital staff had not taken into account that Edibe's youngest daughter was handicapped and that she had suffered two late miscarriages. The ultrasound which was taken that morning - many months after her first hospital visit - had shattered all Edibe's dreams and hopes for a healthy boy. Apparently, while studying the ultrasound, the doctor had kept quiet for a long time. Unable to interpret what he saw on the screen, he had called in his colleagues to confer with them. In the end, the doctors had told Edibe that the baby's organs and limbs were so deformed and grown together that the doctors could hardly make out where its head, heart and arms were. The little boy stood no chance of living.

A few weeks later, Edibe gave birth by cesarian to a dead baby boy. The dead baby's body was kept for autopsy and only released for burial many weeks later. Neither Edibe nor her husband understood why their baby had died and why it had taken the doctors so long to release the body. Shortly after the birth, I saw her in her mother's house again. When she was mourning her loss, her mother said: "Come on, my daughter, it will pass, Allah will give you another one". Like many Kurdish women, Edibe's mother had lost a few children herself, and she had somehow grown accustomed to the premature death of children. Most women had more surviving than deceased children and she hoped this would be so for Edibe too. Had Edibe still lived in the village, her miscarriages and the three births would have carried a much higher risk because medical care was less accessible in villages. Chances of her dying during childbirth would have been greater. Now, Edibe was still alive, but the medical interventions that saved her life and that of her children also implicated that she would probably not have any more children. A new pregnancy and birth would carry great risks for her health and the doctors who carried out her last cesarian had strongly advised sterilization, which Edibe and her husband had refused. I could not make out whether this decision was shared, or whether it was mainly Edibe's or Taha's. However, in legal terms it was not just Edibe's call: the law required the consent of the marriage partner in a case of sterilization.

That a woman with Edibe's reproductive history was scheduled for an ultrasound in her ninth month exposes some of the shortcomings of the health care system. As I showed earlier in this chapter, the limitations of the system did not work in absolute ways. Someone without insurance or a green card might be able to benefit from medical care by using the card of a relative, and there were other ways to work around the system. There was, for example, a multitude of ways in which patients could try to procure preferential treatment, from bribery to the use of a *torpil* (person who uses his or her influence in someone else's favor). A patient might be able to arrange an early appointment with one of the doctors via an acquainted nurse. This time, however, Edibe and Taha proved unable to circumvent hospital regulations: they had few acquaintances outside their family and work circle, and they did not have the financial resources needed to bribe the right people. To exemplify the significance and failure of social relations versus other

resources, I will now describe the problems Edibe and Taha experienced with their handicapped daughter Mine.

Mine Altan

Mine was a giggly and lively two-year-old. She had a crooked leg, a very big head and curious brown spots on her body. She couldn't walk straight and often cried that her leg hurt when she stood or walked. Edibe carried her up and down the hill to her mother's house sometimes, but with Mine's fifteen kilos this was no easy task. Edibe's husband Taha had taken their daughter to state hospitals several times. At one point, around a year before I first met them, Mine had been prepared for operation. However, at the last moment, the doctors had backed out for reasons Edibe and Taha did not understand. Doctors had only told them that Mine was too small to be operated. They were to come back in five months, and then again in six months time. Every time the operation was postponed for an indefinite time period and no medication or treatment was prescribed.

Taha worked six days a week as a gardener for a minimum wage at a large apartment complex, a gated community. He was insured under the Social Insurance scheme. It was hard for him to find his way around in hospitals - he had difficulty making out signs and understanding procedures and doctors, but he had taken Mine to hospital many times. However, once his employer had made it clear to him that he would not accept his recurrent absences any longer, Taha could not take Mine to the doctor anymore. I asked him if relatives could not take Mine to the doctor. After all, Edibe was unable to take her daughter to hospitals on her own: she was illiterate, her Turkish was poorer than that of her husband, and she was not in good health. Taha smiled in response to my question and replied: "Everyone just thinks of himself. Edibe's sister was very ill once, then no one turned up either. There was never anybody who helped us with Mine". He explained that his previous boss had promised to collect money for Mine so that she could be operated by a private doctor: "But now he's gone. We are waiting for the new one now".

After their last visit to the hospital, Taha had taken Mine to a podiatrist living in the apartment complex where he worked. This doctor had examined Mine for free and had told Taha an operation would normally cost 5 billion TL (around 3000 Euro), but that he was willing to operate on Mine's leg for free. Medication and hospital intake would then cost 1,5 billion TL. Edibe calculated that they would be able to raise the money with the help of the residents of the complex where Taha worked, some help of others and by selling her wedding gold. Hoping to spare them the high costs of an operation which could perhaps be done through insurance channels, with the consent of Edibe and Taha, I approached a doctor at the Lokman clinic (see chapter 6), who put me in touch with the podiatrist at the clinic. After a short look at Mine, this podiatric warned us that it might be very dangerous to operate on her leg and referred us to doctor Gerger, a university professor who worked in a state hospital at the other end of the city.

Doctor Gerger examined Mine carefully and asked Edibe a list of medical questions about her husband and relatives. She conferred with her colleague next-door and ordered the hospital photographer to take photographs of Mine's body from different angles. The doctor then explained that Mine most likely had a rare genetic disease, inherited from her father's side, but that to be sure, the father had to come in and be examined himself. She

summoned us to bring the autopsy results of the dead baby boy and ordered some tests for Mine. If her suspicion was correct, she said, treatment could be initiated, but it would be best to leave the leg the way it was, because it might get worse if operated on. When I said that doctors in another hospital had changed their minds about operating right before the operation, she replied: “Of course, they didn’t understand the disease. They backed out because they couldn’t do it”. On hearing that a podiatrist was willing to operate on Mine’s leg, she sighed, shrugged her shoulders and said: “*Cehalet*” (ignorance).

Before Mine could be tested in this hospital, Mine’s patient registration had to be transferred from the state hospital in Göztepe to that of the professor. This took Taha and me a whole day, but then we could start getting her tests done. To communicate some of the difficulties of dealing with the medical bureaucracy, below I will describe one day of the ‘test program’.

At ten to eight Edibe, Mine and I take the minibus from Kartal to the E5. From Kartal bridge we continue by bus. The bus is packed and no one seems to have any intention of offering Edibe and Mine a seat. The ticket seller doesn’t shout “woman and child!” through the bus as ticket sellers sometimes do in such situations, so I have to ask someone to get up. From Tünel station we continue by taxi. Edibe says we should have taken the bus but the hospital is close, so she doesn’t have to worry about the taxi fare.

We arrive at a quarter to ten. The entrance of the hospital is in the middle of a very long greyish corridor. Along the long wall across from the entrance there are waiting rooms giving access to the different departments. On the left and right side of the entrance, there are tens of administrative offices, some staffed by doctors and managers, others by clerks. Hundreds of people are swarming through the hall like bees around a beehive, while others have installed themselves on benches or are waiting in lines. Edibe manages to find a place to sit down with Mine. We are here for an x-ray, so I go to the x-ray room at the far end of the corridor. Loads of people are standing around, but no one seems to be able to tell me anything. I walk up to a desk at the entrance of the room with a line of about thirty people in front of it. A friendly middle-aged man who is in the line tells me to queue up for an appointment. “Some people have to wait until August, but if you pay 15 million you can get it done on the same day”, someone says. The thought “This is how they are taking advantage of poor people” crosses my mind. Apparently, this practice of asking money for preferential treatment is completely legal: the money raised with the employment of extra facilities is used to keep more basic services going.

We only have to pay one million and receive a form, a receipt and an appointment for three o’clock. Not knowing what to do with the form, I wander around with it. I’m not sure whether it relates to one of the other tests and if so, where that test will be administered. I keep asking patients and nurses, until someone tells me I need signatures from the responsible doctors. I walk to the podiatry department where a nurse is guarding the door that provides access to the doctors’ rooms. I ask her what to do with the form. She takes it from me and disappears behind the door. Five minutes later she returns with three signatures and tells me to go to the administrative office. She also says something about a referral.

I join the queue in front of the small window of the administrative office. A man also in the line tells me he is waiting for a referral to another hospital. Slowly, it dawns on me that Mine will be referred to another hospital. After a long wait it is my turn. The woman behind the window informs me that a copy of the referral with the signatures is missing,

so I have to get in the queue for the photocopier. After receiving my photocopy, I join the first line again. When it is my turn, I am told that the *vizite kağıdı* is also missing. I leaf through the file but can't find it and go outside to Mine and Edibe. Apparently, the *vizite kağıdı* is a document, to be renewed every six months, stating that the holder of the insurance card is eligible for social insurance. Edibe is convinced that the *vizite kağıdı* is in the file and in the end we find it.

I join the line for the third time. Most of the time, people wait patiently and calmly for their turn, but every now and then some commotion is caused by people trying to jump the line. When it is my turn, I hand over the papers. Upon inspection they are handed back to me with the message "14, 12, 23". I can't find any of the office windows and ask someone at the x-ray office. The only thing I remember from the mumbled response is the direction for office window 23, so I decide to go there first. By this time, it is nearly twelve o'clock. Next to the window there is a form listing essential documents. My eye falls on a list for *ıldışı* (from outside the province) workers. Because Taha is not from Istanbul, I decide to make copies of the documents in this list, a few extra of the documents that look most important. Copies are 150.000 each, three to four times more than elsewhere.

When I return to window 23, it is closed for lunch. People lingering in front of the office advise me to put my name on a list. The window will open in an hour, they say. I write Mine's name on the list and go outside to find Edibe and Mine. Mine is having a lot of fun with a cheerful young man in a wheelchair. All benches and the canteen chairs are taken, but the sky is clear and the sun is shining. We sit outside on the side of the pavement, sipping from our tea and Edibe takes out a delicious homemade cake from her bag, Mine is nibbling from her *simit*. When I see a free seat on a wooden bench, I gesture to Edibe that she should sit there. An old man, waving invitingly, reserves the empty space for us. The old woman sitting next to us admires the fine needlework on Edibe's headscarf. Her neighbors have the same, she says. Edibe asks where they are from. "Adiyaman", the woman responds. "Kurds?", Edibe asks. "I guess so, many Kurds live there, right? I don't mind, they are good people, one doesn't always get that lucky with the neighbors", the woman says. The conversation turns to government taxes and the pigment spots on Edibe's hands. When it is nearly one o'clock the woman advises me to take my place in the line.

While I'm waiting I start wondering whether the sequence of the office windows was perhaps relevant. I ask a woman whether I need to go to another office first. "First go to 14, then to 12", she says. I get in the queue at window 14. Again, some people are trying to push themselves to the front of the line. When a woman starts screaming that she is being treated scandalously, all heads turn. "My child needs an urgent operation, but all they do is send me from pillar to post!", she cries out desperately. The woman is warned not to shout and is summoned to the front, where a new window opens. Apparently, they are helping her now. Another woman with a small child pushes herself to the front of the line. Because of the child I let her.

The head doctor's assistant who mans window 14 leafs through the documents. "But you don't live in the area", he says with raised eyebrows. I show him the transferral we received in Göztepe hospital. He signs and hands the documents to a man who is wearing a suit far too neat for this environment. The man with the suit stamps and signs, and wishes me a warm *geçmiş olsun* (get well soon).

Time to go to office 12. When it is nearly my turn, I realize Mine's insurance card is missing. I run back to office 14 where I left it and retake my place in the queue. Eager to

finish the paperwork, I carefully observe my place in the line. When a second window opens, the line splits in two. I keep my place on the right side, but a man from the line on the left goes before me. I raise my voice and tell him to go back to his own line. He pretends not to hear me. The girl next to me tells me it doesn't matter. I say it does. People on the left beckon me to come to their side, but I stubbornly refuse until someone says: "You have to go to both anyway, the one gives the papers to the other". They are right. With the papers, covered in stamps, scribbles and signatures by now, I return to line 23.

At window 23, I am told I need a fax of Taha's pay slip. Disgruntled, I rebut by saying that we live in Kartal and want to get the paperwork sorted that day. The woman at the window repeats the word 'fax' and hands me a piece of paper with the hospital's fax number. I go outside to ask Edibe for the telephone number of her husband's boss, which she finds in the papers. I call the number from one of the pay phones in the hospital hall. After having been put through three times, a friendly young woman assures me she will send it immediately.

It is ten to three and we have to start moving in the direction of the x-ray office. The tall lab assistant making the x-rays is strikingly handsome. He seems completely out of place in the dreary hospital, looking as if he has just walked off a glamorous television set. Hearing him slamming at a patient is enough to put me with my feet on the ground. Fortunately, he's rather nice to Mine, but she doesn't sit still, so it takes a long time to complete the x-rays. All of a sudden, I realize I shouldn't be in the room because I'm pregnant. I go out immediately. Frantically I start asking the men and women in white coats how damaging x-rays are to the baby, but I do not get an answer. In low spirits and hoping for some consolation, I get into a conversation with a tall middle-aged man and an old woman, his mother, I assume, who are waiting at the x-ray room. When I complain that nobody is telling me anything, he responds: "I know what you mean, I quit asking a long time ago". Although he comes in for medical treatment with regular intervals, he still doesn't know what exactly is wrong with him.

People searching for a medical cure to their health problems have to endure days and days of the time-consuming hospital visits described above. Taha did not have sufficient time. If Edibe managed to arrange child care for her oldest child, she would have both the time and the opportunity to frequent hospitals. However, Edibe was afraid of taking a bus by herself, let alone crossing the long distance from her house to the hospital. Frequent trips to hospitals were also demanding financially and physically. Trying to make the traveling of long distances less tiring, I often took taxi's to cross shorter distances between bus stops. Edibe, however, would not be able to afford this. And in the unlikely case of her managing to reach the hospital within a reasonable amount of time, she would be virtually unable to communicate with the doctors and nurses. Edibe's feeling of incompetence was shared by many other women and also some of the men, especially those whose Turkish was very poor.

The tests for Mine were done in different hospitals. A test for which she needed to be sedated proved most difficult to get scheduled, because there was a shortage of anesthesiologists who could work with children. The German hospital, one of the most prestigious and luxurious private hospitals in Turkey, had a waiting list for SSK patients

of over nine months.²⁴³ Hoping that doctor Gerger could help us to schedule this test earlier, I tried to call her but I was unable to reach her. During the long time period between different tests, Taha introduced me to Derya Sayman, a middle-aged lady living in the apartment complex where he worked. Her husband was a successful businessman. Derya said she liked Taha very much and she was particularly concerned about Mine. She advised me on ways to circumvent the system, which I tried to no avail. In the end, the director of the Lokman clinic arranged for me to meet again with doctor Gerger, who helped me to schedule a date for a test several months earlier than in the private hospital. Taha asked me to accompany them on this test as well. Because I would be nine months pregnant on the date of the test, I suggested he ask Derya, who had a car and did not work outside the home, to drive them to the other side of the city for the test.

Around this time, I became less involved in Mine. It had become clear that, even now that a correct diagnosis was established, doctor Gerger did not want to operate and the effects of treatment would be limited. I did not regard it feasible for me to accompany Mine and Edibe on all their visits to the other side, and Edibe and Taha seemed unable or, now that no real solution was in reach, unwilling to arrange the support from other people to pursue treatment. Instead, Taha became more determined to have his daughter operated by the podiatrist who lived in the apartment complex. Many people residing there were willing to contribute to the costs of the operation and in early 2004, Mine's leg was operated, supposedly successfully. A pin, to be removed later, had been put in her leg and she had to stay in hospital for several weeks. Her mother stayed with her almost day and night and slept on the floor or in the same bed. When I went to visit them, I asked if relatives had paid them a visit. "No, only my mother", Edibe said. Edibe and Taha had no money left, which I suspected might be one reason why few relatives came to visit the little girl: it would be difficult to visit without offering some form of assistance, financial or otherwise. A few months later, when I visited Edibe and her children, Mine was not at home but in hospital again. A child had pushed her off the swings in a playground and in the fall she had broken her operated leg.

Doctor Gerger had emphasized that if Edibe and Taha were to have another child, this child would be likely to suffer from the same disease as Mine. She advised Edibe and Taha not to have another child. I, Derya Sayman and Edibe's relatives urged them to lend an ear to doctor Gerger's warning - if not for the baby, then for Edibe's health. Edibe said she did not want to get pregnant again, but she did become pregnant. She told me that Taha had offered to help her to get an abortion and that it was not true what other people said, which was that they just wanted to have a son. In one of my last meetings with her, Edibe talked about a woman living in Sultanbeyli who was renown for her successful assistance in home births. She seriously seemed to consider asking this woman to assist her with the birth at home. I had the impression that Edibe felt unable to confront a hospital's medical staff because she would almost certainly be treated with incomprehension and disdain. All the neighbors and relatives present warned her that a delivery at home would kill her, and tried to persuade her to have a hospital birth, which

²⁴³ If SSK insured people required services not offered or insufficiently offered by state hospitals, they could be referred to private hospitals.

she eventually had. With a fourth cesarian, her third daughter, who showed no sign of the disease, was born.

Phrasing Mine's situation in terms of social capital

To summarize the case of Mine and her parents, Edibe and Taha were rather well endowed with bonding capital and also commanded some linking capital. Their bonding capital (mainly relatives) turned out to be unreliable: it was useful in some situations but useless in others. In the years before Mine was born, Taha and Edibe had received significant assistance from relatives, but they were unable to mobilize support from their relatives when faced with a serious and chronic health problem.

It did not become entirely clear to me why Mine received so little support from her relatives. I never asked any of them why they did not help her more. However, it was clear that Edibe and Taha had little to offer in return. Some of Edibe's relatives regarded Taha an impressionable person who lent out money to demanding relatives of his own, even though he could not properly feed his wife and children. Edibe's marriage to him seems to have decreased her chances of receiving support from her own relatives. Edibe herself may also have had little credit in her family. Her sister-in-law Saray once recalled that when she was pregnant with her second child, she suffered from severe pelvic joint pain. While Saray was grinding her teeth under her heavy workload of cleaning and washing - she did the entire family's laundry by hand, Edibe had sat about idly. Thus, Edibe's problem was not that she was isolated, she was in close daily contact with many relatives and friends - who were almost all Kurds - but that she was unable to mobilize their support in a situation that looked serious but not urgent.

The linking capital of Taha and Edibe was located in Taha's ties with the middle-class people in the gated community where he worked, and whose support he was able to mobilize. As the shy and conscientious worker he was, he had built up much credit with the people he worked for. The podiatrist who lived in the building, Derya Sayman, and the other residents had all been willing to contribute some of their time or money to the betterment of Mine's condition. To work in this luxurious apartment complex must have taken a heavy psychological toll from Taha, but looking from the perspective of the procurement of support, perhaps he was lucky to have found work in such an affluent middle-class environment. By virtue of his work environment, in comparison with most other migrants, Taha commanded an extraordinary amount of linking capital: most other male migrants changed jobs regularly, and were thus not in a position to build longlasting relationships with affluent or influential people. I suspect that Taha's shyness - he would never talk back to his boss or people in the apartment complex, no matter how demanding they were - and Mine's endearing character and looks increased the family's chances of receiving support from the people in the apartment complex.

That none of the efforts to help Mine had any positive long-term effect on her health had as much to do with Mine's condition as with the organization of social security services and the health care system (which requires an extraordinary amount of effort to achieve only small results). A child with Mine's symptoms should be under regular health surveillance, and ideally special facilities, such as a light wheelchair to be used on long distances, would be extended to her family. This was not the case, even though Taha was

among the lucky ones who were insured. The reason that Taha could afford to have his child examined by state hospitals was that he had a regular job with SSK. However, the effort needed to complete even the simplest task took far more time than his employer was willing to give him. He was granted a maximum of two weeks holiday a year and was off on some of the religious holidays, but hospitals did not give appointments on religious holidays. Thus, while his job provided him with the benefit of access to health care, at the same time, the requirements of the job made it impossible for him to consume this benefit.²⁴⁴

Access to health care when faced with health problems

I will now, more systematically, list and describe factors that restrict the access of displaced Kurds to health care. These factors complement those analyzed with regard to formal access to the health care system. I will start with aspects which did not figure prominently in the story about Edibe, Taha and Mine, but which are highly relevant to an understanding of the ways in which ‘the system’ excludes the people for whom it is designed. Some of these factors can be understood from a social capital point of view, especially those concerning expectations, roles and norms within families, but again these should be understood against the backdrop of failing institutions and the grim social climate of neoliberal Turkey.

Distrust and distance

Distrust of medical practitioners - not so much of their expertise and capacities but of their ethics - prevailed among people I met in Turkey.²⁴⁵ People complained that doctors did not take enough time to listen to their complaints and to carry out examinations. They also felt that doctors should inform them better about their condition and treatment. A Turkish woman told me that her son was born in a state hospital. When the contractions made her scream with pain, the attending doctor got angry at her for being too loud and instructed the nurses not to attend to her until the moment of the birth. The delivery was so traumatic for her that she never even contemplated having a second child. A Kurdish woman, a relative of a forced migrant, recalled being hit by a nurse during her delivery. The attitude of practitioners toward patients can be explained partly by the fact that physicians at state hospitals were underpaid and overburdened. Because primary health care institutions (general practitioners, family planning centers, health centers) were

²⁴⁴ In quantitative research, the situation of Mine and her parents might not produce any evidence for the effectiveness of linking social capital. After all, in the end, Mine’s parents’ efforts did not result in an improvement of her ‘objective’ condition. However, that Mine’s condition did not change does not negate the advantageous potential of linking social ties. Qualitative research exposes an interplay between a multitude of social and cultural dynamics which cannot be grasped in quantitative research. For example, in large-scale quantitative research any positive impact of linking capital could be leveled out by the negative health impact of the social stress experienced by disadvantaged people maintaining linking social relations in an inequalitarian society. If this were the case, the conclusion should not be that social capital does not matter, it should be to further investigate the conditions under and ways in which social capital operates.

²⁴⁵ My observations contrast sharply with those of medical doctors Ozturk Ertem, Bingoler, Ertem, Uysal and Gozdasoglu (2002:753) who state: “The attitude of the community towards the medical profession is one of trust and respect”. This characterization may result from the fact that most people in Turkey would never show any sign of disrespect to a doctor.

relatively ill-developed, patients habitually contacted specialists other than primary care physicians. This “increases the work load of policlinics at hospitals and reduces the time that the physician can spend with the patient. In this limited time the physician cannot offer a bio-psycho-social approach and can only treat physical illnesses. The physicians grow tired and the patients are generally not satisfied with the therapy” (Şahin & Şahin Öztürk 2004:113).

While there was a general belief that private clinics and hospitals provide better care than the cramped state hospitals, the distrust toward private hospitals and clinics was also great. Stories about private doctors performing unnecessary operations to supplement their income were common. A Turkish acquaintance knew a doctor who refused a job at a private hospital because he was told that he would have to perform a certain number of operations every month, whether people needed them or not. The fear of being subjected to unnecessary medical interventions appears well-founded, according to an article in popular newspaper *Hürriyet*²⁴⁶ which is based on a report prepared by the SSK. In the report it is stated that state and university hospitals, as well as private hospitals and health centers, routinely perform unnecessary operations, carry out cesarions when normal births are possible, and use unnecessary hip prostheses and teeth implants. The same tests are often performed and billed three or four times.

An important obstacle for access to care was the organization and quality of family planning services, services which are instrumental in safeguarding a decent standard of public health. The low level of service provided at health centers deterred many women from going there. Many women told me they had been to a local health center for information about family planning but had been turned away. They were told to go to such and such hospital. In some health centers, there was no medical equipment such as a machine to make ultrasounds. One woman recalled that when she was pregnant and had visited the local health center, the nurse had made some notes on a piece of paper, but had not examined her: “She told me I had a very healthy looking skin and that I was probably in better health than her”. The woman went home without being examined and gave birth at home.

Hospitals providing family planning facilities were often far away and, when women did manage to find a doctor, they did not always manage to get what they came for. Doctors sometimes refused to implant IUD’s with women who had just delivered a child and had not had their periods yet. They claimed it was impossible to implant an IUD²⁴⁷ and told the women to come back when they had their menstrual period. Because some women failed to use contraceptives in the meantime, quite a few unwanted children were born as the result of these doctors’ dismissals.

It is perhaps not surprising then that some women regarded *ebes* (older women with experience in assisting deliveries) as a friendly alternative to doctors and hospitals. One *ebe* told me she had done over forty deliveries which all went well, and that she had also helped women whose ‘stomach had fallen’ (*göbeği düştü* - prolapse of the uterus). By massaging their bellies she could sometimes remedy this problem. *Ebes* sometimes

²⁴⁶ *Hürriyet*, August 9, 2006:

<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=4892153&tarikh=2006-08-09>, accessed November 17, 2010.

²⁴⁷ This is not the case.

provided valuable assistance but the lack of high-quality and accessible medical support for pregnant women carried obvious risks, which were reflected in neo-natal and child mortality figures (Hancıoğlu & Alyanak 2004). Several women I met lost their baby because no nurse or doctor had been with them during the birth.

Expectation of discrimination

The prevailing distrust of the medical system and of the doctors' ethics was, for Kurds, augmented by their experiences with discrimination. Discrimination of Kurds by medical personnel was common - Kurds were often scoffed for their poor Turkish or for having too many children, for example. As Melek Demir, a mother of seven, explained:

I'm pregnant again, unfortunately, and I went to the doctor for a checkup. While he was doing the echo, he asked how many children I had. "Six", I said. "Look", he said to the nurse: "She already has six children and now she has another one, so that this one can also grow up as a thief". He insulted me like that! He didn't say if the baby was alright, if it was a boy or a girl, only that it was 5.5 months. He also asked me where I was from. I was so angry! "How dare you say my children will grow up to become thieves", I said to him. I told him I had my pride and that he didn't have the right to offend me that way, that I would file a complaint about him. Then he and the nurse begged me not to do that. My husband was waiting for me somewhere close. He saw something was wrong when I came back. He asked what was wrong, but I said there was nothing. He would have beaten the doctor up right there, had I told him. Only after we came home I told him how the doctor had insulted me. I'm telling you, if anything is wrong with this baby, I'll file a complaint about the doctor. I'll say he made an ultrasound but didn't tell me anything about the baby's condition, that all he did was insult me. I was being insulted there as a Kurd!

Really, when we go to the hospital and stand in the line and it's our turn, they let others go first. Then someone else says: "I won't take long", and then they let him go first.

It could be argued that the doctor's behavior was rude, but not discriminatory of Melek as a Kurd. Perhaps he was of the opinion that in all large families children are raised to become criminals. Besides, it is common practice to ask unacquainted people where they are from. Examples of Turkish patients who were mistreated show that not all disrespectful treatment is discriminatory towards Kurds, and when Kurds fail to achieve the desired results from doctors or officials, this is not always because they are Kurdish. I mentioned the fact that Kurds often applied for the green card too late to draw any advantage from the card. When I visited *muhtars*, it happened several times that Kurds were turned down when they asked for a *fakirlik kağıdı* in urgent situations, because they had not transferred their registration to their new neighborhood. This being turned down might be interpreted by Kurds as discriminatory behavior. In chapter 6 I referred to a young man who wanted a 'poverty paper' from the *muhtar* so that he could take his child to hospital. When the young father had left, the DEHAP member present in the *muhtar* office said: "That's a Kurd obviously. He may go away now and tell other people he was rejected because he is Kurdish, but the fact is, he really does need that transferral". This being said, I regard it likely that Melek was targeted as a Kurd. In conversations with Turks I noticed again and again that many Turks associate Kurds with ignorance, a lack

of civilization and hordes of dirty children whom they can not raise properly. To give another argument, Cenk Saraçoğlu (2010) shows that racist stereotypes of Kurds are commonplace among members of the Izmir middle-class.

In any case, stories like that of Melek travel fast. Philomena Essed (1991) has shown that victims of racism base their analysis of behavior which may be interpreted as discriminatory on their own experiences but also on those of people with similar ('racial') characteristics. Since every Kurd has either experienced or heard from close relatives and friends about ethnic discrimination by nurses and doctors, it is quite easy to understand why recent Kurdish migrants tend to interpret disrespectful treatment as discriminatory. And even if they do not do this, the question lingers whether the motivation behind the treatment was, perhaps, discriminatory. Statements made by doctor Haluk (chapter 6) and a recollection of doctor Ahmet Kaya²⁴⁸, a medical doctor and the initiator of the Community Health Foundation²⁴⁹ (TOSAV), an organization that worked with earthquake survivors and Kurdish migrants, supported the claim of Kurds that they were treated as inferior. When Ahmet Kaya went to a health center to discuss a plan to increase poor people's access to family planning facilities, the doctor at the health center said: "Yes, I know what you're doing, you are helping these dirty people there. That won't do any good. Let them go back to the mountains". Reflecting on this incident, Ahmet Kaya said:

I didn't say anything after that. This man, a doctor who should have no prejudices, who should have a humanistic attitude, says this to me. You can imagine the way he will treat his patients. We go through so much trouble to convince people to go to the health center, and then, if someone gets a reaction like that, he won't come back a second time. The patient will tell his neighbors and within no time everybody will know.

Considering that health care is a topic that Kurds can also discuss with Turkish acquaintances, we might expect links between Turks and Kurds to be adequate vehicles for the circulation of negative as well as positive stories about doctors and the medical sector. Stories of Turks which mirrored the experiences of Kurds might incite Kurds to modify their ideas about the behavior of nurses and doctors. However, in the hundreds of conversations I had with displaced Kurds, I rarely heard Kurds discuss health-related issues with 'others': negative stories about doctors and hospitals appeared to mainly circulate within Kurdish circles.

Rankings of priorities

Although health problems were often discussed, making provisions against future health problems and hazards did not rate high on the priority list of many Kurdish migrants. Lack of education, a shortage of energy and time, feelings of incompetence, and the expectation of discrimination helped to push health provisions to the bottom of people's priority lists. The situation of Zehra, a young mother from Siirt province, illustrates the fact that taking health provisions had relatively low priority.

²⁴⁸ This is his real name.

²⁴⁹ Toplum Sağlığı Vakfı.

When Zehra was eight months pregnant of her fourth child, she was extremely listless and could hardly stand on her feet. She and her husband had no money for a doctor, she said. Because she looked very ill, I arranged for her to be examined in a private hospital. The gynecologist diagnosed Zehra for anemia and was astonished she had not collapsed already. Both mother and baby could die instantly at birth if Zehra was not treated, she said. After six blood transfusions, Zehra recovered. Unfortunately, the baby was in breach presentation which would complicate a normal birth, so the doctor urged Zehra to give birth in hospital and not at home as she had done three times before. One of the three home births had ended in a tragedy, because the baby, who had been in breach presentation, had suffocated during the delivery.

Because Zehra could not afford a hospital birth, she needed to obtain a green card. However, she and her two oldest children were still registered in the village. Together we started the procedure to transfer their registration to Istanbul and to apply for a green card. Eight and a half months pregnant, Zehra traveled from one office to another to get all the paperwork done, but her green card had not yet come through when her contractions started. She gave birth in the state academic hospital in Kartal, which charged a very reasonable fee. After the birth, she finally received a green card for herself and her two oldest children. However, because Zehra and her husband had failed to register the births of the youngest two children, she had not obtained a green card for them. All doctors' visits and medication for the newborn baby and its older sister would have to be paid for by Zehra and her husband.

Differential treatment

So far I have focused primarily on exclusionary aspects of 'the system'. These had immediate negative effects on individuals, as when a pregnant woman was sent away by a health center without examination, and while they were 'processed' in daily conversations, they also ensued in long-lasting and widely-shared negative dispositions. This reiteration of negative experiences was one way in which sociability impacted on individuals' 'relationships' with health care institutions. Another way in which sociability did this was by creating and reinforcing understandings, values and norms that functioned to cut *certain* people off from support that other people did receive. I found that people in the same webs of relationships sometimes occupied very different positions with regard to their access to health care and treatment. In many families, in spite of the rhetoric of harmonious family relations and selfless dedication to relatives and friends, strong norms of equal treatment did not exist. In the extended family of Aleyna's husband, for example, much depended on relationships of dependence and affection between specific members of the family. While certain family members were taken care of very well when ill, others were neglected.

In large families, people - siblings, for example - tend to feel closer to some members and more distant to others, and to spend much time with some members and less with others. This is likely to be even more so when some of these siblings have a different mother or father. In situations in which basic human needs are not or insufficiently satisfied by public institutions, such 'innocent' family dynamics are bound to affect the degree in which individuals are able to satisfy their need for care and treatment. When

gender norms and cultural notions of who is most deserving of attention come in, access to health provisions becomes even more unequal.

In Aleyna's family as well as in all other families, a strong preference for boys was discernable. Individuals or couples sometimes had different ideas, but in all families, I encountered the strong feeling that boys were more desirable than girls. When Aleyna's second daughter was born, relatives waiting outside the delivery room did not bother to come in and congratulate her once they had heard it was a girl. When Rana, mother of a little girl, was pregnant with her second child and had an ultrasound made, her sister-in-law asked her whether it was a boy or a girl. When Rana contrived the doctor had not told her, the sister-in-law reportedly said: "If it's a girl I hope it dies". On a visit to one of Edibe's *amcas*, I was introduced to a female friend of the family. She looked at the youngest of my two children, who was six months old at that time, and asked: "Boy or girl?". "Girl", I said. She made a disapproving sound. Then, as if to console me, she said: "Doesn't matter, it's only your first, you still have another go". This preference for boys affected how boys and girls, and men and women, fared in sickness and health, but it was not gender per se (whether a child was a boy or girl, for example) that determined people's chances. For example, the position of a girl who was the first female child after three brothers would be very different from that of a girl who only had three older sisters.

Gender relations, roles and expectations were mediated by a host of other factors such as time and money, the state of mind of a potential helper, and degrees of affection, as the following example from the Günay family shows. On a visit to the Günay family, Ahmet, who was a son of Aleyna's husband's *amca* Abdülaziz, said he "had it up to here" with taking his relatives to doctors. His brother's baby son - the first grandson of his father and his father's favorite grandchild - had been ailing for quite some time. After having taken the boy to doctors and pharmacists several times, Ahmet made it clear that others would have to take care of themselves. This example not only illustrates the preferential treatment of the little boy because of his sex, but also clarifies that other people's access to health care was restricted by coincidence: the boy had happened to fall ill before them. Had the boy not been sick, Ahmet might have offered his support to others. Abdülaziz Günay not only had a favorite grandson but a favorite wife as well. Whereas the wife he had married out of his free will was pampered, nobody took the effort to take his first wife Vicdan - who was in very bad health - to a doctor. Vicdan was not neglected because she was a woman per se, but because she was a second-rate wife. This status had everything to do with gender norms and expectations as they had existed in the village: had Abdülaziz and Vicdan not been forced to marry, she might have attained a much more respectable position in another family.

Overall, family involvement tended to turn out negatively for women more often than for men. In-laws and other relatives played an important role in restricting women's access to family planning and prenatal and postnatal care. One of the biggest problems encountered by women was that they often had more children than they wanted and that some children were born without any medical assistance. This situation jeopardized the women's health as well as that of their children. The number of children also put a strain on the father and others who felt responsible for the family income. Several older women told me they would have had less children had they had the chance, and many young

women were not eager to have many children. However, almost all married women had to deal with pressure from relatives and neighbors with regard to the number of children they were to have.

A woman with four children explained that she could not have any more children, but every time her father-in-law visited, he asked her why she did not have more children: “He said to me: ‘A fruit tree has to bear fruit. When a fruit tree doesn’t bear fruit, it will be cut down’.” When I asked her what he meant exactly, another woman present said: “He means he can marry his son to another woman”. The first woman replied: “He wouldn’t do that, but he would appreciate me more if I had more children. He keeps telling me and my *elti* that we have to have a child every year. I didn’t say anything to him, I’m too ashamed”. In line with the wishes of her father-in-law, she did have children very young, but even then she had to put off with the disapproval of relatives. “I married at fourteen. I was very young when I had my first child, I cried for a year after that. My *elti* kept saying to me that I was so young to be a mother, things like ‘You’re a child yourself’, as if she really disapproved. I was so ashamed of myself.”

Sometimes information about contraceptives was not passed on to younger women because older women wanted younger women to have many children. Some young women believed that birth control pills made women who had not yet given birth to children infertile. For them, this was a reason not to use them. Mothers-in-law and other female relatives often also had a strong say in the conditions under which young women gave birth to their children. Rana, for example, desperately wanted to give birth in hospital, but gave birth at home without any medical assistance because her husband’s older sister and her mother-in-law believed this was how it should be done. Rana: “My mother-in-law said: ‘I’ve given birth to ten children like this, why shouldn’t you be able to do it’”. Doctor Ahmet Kaya confirmed that mothers-in-law often acted to restrict the choices of *gelins*.

Often the family, usually the mother-in-law, doesn’t want her *gelin* to give birth in hospital, that’s true. It’s hard for a *gelin* to say no to her mother-in-law. “If your child dies, you can have another child”, people think: “But you only have one mother-in-law, and if that relationship suffers, that with your husband will suffer too”.

This being said, some mothers-in-law were very supportive of their sons’ wives when they were pregnant or raising small children. Resime from Çanakçı village, for example, arranged for her daughter-in-law to be admitted to hospital and took care of her until she was strong enough to come home. Also Zeynep Demir was deeply appreciated by her daughters-in-law.

To round off this section about differential treatment within families, it should be noted that unequal treatment did not only result from culturally and personally inspired likes and dislikes, but also from the rapid changes in socio-economic conditions and geographic locations the forced migrants experienced. It is much more difficult to uphold a norm of equal treatment in extended families than in situations in which small nuclear families are relatively independent from their surroundings.²⁵⁰ For a father of two

²⁵⁰ I also use the term extended family to refer to a cluster of related nuclear families in close contact.

children growing up in a secure and stable environment, it is much easier to treat his children equally than it is for a father of ten children, born and raised in quickly changing circumstances which necessitate frequent adjustments. It was regarded quite normal - albeit not always fair - that some children in the family worked, while others attended school, and that some were forced to marry someone they did not like, while others had (or took) the freedom to decide about their own marriage partner. When structural factors make it difficult to treat children equally, unequal treatment may be more easily tolerated.

How social capital operated

To provide more insight in the dynamics of the migrants' social capital with regard to the obtainment of health care, I will employ Portes' (1998) analysis of why people do things for other people. Portes distinguishes four types of mechanisms through which support for, but also control and restraint of people may be established. The first two stem from an internalized sense of obligation: people do things for other people because they sense they ought to and because 'it feels right'. The other two are instrumental: people do things for other people because they hope to get something out of it for themselves.

An internalized sense of obligation can, according to Portes, emerge from the instillment of values during childhood (*introjection of values*). An internalized value might be to care for and respect the elderly. This would be a value with universal applicability: all elderly would be regarded as deserving of care and respect. However, as Portes argues, there are also situations in which "the altruistic dispositions of actors (...) are not universal but are bounded by the limits of their community" (Portes 1998:8). This tends to be the case when people's group identifications are centered around a sense of sharing the same fate. Examples of people who feel they should stand by each other because they are 'all in the same boat' (*bounded solidarity*), may be factory workers or members of a religious community. With instrumental - as opposed to intrinsic - motivations, there is an expectation of repayment in one way or another. Repayment may be expected from the person who received support (*reciprocity exchanges*), but may also be expected from the collectivity to which donors and recipients both belong. In the latter case, which Portes refers to with the term *enforceable trust*, "the collectivity itself acts as guarantor that whatever debts are incurred will be repaid" (Portes 1998:9). Portes illustrates the idea of enforceable trust with the example of a banker who can extend a loan without collateral to a member of his religious community, because the threat of ostracization in case of non-repayment would be too high a price for the money borrower.

The question is which mechanisms were operative, and how, in the case of the forced migrants seeking support in dealing with health problems and the medical bureaucracy. To start with the instillment of values, in my observation, people who assisted others did this because they cared and sensed they ought to. Most forced migrants did indeed believe that sick people should be supported by their relatives and by other people around them. Because the support of sick people was labor-intensive, in practice, this norm applied to close relatives, friends, and neighbors, who were usually Kurdish, and often also co-villagers. Mostly, the expectation of support was limited to a face-to-face community of people who had rather dense ties with each other.

If the norm was that ill people should be supported, then why was support quite often not provided? An important reason for staying passive was that people did not feel they were able to help. Many migrants felt that the support needed was beyond their capacities, and beyond what could reasonably be expected. To take on the responsibility of supporting and caring for a sick person drained energy and other resources. People all had their own financial, family and health troubles, and many felt incompetent in face of 'the system'. To venture into the medical sphere implied a confrontation with their 'shortcomings': it is not much fun to be talked down to, and it is not easy to harness oneself against expected discrimination. Considering that it was so difficult to provide support, only those who 'really' needed it should be able to count on support, and this support should be provided by the ones most responsible, able and competent.

However, people differed in their perceptions of what being sick and needy meant. As the example of Aleyna and her baby daughter who drank cleaning detergent showed, people did not always know or agree about when care was needed. In Aleyna's case, it was not only that she was relatively 'marginal': being a woman who married into the family, mother of a daughter only. It was also difficult for Aleyna and her relatives to assess the nature and urgency of what happened. If Aleyna's daughter had cut herself with a knife and had been covered in blood, Aleyna's relatives might have rushed the girl off to a doctor no matter what. A relative lack of basic biomedical knowledge impacted negatively on people's ability to judge the urgency and severity of a health problem. Many migrants were unaware of the benefits of preventive health care, and of health-related precepts such as when to start feeding solid food to a small baby. This was due to the fact that very little time and effort is spent in Turkey on health education, and to the migrants' low level of education. Most people's only sources of information were the television and the people around them: the PKK-affiliated Kurdish newspaper regularly reported about health issues, but this paper was not read by most of the people who could put this knowledge to use.

It was not only inconclusive and contested when people were in need, but also which person in need was close enough to qualify for support. The boundaries of the communities of twenty or thirty years ago had unraveled and sometimes even dissolved. Over the past decades, people's sense of community became both broader and narrower. On the one hand, what was left of the 'traditional' community was being extended on a more inclusive ethnic basis - diffusing the potential for support - on the other hand, people were thrown back on smaller family units than the extended unit, and new divisions were drawn between different strands of extended families. In most families, there was a tendency to establish nuclear households. With the establishment of nuclear households, the 'modern' perception gained ground that the husband was the first responsible for his wife and that parents were the first responsables for their small children. If the husband of an ill woman did not do what might ideally be expected of him, why would someone else take up her case? People who felt some inclination or pressure to help others, sometimes refrained from taking responsibility for a patient when the patient herself or himself - or the patient's closest relatives - remained passive. I also noted this with myself. Mustafa Demir from Ağaçlık village once asked me to take his wife to a doctor, but I refused by smiling and saying that he could also take her. Almost

always, responsibility could be assigned to people closer to the patient. Besides, people close to the patient had difficulty making out why they should help one person but not their other relative or neighbor.

Close relatives who would have lived next-door a generation ago, now might not see each other for weeks or months on end. Even when people knew that their relative was ill, not being faced with this every single day decreased incentives and opportunities to support him or her. I am not suggesting that twenty or thirty years ago, people in need of treatment and care would have always been more likely to be supported. I heard many stories of mothers who, still in the village, had not been allowed to take their children to a doctor, and who lost a child for seeking medical support too late. However, it used to be clearer who fell under the responsibility of whom and the community was somewhat more stable: people knew where to look for support. Decisions about sending family members to doctors were taken under the auspices of the family head, usually the father or grandfather. In Istanbul, family heads were still quite influential in enabling or cutting off people's access to health care, but they were not usually the ones with the language skills and the knowledge of how things worked. Therefore, part of the responsibility to act befell younger male members of the family who were busy trying to improve their meagre living standard, building up their livelihoods - often getting frustrated in this process - and who did not always feel they were the 'natural responsible' for sick relatives.²⁵¹

Other aspects of situations regarding care for ill people were also characterized by vagueness and inconclusiveness. If people decided to support someone, they often did not know what they were getting themselves into, and if their efforts would have any positive effect at all. Even the simplest diagnosis could take an extensive amount of time and might not result in effective treatment. People who tried to help might not be able to achieve anything, because of the nature of the health problem or because doors would be smashed in their faces. Mine, the girl with the crooked leg, for example, had been taken to hospitals several times already and doctors had not known what to do with her, so how could her relatives know what to do? Prospective helpers did not know how long they would be needed, and they gathered that after one offering of support, the person in need would start to expect more. A young woman who very much wanted to obtain a green card, kept asking her husband to apply for it. For his wife and children to benefit from a registration in his name, they would have to get married officially first, which he did not think was necessary. He had little faith in any state facility or institution and was of the opinion that Kurds should keep away from the state as much as possible. However, in the end it seemed to boil down to other things. His wife said: "You know his mother, he says: 'If I do it for you, my mother will demand I do it for her and my father too, that's too much of a hassle'."

Appeals fitting Portes' statements regarding bounded solidarity were made, but on the whole, these had limited effectiveness. The cases in which village associations or DEHAP raised money for a sick person in extraordinary circumstances, formed 'classic' examples of bounded solidarity. Whereas from an outsiders' point of view, DEHAP

²⁵¹ Cathrine Brun (2000) draws attention to the key role that is often played by young men in processes of resettlement.

appealed to a particularistic and primordial sentiment, for many forced migrants, it was quite a new experience to provide support to people merely on the basis of ethnic solidarity. DEHAP's claims for support could not have been made, say, twenty years ago, because most forced migrants had still lived in territorialized village communities then. Thus, the party's appeals and perhaps also those made by the board members of village associations, really were the "emergent product of a common fate" (Portes 1998). Although appeals to ethnic solidarity were made, most people felt that such solidarity did not extend into the domain of health care.

Instrumental motivations played a minor role in the provision of support to ill people. In terms of reciprocity exchanges there was little to be gained from the provision of such support. Aleyna and Mine's parents, for example, were hardly in a position to reciprocate received support. However, once people had provided extensive support to someone, they would expect the recipient to support them in return, if the need and opportunity arose. If someone who was approached for support did not trust that the other person would do the same for him or her, he or she would be less likely to help. In relationships which were very unequal, the donor knew he would always be the donor and not the recipient. This could be draining for the person on whom demands were made. Ahmet Günay, for example, the young man who took his little nephew to the doctor but who told other relatives to look after themselves, would always be the person offering support. However, Ahmet did need the 'credit' of his father and the rest of his family to keep up his textile business. This may have formed one incentive to help.

The mechanism of *enforceable trust* did not play a role of significance in mobilizing support for sick people either. As Portes argues, when enforceable trust is operative, the expectation of repayment is not based on the personal relationship between the donor and the recipient, but on the insertion of both actors in a common social structure. In Portes' example of the banker extending a loan to someone he does not know, the banker extending the loan counts on the 'surveillance' of the borrower by the group: the threat of ostracism encourages the borrower to repay the loan. With respect to health care, the idea of enforceable trust might be viewed more in terms of people being pressured into supporting anonymous others, for fear of being ostracized. However, efforts to support anonymous people were few, and although there was some pressure exerted on prospective givers to conform to requests for a donation, if people did not give anything or did not give much, they were not ostracized. Only among the Alevis, among whom income differences were relatively large, someone approached for support might feel pressured by 'the community' to give so that his reputation would not suffer.

As stated earlier, the migrants' linking capital was very limited. To illustrate the importance of linking ties, I may give the example of what my husband's brother, who was an electrician before he retired, did for his niece when she became ill. When he was still an electrician, he founded a neighborhood association, chaired it for many years, and initiated many fund-raising events for poor neighborhood residents. Through these activities, he established a multitude of contacts with local politicians and successful businesspeople. When his niece was in need of long-term medical treatment, being the best-connected person in his family, he arranged for her to be admitted to one of the best hospitals in Istanbul and for her employer to accept far longer time periods of sick leave

than he would normally grant an employee. Another example of linking capital was the social capital mobilized at my husband's university when the child of the *çaycı*, the person serving tea and other drinks, fell seriously ill. Contrary to the teaching and managing staff, the *çaycı* was not paid in dollar amounts with three zeroes. He also did not have private health insurance. Therefore, the teaching staff collected money for the operation of the child.

To my knowledge, very few of the forced migrants had such contacts, or if they did, they did not or could not - yet - employ them for such aims. The only example of linking capital was that of Taha, Mine's father. It is plausible that linking capital 'sticks' more to the needy person who commands the relevant ties than other types of social capital. When affluent or influential people do favors to poor people who work for them, these favors may not extend to a great many people around the workers. It is, for example, doubtful whether the people in the gated community would have done the same for Mine if she had not been Taha's daughter, but the daughter of, say, his brother's wife's brother.

In their capacity as domestic workers or nannies in rich people's households, women from poor or migrant communities may be well-positioned to build up linking capital. In the years after my fieldwork, I observed that more Kurdish women started to work and that they mostly worked as domestic workers in middle-class households. This is how Zehra found her husband a new job. She cleaned the house of a doctor who worked at a hospital in Kartal and managed to obtain a job for her husband at the laundry of the hospital through this doctor's intercession. Although Zehra's husband's salary in the laundry is lower than when he worked in construction, he now enjoys fixed working hours, SSK insurance, loses less time traveling to his workplace, and is no longer dependent on his paternal cousin who acted as his subcontractor and who did not always give him his wages on time.

A downside of this type of linking capital is that it only comes about by accident. There is no institutionalized infrastructure for it to emerge. Another downside is - and this is crucial - that for linking capital to develop, it is especially the person in need who has to do certain things, and to abstain from doing certain other things. He or she has to possess certain 'qualities' and skills to create a setting in which linking capital can emerge (you need to know people to find a job as a cleaning lady in the house of a medical practitioner), and to behave in such a way that the more influential or powerful person is willing to support him or her. Zehra, for example, always struck me as one of the most socially skilled young women I met. Taha, on the other hand, as stated earlier, was extremely shy, almost servile. Nothing in the appearance and behavior of Zehra and Taha hinted to the stereotype of the wild or dangerous Kurd. Thus, they did not constitute a threat to members of the Turkish middle-class who are characterized by several authors as feeling themselves under threat (e.g. Ayata 2002:28; Saraçoğlu 2010; Sirman 2006:36). Kurds who are less able or willing to present themselves as 'adapted and innocuous' will have a much harder time than Zehra and Taha to yield the benefits of linking relationships, for they would have to constantly restrain themselves.

Reflection: illness, social capital and structural violence

In an area of life in which people's chances of improving their position are dependent on, on the one hand, financial capital, social skills and upward linking social capital, and on the other hand, 'the system', the bonding social capital of the Kurds was significant, but there were sharp limits to what it could achieve. Both the nature of health problems and the organization of health care facilities, made it difficult for people to help others. When the need was acute and short-term, people around a sick person were likely to raise money for treatment or to support relatives in other ways. When people were chronically ill or their need for care was unobvious, it was far more difficult to sustain support. All migrants suffered from the stress of living in an enormous city in which time and money were never enough, and they felt powerless in the face of 'the system'. Providing a gift of time and effort in this respect was far more difficult than offering a wedding gift or distributing food on a *mevlüt* or circumcision ceremony. Besides, a low level of literacy, distrust toward doctors and hospitals, expectations of discrimination, the wish to stay aloof from institutions, the criteria for green cards which excluded certain people in need, and lack of support from relatives and friends - sometimes in combination with a low sense of urgency - served to delimit the access of displaced Kurds to failing health services. While some of these factors had nothing to do with ethnicity or with the experience of forced migration per se, others did.

As in most of the previous chapters, also in this chapter, 'the state' occupied a central place. Whereas in several previous chapters the overt violation of the rights of Kurdish citizens was the topic, this chapter was concerned with more covert infringements of the rights of the forced migrants within the context of structural violence, or, the medical neglect of the poor in Turkey. State health services were too far away from those who needed them most, they were understaffed or badly-equipped, child health surveillance programs existed but were very easy to 'fall out off', and although the green card system was relatively successful in providing access to basic health care, many poor people were still not covered by any kind of health care provision (Buğra & Keyder 2006; Ozturk Ertem, Bingoler, Ertem, Uysal & Gozdasoglu 2002; Şahin & Şahin Öztürk 2004).²⁵² Only recently, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that measures would be implemented to end the common practice of keeping newborn babies and dead bodies hostage in hospital when hospital bills are not paid - effectively kidnappings which can last for weeks and even months.²⁵³

Inequality in terms of health care is reproduced within a 'national' climate of inequality. Before the constitution all Turkish citizens may be equal, but it seems to be a fact of life that in some laws and many practices some people are more equal than others:

²⁵² Tercüman newspaper (April 28, 2006) reports that the number of green card holders increased from 6,722,444 in 2004 to over 11 million in 2006. The average cost expended per green card holder was 260 YTL, less than 180 Euro's. In absolute numbers Diyarbakir had most green card holders: <http://www.tercuman.com/v1/haber.asp?id=38602>, accessed September 29, 2010.

See Kurban et al. (TESEV) 2007: 261-262 and Adaman and Ardiç 2008 for more figures. For a collection of journalistic articles on (abuse of) the green card, see: <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=796821>, accessed September 29, 2010.

²⁵³ Report on internet news service Türkyurdu (August 11, 2009): <http://turkyurdu.com/son-dakika/basbakan-erdogan-yeni-dogan-bebekler-ile-olulerin-hastanede-rehin-kaldigi-gunler-geride-kaldi/>, accessed September 29, 2010.

rich people more than poor people, Turks more than Kurds, Kurds more than gypsies, people with education more than people without education, people with high-placed contacts more than people without these contacts, people with regular jobs more than people who work on the street, men more than women, women without headscarves more than women with headscarves - or vice versa - and so on. Excesses of the system are remedied with appeals to charity, a 'business' which is itself highly politicized.

Although vast numbers of citizens suffer from institutional shortcomings in the field of health care, differential access to health care is reproduced not only by large segments of the socio-economic elite but also by disadvantaged sections of the population. Inequality between the uninsured and insured, and between the privately insured and the publicly insured, is naturalized to a large extent: many people regard a green card not as a basic right but as a gesture of goodwill which has to be deserved by the card holder, for example, by not being criminal or politically 'deviant'. Persistent and vast numbers of newspaper reports incriminating the holders of green cards indicate that they are regarded by many as crooks (see also Yılmaz 2008). Saraçoğlu (2010:247) shows that at present one of the most widely-shared negative stereotypes of Kurds is that they are 'benefit scroungers'. When in 2008 large numbers of Kurdish children joined mass demonstrations against the government, these children not only received high prison sentences, the governor of Adana declared that the green cards of "families who send their children to political meetings (*eyleme gönderen*)" would be confiscated (Darıcı 2009:19). There was no public outcry against these high sentences nor against the confiscation of green cards.

As Szreter and Woolcock (2004:655) argue, to improve poor people's health condition, "it is crucial to facilitate the building of linking social capital across power differentials, especially to representatives of institutions responsible for delivering those key services that *necessarily* entail on-going discretionary face-to-face interaction". The following quotation takes us back to the problems analyzed in chapter 6 regarding the relationships between professionals and NGO workers and the forced migrants.

Bridging social capital between people who know themselves to be unlike in terms of social identity can only occur spontaneously in a civil society where there already exists a *rough and ready approximate equivalence between unlike individuals* (...) Where, however, there are circumstances - sustained by legal institutions (e.g. Jim Crow laws, apartheid), high economic inequality, rigid social status differentials (e.g. caste distinctions) - in which all individuals do not perceive themselves as enjoying such a rough equivalence, it is entirely unrealistic to expect spontaneous bridging capital to form between haves and have-nots, or between officials, professionals or nongovernmental organizations (...) and the poor communities they work with (Szreter & Woolcock 2004:656, my emphasis)

Research carried out by Saraçoğlu (2010) in Izmir indicates that many members of the professional groups specifically mentioned by Szreter and Woolcock (2004), such as law enforcement officers, social workers, health care providers and teachers have become overtly anti-Kurdish over the past years. Szreter and Woolcock (2004:656) argue that in such circumstances, "those with the power and resources to think very carefully about

how to create the shared sense of fairness, including mutual respect between all concerned” bear a special responsibility. While poor people will remain active agents in the mobilization of linking social, the conditions in which such capital can thrive, can only really be influenced by people with political, economic and ‘opinion forging’ power.

As yet, romanticized notions of relatives supporting each other are mobilized in an instrumental manner by lawmakers, the government and other authorities (Buğra & Keyder 2006). They design and implement policies which go against the grain of a large body of research about family relationships showing that, almost universally, the family is not only a site of much affection and support, but also a site of much neglect and violence (Graburn 1987; Kağıtçıbaşı 1982; Kandiyoti 1995; Levinson 1989; Römkens 1986; Steinmetz 1988; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2007). Neglectful or abusive relationships are bound to negatively affect the health of the more vulnerable members of families.²⁵⁴ Even under the best of conditions, the (procurement of) treatment and care for ill people should not be left to relatives and neighbors, let alone in communities which are under as much economic, social and emotional stress as the poorer sections of the Turkish population, and especially the forced migrants. Poverty - also relative poverty - not only forms a risk factor for child health per se (Aber, Bennet & Conley 1997), it is also found to be associated with relatively high rates of child neglect (Drake & Pandey 1996; Scheper-Hughes 1987).

As explained in chapter 6, recently some changes were made in policies concerning health care with potentially positive effects for poor people, the major example is the provision of free health care for children under 18. It is too early to judge what the effects of these changes will be for the forced migrants, but recent telephone interviews with a few forced migrants and related research (Kurban et al. (TESEV) 2007) suggest that problems in terms of the provision of health care are still rampant.

In laying bare the inadequacies of the migrants’ social capital in matters of illness and disease, my research results support the growing body of research (e.g. Fine 2003; Lynch, Smith, Kaplan & House 2000), which criticizes an all too optimistic understanding of social capital as a cheap remedy to a great diversity of societal ills, which undertheorizes both the ‘internal’ inequality-promoting aspects of social capital and the pervasive impact of structural inequality and violence. A more refined understanding of social capital, which incorporates an analysis of the structural conditions within which different kinds of social capital emerge and operate, offers a more realistic insight in problems relating to access to public health.

To summarize, in this chapter I argued that in coping with health crises, the migrants’ social capital was relatively ineffective. Health problems were more or less ‘private’ problems with private repercussions. In spite of values and norms regarding support for sick people, in actuality, expectations of support did not extend too far. People could not be forced to donate money for an ill person, for example, and if someone who offered a lot of support to an ill person felt let down by the recipient later, the recipient could not be forced by others into a more appropriate response. As I will show in the next and final

²⁵⁴ Leland Ackerson and S.V. Subramanian (2008), for example, found that domestic violence increases the risk of malnutrition of women and children.

chapter, when people encountered problems with possibly far-reaching repercussions, that is, in situations of impending or actual conflict, social capital *was* often quite effective. With interfamily and intrafamily conflicts over money, labor and the like, the incentive for relative outsiders to appeal to ‘Kurdish fellowship’ or to some sort of ‘universal morality’, and to enforce the observance of norms, was greater. If in this chapter, I showed that the price to be paid for the ineffectiveness of ‘Kurdish’ social capital was paid by the forced migrants themselves, in the next chapter it will become clear that if there is a price to be paid for the relative effectivity of ‘Kurdish’ social capital - which I think there is – then at least part of this price is paid by ‘the state’ or ‘Turkish society’.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conflict, Capital and Control: “We Solved That One Too”

One evening early March 2003, nine men - all brothers and cousins - agreed to meet at the taxi stand at Pendik Dörtyol, that is, at the main entrance into Pendik from the E5. Because the E5 cuts right through Pendik district, dividing it in a lower and upper section, at Pendik Dörtyol, an overpass stretches over the E5 to link the two sections to each other. The taxi stand functioning as a meeting place on this particular evening was located at the upper side of the overpass. It was a small parking lot surrounded by high storey buildings accommodating furniture outlets, car companies and insurance agencies. I had never thought of this place as an apt spot to fight out family differences, but the nine relatives assembling here came to do battle. And so they did. One ended up with several fractures in his skull, his brother with a broken nose, someone else had a broken cheekbone, and one was stabbed right above his eye. The ones least injured fled before the police arrived at the scene.

I was unaware of any of this happening until Azad, one of the men present at the site, called me with an unusual request.²⁵⁵ After the usual exchanges about our own well-being and that of our respective close relatives, he hesitantly asked if I - perhaps, for a limited amount of time, only if I could afford it, and if it did not compromise me in any way - would be able to lend him a certain amount of money, maybe 500 million lira.²⁵⁶ He explained that he, his brother and some of his cousins were in urgent need of money to settle a conflict with other relatives. A cousin had taken the conflict to DEHAP and the party officials had ruled that the physical damage inflicted by Azad's side on the other party, which was greater and more costly than that suffered in Azad's camp, should be compensated. Although Azad did not agree with this decision, he felt forced to concede.

²⁵⁵ I quoted Azad in earlier chapters. Azad means freedom in Kurdish. Relatives and friends know him by a Turkish name. When I visited him in 2010, he asked to be named 'Azad' in this dissertation. Azad's wife was the girl from Tatlıdere village who related how her mother and other female relatives were locked up in a shed by soldiers and feared they would be burned (chapter 4). Azad and his wife met through DTP channels after my departure from Turkey. She said she would like to be called Gülistan, also a Kurdish name. 'Zehra', the woman whose father was killed by the PKK when she was eleven years old (chapter 4), was fine with the name I had given her. If I had asked more people for their naming preference, many would have come up with Kurdish names. I did not use many Kurdish names as pseudonyms, because to do so would result in an unrealistic depiction of naming practices among Kurds in Turkey.

²⁵⁶ Roughly 285 Euros.

Azad was a friend of Abdurrahman *amca*, an elderly man from Siirt to whom I was introduced by Gül, the woman who had set me up in Pendik. Abdurrahman and Azad were *hemşeri*, they both were from Siirt province. In his teenage years, Azad worked odd jobs in Adana, Eruh, Istanbul and other places. When he was around twenty years old, he joined the PKK. Until that time, he had been trying to establish himself as a musician, playing the *saz* (a long-necked string instrument). He was a great fan of Şivan Perwer - one of the best known Kurdish folk singers ever - all of whose songs he knew by heart: “To be honest, one of the main reasons that I joined the PKK was to go to Europe to be close to Şivan Perwer. Being in the PKK, it was easy to go abroad, people said”. After a year in the PKK, the organization sent him to Siirt to develop political activities. Upon being denounced by an informer he was arrested, and sentenced to thirteen years. Because he did not feel safe in his region of origin, a few days after his prison term ended, he moved to Istanbul, where he lived as a guest in the house of Ferhat, one of his cousins.

I knew Azad well enough to know that he would never ask for anything unless he absolutely had to, and that he would do his utmost to pay the money back. He was a sensitive and helpful person who spoilt his nieces and nephews with attention instead of sweets and presents. Although poor, he was very generous and deeply disliked having to accept grants from others. He never came to my home empty-handed, and when we met elsewhere he always insisted on accompanying me home so that he could pay for my minibus fare, even at times when he was unemployed, which was often. It was extremely hard for him to find a job because of his ‘political record’. When I once asked him why he had so little contact with his old friends from prison or the PKK, he told me he would be embarrassed about having so little to offer them: he could not even treat them to an outdoor meal.

I told Azad that I would lend him the money and agreed to meet him and one of his younger cousins - apparently one of the most hot-headed ones who nevertheless got off with minor injuries - in a small *pastane*, a bakery serving tea and sweets. Azad had a fresh scar right above his eye, the imprint of a knife. He brought his hand to his face and pointed out the tiny distance between the scar and his eye with his fingers: “I was this close to losing my eye”, he said. Upon ordering tea, he and his cousin set out to tell me their side of the story, probably not only because they thought I had a right to know now, but also because at that moment their whole lives practically evolved around this conflict. In subsequent meetings Azad kept me informed. At every meeting he expressed his discomfort at not being able to pay the money back sooner. Yet, in spite of his financial difficulties, he managed to pay the entire amount back within a year and a half. As far as the conflict was concerned, it took until 2008 for the families to reconcile, but during all those years of simmering tension, there never was a new outburst of physical violence.

This case of DEHAP intervention in a fight was not a one-time incident, on the contrary, when displaced Kurds were confronted with conflicts, it was common practice to approach the leaders of the local branch of DEHAP or its successor DTP. To speak in terms of social capital, whereas this capital, as I showed in the previous chapter, was largely ineffective in the field of health care provision, in the field of dispute resolution it turned out to be quite effective. Leading Kurds proved able to transform a decidedly Kurdish form of symbolic capital into a valuable form of social capital, and newly migrated Kurds, although marginalized members of urban society, commanded a social resource which many others did not command.²⁵⁷ On the face of it, the symbolic capital of local Kurdish leaders weighed heavier than the authority of the police or the court. If this was so, it should be asked where these Kurdish leaders derived their authority from and what their practice of conflict resolution indicated about 'the state's grip' on forced migrants. In other words, an important question is what this mobilization of otherwise 'marginal' social and symbolic capital tells us about the salience of ethnic identifications in the complex urban settings in which the migrants lived - and still live. And, to retain our focus on social capital theory, it should be asked what this social capitalistic practice indicates about the uses and limitations of social capital in settings marked by structural and political violence.

In the first section of this chapter, I will situate DEHAP's conflict resolution practice in the wider realm of the existing possibilities for dispute resolution in rural and urban Turkey.

The second section will be devoted to Kurdish perspectives on the how and why of DEHAP involvement in conflicts. I will explain how DEHAP board members usually acted when their assistance was required, what the options were of Kurds who were faced with a conflict, and why they often relied on DEHAP.

In the third and longest section of the chapter, I will analyse three conflicts, two of which were mediated by DEHAP. These conflicts all highlight aspects of the social context in which the forced migrants lived, loved and argued, but they also serve to illustrate different points. The first conflict shows how DEHAP was able to gain some legitimacy among non-Kurds. The second conflict establishes the forced migrants' resort to DEHAP as a form of social capital. This conflict is also analysed for the insights it can provide in certain social dynamics within families of forced migrants. The third conflict exemplifies not the widening of DEHAP's sphere of influence, but the competition the party faced in the field of alternative resolution.

But first, by way of rounding off this introduction, I will specify my approach to the subject of this chapter a little more.

²⁵⁷ Also in the region of origin, this symbolic capital of some people functioned as social capital for others people.

Studying dispute resolution

In the months and years after Azad enlisted my support, I spoke with several members of his family, his as well as the ‘other side’ in the dispute. Once my interest in the topic was aroused, I started to ask other forced migrants for their experiences with disputes and DEHAP’s intervention in conflicts. Some people related their own stories, while others provided me with examples they had heard about from acquaintances. The second section will be devoted to Kurdish perspectives on the how and why of DEHAP involvement in conflicts. I will explain how DEHAP board members usually acted when their assistance was required, what the options were of Kurds who were faced with a conflict, and why they often relied on DEHAP.

I should perhaps note that I am using the concept of dispute or conflict resolution in its ‘classic’ anthropological meaning, which is different from the way it is used by some others researchers of Kurds in Turkey. Ayşe Betül Çelik and Bahar Rumelili (2006), for example, discuss conflict resolution in the context of a nationwide solution to the Kurdish question. Although the failure to achieve nationwide reconciliation between Kurds and the state is related to the topic of this chapter - it constitutes one of the preconditions for DEHAP’s practice of conflict intervention - the conflicts discussed in this chapter are of a different nature and scale than the conflict between ‘the state’ and ‘the Kurds’. This chapter is primarily concerned with the resolution of disputes on a local level between people who knew each other before the conflict emerged, or between people who became closely involved through the conflict. It is concerned with disputes that do not only affect the individuals directly involved, but that have an impact on the well-being of and social relations among families or local communities - disputes about issues ranging from theft to domestic violence and from financial malversations to the troubled aftermath of a traffic accident.

When studying dispute settlement, we can differentiate between the mechanisms for resolution (what we might roughly call the internal dynamics) and the social processes involved (external dynamics). Disputes provide a key to understanding social relations, because, as Elisabeth Colson (1995:65) states, disputes “mobilize support systems, highlight social cleavages, and are argued in terms of general morality”.

As P.H. Gulliver argued, disputes are a way of grouping people together, but also of separating them (Caplan 1995:3). They reveal much about norms and ideology, power relations, agency, morality and meaning (Caplan 1995:1). In short, disputes offer a window on the issues that really matter to people and they provide important clues to hierarchies of authority and power, to gender relations and so forth. It is therefore fruitful to analyse the disputes themselves - to ask what they are about, who are involved and who are endowed with the authority to mediate - as well as how they are mediated. Ultimately, I was interested in illuminating the particularities of the forced migrants’ lives in

Turkish cities. Considering that this was my aim, the social dynamics of conflict could be studied on two levels. One level concerned the 'micro-stuff' that the conflicts of forced migrants were made off - the power relations at stake, the grievances aired, and the morality invoked. The other level concerned the characteristics of the intervention efforts and more broadly the urban context in which forced migrants lived their lives. Urban conflicts and the efforts to resolve them reflected and affected the way in which Kurdish migrants - including forced migrants - aligned themselves with, or dissociated themselves from, other residents of the city.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN TURKEY

The kind of conflict resolution in which DEHAP was involved is quite common in many societies, including the Kurdish and non-Kurdish regions of Turkey, if not today then at least until very recently. Yet, this is - or was - so in varying degrees.²⁵⁸

Paul Stirling (1965) and Carol Delaney (1991), two renowned anthropologists who both studied village societies in Turkey, found that there was no agreed upon mechanism for the resolving of disputes. Stirling, for example, noted the absence of an established mechanism to resolve the many intra-village quarrels in which people were *küs* with each other, *küs* meaning "the formal breaking off of social relations, usually in the interests of honour" (Stirling 1965:248).²⁵⁹ However, June Starr (1978a & 1978b), who studied disputes in a Mediterranean Turkish village, pointed to a multitude of options for villagers involved in a conflict. She identified six different options in the village and five outside (Starr 1978b:134). Around half of these involved intervention by villagers, and the other half involved the gendarmerie, the court and various other state representatives.

In places where mechanisms for dispute resolution existed and were effective, there was not usually a binding formula for how to resolve certain types of conflicts, and often disputants had a large degree of choice as to when to approach a go-between, and who to approach. Starr (1978b:134) remarks that the choice of mechanism or institution was informed by the stage of the conflict and the way in which the contenders perceived their own interests. According to Bruinessen (1992:67), the threatened party took recourse to someone whose authority it knew or expected to be acknowledged by those from whom it expected a revenge attack. Who this person was depended on the circumstances.

²⁵⁸ There may be important differences between resolution mechanisms in tribal and in non-tribal settings, but I will not focus on these. This section merely serves to provide insight in the diversity and range of alternative conflict resolution practices in Turkey.

²⁵⁹ This does not imply that conflicts were never resolved. Stirling (1965:254) states that some were allowed to die out, while others were replaced by new quarrels. In yet other cases, reconciliation was established, often by 'giving' a woman in marriage to the family of a deadly victim.

In her study of a Kurdish village, Lale Yalçın-Heckmann (2002:153) describes an intra-tribal dispute resulting from the elopement of a girl.²⁶⁰ Although the father of the girl took the case to court, the conflict could only be settled by a local mayor who happened to be the agha of another tribe. When the forced migrants spoke of village quarrels in the past, they usually said that some *önde gelen* (leading people) had reconciled the fighting parties. Often these people came from villages in the vicinity. Imams, sheikhs, tribal chiefs, and older representatives of influential families all fit this category.

The extent to which ‘the state’ pervaded village life must have exercised influence on the degree to which villagers were able to resolve their ‘internal affairs’. Stirling (1965:253) argues that the increased efficiency of the government curtailed the autonomy of indigenous village leaders, probably also in the field of dispute management. His remark about the increased efficiency of the state contrasts with Bruinessen’s (1992) observations about the persistence of ‘traditional authority’ in the Kurdish regions.²⁶¹ However, Bruinessen also notes that in certain areas chieftains and sheikhs were curtailed by the state. Where this was the case, conflicts “could go on endlessly, or at best peter out slowly”, because the gendarmerie had not yet established sufficient legitimacy to be able to settle disputes (Bruinessen 1992:70). The Kurdish distrust of the state to which Bruinessen refers, is also noted by other authors, for example, Lale Yalçın-Heckmann (2002) and İsmail Beşikçi (1969). However, distrust of the state was not solely a Kurdish sentiment. Both Stirling (1965) and Delaney (1991) describe feelings of hostility against the state and its representatives, including teachers, doctors, imams and the gendarmerie. Delaney, for example, states that the villagers strongly resented state representatives and believed that all bad things came from outside. Nevertheless, in the village where she worked, “as elsewhere Atatürk was regarded a savior” (Delaney 1991:221). In Kurdish villages, if Atatürk was known at all, he was hardly viewed as a savior.

The observations of, among others, Talha Köse (2002) and Şansel İlker (2003), as well as my own, indicate that also in urban settings rich practices of dispute resolution exist. Students of Nimet Beriker, associate professor at Sabancı university in Istanbul, found that in some Istanbul neighborhoods

²⁶⁰ The norm for girls was, and often still is, to stay a virgin until they marry someone of whom their parents and other relatives approve. The worst thing a girl can do is to give rise to gossip about her ‘chastity’. When a girl or woman elopes with a boy or man to put pressure on her family to allow her to marry him, in Turkish this is called *kız kaçma*. When a girl or woman is kidnapped by someone who wants to marry her, this is called *kız kaçırma*. Sometimes the girl’s parents and other relatives consent in the marriage because they perceive it as the only way to preserve or ‘clean’ their honor. Sometimes it is difficult to make out whether a girl or woman was kidnapped or eloped voluntarily. All parties in an elopement or kidnapping may have their own ‘honor-related’ reasons to present matters in a certain way.

²⁶¹ Bruinessen (1992) argues that the role of sheikhs in conflict resolution propelled them into the role of proto-nationalist leaders at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The status they then achieved makes them useful to political parties today too.

muhtars are often called on for assistance in conflicts,²⁶² and Köse (2002) provides many examples of mediation by *alim*, Islamic scholars with expertise knowledge of Islamic legal jurisprudence. These *alim* mediate in disputes ranging from conflicts on the work floor to traffic accidents, and from marriage problems to financial disputes. Dicle Koğacıoğlu (2008:110), who studied informal conduct in an Istanbul courthouse, also notes that mediation and negotiation without court involvement is common. I personally came across several cases in which disputing parties in the city appealed to respected elders still living in the village. The opposite, village residents calling on their relatives in the city for support, happened too.

Also in the media, there are reports about out-court intervention in serious conflicts by 'leading people'. On August 12, 2005, for example, Milliyet newspaper²⁶³ reported that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had sealed peace between three mayors of his own party who had been embroiled in a blood feud, and that the DEHAP mayor of Hazro had also been involved in the effort to end this feud. A few months later, Milliyet reported that DTP had reconciled two families in Van that had been enmeshed in a blood feud.²⁶⁴ Besides, in Turkish and European media, I repeatedly encountered the name Sait Şanlı, chairman of the Diyarbakir Office of the Association of Butchers²⁶⁵ and the Association for Mutual Aid and Cooperation for People from Lice²⁶⁶. Depending on the year in which the articles appeared, he was credited with having solved 300, 400 or, in November 2008 in The Independent, over 500 violent conflicts.²⁶⁷

Taking the above into account, it might seem that there was nothing new under the sun. However, in the past few decades not only the context and meaning of 'Kurdish' conflict intervention changed, the context and meaning of 'Kurdish' conflict changed as well. For the forced migrants, their displacement implied being faced with changes in the nature of conflicts and in the social context in which these conflicts occurred. In previous chapters, we saw that the forced migration in itself was instigated by conflict, not only between 'the state' and 'the Kurds' but also within communities. Sometimes, moving out of the village was a way of escaping from the scene of intra-village and inter-village conflicts. Yet, at the same time, the forced migration and the process of settling carried the seeds of conflict in them: relatives were separated from each other,

²⁶² Personal communication with one of the students, July 2005. To my knowledge, the research results were not published.

²⁶³ See: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/08/12/siyaset/siy01.html>, accessed February 3, 2010.

²⁶⁴ See the report by Emin Sancar:

http://www.haberdiyarbakir.com/news_detail.php?id=25058, accessed September 29, 2010.

²⁶⁵ Kasaplar Derneği Diyarbakır Şube.

²⁶⁶ Liceliler Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği.

²⁶⁷ See: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-man-who-heals-deadly-kurdish-feuds-1023115.html>, accessed June 16, 2009. See also:

http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_world_1_15/07/2005_58641, accessed June 16, 2009.

people had limited access to the education system and the job market, they were discriminated against, not all migrants were capable of speaking Turkish, and so on. In this new context, new conflicts emerged and existing conflicts came to be defined in different terms: whereas in the village, economic conflicts had often been about land, in the city they were more likely to be related to competition for jobs or exploitation of workers. Besides, in the urban context, new fault lines between groups emerged: whereas in the village, most conflicts had occurred between Kurds, often of the same religion, as I argued in chapter 5, urban Kurds also got drawn into conflicts with members of other ethnic and religious groups.

This chapter is focused on intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflict and efforts to resolve it. In this respect, it is noteworthy that two violent deaths of Kurdish children, and the killing of an adult member of the Demir family from Ağaçlık village, did not ensue in ethnic rioting or violent political protest. One of these killings took place on the European side and two occurred in Kartal district. When visiting the Bedrans on the European side, 10-year-old Kanun told me the following.

Our school is *aşağıda* (below). The school *yukarıda* (above), there are lots of things going on there. A little boy got killed there. The teachers had beaten him and threatened him: “You are not going to tell this to other people”. They had hit him on the head with a chair. He came home and he didn’t feel well. They took him to a doctor and the doctor said he had been hit. A few days later he died. When this came out, the teachers wanted to flee. If the police hadn’t stopped the crowds, they would have ended up in a very bad state.

Kanun recalled that members of the local HADEP board had visited Kurdish parents whose children attended this school, and perhaps other parents as well, to ask them to keep their children at home for a day in protest. Kanun’s father explained that the death of the boy had made Kurds anxious: “It hasn’t happened at this school, but it might, you can’t know”.

The perpetrator and victim of another harrowing killing had also met at school. At the primary school attended by many of the Demir children, a Kurdish boy aged nine or ten was killed by a Turkish girl a few years older. The girl had broken the boy’s pen. When the boy demanded his pen back, the girl took him to the woods, beat him with stones and buried him. One of the *muhtars* in Yakacık confirmed this story.²⁶⁸ A third victim of deadly violence was Kerem, the eldest son of Mustafa Demir from Ağaçlık village. At the vegetable market where they worked, a younger brother of Kerem had put on a Kurdish cassette. When an MHP supporter (Turkish nationalist) started to argue with Kerem’s

²⁶⁸ “Her parents were divorced, she lived with her mother, and her mother was a problem case, the girl is in youth prison now”, said the *muhtar*. In a tense situation, such a horrendous killing could be expected to ignite ethnic riots, but it did not. I suspect that the fact that the girl had no father, that her mother was regarded a ‘lunatic’ and that she was quickly taken out of the neighborhood, must have subdued the urge to take revenge.

brother over the cassette, Kerem tried to calm the quarrellers down. Later that day, when Kerem was breaking down his market stall, the MHP supporter returned and stabbed him to death. A cousin of Kerem was stabbed in the shoulder and knee. Members of the Demir family were regularly attending trials when I was in touch with them.

Before focusing on the concrete manifestations of the conflicts in which HADEP/DEHAP/DTP intervened, in the following section, I will address the party's practice of conflict resolution as such.

DEHAP AND DISPUTES

The chairman of DEHAP Pendik was approached for assistance in conflicts more than once a month, that of Sultanbeyli claimed to have been involved in 250 cases. The chairwoman in Kartal said there were around six elopements a year and many cases of marital problems and domestic violence of which the latter were the most difficult to resolve. Other examples mentioned by the interviewees concerned unreturned loans, a failed business enterprise which led to fights between business partners, an accident at a vegetable auction in which one person broke his leg, a pistol fight in a wedding hall in which the victim almost lost the use of his hand, and a dispute between workers about who was first in line to get a specific job. In most of these examples, both parties were Kurdish, either Sunni or Alevi, sometimes one side was Turkish. Usually one or both sides in the dispute were sympathetic to DEHAP.

The procedure

When DEHAP agreed to take on a case, DEHAP told both or all parties it would try to reach a compromise acceptable to all parties, but that the contenders should accept any decision reached by the party. DEHAP thus acted as an informal judge who acquired legitimacy in ways more typically used by mediators. Anthropologists tend to make such a distinction between adjudication and mediation (e.g. Canter 1978; Gluckman 1982; Gulliver 1979). In processes of adjudication, the adjudicator imposes a solution on the contending parties. Judges typically have an adjudicatory role, that is, their rulings are binding and enforceable by law. By contrast, mediation aims to achieve a settlement agreed on by all sides in a conflict. Mediators regard mediation and negotiation as an important element of the settlement process, which keeps damage to social relations at a minimum, and allows contenders to emerge from a conflict without losing face. However, researchers of dispute settlement have remarked that, even though the terms 'resolution' and 'settlement' imply reconciliation and definite solutions to conflicts, in reality many disputes are not resolved, they are merely 'managed' (Colson 1995:69-70). In the case of DEHAP, this was often no different, as I will show.

After agreeing to take on a case, the first move of the chairperson was to create a delegation of three or four people to negotiate with either or both parties in conflict. The choice of delegation members could differ from situation to situation, because the delegates should possess the authority to influence particular contenders. As the chairwoman of DEHAP Kartal stated:

Often people like İrfan Karacaer take part in this. İrfan is respected, he is from a family of *esnaf* (retailers) and is knowledgeable about traditional law and religion.²⁶⁹ We don't usually take *meles* with us, because Kartal is quite a mixed neighborhood. There are lots of groups and also a large group of educated intellectual people. Here it's not necessary. But in Sultanbeyli, for example, that would be different. There they take *meles* with them. You are asking me about being accepted as a woman. That has never been a problem. They know that I am coming as the chair of the party, this gives you some extra power, they don't just see me as a woman.

Considering the respect for the *önde gelen*, a chairperson from an influential family might be expected to have more authority than one with a more humble background. The chairman of DEHAP Pendik, for example, was a member of a well-known family from Bitlis and claimed to be related to eighty percent of the people from Bitlis living in Pendik. This might have enhanced his influence among people from Bitlis, but I never observed that his being a member of a well-known family mattered a great deal.

The Sultanbeyli chairman agreed that many Kurds still deeply respect people from religious families of high standing: "But only if that person lives up to their expectations. We had someone here, he was from a sheikhly family and got elected as a board member without doing much work for the party. But he didn't do the best he could so people didn't re-elect him". Most of the time, he said, they did not take *mele* with them: "*Hacı*, the old man you met in our office, often comes with us. He's old and very religious but when I talk he stays quiet. Then people view me with even more respect even though I'm much younger than him, I'm 39. They say: "*Hacı* listens to him, so we should listen too".²⁷⁰ The chairwoman in Kartal was under forty years of age, unmarried and Alevi, that is, female, young, from a religious minority, and diverting from the 'marriage and children norm'. Yet, she was accepted as a go-between in disputes. Of course, the creation of a delegation ensured that people with different kinds of authority could be included: a delegation of women only would probably have been a bridge too far. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that characteristics that adorned a person with sufficient symbolic capital to negotiate a conflict 'in the old days' were not necessarily sufficient in the early 2000s, and

²⁶⁹ İrfan Karacaer (pseudonym) used to be the chairman of DEHAP Pendik and two of his brothers are successful retailers.

²⁷⁰ Men who went on pilgrimage to Mekka are called *hacı*.

that characteristics at odds with 'traditional authority' did not have to constitute an obstacle in the resolution of disputes.

If the two contending parties accepted DEHAP's intervention, DEHAP arranged meetings with the different parties in their houses or on 'neutral ground', for example, in the house of a neutral neighbor or in the DEHAP building. First the delegation met with the two parties separately, afterwards they often tried to bring certain members of the contending parties together. The chairwoman of DEHAP Kartal said that an often employed technique was to try and enlist the cooperation of the individuals least willing to compromise by entrusting them with the responsibility of bringing the conflict to a peaceful solution.

In Sultanbeyli, when a solution was in close reach, the fighting parties were sometimes brought together to vow that they would keep their promises to each other. As the Sultanbeyli chairman stated: "We do that in front of the people (*halkın önünde*), sometimes 150 to 200 people are present. They give each other their word, we make them kiss up, and then we drink tea. The peace arrangement is not only followed up by us but by everybody present there". Usually, cases were settled by financial arrangements. One party was 'fined' to a certain amount of money as compensation for the time that an injured man was out of work, for the reimbursement of hospital costs, for the upkeep of a deserted wife and so on. In return, the recipient of this money promised not to go to the court and not to resort to violence. In a case described below, both parties were indignant toward DEHAP for settling the matter 'only' financially, as if this was incongruent with the aim of establishing reconciliation. However, financial arrangements to settle disputes are accepted in Islam and were prevalent among Kurds, also before forced migration.

DEHAP's efforts were not restricted to visiting and talking alone. At times, the party tapped into its network of sympathizers to organize temporary housing for people who had been expelled from their house due to a conflict. The Kartal chairwoman, for example, related an example of a girl who, two days before her proposed wedding, confessed to her fiancé that she was not a virgin. The wedding was called off immediately, and because the girl was not welcome in her parents' house anymore, DEHAP found her a temporary place to stay. Reportedly, several years before the proposed wedding the girl had slept with a man who did not keep his promise to marry her. This man was not a DEHAP member but he could be reached through DEHAP channels. DEHAP confronted the man and his family with what he had done, he admitted his 'crime', and it was agreed he would pay an amount of compensation money to the girl. Next to this financial arrangement, DEHAP managed to convince the parents of the girl that they should 'take her back'.

One of DEHAP's main goals was to prevent a case from being pursued in court. The Sultanbeyli chairman claimed that the party was both faster and more sensitive to the social setting people live in than the state judicial system:

We don't accept this logic of reward and punishment. Things like wounding people (*adam yaralama*) can happen in a burst of anger. We don't think people should be punished heavily for such things. We don't think people should be punished severely for simple mistakes (*basit hatalar*). We want the person who has made a mistake to apologize to the other side, to admit the fact that he was wrong.

When the 'damaged party' accepted DEHAP's intervention, it often knew it would not be able to pursue a court case, in the same way that it knew it would have to renounce violent revenge. In cases where one contending party had made a legal complaint, DEHAP sometimes exerted pressure so that this complaint was withdrawn. Because in murder cases it was the state who opened a case on behalf of the public, in such cases, DEHAP had little influence on court proceedings. Nevertheless, the chairman of DEHAP Pendik claimed that his predecessors in Pendik had successfully reconciled the two sides in a conflict in which one person was killed. When I asked him if the family of the victim had not pursued the case in court, he said he did not know about the judicial procedure: "We stay out of that". I took this as implying that DEHAP might be involved in a dispute resolution process parallel to the court proceedings, in order to reconcile the two parties and prevent future outbursts of violence.

The choice of arena

The 'choice of arena' is the first stage of the negotiation process (Gulliver 1979:122). In most of the conflicts I was told about, before approaching DEHAP, the quarrelling parties appealed to respected members of their networks. Frequently, the police was involved in one way or another too. In fact, the threat of being taken to court or the fear of a conviction often compelled people to seek mediation by the Kurdish party. Generally, the disputer most in need of a settlement approached DEHAP for help. This might be the *mağdur taraf*, meaning the one who suffered most physical, financial or emotional damage. Often both parties viewed themselves as *mağdur*, so the party that approached DEHAP was usually the party having most to lose in a court case. In the case of a violent fight, this would be the disputer who inflicted most physical damage. In the case of a divorce, it might be the deserted wife who had been left without any financial settlement.

June Starr (1978a) indicates that no easy conclusions can be drawn from the way in which people deal with conflicts. Resorting to the courts may reflect a desire to distance oneself from the old ways, but it may also reflect a desire to put pressure on the other party to strengthen a position in a 'traditional' social setting. Thus, an appeal to the court does not indicate a 'modern attitude' per se, while an appeal to 'traditional' forms of mediation does not necessarily indicate a conservative attitude. Resort to DEHAP is likely to carry different meanings

for different parties in different conflicts. It is tempting to assume that DEHAP's practice of alternative mediation is an expression of ethnic resistance against interference of state institutions, but it does not have to be. To try and establish possible links between DEHAP's role as a dispute resolving mechanism and the reconstruction of an ethnic community in the urban context, it is important to establish the range of options that Kurds had when they were confronted with a conflict and the choices they made in this respect. If Kurdish migrants could also approach a *mele*, a *dede* (a religious leader of the Alevi), a *muhtar* or any other person with authority, it is important to ask why they preferred DEHAP.

After having exhausted the support of relatives and fellow villagers, for people who felt close to DEHAP, the most 'natural' choice in case of a dispute was DEHAP. These people were familiar with PKK intervention in disputes in the region of origin, and appreciated the role that the PKK used to play in abating conflicts there. In Istanbul, DEHAP was viewed as a kind of *aille reisi* (family leader) and was adorned with similar prestige as the PKK. When a young couple married, DEHAP was there to congratulate their families and to provide cachet to the wedding with a speech. When a loved one died, DEHAP board members visited to pay their condolences. And when a conflict needed to be resolved, DEHAP was expected to reach a solution. All respondents frequently mentioned the aim of reconciling the two parties and of 'making peace among the Kurds'. DEHAP was credited with seeking justice and reconciliation regardless of a person's wealth, status or political affiliation. The chairpersons proclaimed that, even in disputes between a DEHAP member and an 'outsider', if the non-DEHAP member was in the right, they would reprimand the DEHAP member: "People know that and trust us for that reason". When I asked the Pendik chairperson who told me that DEHAP had resolved a murder case, if a murderer should not be punished by the state, he replied:

I know what you mean, a murderer should be punished. But look, in the villages, murder and manslaughter happen a lot. There nobody goes to the police or the judge. Everybody knows that if you go there, your problems won't be solved. The state cannot reconcile two fighting parties. It cannot bring murdered family members back.

Surely, the chairman did not want to imply that DEHAP was able to bring the dead back to life. Clearly then, DEHAP's supposed ability to forge a lasting peace was what made the party an attractive alternative for the judicial system. The respect attributed to DEHAP stood in stark contrast to the way people perceived the state. In previous chapters it was documented that most recent migrants from the Southeast had family members who were tortured or imprisoned on the basis of testimonies extorted through torture, and that some forced migrants had been subjected to arrests and torture themselves. This resulted in fear of and distrust toward the state.

I also demonstrated that the authorities were largely unresponsive to the needs of the forced migrants. During the first years after their arrival, the vast majority of forced migrants refrained from approaching state institutions that might have offered material support. The intimidation they experienced in the places of settlement is likely to have deterred them from applying to institutions (cf. İnsan Hakları Derneği 1995:37-38; 1998). In 1995, the left-wing newspaper *Evrensel* reported that large numbers of Kurds in Izmir turned to HADEP in cases of conflict, because they either feared or distrusted the state.²⁷¹ Although fear of the state decreased - at the time of my research, people had begun to make demands on state institutions - Kurds were still inclined to keep the state at a distance. They tended to believe they would not be treated fairly by the police and the courts, especially if they or their family members were registered as PKK sympathizers. The refusal of the authorities to issue green cards to migrants suspected of sympathizing with the PKK indicated that this belief was grounded in reality.

But it was - and is - not only Kurds who perceive of themselves as being caught in a state of perpetual injustice. Reporting on the perceptions of poor litigants of the judicial system, Dicle Koğacıoğlu (2008) notes:

Many establish links between their socioeconomic position and the way they are treated in court; they consider themselves being subject to a comprehensive state of injustice. Their experience in the court is commensurate with the way they experience other institutional settings. Yavuz, a man of 27, asked in a rhetorical manner, while pointing to his rather run-down house: "Look at this and tell me, is there justice, which right of ours can we get? What we face is a major series of unfair acts". (Koğacıoğlu 2008:109)

Most of the litigants about whom she makes this remark were Turkish. The Turkish media also provided ample evidence of the partiality and injustice of the legal system. On one extreme, police officers accused of torture were often discharged from legal prosecution on the basis of lack of evidence, or because the case was statute-barred. On the other extreme, teenagers accused of stealing *baklava* (sweet pastry filled with nuts) at a bakery could be sentenced to six years, even though the evidence was meagre.²⁷² Distrust is hard to measure.

²⁷¹ In the mainly Kurdish-inhabited district of Konak, in a time period of just three months, HADEP was approached for assistance in 700 conflicts (*Evrensel* July 14, 1995, paraphrased in Wedel 1997:177).

²⁷² A recent example is the acquittal of 35 police officers interrogated in relation to the torture of four defendants, one of whom died. The lawyer of the victims' families was not allowed to be present when the prosecutor took the officers' statements nor to view relevant documents. See: <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/110677-iskence-suclamasiyla-ifade-veren-35-polis-serbest>, accessed June 18, 2009. The teenagers, aged sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, from the Kurdish city of Gaziantep claimed to have been tortured during the interrogations. In December 1997 they were sentenced to nine years imprisonment. Those under-age received a reduction of three years. All were released after nineteen months. See a report by Nedim Şener (August 31, 2003) in *Milliyet* newspaper:

Thus, it may not be right to say that among Kurds it was greater or more pervasive than among non-Kurds, but it was certainly more faceted. Kurdish distrust was not only instilled by the structural violence of elitism and the state's neglect of the poor, it was also inherited from a violence-infected recent past.²⁷³

Some Kurds had more reason to avoid contact with the police and other state representatives than others. People who evaded military service or who were arrested or imprisoned in the past - and this was no small group - had all the more reason to shy away from the police and the courts, as their past was bound to be raked up in the legal process. The criminal record of people convicted for a political crime, whether they were personally involved in a violent act or not, was never cleared. It was virtually impossible for them to find a decent job with even a minimum of health insurance and worker benefits, so it is not difficult to imagine how the stigma of their 'political record' might work to their disadvantage in a court case.²⁷⁴ Besides, for people from certain areas (especially the Kurdish Alevi district of Dersim/Tunceli) their place of birth was enough for police officers and other state representatives to regard them with suspicion. "The face of the state looks cold to people" ("*devlet yüzü insanlara soğuk geliyor*"), as one Kurd said.

The 'logistic' shortcomings of the legal system were another important motive for using alternative channels of dispute resolution. Pursuing a case in court was a cumbersome and dragging process (see Koğacıoğlu 2008). Often, a quick alternative settlement was preferred, because the threat of violence which often accompanied an unresolved dispute, and the disruption of social relations between families in conflict, might hamper the quarrelers and their relatives in their daily activities. Besides, the nature of the conflict itself might be such that an urgent solution was needed: people might be in serious financial trouble if a business deal fell through, a woman who wanted to divorce her abusive husband might not have money and time for a costly and dragging court case with a possibly unaccommodating judge.

Considering the fact that many Kurdish migrants were relatively new to the city and therefore had few contacts outside the circle of family, fellow villagers, their immediate neighbors and DEHAP, many people would not know who to approach besides DEHAP. If people wanted to approach a *muhtar*, for example, they would first have to know him or her. In Koğacıoğlu's (2008:110-111) research, people "who lack skills or connections for dealing with disputes in other ways - that is, people who lack symbolic, economic or social capital or those who cannot effectively put these forms of power into play in a given dispute - carry them to the courthouse". In my research, Kurds with limited

<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2003/08/31/pazar/paz03.html>, accessed June 18, 2009.

²⁷³ See Dicle Koğacıoğlu 2008 for striking examples of the elitism of legal professionals.

²⁷⁴ Five years after people have finished their prison term, they regain the opportunity to work in the private sector. The political record is not disclosed to private employers anymore. The exclusion from working in state institutions is for life.

symbolic, economic or linking social capital relied on one of the few forms of social capital they did possess.

However, I would be painting too rosy a picture if I suggested that litigants always sought out DEHAP purely voluntarily, out of admiration for its unblemished reputation of impartiality. Nor were people always motivated by dislike and distrust of the state. The fact that DEHAP was seen as a kind of *aile reisi* put pressure on quarrellers to accept intervention by DEHAP, also when they preferred an alternative legal or illegal solution. DEHAP coaxed or urged people into cooperation by its appeal to Kurdish identity and social responsibility, for example, by saying that “we as Kurds are having a hard enough time here, we shouldn’t be arguing among ourselves”, and that “there is no need to air the dirty laundry”. In other words, there is no need to besmirch the image of the Kurds by making their disputes known to the (Turkish) public through court cases. DEHAP board members usually had great confidence in their own moral righteousness and that of their party. They could be very persuasive, did not refrain from making strong moral judgements, and did not easily accept no for an answer.

In discussing the price to be paid for non-cooperation, the Sultanbeyli chairman threw light on the social incentives for contenders to accept DEHAP’s offer to intervene. Apparently, non-cooperation during the resolution process could be met with exclusion in many spheres of life: economic, social and political.

If someone doesn’t comply, he is excluded socially. No one would greet him anymore, no one would do business with him anymore. The one who disrupts the peace (*barışı bozan*) is reported to all the branches of the party in the whole of Turkey, so that, if he moved, he wouldn’t have much prestige anymore there either. There are things we would never accept, for example, to exchange a girl for a girl in the case of an elopement.²⁷⁵ Say, someone’s daughter runs off with a boy and he insists on getting a girl from the boy’s family. If that person wanted to become a *muhtar*, he wouldn’t stand a chance. We’d make sure he didn’t get any votes.

In response to my question what would happen if the brother of this man wanted to run for office of *muhtar*, he said DEHAP’s response would be no different.

Chairman: We say, for example: “If you hit a dog, your embarrassment will be toward the owner” (*bir köpeğe taş attığın zaman, sahibinden utanırsın*). Or:

²⁷⁵ To exchange brides between families is known as *berdel evliliği* or *eş değiş tokuşu*. Often a brother and sister of one family marry a sister and brother of another family. One advantage for their parents is that no *başlık parası* (Turkish for bride price) needs to be paid. When a young woman elopes with someone or is kidnapped against her will, her family is sometimes appeased by the man’s family by an offer to ‘give’ a daughter, or another unmarried female relative, as a bride to the family of the eloped or kidnapped girl. See Yalçın-Heckmann 2002:327-333.

“When a dog bites someone, the owner is sued, not the dog” (*bir köpek bir insanı ısırırsa, dava köpeğe açılmaz, sahibine açılır*). Perhaps this is a crude comparison, but that’s to explain how we see it. The family of the person who makes the mistake, shouldn’t allow him to make that mistake.

Miriam: What if it was a very large family, would they all be held accountable?

Chairman: Then we hold the person with the highest status (*irtibat*) responsible. If this person we were talking about insists on getting a girl, and he or his brother wants to become a *muhtar*, then we would talk with other family members of the person who was in the wrong, his cousins, for example, so that they would make him drop his demand [to ‘receive’ a girl]. Then his brother can become *muhtar*.

When I asked him whether - besides the desire for peace, the threat of exclusion, the respect for DEHAP, and the social skills of the negotiators - the existence of an armed power (the PKK) behind DEHAP was an important factor compelling people to cooperate, he smiled and paused for a moment. Then he looked me straight into my eyes and said: “Look, without a power behind you, there is no solution possible”. He made it clear that, in his view, there was no need for people to be afraid of the PKK as an armed organization. However, if people’s fear of the long arm of the PKK incited them to accept the rightful solutions offered by DEHAP, he had no reason to want people to change their perceptions. To summarize, the moment a contending party obstructed the resolution process or broke its promises, it did not only face the other contender, but an entire branch of a political party and possibly many members of its rank and file. Clearly, the original conflict would have taken on new and much broader dimensions. The chairman related the above in response to questions about why people complied with DEHAP’s proposed solutions - not in relation to the question why people accepted DEHAP’s involvement in the first place. However, the threat of being ostracized and the PKK factor were likely to play a role in the decision to refuse or accept DEHAP’s offer as well.

DEHAP often succeeded in resolving a conflict to the extent that tensions between the contending parties were subdued. Whether DEHAP succeeded in reconciling the two parties was a different matter. My experience with two of the cases described in some detail below, as well as the insights from the literature about dispute settlement, make it unlikely that DEHAP was as successful at reconciling contenders as its chairpersons and board members claimed.

THREE CONFLICTS, THREE INTERVENTIONS

In this section, three cases will be explained in some detail to throw light on practices of alternative dispute resolution in Istanbul squatter neighborhoods. The conflicts varied significantly in terms of the number of people affected by them and the social context in which they occurred. Besides providing insight in

DEHAP's practice of conflict resolution, these conflicts illuminate some of the conditions under which forced migrants lived their lives. The first conflict to be discussed is an inter-ethnic and inter-religious divorce dispute between two families - one Alevi Turkish and the other Sunni Kurdish - who were neither acquainted with each other nor with DEHAP until the conflict emerged. Nevertheless, DEHAP played a central role in preventing the dispute from escalating into physical violence. This dispute elucidates the motivations of non-Kurds to approach DEHAP and the strategies employed by the mediators. It also brings out the urgency of conflicts regarding elopements and divorce, which are disputes regularly taken on by DEHAP, and some of the shortcomings of the police and legal system.

Mediating a conflict involving Turks and Kurds: a failed marriage

As mentioned earlier, DEHAP did not only intervene in disputes between pro-DEHAP Kurds, but also in disputes between Kurds - pro-DEHAP or not - and members of other ethnic groups. Based on the figures provided by DEHAP chairpersons, I estimate that at most one in ten or fifteen disputes was between Turks and Kurds. More often than not, the contenders in such disputes were complete strangers until the conflict forced them to interact. This notion of a 'conflict between strangers' is not generally accounted for in research about traditional forms of dispute resolution. After all, such research usually deals with societies consisting of small face-to-face communities, where the aim of resolution efforts is to re-establish social relations without any of the contenders losing face, and where, in spite of these aims, disputes are destined to leave their marks on the community. As Simon Roberts (1979) states:

Whatever the range of people involved in a dispute within a small face-to-face group, it is unlikely that it will disappear without trace, leaving no lasting mark on the community. Those concerned will continue to live at close quarters, participating in the same complex of relationships as existed before the dispute occurred. It will be rare in such a context for trouble to arise out of a single-stranded relationship of the kind that is possible in our society, where disputants may have no further contact with each other after the immediate issues have been resolved. (Roberts 1979:51)

In Istanbul, conflicts could also arise out of single-stranded relationships. For example, people involved in traffic accidents often do not know each other. In squatter areas children often play outside on busy streets, because there are no playgrounds in their neighborhood. When a motorist speeds through such a street, and hits and kills a child, chances are high that the families of the driver and the child were unacquainted with one another. The desire for a solution in such a case is not instilled by the wish to repair damaged social relations, but by a hankering for justice and retribution and the ever present threat of violent

revenge. If such a conflict is resolved successfully, the disputants may return to their own communities and will not have to face each other again. This is not to say that the conflict will be forgotten, or that it won't have left any trace, but the dispute is less likely to surface again in the relations between families or groups than would be the case in a closer-knit community. Elopement disputes constitute another type of conflict which may emerge out of single-stranded relationships, within one ethnic group or between members of different ethnic groups. Whereas in the case of an elopement with the girl's consent, the eloping girl and boy would know each other, their families might not be acquainted.

In 2003, Begüm Koçak, the chairwoman of DEHAP Kartal, was approached by a Turkish Alevi family in a conflict which had started with an elopement.²⁷⁶ Begüm told me the following:

There was a family from Tokat, they were Turkish Alevi. Their daughter ran off with a boy from a Sunni family from Siirt. The boy and girl were still at *lise*, they were under eighteen. The boy's parents didn't want them to get married, and the police got involved because they were still under-age, the parents had to give their permission for a marriage, in the end they accepted. The girl moved in with her husband and his parents. They were from very different backgrounds, not just religion, but they were raised very differently. The girl was used to having some freedom, she couldn't cope with living with her in-laws, after six months she returned to her parents. Her husband's family was very angry. "We want her back or otherwise we are going to kill her", they said. And: "So what, if he has slapped her once or twice". So these families were quarreling.

Miriam: How did this case come to you?

Begüm: At some point the girl's family came to us. I think a neighbor probably told them we might be able to help. Before that, they had approached a *mele*, I assume the girl had told her family to go to the *mele*, because he would be able to influence the boy's family, but apparently he told them he couldn't help them. They had also been to the police, they had started a legal procedure for a divorce, but in the meantime the girl couldn't stay with her parents, for fear of being killed. So they came to us and we said we would talk with the husband's family. We first investigated the family that had taken the girl in the first place, we found out they were from Siirt and had been village guards there. Of course, when we heard this, we tried to find out who the most enlightened person was in the family.

Miriam: If they were village guards... how did they receive you?

Begüm: They treated us well, maybe they had some negative feelings but they didn't show them to us. When we went there, first we sat down, drank tea, made some conversation. When we left, we told them that it wasn't our aim to take the girl from them, that she was their *gelin* after all, but that threats and violence wouldn't solve the problem. We told them their way was wrong, that

²⁷⁶ In line with my use of pseudonyms for the people I spoke with, I do not refer to the chairwoman, or other people involved in the resolution of conflicts, with their real names.

we had to work on a solution accepted by both parties. “Let’s solve this together”, we said: “But not with violence”. They said they respected us, but if we wanted to solve the issue, we should bring them the girl. We said that first the boy and girl should get together and talk, without the rest of the family, that the basic problem was between the boy and the girl. We tried to establish a friendly atmosphere, they may have been village guards... We said to them, not directly, that they were village guards. People can make mistakes, but they can also return from their mistakes. We said that if we were able to solve this problem well, this would be a way of doing that. I mean, we didn’t accuse them, or belittle them, or exclude them. This was a mistake, maybe it happened under force, maybe voluntarily, it wasn’t important, we didn’t go into the topic. We only said people can make mistakes, and trying to take the girl back with violence was also a mistake. “Let’s not make these mistakes anymore”, we said. Maybe they didn’t accept what we said in their hearts, but they knew we were right, that in this time certain things have to change.

We decided to bring the boy and girl together the next day. We went to the girl’s family to talk about it. Both families said: “We want to come too”. They also came to the party building. We told the families to leave so that the couple could talk. We talked with them for a few hours, me, İrfan Karacaer was there too. We quickly understood it was a culture clash, a matter of religion, and the way they were brought up. The boy regretted certain things, he had tried to dominate her, he felt sorry about that. But she was absolutely unprepared to go back. We organized several more meetings, between the boy and the girl’s family and the girl and her father-in-law. We told the boy’s family the girl wouldn’t come back. They reacted very angrily. At first they kept saying we should bring the girl back, they said we had the power to do this. I said that perhaps we could do that, but it wasn’t a solution. I told them that now that we were involved, any violence used against the girl, I would regard it as violence perpetrated against me. If we weren’t involved, they would have resorted to violence.²⁷⁷

The boy’s father wanted to talk to the girl, he told the girl they wouldn’t harm her if she came back. He said: “The *başkan* (chairperson) is involved now, she will make sure you won’t be harmed”. But the girl told him she didn’t love his son anymore. He was stunned to hear her say that. He just couldn’t believe it. He turned to me and said: “*Başkan*, if my wife says she doesn’t love me anymore, will you take her from me too?” He was so stunned to hear a woman say she didn’t love her husband! I said: “I’d say you should concentrate on ways to make her love you. But if she was really in need and came to our door in search of help, I would help her too”. In the end they accepted a divorce. First the boy agreed to it, then his family, but not whole-heartedly. Only recently I saw the mother of the boy again. For the first time she hugged me

²⁷⁷ As transcribed from tape: *Biz ortada olmazsak, şiddet olacaktı, ama biz olduğumuz için... çünkü ben şeyi koymuştum: “Bu kıza yapacağınız şiddeti ben birey olarak kendime kabul ederim, bana yapacağınız şiddetin sonuçları farklı olur”, demiştim. “Sizin bu kıza atacağınız bir tokat bana atılmış bir tokattır, o tokatı atarsanız... düşünün”*. I did not understand this as a threat of violence at the time of the interview, but later I realized it might be read this way.

when she saw me. I asked her why, because she had never done that. She said we had done the right thing after all, that she realized this now.

An important question is why an Alevi Turkish family would approach DEHAP to help solve their problem. It is possible that the Alevi background of the chairperson played a role in the decision of the Alevi family to approach DEHAP. Another reason for them to approach DEHAP might be the party's ability to protect the girl from the wrath of her in-laws. Then again, they may have also turned to DEHAP in the way that a chronically ill person, who was always cynical of the paranormal, may resort to a medium - without much hope but thinking it can't get any worse anyway. DEHAP had intervened in similar cases before this one, and, as the chairwoman said: "If you manage to help solve a certain problem, then many others with that problem will come to you too. But this again may change quickly when people see that you can't help, for example, in a case of domestic abuse. Then people will say we can't do anything either". Thus, non-Kurds might simply seek out DEHAP if they believed DEHAP commanded enough respect with their opponents to reach a reasonable settlement. To phrase this in 'social capitalistic' terms. The symbolic capital of the *önde gelen* of the 'opposing' group, took on an instrumental value for the *mağdur taraf*. But a certain degree of social capital was needed to put this symbolic capital to work on behalf of the *mağdur*.

The father of the girl confirmed that - even though he and his family exposed strong anti-Sunni feelings - he had first tried to find a *mele* who would be able to reason with the family of the boy.²⁷⁸ This did not work out, perhaps because he did not pull the right relational strings to access the *mele*'s symbolic capital. He then approached DEHAP. Contrary to how he viewed the *mele*, which was in purely instrumental terms, he felt a certain degree of closeness to DEHAP. This perception of closeness had emerged during a six-year prison term served on accusation of murder and membership of TİKKO, a small militant communist organization founded in 1972. In prison he had established cordial relations with PKK members and sympathizers, so when a friend told him DEHAP might be able to exert influence on the family of the boy, he immediately agreed to approach DEHAP.²⁷⁹ Begüm Koçak's Alevi background did not come into his decision to appeal to DEHAP. However, her Alevi background had a positive impact on her relationship with him and his family, all of whose members were very fond of her. DEHAP utilized such religious and political sentiments with dexterity: they 'assigned' İrfan Karacaer (from the same religious background as

²⁷⁸ In fact, their antipathy was directed mostly at Shafii Islam, the religious school that most Sunni Kurds in Turkey adhere to, which this Alevi family clearly regarded as the most backward form of Islam in Turkey.

²⁷⁹ Also in Sultanbeyli, in intervention efforts between Kurds and Turks, the Turks who approached DEHAP were sometimes people with radical left-wing sympathies

the boy's family) to the family of the boy, and Begüm to the family of the girl. As Begüm told me: "İrfan was like the father of the boy and I was like the mother of the girl".

My interview with the girl and her parents indicated that the resolution process was less clear-cut than the streamlined account of the chairwoman had suggested.²⁸⁰ The conflict had dragged on for months in which the girl and her family had had little peace of mind. The outcome of DEHAP's intervention efforts remained insecure until the divorce was executed. Because the threat of violence was targeted at all of her immediate family members, the whole family went into hiding several times. The parents of the girl were very dissatisfied with the conduct of the police. When the girl moved in with the boy's family, her parents were still legally her guardians because she was only sixteen. Nevertheless, the police did not respond to their pleas for intervention. When, after the girl had escaped from the house of her in-laws, some twenty relatives of the boy paid a visit to the girl's parents, swearing that blood would be spilled, the girl's mother called the police. The four policemen who came to the house backed off when they saw the number of intruders.

Time and time again, large gatherings of relatives of the boy turned up at the girl's doorstep to argue their case, often in Kurdish, a language incomprehensible to the girl and her parents. Because the husband and his family obstructed the divorce, it took three court hearings with weeks in between for the divorce to be finalized. In the meantime, the girl's family learned that an under-age relative of the boy was taking shooting lessons, suggesting that the boy's family was carefully planning an attack.²⁸¹ Before every hearing, the boy went to the DEHAP office to beg them to bring the girl back, and every time DEHAP telephoned the family of the boy to warn them to abstain from violence. After the first hearing, the older brother of the boy lashed out at the girl's father with a key and after the final hearing, some relatives of the boy chased the girl and her parents with a car, forcing the girl's father, who was behind the steering wheel, to speed through narrow allies while trying to shake off his attackers. At the time of our interview, three years after the initial conflict, the girl's parents still worried about a possible revenge attack: they never allowed their daughter to go out on her own. They put their hopes on the boy getting married to someone else, thinking that only then, his family would leave them alone.

The boy and his relatives would undoubtedly relate the events from a very different perspective, but I doubt their stories would rebut my understanding of the resolution efforts as a dilatory and unpredictable process without a clear-cut final result. DEHAP did not manage to reconcile the contenders, but its involvement did make it more difficult for the boy's family to resort to violence.

²⁸⁰ I do not mean that she deliberately left out important aspects, but that she, as a third person and relative outsider, could not convey the ins and outs of the conflict - including its emotional content - and the 'messy' and chaotic events that followed the inception of the conflict.

²⁸¹ An under-age shooter would receive a lower prison sentence.

Without DEHAP, the girl or any of her close relatives might have died, or a relative of the girl might have attacked the family of the boy. The youngest brother of the girl was away on military service during the most turbulent time of the conflict, and, his mother said, it was better if he did not hear too much about it, because the conflict had instilled a deep hatred in him for the Kurds. "He gets extremely upset when it is about this", his mother said: "He keeps saying he wants to kill them all, the Kurds. If it was up to him, he wouldn't leave one of them alive". Considering the strong feelings of this boy, which I believe were fuelled by his mother's strong aversion of Shafii Kurds, and possibly also by his experiences in the military,²⁸² it is all too possible that DEHAP's involvement curbed the wish of the girl's brother to use physical violence against the family of her ex-husband.

I could not ask the family of the boy why they accepted DEHAP's intervention efforts, because the boy's father was in his hometown when Begüm Koçak tried to arrange an interview for me, and the others felt unauthorized to talk to me without his permission. In their desire to 'clean the family honor', many families in similar situations would be ready to 'sacrifice' an under-age son by assigning him the task to take revenge. The sacrifice would only be relative because this under-age boy would leave prison an 'honorable' man. By getting involved in the dispute, DEHAP seems to have created a context in which this price became too high. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, fear of exclusion and violent reprisal sometimes affected the decisions taken by contenders in a dispute. For this family, this may have been the case even more so, because village guards were not at all regarded positively. I was often told that ex-village guards lived quite marginal lives in Turkish cities, not being able to associate with Turks and at the same time excluded by Kurds.²⁸³ The prospect of developing a conflict with DEHAP must have weighed heavily on this family with such a blemished ethno-political record. When I asked Begüm why she thought the family from Siirt had complied, she said: "They knew that if they didn't comply, we could make it impossible for them to stay here. They would be cut off from their environment, life would become unbearable for them, they would have to move". In previous chapters, we saw that for some Kurds the fear of displacement was an important factor inciting them to take up state-supplied weapons against other Kurds. This fear then, resulted in much bloodshed. Begüm's explanation indicates that under different conditions, this fear of being displaced by a powerful agent could also save lives.

²⁸² Turkish conscripts are trained to kill while being exposed to extreme Turkish nationalist and sometimes openly anti-Kurdish rhetoric and sentiments, and they tend to be beaten and humiliated themselves during their training. Many are psychologically traumatized, not even only those who partake in fighting in the Southeast, see Altınay 2004.

²⁸³ Abbas, former village guard, confirmed that pro-DEHAP Kurds looked down on him and his family (*insan gözüyle bakmıyorlar*), but he thought this was because they regarded him a religious fundamentalist.

Kurds fighting Kurds: a struggle for family leadership

The second conflict is that with which I started this chapter. My description is focused mainly on the accounts of Azad and Ferhat, two of the prime contenders, and on that of Zehra, the wife of a paternal cousin of Azad and Ferhat. DEHAP's role was different from that in the first conflict, because the Kurdish family involved in this dispute had long-standing ties with DEHAP, which were embedded in their other social relations: 'the party' was an important site of identification. DEHAP was not merely approached after the conflict broke out, as in the previous case, but had been a resource in earlier power struggles as well. Thus, besides providing insight in the sources of conflict and the interests of the contenders, this case also allows us to draw conclusions about the effects of this kind of mediation on the relations between the people directly and indirectly involved.

As I stated at the beginning of the chapter, after Azad was released from prison, he moved in with Ferhat, a son of one of his father's brothers. Ferhat was in his mid-thirties when I first met him, and had been living in Istanbul with his family since the late 1990s. With his two wives and six children under the age of eight, Ferhat lived on the fourth floor of a bare looking apartment building - unpainted walls and concrete staircases without banisters. He grew up in a village close to Eruh in Siirt province, where he had attended school for two years. After his first marriage, Ferhat moved to Siirt to evade pressure to join the village guard. Later the village was depopulated as part of the state's forced migration policy and the villagers were dispersed over the Kurdish regions of Cizre, Siirt and Ceyhan, and the Turkish cities of Mersin, Tarsus, Bursa, Istanbul, Izmir and Antalya. In Siirt, Ferhat became a skilled *mermerci*, a layer and polisher of marble floors. Hoping to improve his economic position he moved to Istanbul where he pursued his career in marble as a *taşeron* (subcontractor). He acted as a middleman between big (usually Turkish) contractors and his relatives who came to Istanbul after him, a lucrative position in comparison to that of an *işçi* (worker).

From the start, it was difficult not to note the tensions between Azad and Ferhat. In Azad's eyes, Ferhat was not an enlightened patriot, but merely intent on preserving traditional 'feudal' hierarchies. Azad believed that Ferhat's once uttered phrase "Democracy is a fine thing, but not in my house" exemplified who Ferhat really was.²⁸⁴ Ferhat presented himself as a modern man of the world, unable to develop his full potential because of limiting conditions imposed from the outside, but still more developed than many around him. He concealed the fact that he had two wives whom he often beat and humiliated, and that he mostly ignored and sometimes mistreated his children. On one

²⁸⁴ The word *demokrasi* is used very often by pro-DEHAP Kurds. It refers to all that is both good and modern: equality, patriotism, emancipation of women and so on.

occasion I noticed a blue bump on the forehead of his two-year-old son from a blow Ferhat had delivered him two days earlier.

Neither of his wives was married to him officially, so their children did not have identity cards. This meant they would not be able to go to school and were not eligible for any kind of medical services.²⁸⁵ To my knowledge, he never showed any interest in changing this situation. The oldest child, a girl, went to school - still unregistered - for the first time in September 2003 when she was nine - two to three years older than her classmates. Besides Azad and Ferhat, several more relatives were involved in the dispute. I will first sketch some aspects of the conflict by summarizing Azad's view on it.

Azad's version of events

Ferhat has been dominating our family for a long time, especially his brothers and cousins [*amaçocukları* - father's brother's children]. In the village he would never be able to behave as the feudal landlord the way he is doing here. They [the elder males] wouldn't let him get away with it, but in Istanbul he thinks he's some kind of king. He can behave this way because his brothers and cousins depend on him, he is able to give them jobs. There are so many people like him, also in DEHAP. They talk of equality and democracy, but they are feudalists. The previous chairman of DEHAP in Pendik was just like that. They understand nothing of what our ideology is really about.

When my brother Özgür arrived in Istanbul recently, Ferhat started to lose his dominant position. Some of our cousins started to loosen their ties with Ferhat, but İbrahim (Zehra's husband) is still under his influence. So are Ferhat's brothers. Ferhat and Özgür have been on bad terms for a long time. My brother Özgür is pretty bad-tempered himself, you can't really reason with him either. Ferhat at some point threatened to kill Özgür and two others of our family. The immediate cause for all this was that Arif's wife ran away. Arif is a son of Hakan, just like İbrahim and Can. Only İbrahim has a different mother. Arif has been married for ten years and he and his wife have been having trouble for ten years. They fell out lots of times and we always tried to get them to reconcile.

A few weeks ago, they came to our house, they were having problems again. The situation was beyond repair. With our intervention they agreed on a divorce, it was really unavoidable. After that decision, they were still staying

²⁸⁵ Only civil marriage (*resmi nikahı*) is legal in Turkey. Most Muslims have a religious ceremony (*imam nikahı*) as well. Some couples - among them many Kurdish couples - only conduct the religious ceremony. Until recently, these couples could not register their children, which meant that they could not apply for health insurance or benefits for their children who could also not go to school. When a man had more than one wife, often all his children were registered in the name of the official wife, or if he was not officially married to any of his wives, sometimes the children were registered in the name of other married family members. In other cases, the children were not registered at all. Some schools accepted unregistered children, but these children could not receive a diploma. Recent legal changes enable women who are not legally married to register their children in their own name.

with us - Arif, his wife Neylan and their three children. One evening when only Neylan and Özgür's wife were at home, Neylan went out to make a phone call. Özgür's wife told her to stay in, but she went out anyway and never came back. We soon heard she ran off with an unmarried man, an acquaintance of Arif. But nobody knows where they are now. Özgür's first reaction was to kill both Neylan and the guy she ran off with, but I managed to talk this out of his head.

Ferhat heard about this. He went to Abdurrahman *amca* and told him he wanted to help. He just couldn't bear being kept out of all this. Abdurrahman discouraged him from doing anything. Then Ferhat called Can and they arranged a meeting. Özgür told Ferhat he didn't appreciate his help. Ferhat then called Özgür '*amo*' which is extremely derogatory. Özgür told Ferhat: "You lean on the fact that you are older but I neither accept your authority nor that of your father". Abdullah, Can's younger brother, who also was on bad terms with Ferhat, also said something pretty disrespectful to Ferhat. Others said he had to apologize for it. So he went to see Ferhat to apologize, but when he was there he did not apologize and Ferhat offended our side of the family again. My father came to Istanbul because of all this, to ease the tensions. Abdurrahman *amca* was also present in this meeting, he did the best he could to prevent an escalation. But Ferhat only offended them. To do what Ferhat did, to disregard the words of the elderly is an extreme form of disrespect in our culture.

When Ferhat talked to his brothers later, he explained everything differently to them. Ferhat's younger brother Zafer called Özgür on the phone and swore at him. Then Özgür said: "Let's meet at Güvercin square, to settle our differences". Özgür and some others went outside with sticks and stones. I tried to stop them, but they couldn't be stopped. They were steaming with anger. I tried to convince them to leave their sticks behind but they just hid them. Neighbors also tried to stop them but they couldn't. Can and I went with them to see what we could do. When we arrived at the square, Can and I tried to intervene between the two sides, but the moment we arrived I was stabbed just above my eye and everything turned black. I was in shock, I couldn't do anything. Can was also beaten to the ground. The worst injuries were on the other side.

We fled out of fear of the police. We stayed in the house of Abdurrahman's son. The other side filed a complaint against us. The police came to look for us but we weren't there. I kind of made myself disappear for a week or so. I didn't want anybody to ask any questions. I already have a criminal record [political record], if I am arrested, I go in for good.

Can approached DEHAP. First they went to the hospital. I heard they were quite shocked when they saw Ferhat and the others, their heads bandaged and everything. DEHAP must have thought we were intent on killing them. Then DEHAP came to us. Özgür was unable to talk with them, so I had to do the talking. The chairman was new, he seemed alright. In the end he more or less understood how it had all happened. They still decided we had to pay a fine, for reimbursement of hospital costs. We had no choice but to accept it, the

alternative would be to go to court. So then we talked about the amount. The previous chairman of the party spoke of three or four billion, which is outrageous. We told them about our financial position, we just didn't have that much money. They agreed on 1.5 billion (around 900 Euro), which was hard enough to get together as it was. This fine that DEHAP assigned us, we said we would pay it in two or three terms, we just can't pay it all at once.

Azad's side had most to lose, which is why Can approached DEHAP. Ferhat had a very different reading of events. He argued his case with constant reference to his own generosity and sincerity versus the ingratitude and dishonesty of Azad and the others.

Ferhat's version of events

My father is the oldest of thirteen children. He practically raised his younger brothers when his own father died. He was the one who raised Hakan, the father of Can and İbrahim. Thanks to my father, Hakan could study. It all started like this... Abdurrahman *amca* complained about me to DEHAP. At some point I received a message that the DEHAP chairman wanted to see me. "You are in the wrong", he said. I had no idea what he was talking about. I found out Abdurrahman *amca* had told him I was making it impossible for Özgür and the others to work. In fact, they had stolen my work from me! First I had found them jobs with a contractor.²⁸⁶ Then they approached this contractor directly, they wanted to work with him directly. I was pretty angry about that, but in the end I just left it that way. Now Abdurrahman was telling DEHAP I was making life impossible for them! In fact, he is a cheater himself. He lied to DEHAP about İbrahim's mother İffet. When she came to Istanbul a while ago, her husband Hakan was still in the *memleket*. Abdurrahman went out of his way to convince DEHAP they had to give her *yardım*. He said she was all alone, she didn't have any sons, that kind of crap. Her son was in love with Abdurrahman's own daughter for God's sake. And he didn't know her? He didn't know she had six or seven sons? They are not needy, her husband has a pension, not an ordinary pension but a civil servant pension.

Although Azad had told me he had not been involved in the fighting, Ferhat put most of the blame for the violence on Azad.

Azad is a liar too, he has enemies everywhere, the reason he joined the PKK was he had too many enemies. Özgür... Same story, he can't go back to his *memleket* because he has cheated on so many people. When Hakan came here, he told the people of DEHAP things like: "We are very poor, we always supported DEHAP". But that's not true. When we had to vote 'open' you know, when the soldiers checked who we voted for, Hakan voted for the CHP.

²⁸⁶ Salaries or a lumpsum for the whole job were paid to Ferhat, who paid his workers - in this case his cousins - what he saw fit.

Arif is an incredible cheater too. He did the strangest things, he stole out of our wallets, he tore up Zafer's identity card. You wouldn't believe the crazy things he did.

Ferhat's wife Leyla intervened to say: "We took care of all of them. When they came to Istanbul to work, we cooked for them, we didn't have a washing machine, we did all their laundry by hand, and I had given birth just a month before. They probably never understood the value of all that". And Ferhat continued:

I did everything I could for them, also for Azad's father. When he was already too old to work I put him on the payroll so he would receive wages, I always collected money to help him out. This whole family... When they were hungry, I was hungry with them. If I'd used all the money I spent on them to send my children to school...²⁸⁷ This Azad, he talked behind my back. He said the strangest things to my wife. He told other people I have two wives. I never had any problems at home, but the moment he arrived the trouble started. And I put up with him for a year, he lived in my house! And Abdurrahman *amca*, he comes from '*agalik*' (tribal structure): last year his son killed someone, did you know that? Now he is trying to get his reputation back in the party, to tell them he is sincere, but nobody believes him now. He didn't invite anybody from DEHAP to his son's wedding, but there were a lot of MHP members there.²⁸⁸

About this fight.... We weren't on speaking terms then. But I heard about Arif and his wife. I couldn't help feeling sorry for him. I called Hakan. He denied the whole issue. Then I called Can. He said: "Thanks for your offer, but we don't need it". In fact, they had already forged their plan, but I didn't know. I went to Özgür. At the doorstep he already offended my father. I said: "First take care of your own father before you insult mine". At that time, Azad's father was very ill, but they didn't do anything for him. I left. I had gone to his house because my brother Zafer insisted. I told Zafer they offended our father. Then Zafer wanted to talk with them, he called them. When we went to the square, Zafer didn't go there to fight, but I did. It was us, İbrahim, Zafer and me, against them: Özgür, Azad, Abdullah, Can, Arif, a neighbor from Siirt and two strangers. They had knives and sticks. The first thing they did was beat Zafer to the ground. I threw my stone, all three of us were beaten up. Broken fingers, broken skulls. We were taken to the hospital by ambulance. Azad was the worst of all, the instigator of all this. Later he trumpeted forth he didn't join in the fight!

After we were discharged from hospital, the police called us. They asked who did this. We said they were our cousins, that something stupid had happened and we didn't want to file a complaint. The public prosecutor said: "These are not the mountains of Siirt, don't let this pass", but DEHAP wanted us to drop

²⁸⁷ In fact, Ferhat did not particularly want to send his children to school.

²⁸⁸ As stated earlier, the MHP is an extreme right-wing party strongly opposed to Kurdish demands. A patriotic Kurd would probably never invite MHP members to his son's wedding.

the case. DEHAP said: "They were wrong, but don't make it a case". We said: "We'll drop the case, but we will never reconcile". If I reconcile, it will start all over again, they will steal my work again. Last *bayram* (religious holiday) they all came to visit us, Hakan, Özgür, Abdullah... They want to reconcile, but I won't. Hakan says he never wanted all this to happen. But right after they had beaten the shit out of us, Can called his father: "*Operasyon tamam*", (operation completed) he said. They planned it all. Azad is the worst of all. I could drink his blood, but I still wouldn't be satisfied.

I spoke with Ferhat in 2005, that is, two years after the fight at Güvercin square. Leyla and Nida, Ferhat's wives, told me that all contact had been cut off, also between the women. In spite of Ferhat's lack of respect for them about which they tended to complain a lot, Leyla and Nida seemed to stand right behind Ferhat. They claimed it had not been Ferhat who had instigated the conflict, but Özgür who had been intent on exploiting the situation for his own benefit. Leyla and Nida were adamant that Özgür had received money (some sort of bride wealth) from the man with whom Neylan had run off.

Some of the emotions and frictions that surfaced in the dispute went back to the time before migration, as did the strategy of resorting to the party. As I showed in chapter 4, the PKK had acquired the authority to interfere with people's daily lives and disputes. As İbrahim's wife Zehra recalled, the PKK had figured in a long-standing dispute between her and her mother-in-law İffet. Zehra's father was murdered by the PKK when she was eleven years old, and shortly after, her father's sister had claimed her as a daughter-in-law for her stepson. At some point during the war, Zehra's mother-in-law left the village with her 'real' sons to settle in Siirt. Zehra recalled:

It was just us in the village, we had to take care of everything. It was loads of work. My *elti* was very upset about all this. She said: "She has left with her own children and she leaves us behind. Now the PKK can just come and take my husband". That was the time when the PKK could recruit your husband and give him military training and then he was with them, there would be no return. My *elti* was very angry because my mother-in-law made sure her own children were safe, but we weren't. My *elti* went to the PKK to complain. She went to someone who was with the PKK, someone who gave them food, that kind of thing, everybody knew he was with them. She went to him to complain. Then the PKK came to the village to see what was going on. They looked at the animals and went to the man who was herding them, they said they would seize the animals. My mother-in-law returned to the village as soon as she heard about this, but the PKK had already taken half of the animals. She sold the other animals for a very low price. Then she went back to Siirt.

Later, when Zehra was pregnant for the third time and could not bear the way she was treated by her mother-in-law, İbrahim's stepmother, anymore, her mother took her away to her own village.

I was pregnant with Selin at that time. Then they [Zehra's in-laws] said. "We won't let you go. We will come to get our child. We are with the PKK (*PKK'yiz*), we will kill you", that kind of thing. They meant, we have PKK members in the family and they would talk to them. I told them: "As soon as I give birth, I will send the child to you, without even breastfeeding it". They said they would marry İbrahim off to someone else. I told them to go ahead, I said I would also marry someone else. A few months later my father-in-law came. He promised me they would leave me alone from then on. I went back with him.

In the conflict between Azad and Ferhat, Zehra was not a major contender, but she had no problem siding with her husband and Ferhat against her husband's stepmother, who, she felt, had never treated her fairly. Zehra's in-laws would probably describe events quite differently, but considering Zehra's story and other evidence about the role of the PKK as adjudicators, it is likely that members of Zehra's family did indeed try to enlist the PKK's support in order to pursue their own goals. In Istanbul, different members of this family continued to do so. While the conflict between Azad and Ferhat was still on DEHAP's table, Zehra appealed to DEHAP for intervention in another matter. She told me that several years earlier, at the instigation of Özgür, another relative had borrowed her wedding gold, promising he would quickly return the gold to her. He had failed to keep his promise. Zehra wanted DEHAP to exert pressure on this man, so that he would pay his debt to her.

"We solved that one too"

After DEHAP settled the case tensions between the two sides persisted. At some point, Hakan told me that Ferhat had filed a complaint against his sons accusing them of the illegal trade in antiques. One day in the year 2004, the police in his place of residence had called him to the police station to respond to the allegations. It had taken him quite a while to clear his sons from suspicion. DEHAP may have been instrumental in preventing another outburst of violence, but it was abundantly clear that tensions had not subdued and that violence might burst out again. Only years later, in 2008, the families reconciled. In a telephone conversation in June 2009, Azad emphasized that DEHAP had had nothing to do with the normalization of relations: "We are on speaking terms, but not because of the party. Had it been up to them, it would have gotten worse instead of better. We reconciled for the sake of our *amca*, actually our father's *amca*, he wanted us to restore relations. We did it for his sake". The outcome of DEHAP's involvement neatly fits Elizabeth Colson's (1995) critique of the 'harmony model' in dispute resolution. As she states:

Negotiation and adjudication can settle particular claims, because moots and courts have the means to persuade contenders to accept a verdict, whether this is an agreement reached through bargaining in the moot or laid down by a court. They have much less success in convincing contenders that they are in the wrong, and they do little or nothing to heal ruptured social relationships or abate anger and contempt (Colson 1995:79-80).

Nevertheless, the DEHAP chairman who mediated the dispute, and who did not know that I knew the contenders, told me it was completely resolved.

Ferhat's remarks about Abdurrahman's complaint to DEHAP indicate that DEHAP was hardly impartial when Can approached the party for mediation. Ferhat stated that, before the conflict erupted, Abdurrahman, who was a member of the DEHAP neighborhood committee, had used his influence to make DEHAP act in favor of Özgür and his allies. But he, Ferhat, had convinced the DEHAP chairman that he was merely the victim of injustice, not the instigator. This 'wheeling and dealing' before the clash at *Dörtyol* occurred made DEHAP's claim of impartiality difficult to maintain. The fact that DEHAP collected and distributed small amounts of money to help the poor, and relied on the 'eye-witness' accounts of people who had their own loyalties and interests, made the party vulnerable to manipulation. Yet, DEHAP was often able to achieve more than the judicial system.

Zehra who hoped that DEHAP would help her to regain her wedding gold, was very disenchanted with the way she was treated by DEHAP, the chairman in particular. Azad thought the chairman had not been too bad, but had lacked the necessary insight in feudal relations and had therefore opted for the easiest solution - imposing a fine on the party that had inflicted most damage - instead of trying to get to the root of the problem. "If you mediate in a conflict and you lose goodwill and members, you're doing something wrong. Can was a member, for example, he's not anymore. My sister-in-law (İffet), my brother, the others, they have all grown cold toward the party". The conflict and the way it was dealt with thus appeared to have resulted in the creation of a gap between DEHAP and Azad's side of the family. Nevertheless, their resentment against the local leaders of DEHAP did not affect their feeling of sympathy toward the party as such. When I asked Özgür if he and his cousins had considered approaching other people or institutions instead of DEHAP, he said they had not. He told me that DEHAP was their party, their representative, and that DEHAP had solved cases much worse than the case at hand. Therefore, he had great faith in its ability to reconcile the contending parties. "I don't know the *muhtar* or other people here, but even if I did, I would still prefer DEHAP. Even now. But I wouldn't go to the same DEHAP people that interfered in our conflict". For them, DEHAP was and remained *the* station for help in a conflict.

The sources of the conflict between Azad and Ferhat

In retrospect, it was impossible to find out what ‘really’ happened. Although I found some narrators more dependable than others, all of them had their own reasons to stay silent about certain aspects of the conflict. Zehra was one of the people I regarded most trustworthy. It was easy for me to associate with her because she was cordial, quite out-spoken and could move about independently from her husband. Zehra often criticized Nida and Leyla for their compliance with their situation. She carped on the fact that neither Leyla nor Nida had ever tried to register their marriages, and claimed to have registered her own marriage right after the wedding. I had to modify my image of Zehra when Nida told me that once, when she had tried to leave Ferhat, Zehra had urged her to stay with her husband. When Nida, worn-out of the way Ferhat treated her and her children, had decided to go into hiding with relatives, Zehra had tracked her down and talked her into returning to her husband.²⁸⁹

The direct reason for the fight at Güvercin square - or the straw that broke the camel’s back - was ‘classic’: a married woman ran off with a man. The ensuing controversy focused on the question which males were endowed with the authority to deal with the issue at stake, or rather, not only this issue, but many others as well. At the center of the conflict between Özgür and Ferhat was the issue of male competition for money and power. Azad was primarily concerned with the moral leadership of the family. He believed that the terms of the relationships in his family were strongly influenced by the experience of migration. In his view, the relative disintegration of families caused by migration created new situations in which the elderly were less able to keep money and power-obsessed narcissists like Ferhat in check, people who would not only harm themselves but also others.

Surely, similar power struggles were fought out also in the region of origin. However, in the urban context the qualities needed to rise to prominence in a family had changed. The fact that Ferhat was the oldest and most established migrant in his family worked to his advantage. Unlike the others, he was used to associating with Turks and knew his way around in the construction business. Also significantly, he owned a car which enabled him to move around and meet with prospective employers quickly, and which he could use for the transportation of workers and materials. Ferhat then was able to exploit the unequal benefits of migration.

In earlier chapters, I stated that in the area of work, people’s social capital was relatively successful: when looking for work, many recent migrants benefitted from the support of relatives and friends also had a downside. Relatives and friends did not just speak to their employers on behalf of an unemployed person,

²⁸⁹ Zehra may have refrained from telling me about her ‘more traditional self’ to preserve a certain image of herself as she liked to see it, or she may have sensed that certain revelations would not fit my ideas about male-female relationships and would therefore jeopardize my favorable image of her.

or inform him that so and so was looking for workers, they sometimes became informal job brokers and employers themselves. Because there was almost no institutionalized support of the poor - no worker protection, no employment schemes, no decent health care policy, many people found themselves at the mercy of their relatives and friends. Especially recent migrants with few opportunities to associate with new people were dependent on relatives with contacts outside the circle of close relatives and friends. The dispute between Azad and Ferhat brings home the fact that the inequalities and relations of dependence within recently migrated families which resulted in unequal access to health care, could also lead to violent intra-family or intra-‘old community’ conflict.

Economics versus ethics

Ferhat realized that certain readily observable aspects of his life style hardly looked good. He realized that for some people, he was the spitting image of the traditional patriarch. His transgression of ‘modern’ norms - for example, a man is allowed to have one wife only - put him in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis Azad and vis-à-vis me. Ferhat was aware of this and tried to restore his credibility by impressing on me that his only fault, which he readily admitted, was not having been strong enough to withstand the external pressures put on him to take a second wife - it had not been his idea to marry a second time, and by emphasizing his adherence to the ‘support and solidarity’ norm. Ferhat tried to undercut Azad’s claim that he was only intent on self-enrichment, an accusation which is often directed against Kurds who vote for the ‘wrong party’, and who “don’t remember where they come from”. Azad criticized Ferhat for buying into consumerism and capitalism, at the expense of patriotism and human solidarity. People complained that many Kurds were confused as to where they were heading, that they had lost a clear anchor or beacon.

Although DEHAP did provide some direction, some people argued that its capacities were limited, partly because of constant state pressure, partly because its financial resources were meagre, and partly because ideological confusion and consumerism had also ‘infected’ DEHAP.

Azad and Ferhat’s narration of the conflict highlighted many issues which lurked in the background of almost any conversation I had. One important thing was that morality tended to be argued in political terms. The subtext of Azad and Ferhat’s narration of the conflict read: a good person is committed to the Kurdish cause, and a person truly committed to the Kurdish cause, is a good person. Many people, especially men, defended the Kurdish cause with almost religious zeal. For most of them, the PKK came closer to the realization of their ideals than anything else, and they regarded DEHAP, no matter how imperfect, as its ‘worldly’ representative. Clearly then, to discredit others, the political motives of these others had to be discredited. Thus, Ferhat accused Hakan and Abdurrahman of lying to DEHAP to arrange financial support. Azad accused

Ferhat and some DEHAP board members of having no clue about what the PKK was really about, and of allowing Ferhat to behave like a traditional agha. Ferhat accused Azad of having joined the PKK for the wrong reasons, not for love of the Kurds, but to make his escape from people he had enraged. Such accusations openly challenged the opponent's 'politico-moral solvency'.

A recurring theme in the narration of this conflict, but also overall in my research, was people's stated abhorrence of conservatism in the form of '*ağalık*' (the agha as an institution), and '*eski kafalı*' ('old-headed') notions and behaviors. The idea that being male, wealthy, of high age, or from a high-ranking family automatically entitled a person to status and privilege invoked much criticism, especially among men. The fact that in its discourse, the PKK strongly opposed traditional hierarchies, such as the control of aghas and sheikhs over 'the commoners' and of men over women, played an important role. The denouncement of 'feudalism' was a show of loyalty to the PKK, and a way to show me they had their hearts in the right place. Some people were also affected by the variety in gender and other social relations, which they encountered in the city. They realized that there might be more ways 'to be somebody' than people used to think.

That certain central aspects of people's past ways were denounced did not imply that people wanted to get rid of the old ways wholesale. Hospitality, solidarity, and respect were regarded authentic Kurdish values to be highly merited. Thus, the rejection of traditional hierarchies did not preclude respect for seniority, nor did it preclude a desire to nurture close family and community relationships. There was a tacit understanding that while the elderly should not be followed blindly, they should be held in high esteem, unless their behavior breached basic norms of morality, and even then, they should not be confronted openly. Regardless of the degree to which people actually stuck to these unwritten norms, their disagreements were argued in terms of them. One sure way to discredit an opponent was thus to accuse him or her of disrespecting the elderly or of neglecting his relatives.

Those Kurds who opted for economic success were watched with suspicion by the others. In interviews with forced migrants who had achieved a degree of economic success, I observed that it was almost impossible to achieve success without developing a sense of guilt toward your 'rank and file'. Forced migrants who were economically more successful than others flaunted their dedication to the Kurdish cause by saying that, if things got better, they wanted to invest in their region of origin. Yet, when I asked them if their workers were insured, the answer was no. They would soon be out of business, if they were to ensure their workers, they said.. These beginning entrepreneurs operated in the margins of the market. They had limited expertise and resources in branches faced with fierce competition from countries with lower wages, and had to support a large number of close relatives. In this context, starting entrepreneurs could hardly be 'good employers': they became similar to the employers that had previously

squeezed *them* out for little money. It might not be any wonder then, that many others regarded them with suspicion.

Competition in the resolution arena: dedes and hocas

The third dispute to be analysed is a conflict between Alevi and Sunni Kurds, which could have turned into inter-ethnic rioting, had tensions not subdued. The contenders had no previous history of social interaction with each other, and they were not close to DEHAP. The conflict was settled by religious leaders from either side in the conflict, one of them being Celal Akkaya, an intellectual well-known in Islamic circles and at the time an advisor to the Istanbul city mayor. He also happened to be the son of a religious teacher of high standing from Bitlis. I spoke about the conflict with Celal, with his friend Seyyid, the *mele* from Diyarbakir who lived in Sultanbeyli, and with Abbas, the father of some of the men involved in the fighting. All were Sunni Muslims. A daughter and a daughter-in-law of Abbas also responded to questions about the conflict, but they seemed apprehensive for talking about things they were not supposed to talk about. Seyyid was not too talkative either. He did not find it particularly useful to poke up a conflict several years in the past, the retelling of which might, in his view, exaggerate the propensity for religious strife between Alevi and Sunnis. In contrast, Celal repeatedly stressed the Alevi-Sunni fault line as one of the main social distinctions in Turkey along which civic unrest can develop.

It is not hard to find evidence of Alevi-Sunni tension in Sultanbeyli. To give an example, according to an article in a Turkish newspaper, more than 11 thousand of the 25 thousand Alevi in Sultanbeyli signed a petition for the foundation of the *cemevi* (religious meeting place), but the local authorities persistently sabotaged the Alevi effort to found such a place.

Following Erman and Eken (2004), in chapter 6, I argued that the potential for inter-group strife - already heightened in the trying years of economic liberalization - was further developed by the state. With its ideology and clientelistic practices, the state favored certain identities over others - urban over rural, Sunni over Alevi, and Turk over Kurd. A news report such as the report mentioned above, and the words of Celal, suggest that the local authorities in Sultanbeyli did their part in favoring Sunni identity. Besides pointing to the 'politization' of difference, Erman and Eken draw attention to the socialization of young disaffected men in a macho street culture, which in the strained urban environments of the 1990s and 2000s created a readiness to use violence. The conflict at hand forms an apt illustration of this.

Apparently, it all started with an argument between three young Sunni men from Siirt and five or six Alevi men from Erzurum. According to Abbas, the Alevi men were drinking liquor in a picnic area in the woods close to Sultanbeyli: "Something you wouldn't find with us, we can't drink". His son and their cousins - "young lads still, easily inflammable" - reprehended the Alevi

for drinking in public. The Alevis replied with hostile remarks. The *Siirtliler* (people from Siirt) then went away to fetch reinforcement troops, and returned to the picnic area with eight or nine men carrying knives and sticks.²⁹⁰ The swearing quickly turned into fighting in which the *Erzurumlular* (people from Erzurum) were rather ineffective because they were half drunk, as Abbas said. Two Alevi men were heavily injured. One of them was in coma and had to be operated two or three times in one day: his milt was chronically damaged. The police arrested and imprisoned Abbas's son, his brother's son and a fellow-villager. The accounts of Abbas, Seyyid and Celal were not conclusive about whether any of the Alevis were arrested. Abbas claimed that none of them was, even though the police found a gun on one of them, but he made it clear that the attackers were his own relatives and fellow villagers, not the Alevis.

In the days after this fight the atmosphere was very tense. Abbas's son-in-law Seyyid was worried that the fight would be blown out of proportion, so he telephoned Celal Yüksel to ask for his assistance in resolving the conflict. As soon as Celal heard about the fight, he established contacts with an acquaintance of his, Hıdır Bulut, a highly respected Alevi *dede*, who appears on television sometimes. Celal and Hıdır Bulut arranged to go to Sultanbeyli with several more *dedes* to calm the families down. "They came to my house", Abbas said: "*Hoca* (Seyyid), this man from the municipality whose father we know - I think his name was Cemal, and the *dede*. They first asked us if this was an Alevi-Sunni fight, I said no: 'We've never had any problems, right next to us we have Alevi neighbors', I said". According to Abbas, Celal and the *dedes* brought the two parties in the conflict together and convinced the *Erzurumlular* to withdraw their complaint, so that the three men from Siirt could be released.

We agreed we would all pay 700 million. We, the families of the injured, and the *dedes*. People were already on their way from Erzurum and Tunceli to join in the fights, from Siirt there were also people coming, but nothing happened. My son and relatives stayed in prison until after the arrangement, because the prosecutor had to bring them up first. Then, when the other side withdrew their complaint, they were released.

Celal explained his involvement as follows:

I was in hospital when Seyyid called me to tell me about the fight. The next day I got up and went to Hıdır Bulut, an Alevi *dede* who is a friend of mine. "This is going to get bigger, we have to prevent this fight from getting worse", I told him, because at that time, people were throwing stones in the air to scare each other, tensions were very high. The Alevis were saying the Sunni were intent on killing them ("*Sünniler bizi kesiyorlar*") and the *Siirtliler* felt the

²⁹⁰ I use the terms Alevis and Sunnis as well as *Siirtliler* and *Erzurumlular*, because they were both used in the accounts of the conflict. However, Abbas much more often used terms like 'we', 'they' and 'the other side.'

Alevi were provoking them (“*Aleviler bizi tahrik ediyorlar*”). The whole thing had nothing to do with religious differences at first, but once it started, people jumped on the religious factor. People couldn’t safely walk the streets without shouting abuse and being shouted at. They were ready to use guns. It was a very explosive situation. I went there with four or five *dedes*. It’s my job to calm the Kurds down, you know, my family is very famous, you see. First we went to Seyyid. He explained what was happening: “The two sides are both Kurds, we have to calm them down”, he said. The same day we went to the *Siirtliler*.

Miriam: Were there also women present during the talking?

Celal: No, they never sat down with us. Women are more emotional, you see. It was especially the Alevi who said that they didn’t want any women involved, the Alevi *dedes*. So we went to the *Siirtliler*. They told us they had never had a fight with these people before, this was the first time. They were afraid it would get worse. At first they didn’t want peace, but we said: “We don’t want fights, this can blow over to other places and other cities. You will have to apologize and pay some blood money to the other side to make sure it doesn’t”. When they heard who I was, it wasn’t so difficult to convince them, because my family is very well-known.

Miriam: Do you know if HADEP was involved at all?

Celal: HADEP was only working to inflame the fight. They were accusing the Alevi. I don’t know why. There is this Alevi association in Sultanbeyli, Pir Sultan.²⁹¹ The Alevi were in contact with them, maybe they didn’t like that. The people from Pir Sultan said the Sunnis were attacking the Alevi. I don’t know how it happened but HADEP took an anti-Alevi attitude. If it had been up to them, the whole thing would only get worse. Thank God we came in.

Miriam: Were there any young people present during the talks? Like, the men who had been involved in the fighting?

Celal: Yes, but we didn’t allow them to talk. We kept saying this fight should not lead to deaths. We managed to convince them. The same day we went to the other side. We said we weren’t blaming them for anything, but that the whole issue was not one between two families anymore, that we didn’t want this to turn into an Alevi-Sunni fight. They were full of anger but there were some people among them who thought clearly. We made sure the fighting was put on hold for the time being. A week later we went there again to reach an agreement about the money. The Alevi *dedes* tried to win the Alevi over. They [the relatives of the Alevi victims] wanted more money. We didn’t manage to reach an agreement, so we went a third time, then we reached an agreement. The *Siirtliler* paid the others some money, I don’t know how much exactly, I left the details to Seyyid.

Miriam: Earlier you said the Sultanbeyli mayor had not played such a great role...

²⁹¹ He refers to the *Pir Sultan Abdal Derneği*, a leftist Alevi organization founded in Ankara in 1988 with branches all over Turkey. Pir Sultan Abdal was a famous Alevi poet and rebel, who was in the 1970s adopted as a symbol of left-wing activism (Sökefeld 2008:67,96).

Celal: That's true. He raked up the fights. I warned him and I told the Istanbul mayor that the mayor in Sultanbeyli was instigating people against the Alevis, I told him this would spread to other places. I also talked to the Sultanbeyli mayor directly, I told him in very clear terms he should stop doing what he was doing.

Miriam: Could you have played the same role in the conflict if you did not have that position in the municipality?

Celal: It would be a bit difficult. It was a combination of two things, my family and my position here. If it wasn't for us, if we hadn't calmed down that fight, the whole thing would have spread to other neighborhoods and cities, with detrimental consequences...

After some talking and pleading, Abbas and his relatives warmed to the idea of a settlement. His son, cousin and fellow-villager would stay in jail for an indefinite period of time as long as the conflict was not resolved, so Abbas's side had much to win and little to lose. At first sight, the Alevis had far less to gain by a settlement. I do not know how the *dedes* were received by the Alevis and which strategies they employed to win the Alevi contenders over. But being faced with four or five *dedes*, learned men who command great respect, from other parts of the city, of whom at least one was virtually a national celebrity, must have made an enormous impact on them.

Celal regarded his own role of central importance to the resolution of the conflict and dismissed involvement by the Sultanbeyli mayor, HADEP, and the Pir Sultan Abdal Association in terms of them stirring up ethno-religious trouble. He indicated that his own clear thinking and prompt action had prevented large-scale inter-ethnic fighting with possibly far-stretching consequences, perhaps even civil war. I neither spoke to the then mayor nor to people of the Pir Sultan Abdal Association. However, when I asked the DEHAP chairman in Sultanbeyli about the conflict, he replied it might have occurred when he was hospitalized and not active in the party, because he did not know about it: "It can't have happened in the last six years or so, because during that time DEHAP has had an active role in every major conflict". Indeed, the conflict occurred in 1998, when he was not yet in office. When I mentioned this conflict on a visit to DEHAP Kartal, the then chairman immediately understood what I was talking about: "Yes, that's true, I remember that one. It started on a picnic. We resolved that one too". He recalled that HADEP had enlisted the support of religious leaders on both sides to convince the contending parties that they should renounce violence. The conflict in Sultanbeyli and this man's narration of it demonstrate that DEHAP was not only competing with the judicial system, but also with other players in the field of alternative conflict resolution.

This former chairman's appropriation of a leading role in the resolution of a conflict most likely not mediated by DEHAP, serves as a reminder that DEHAP's success stories should be interpreted with caution. In the past

decennium, the AKP, the Islamic party which holds government power, has been competing with the PKK for the 'Kurdish vote' (Tezcür 2009). Celal's portrayal of the way in which he handled the Sultanbeyli conflict is likely to have been informed by this political struggle for the loyalties of 'ordinary Kurds'.

Reflection: 'peacetime' capitalizing on a 'wartime' inheritance

Urban conflicts and the efforts to resolve them reflected and affected the way in which Kurdish migrants - including forced migrants - aligned themselves with or dissociated themselves from other residents of the city, even if forced migrants were not directly involved in every single conflict. DEHAP's practice of conflict intervention had antecedents in conflict mediation practices of traditional leaders, but in its Istanbul form it was a direct inheritance from the war. In chapter 4, I argued that with the entrance of the PKK and the 'militarization' of social relations, intra-village conflict became translated into political terms: if one faction of the village joined the village guard system, the other was likely to side with the PKK, and among those who felt close to the PKK, conflicts were argued in terms of who was really deserving of the PKK label.

In this politicized context, the PKK acquired the symbolic capital that enabled it to mediate in conflicts, that is, a symbolic capital backed up by military force. As Nicole Watts (2009:8) states: "The activities of the PKK and its efforts to monopolize the means of coercion and symbolic capital" created "dual and dueling authorities" in parts of the Southeast. This was also visible in urban contexts, where the authority to mediate conflicts was reserved for DEHAP. Among those who claimed to be *yurtsever* (patriotic), DEHAP could hardly be kept out of major conflicts, and even people who did not have a favorable view of the party could not always get around it.²⁹² The 'masses' of forced migrants, for whom an appeal to DEHAP in case of a conflict was an almost automatic first choice, boosted DEHAP's status as an urban power.

Madeleine Leonard (2004), who researched the repercussions of the political conflict and the peace process on a Catholic community in Belfast, ascertains that the horizontal 'bonding' capital of which Robert Putnam speaks may be mobilized as part of a political strategy by those who have no faith in their government or state. Among the Catholics in the poor neighborhood she studied: "support networks emerged as ways of challenging the state's inability to provide employment for its citizens" (Leonard 2004:932).

Yet, this bonding capital was not without its disadvantages: people who were deemed unlikely to 'pay back' were often excluded, and economic exploitation of friends and relatives occurred regularly. In Leonard's research, the fact that some members of dense networks were able to cultivate linking ties with people

²⁹² *Yurtsever* is a Turkish word, but is also used by Kurdish nationalists to refer to themselves.

outside these networks, while others were unable to do so, increased inequalities within the initial dense network. In my research, social capital operated in similar paradoxical ways. Ferhat's linking capacities, for example, excluded other members of his dense bonding network. Exploitation of 'ethnic brethren' is prevalent in many migration situations (Portes 1998), but probably more likely in situations in which the newly arrived have reason to be weary of 'the state', for example, when they do not possess legal permission to be where they are or when they 'carry with them' a history of repression by this state.

From the perspective of the forced migrants, their ties with DEHAP constituted a salient form of social capital. DEHAP might not offer much in a material sense, in the way that the AKP offered commodities, but it did offer something immaterial which could be pretty valuable. DEHAP's practice of conflict intervention provided the migrants with a sense of security, and helped them to adapt themselves to quickly changing and often adversarial living conditions. Mediators imprinted on forced migrants that times had changed, and that physical violence was not the best way to settle a business conflict or an 'honor case' (*namus davası/kız meselesi*). In employing an emancipatory discourse, DEHAP tried to change the definition of what was honorable. Mediators pointed out how the use of violence would backfire on those wanting to use violence, and possibly on Kurds more broadly. I have no doubt then that DEHAP's practice of conflict intervention enabled people who had previously been marginalized to achieve a sense of safety or to improve their positions, and that the party even saved lives.

However, there were limits to DEHAP's offering of protection, for one thing, because not every request for intervention was granted. Zehra's dispute over her wedding gold, for example, was not dealt with. She felt that without a man - husband or father - who spoke up for her, she did not count. Another example of unsuccessful resort to the party can be deduced from a documentary made by two young Kurdish women from The Netherlands. The documentary makers interviewed a widow in Diyarbakir whose teenage son murdered her daughter/his sister for bringing shame on the family.²⁹³ The woman explained that before the killing happened, knowing that her son was up to something, she had applied to the legal authorities and to 'the party' for intervention. Apparently, neither the authorities nor DEHAP were able or willing to help prevent her son from using violence.

Again and again, I observed that Kurds had very high expectations of 'the party'. In chapter 1, I stated that it was a young DEHAP supporter (then HADEP) from Muş named Cengiz, who had introduced me to members of the Bedran family from Alimler village. Sadly, about a year after I first met Cengiz, he committed suicide. He had eloped with a girl and his family had received this

²⁹³ The documentary *Verdwaalde Gezichten* (Lost Faces) was made in 2007 by Yeter Akın and Seren Dalkıran to create awareness about, and to combat honor-related violence.

very badly. While some people held Cengiz's older brother responsible for his death - I was told that he beat Cengiz, locked him up and withheld food, this older brother accused DEHAP of not interfering effectively. Cengiz's sister-in-law complained that Cengiz had dedicated his whole life to the party, but that when he needed the party, they dropped him like a hot brick. She said HADEP had not wanted him to marry, because as a married man he would have less time to devote to the party. Such stories indicate that the relationship between person and party was perceived as one of mutual investment. To give another example, Azad, who was out of work often, told me that the party would be able to find him a job, but sooner or later something would be expected in return. It is plausible that the ties that contenders had with the party before a conflict emerged or escalated, had an impact on DEHAP's response to a request for intervention, and to the party's subsequent handling of the case.

From DEHAP's point of view, the fact that so many people looked to the party for the resolution of conflicts was mostly a blessing but also a burden. On the 'blessing side', it offered party officials an opportunity to combine the 'morally right' with the 'politically useful': Chairpersons and board members not only felt a moral responsibility to prevent conflicts from escalating, such requests also offered them an opportunity to widen DEHAP's sphere of influence among Kurds. It was part of the politics of DEHAP and DTP to identify 'Kurdishness' with allegiance to DEHAP and DTP (Tezcür 2009), and dispute resolution provided one mechanism through which board members could try to achieve this. On the 'burden side', I heard complaints that to intervene in conflicts was time-consuming and risky, because the mediators could also lose prestige. To resolve conflicts was no easy job. It was impossible for DEHAP to know all the ins and outs of long-term conflicts, and DEHAP was constrained by the workings of the legal system: there was an incentive to appease the side with most to gain in a real court case. Besides, as indicated above, board members and chairpersons had better relations with some contenders than with others. Thus, the impartiality so often emphasized was sometimes difficult to uphold. In spite of all this, also when DEHAP did not live up to people's expectations, most forced migrants still remained loyal to the party. After all, they reasoned, do not all people make mistakes, and what are the party's imperfections in comparison to the gross violations of Kurdish rights by the state?

It should be clear by now that in conflicts between Kurds, in arguing that Kurds should stick together and should not allow the state to mingle in their internal affairs, DEHAP most certainly employed dense networking as a political strategy. This had results which I find highly applaudable, but the appeals to brotherhood and solidarity which went with DEHAP's interventions could also allow inequalities to persist, for one thing, because DEHAP had to make sure it did not alienate large segments of actual or potential rank and file. I have little hard evidence for this apart from Begüm Koçak's admission that the party could not always achieve what she personally wanted to achieve. What young people or

young women wanted was not always counted because DEHAP could only go so far in bending the prevalent norms.

As I argued at the end of chapter 7, the mobilization of social capital to combat health problems may come ‘cheaply’ to the state: it helps to keep health expenditures relatively low.²⁹⁴ However, it is obvious that DEHAP’s conflict resolution practices ‘cost’ the Turkish state in terms of prestige and legitimacy, if not power. I should perhaps be careful not to overstate this point. After all, both as an idea and in experience, ‘*devlet*’ or ‘*Türk devleti*’ was omnipresent in the lives of most forced migrants. While many despised or feared the state, most also needed it and had large expectations of it, in terms of the provision of health care and education, for example. But this was a matter of Turkey having won the minds of these Kurds, not their hearts. The forced migrants demanded justice, after years of having suffered injustices ranging from torture, mass expulsions and extrajudicial killings to the harsh daily struggle for a decent living standard and the ineffectiveness of state institutions in ‘petty’ conflicts. The bottom-line was, and is, that the ‘incapability’ of ruling politicians and government agencies to deliver justice has produced and continues to reproduce profoundly cynical dispositions toward the state, which have reinforced a long-standing practice of sidelining ‘the state’ whenever and wherever deemed possible and necessary.

²⁹⁴ Its long-term costs in terms of the loss of human capital are more difficult to calculate and do not seem to play a major role in political discussions.

Conclusion: Turkish Displacements – Fixating ‘Matters Out Of Place’

Turkey is a multi-ethnic country which, by adopting Turkishness as a unifying and homogenizing force, fuelled different forms of resistance at different times and in different regions, most notably among Kurds whose elites had developed a nationalist consciousness in the latter days of the Ottoman Empire. In the face of severe Republican repression of all people regarded disloyal to the Turkish nation, coupled with the economic underdevelopment of ‘suspect’ regions, violent ethnic resistance solidified itself and widened its base of support. Thus the Turkish authorities achieved almost the opposite of the national uniformity and togetherness that the founders of the Republic had hoped to achieve. In this account about Turkish ethnic expansion and Kurdish ethnic resistance, the forced migration of Kurdish villagers was an instance of large-scale primarily state-orchestrated political violence against ‘unturkifiable’ people. This violence had lasting effects on the lives of the displaced Kurds and, largely by way of how these people acted on this ‘event’, was to add new and enduring dimensions to the problem of ‘Turkish national unity’.

Between 2001 and 2004, I carried out anthropological research among forcibly displaced Kurdish families who came from different regions in Southeast Turkey, and who lived on the Asian side of Istanbul. I spoke extensively with the migrants about the time period preceding their displacement and about the migration process itself. I also investigated the ways in which they rebuilt their lives in an alien environment, and the resources and practices that they drew on in this process.

Because they did not receive any support from governmental or nongovernmental organizations, they depended on their own social capital, that is, it was the value of their relationships with other people that enabled them to establish their lives in the city. In short, I focused on the migrants’ stories about the past and their social relationships in the (then) present. My main contribution to the study of forced migration and of the impact of political violence on civilians is in the way in which I tied ‘narrative’, a field of study in its own right in anthropology, to ‘social capital’, a concept which has risen in the past decennia in the social sciences and in policymaking. More precisely, my contribution is in the way in which I connected experiences with different kinds of violence to the concept of social capital, via one of the routes along which these experiences are socially ‘processed’, that is, through stories.

I began my introductory chapter with three vignettes, three vistas of the theoretical and ethnographic anchoring grounds of my research, so to speak. The vignette about the ‘national soap of war’ addressed the conspicuous lack of mainstream interest in the impact of war violence and mass displacement on Turkish citizens from the Southeast. This lack of interest was all the more notable because war and displacement continued to inform the everyday lives of displaced Kurds, also long after their arrival in Istanbul. The second vignette about people arranging marriages for their children in difficult economic circumstances, emphasized the migrants’ capacity to act on their own behalf, their ‘agency’. I argued that migration was not some kind of Pavlov reaction to an outside impulse, but that the desire of the migrants to realize their ‘culturally scripted projects’ under less favorable circumstances was a motivating force in their migration. The third vignette emphasized that, even though phenomena which by outside observers have often been regarded as watershed events ensuing in severe disruption, there was much continuity between ‘pre-migration’, ‘wandering’ and ‘post-migration’ lives.

These are all fairly accepted points of departure in the present-day sociological and anthropological study of war and forced migration. The crucial question is how all this played out among forced migrants in Istanbul. In this concluding chapter I will clarify my thoughts on how it did. I will also draw some relevant connections to developments which took place after I left Turkey, and will point out directions for future research into the impact of forced migration on Kurds and on Turkish society.

VIOLENCE AND AGENCY

That agency is such an important term in research about war and displacement is not only because the images that spring to view when ‘outsiders’ think of people affected by these phenomena are of people ultimately dispossessed of control and power. It is also because the manner in which we view forced migrants and warzone inhabitants has far-reaching moral and political implications. For example, someone whose only ‘capacity to act’ is to flee from a war to a Western European country and to apply for asylum is entitled to protection. If a ‘receiving’ government can make it plausible that this person was not as helpless as he claims to be, this government is relieved of the duty to grant him asylum status. Similar considerations play a role in Turkey too.

In Turkey, with the adoption of the so-called Compensation law in 2004, a Kurd who can prove that state representatives forced her to leave her village is entitled to compensation. This constitutes one reason for the Turkish authorities to play down state violence and pretend that the forced migrants were ordinary rural migrants, who left their villages because they thought life was better elsewhere. In contrast, an organization like HADEP/DEHAP/DTP/BDP, which claims to represent forced migrants, has an interest in the acknowledgement of

the migrants' lack of agency in the face of state violence on the one hand, and in the acknowledgement of their capacity for agency as politically aware Kurds on the other. Clearly then, whether the forced migrants are agents of their own lives or mere victims of particularly brutal structures, is not only an academic but also a moral and political discussion.

Resistance to external domination and the scripting of indigenous projects

Sherry Ortner (2006:132) makes a distinction between 'soft' definitions of agency, such as the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001:112), and 'hard' definitions of agency, in which actions are motivated by goals, desires, intentions and purposes. In my view, speaking of agency becomes interesting in relation to the observation that people have goals, desires, intentions and purposes which do not spring entirely from apparently omnipotent structures, and which are perhaps different between members of the same 'category' or between people who find themselves in similar circumstances. Therefore, I opt for a hard definition of agency which foregrounds felt, thought, voiced or acted-on desires, motives and intentions which go beyond merely 'surviving', 'responding to' or 'fitting in'. The problem is that desires and motives are sometimes irrelevant to outcomes, or "at the very least have a complicated and highly mediated relationship to outcomes" (Ortner 2006:132).

Thinking about agency in relation to people who occupy marginal positions, Ortner (2006:145) distinguishes between an 'agency of power' which is organized around the axis of domination and resistance, and an 'agency of projects' which is "defined by the local logics of the good and desirable". What might 'power agency' and 'project agency' amount to in the case of Kurdish forced migrants?

Even when repression was at its height, Kurdish villagers tried to continue their lives on their own terms, that is, they forged projects with a degree of durability. A family that wanted to send a son to boarding school so that he could become a civil servant and provide financial and social security for his relatives, would not give up on this pursuit right away 'just' because state authorities were becoming more repressive, or because the PKK made it clear that this son would be better off fighting in PKK ranks. Nevertheless, through state and PKK politics, the structural context in which people 'planned' or 'plotted' their lives *was* transformed. For many later forced migrants, the PKK offered a new window on the world and an alternative take on modernization, now that the narrow avenues that the state had used to offer them, seemed to have been closed off. New pursuits, such as helping to restore the Kurds to dignity, were added to the spectrum of thinkable projects, and the previously taken-for-granted - 'being able to live as a family or a community in the village' - became a project, for many a political one even.

The PKK's narrative of Kurdishness appealed more to many Kurds than the state discourse in which Kurdish villagers were tagged as state supporters or potential militants ergo committers of crimes against Turkish humanity. However, the villagers were not blank recipients of PKK or state messages. They had 'indigenous' positions to protect, to improve or to escape from, so that the 'choices' people made in the 'PKK-state field' were influenced by their individual position in their family, the positions adopted by leading family members, and by local constellations of power relations. For a young woman, joining the PKK was not only a political choice, it also meant going in search of adventure and gaining independence from her family. Thus, besides new projects being added to the spectrum, it was also the case that in the 1980s and 1990s, old projects were 'newly clothed' and that the means to enact 'old projects' changed. People could now accumulate the resources required to start a family by becoming a village guard, and they could now gain an advantage over their much hated neighbor by aligning themselves to the PKK or the state. Projects which used to be 'domestic', in the sense of having little to do with national politics, became political because they were now phrased in terms of opposition to, or cooperation with, the state or the PKK.

One way or another, almost all forced migrants I studied ended up in what was, from a state perspective, 'the wrong camp'. It was the PKK's narrative of Kurdishness, and the possibility of the villagers adopting this narrative, which made Kurds 'matter out of place' (Douglas 1966) for the state and which was the cause of their displacement. When gendarme officers, soldiers or special teams ordered the villagers to leave, the villagers were unable to effect resistance. In terms of 'power-agency' then, the forced migration signalled the defeat of the villagers' agency. However, if we understand agency in terms of the forging of indigenous projects, forced migration denoted not only defeat but also the resilience of many of the villagers. Optimistically stated, the villagers' 'compliance' bought them time on their own terms. Although the forced migrants failed to remain in the village, they enabled themselves to pursue their culturally scripted projects, pursuits which had, by that time, become increasingly political.

The transformation of social capital

The forced migrants were differently capacitated in how they organized their lives during and after the forced migration. An important source of 'forced migrant agency' was created by their 'social capital', a notion which refers to the instrumental value and drawbacks of social relations.

Since the 1970s, the bases and functions of the villagers' social relations had changed. Before the PKK emerged, people spoke Kurdish, most of their close relations were with Kurds, and encounters with Turks were encounters with difference. People's 'soft' Kurdish identifications were informed by and embedded in their daily social relations. Such relationships with relatives and

friends are often referred to as 'bonding social capital' (Putnam 2000). With the entrance of the PKK and the state into the villagers' everyday lives, the make-up of people's social capital changed, as well as the functions which this transformed social capital had to perform. To give an example of the 'new functions' of social capital, the PKK expected villagers to prevent their relatives from joining the army, and state authorities expected villagers to inform on their fellow villagers. Stathis Kalyvas (2007:351) rightly refers to denunciation in war or under authoritarian regimes as "the dark face of social capital".

During the war years, the bonding social capital of the Kurds shrunk in some ways, and got damaged in others: some people were at large, others were in prison, and old relatives and friends might not be regarded trustworthy or able to offer support anymore. However, 'Kurdishness' opened up a possibility for 'bridging ties' between previously unrelated people. The migrants 'carried' their transformed social capital with all its possibilities for inclusion and exclusion with them to the city. As shown in previous chapters, trusted relatives, fellow villagers and old friends (of friends) were the first people who the migrants established contact with. Newly arrived forced migrants often found temporary jobs and housing through relatives and old friends, but sooner or later they also began to establish new relationships with people who shared their stories about the past. When previously unconnected people became friends and started to intermarry, such bridging capital took on bonding qualities. As I will elaborate on below, HADEP/DEHAP/DTP played an important role in the coming about of such bridging-turned-bonding capital.

Initially, most new contacts were established by older male family heads or by working young men. Less well-connected relatives of these males were largely dependent on these men for jobs, for the broadening of their social networks, and the improvement of their position. Those who found themselves figuratively 'in the margins of the community', for example, mothers of small children, often turned out to be the last people to profit from Istanbul-made progress.

REMEMBERING DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF 'PROPS OF MEMORY'

In Istanbul, the forced migrants felt they were viewed as people with no past to speak of, unless it was a suspect past, and as people with no culture to speak of, unless it was a suspect culture. They were not in a position to appropriate Turkish pasts for themselves, or to pass as Turks. It is hardly surprising then that the forced migrants insisted on retaining their own pasts and that in the process they constructed an idealized version of their pasts, something that we all do but that is more 'compulsory' in some cases than in others.

The forced migrants were dislocated from the props of memory: they had stories that were not congruent with the political message of the dominant Kurdish narrative, stories that seemed to unsettle idealized gender relations, and

stories that perturbed family and community relations often remained untold. I referred to this phenomenon as ‘the internal censorship of memories’.

When someone dies and their belongings are dispersed, those who remember them lose the familiar, home, places in which they habitually met. They had set up unconscious habits and previous times - the chair, the arrangement of table settings, the ashtray and vase on the mantelpiece that would be reminders of the ordinary times together have now gone. An ordinary death and an ordinary disposal of belongings destroy a great many prompts that might recall habitual conduct. (Feuchtwang 2003:76)

While being away from certain props of memory might result in oblivion or disregard for the past - this is exactly what Paul Connerton (2009) suggests is a condition of modernity - Feuchtwang (2003:77) suggests that this is not the case when persons and things “that were themselves the props of memory: the familiar suppliers and prompters of anecdote, people and places, indoors and outdoors” are forcibly dislocated or destructed: “In those cases, grief and mourning are more likely to remain unfinished”.

The forced migrants were dislocated from the props of memory: they had very little to remind them of the facts, or to order the facts. They had few photos or written statements, they could not look up dates in letters, diplomas or bills, they could not consult newspaper articles or video recordings, and there were no records available of emergency calls people might have made when their house was shot or their village burned. It was not bank accounts that got plundered but stocks that were wasted, fruit trees that were appropriated and, in some cases animals that got killed. Most forced migrants could not return to their villages or could only return once or twice to the ruins of their village. Thus, they could not physically revisit their ‘pasts’ with their children. Apart from the occasional *tandır* (clay ovens for baking Kurdish bread), in Istanbul there were few visible reminders of their lives in the village. There were no monuments or memorials to testify to the violent recent past - no open air museums in which Kurdish villages were rebuilt for showing, before and after being bombed - there were no street names which reminded them of their village pasts in positive ways.

The migrants did their remembering and recalling against obliterating odds. One way in which they did this was by telling stories, the point of which was not primarily to give factual information but to reinstate a sense of shared belonging and to give meaning to their Istanbul lives. The space for the stories of the migrants was primarily provided and reproduced by HADEP/DEHAP/DTP and by organizations close to this party. In the interaction with other forced migrants and the Kurdish political party “individual memories came to stand for the memory of the nation” (cf. Sirman 2006) and an ethnic oppositional consciousness emerged. It was almost inevitable then that some people’s

memories were regarded more fit to stand for the memory of the nation than other people's memories. Stories which were not congruent with the political message of the dominant Kurdish narrative, stories which seemed to unsettle idealized gender relations, and stories which perturbed family and community relations, often remained untold. I referred to this phenomenon as 'the internal censorship of memories'.

If the importance of the past was overstated in the migrants' stories, this shows all the more that the past became a permanent frame of reference, a social condition of their Istanbul lives. It does not imply that the forced migrants were continuously mulling over their Kurdishness and state repression, nor that their 'culturally scripted projects' were all grounded in the past or geared toward the Southeast. While many elderly people could only really see themselves living productive and meaningful lives in the region of origin, many others were firmly rooted in Istanbul soil and - as Kurds - laid claim to Istanbul as well as Kurdistan, without feeling themselves typical *Istanbullus* and without wanting to live in Kurdistan (cf. Darıcı 2009). Most migrants wanted to have good relationships with their neighbors, they wanted regular well-paid jobs preferably with insurance, they wanted their children to marry well, they wanted to become home owners, they wanted to be treated with respect, and more and more people wanted a good education for themselves or for their children. But the circumstances were hardly encouraging and most of their relationships were with people with comparable experiences, people in similarly adverse situations and with similar stories, who had as much 'reason' to keep telling these stories. So, many forced migrants felt it was a duty to keep the Kurdish language alive, marriage partners often had to fit 'political' criteria - they had to be close to HADEP/DEHAP/DTP, or at least, not be opposed to it - and many people wanted to advance the position of Kurds in small or large ways, for example, by setting up a business so that one day they could invest in their region of origin. Taking into account that the meaning of the 'homeland' varied greatly between individuals, the Kurds in Istanbul can most definitely be viewed as part of a Kurdish diaspora.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The absence of positive and the abundance of negative props (such as renewed repression, discrimination as Kurds, Kurdish children being called terrorists) signaled that although the war had abated, in some ways and some places it was still going on. Besides, violence other than that of war and displacement was operative in seemingly neutral institutions such as the health care system, and in the virtual lack of schemes for the provision of housing to people with low incomes. The 'immoral economies' (cf. Buğra 1998) of health care and housing can be viewed as sites of structural violence, a violence which was not ethnic per se. Yet, categories of Kurds suffered from structural violence more and more

profoundly, because they were thrown into city life, coming from a situation in which structural violence was augmented by a large degree of political violence. Not only did they ‘lag behind’ regular labor migrants, but they were also treated differently, worse most of the time, by institutions as well as in their neighborhoods.

The forced migrants’ social capital was crucial for survival, but also had sharp limits. After all, both the bonding capital of ‘old fellows’ and the bridging capital of ‘new partners in adversity’ were forms of ‘horizontal capital’, that is, the relationships in which this capital inhered were relationships between people in similar economic and political conditions. Differences in status and economic position did exist (a long-settled local board member of the Kurdish party would probably be more financially secure than a recently arrived forced migrant) but were relatively small. ‘Vertical’ or upward ‘linking capital’ (Szreter & Woolcock 2004), that is, ties between the forced migrants and people in powerful positions who would be really able to help the forced migrants ahead, was virtually non-existent.

Structural neglect of people at the bottom of the societal hierarchy and explicit and implicit exclusion of Kurds by procedures and discourses, gave way to new ‘social capitalist’ dynamics. This was especially visible in situations in which people were confronted with small or big crises, such as illnesses or conflicts. Ill people tended to be at the mercy of their relatives, neighbors and friends. However, the people around ill persons usually only helped out in exceptionally urgent or poignant situations in which tangible successes could be scored. People with invisible, hopeless or ‘routine’ afflictions or conditions were not usually attended to. Partly, this was because most people around the forced migrants were more or less in the same boat (as unknowledgeable, possessing as little time, and being as low in cash as their friend in need). A factor which inhibited the potential of people’s networks in the realm of health care provision was also the fact that forced migrants often lived far away from relatives and friends. However, it was also the case that some categories of people were less likely to receive assistance than others. The economic and social strain on Kurdish families reinforced the inequality promoting aspects of people’s bonding capital, and resulted in unequal access to health care services *within* families and communities. Some of those people who needed medical care most, or for whom it would be most effective - pregnant women, for example - often had the greatest difficulty accessing it.

As I argued in chapter 7, the ‘sense of rough equality’ that is said to exist in egalitarian societies and that may allow disadvantaged people to successfully mobilize ties with people across power differentials, hardly exists in Turkey. If this were to change, this change would probably be coupled with a more inclusive social security system and a less exploitative economy. However, if such an emerging sense of rough equality was not accompanied by positive changes in the social security system and the economy, disadvantaged people

would still have to rely on the 'goodness of hearts' of the people whose houses they clean, whose gardens they tend, and whose cars they watch over. Poor people would have to put in much effort (spinning and pulling the right social strings) to acquire access to provisions that other people acquired through formal arrangements. In effect, inequality would still reign. In the present socioeconomic context, linking capital may help some forced migrants ahead, but I suspect its price to be very high or too high for Kurds who are unwilling to play down their Kurdishness. Also, considering the inequalities in bonding networks, it is not warranted to expect that the linking capital of forced migrants who are able to mobilize such capital will necessarily benefit their family or their wider bonding community (cf. Leonard 2007). As it is, what the forced migrants need most is better and more work opportunities, decent work conditions, unimpeded access to health care facilities, better educational opportunities for their children, and the assurance that they can rely on social welfare in case of need.

My case studies of 'health' and 'conflict' exemplified that horizontal capital in contexts of political and structural violence takes on qualities specific to the violent context. In my chapter about intervention in conflicts, I showed that in Istanbul, bonding was not just a way to survive or a way to get by, as Putnam (2000:23) suggests. For some of the people who sought support to resolve conflicts, bonding was also a political choice that reflected how they viewed themselves and Turkish society. For them and for the Kurdish political party, dense networking had become a political strategy which derived much of its *raison d'être* from the failure of state institutions and the silencing of Kurdish memories (cf. Leonard 2007).

That social capital did not always yield the expected or hoped for benefits, does not mean that it is not a useful analytical tool. If people can only rely on the people they know for economic and social security and mobility, there is no getting around the concept of social capital. The concept then becomes "a device for uncovering social processes and social structures" (Leonard 2007:929) that are at the root of the problems of the people whose only option is to depend on social capital. My analysis of the multitude of factors and phenomena relevant to the outcomes of the migrants' social capital, underlines pleas for a view of social capital not as "a historical and cultural essence" but as something which should be investigated in particular local and political contexts (Nguyen & Peschard 2003:452).

The power to rule and the power to heal

In their article entitled ‘Anthropology, inequality, and disease’ Vinh-Kim Nguyen and Karine Peschard (2003:460-461) state that the power to rule is often intermingled with the power to wound, to heal, and to prevent injury. ‘Therapeutic systems’, such as that of biomedicine²⁹⁵, must be justified and marketed, and are tied up with the prerogatives of people in political and economic control. In short, the powerful have much say in determining what is and what is not an affliction, who needs and who does not need to be healed, and who should and who should not be protected from injury. The Turkish state sent soldiers to the Kurdish regions, tortured and killed civilians and militants, and allowed situations in which Kurds became prone to illness to persist. The state also played an important part in creating the conditions which prevented certain categories of people from injury, while making others vulnerable to it, and in the creation of (access to) health care facilities. Although the PKK had less power to heal and to prevent injury, the organization killed and injured as it saw fit. By forcing villagers to take care of injured militants, PKK members made these villagers vulnerable to state violence. Neither the PKK nor Kurdish political parties could amount to much in the field of health care provision, even though there were doctors in the PKK who treated ill villagers when they had the opportunity (İkibine Dođru, August 8, 1989).

However, HADEP/DEHAP/DTP derived its claim for political power from its ostensible power to heal - not individual people but ‘the people’ – as if the party possessed a deeper understanding of what ‘the Kurdish body’ needs than the state or other organizations. Whereas the domain of conflict intervention may seem to be entirely separate from that of illness, they are closely connected. The conflicts referred to in chapter 8 included traffic accidents, domestic violence, a suicide which might have been prevented, and competition for jobs in circumstances of lurking undernourishment and malnourishment. Not only did such conflicts induce much stress, a factor which is associated with adverse affects on people’s health and wellbeing (Nguyen & Peschard 2003:451), many were to do with finding ways of preventing, addressing or redressing physical damage and afflictions. An important portion of money fines assigned was often for the payment of hospital fees. If the people involved in these conflicts had been properly insured, or if facilities for health care had been easily accessible to them, this aspect of paying for health damages would not have come into the equation at all. Thus, while claiming to be able to heal relationships, the party also indirectly played a part in the healing of individual bodies.

²⁹⁵ ‘Traditional’ Chinese medicine and witchcraft are examples of alternative therapeutic systems.

NOTES ON TIME AND LOCATION IN THE AFTERMATH OF FORCED MIGRATION

So far, I have summarized and reflected on some of my main 'findings'. While doing this, it should be kept in mind that the aftermath of forced migration was far from uniform. Not only was its impact different for different families, genders and generations, there were important disparities between different localities and time periods. Illiteracy, overcrowded schools, petty crime, tensions between residents, children selling paper napkins and lighters on the streets, and people who never see the face of a doctor exist in all *gecekondu* districts in Turkey. However, the incidence of the problems and the ways in which these are perceived by forced migrants change from district to district, neighborhood to neighborhood, and from quarter to quarter.

If I compare my research to that of other researchers, it seems that the forced migrants in my research were relatively 'lucky'. I argued that violence was a constant in their lives, but what I encountered was nothing like the violence experienced and engaged in by the Kurdish children studied by Haydar Darıcı (2009) in Adana. I showed that women lost out in many situations, but the young women in Diyarbakir studied by Şen (2005) were far worse off. I denounced lacking health services, but the situation in Istanbul still compared favorably with that in the overcrowded cities of the Southeast (Akçura 2008:285-295). The image that emerged from my research was of an urban realm plagued by hardship, but with a more 'human scale' than in other parts of the city and country.

One of the things which was impressed on me was the deep sense of children's loyalty to their parents and their families. The difference between the relative 'pliancy' of the migrants I studied, whose oppositionality was primarily in collective consciousness, and the readiness to use violence analyzed by Darıcı points to the importance of time and location in studying the aftermath of forced migration.

Darıcı (2009), who carried out research among Kurdish boys in a neighborhood in Adana which was dominated by poor Kurds, provides a striking account of the violence suffered and inflicted by Kurdish children, their almost total lack of willingness to abide by rules of 'the system', and of the gap which the children experience between themselves and older Kurds, with whom they nevertheless feel connected through the shared experience of state violence. Many of the boys in Darıcı's research were engaged in both criminal and political violence, and virtually none of them had any hope of getting anywhere in life through education. Darıcı demonstrates that these children's politics, in going way beyond the politics of the DTP, began to force the DTP to reassess its own politics.²⁹⁶ Considering the fact that the dominant narrative about

²⁹⁶ The dominant narrative about these children holds that they are manipulated and bribed to engage in political violence.

‘protesting Kurdish children’ holds that these children are manipulated and bribed by adults to engage in political violence, Darıcı’s work is an excellent example of the way in which the ‘evidence of experience’ can tear a dominant narrative to pieces. Darıcı makes it vividly clear that the losses and the wrongs they suffered were expressed more with *anger* than with mourning. In the families I studied there was both anger and mourning, but *mourning* had the upper hand. Nevertheless, the anger which was most definitely there, makes a scenario such as sketched for real by Darıcı a thinkable future prospect, even though many people in Turkey feel that nowadays Kurds have almost all they wanted or could reasonably expect.

The silence and tumult of the dominant narrative

Much has changed in Turkey since 1990, when the then prime minister Yıldırım Akbulut could publicly state that “those who live on the lands we are watering with the blood of the martyrs are Turks and they shall remain Turks. There are no Kurds. There are only Turks” (Turkey Briefing 1990). The discourse regarding ‘the Kurds’ has become fragmented or multiplied in such a way that there is more space now for Kurdish perspectives, and it has become easier for ‘lay people’ to become informed. Much has also changed since 2000. A long list might be compiled of more and less potentially positive efforts to address the Kurdish issue, many of which were initiated by the ‘Islamist’ AKP that aims to attract many Kurdish voters. In 2004 a law was passed to compensate the forced migrants for their material losses, Kurdish may now be taught at private schools, and several films were made which alluded to or directly tackled the forced migration of Kurds.²⁹⁷ These films drew quite a wide audience. The silence seems to have been broken. However, this is only so in (un)certain places and at (un)certain times. The silence is still there, and it extends to non-Kurdish victims of political violence as well as to the perpetrators of this violence.

In 1998 Nadire Mater, a Turkish journalist, published a book of interviews with soldiers who served in the Southeast. The soldiers told her very different stories - some were proud, others ashamed, some wanted to go back, others wanted to die - but their honesty was not appreciated: the book was banned. There are also others who are not supposed to speak, those who tortured the many Turkish citizens who were subjected to torture since 1980, for example. Exposed torturers who do not show any remorse are given a second chance because they “acted in the line of duty”, states medical doctor and psychologist Murat Paker (2007:110). As a result:

²⁹⁷ EU-pressure played an important role in the coming about of this law. The law was and is, both in terms of its wording and its application, problematic. Very few forced migrants have received actual compensation, see Kurban et al. (TESEV) 2007; Kurdish Human Rights Project/Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales 2006, accessed September 29, 2010: http://www.barhumanrights.org.uk/docs/bhreckhrp/IDP_return_compesation.pdf.

Examples of the films mentioned are ‘Büyük Adam, Küçük Aşk’ (Big Man, Little Love), directed by Handan İpekçi, and ‘Güneşi Gördüm’ (I Saw the Sun), directed by Mahsun Kırımızgül.

Thousands of torturers and hundreds of thousands of torture victims are walking among us. Perhaps they do their shopping at the same supermarkets, watch films in the same cinemas, their children may go to the same schools. As if nothing serious happened. As if it is possible to forget by putting the lid on it, by pretending it did not happen. (Paker 2007:111)

In 2003, for the first time, an account of torture appeared in a mainstream newspaper, a significant though belated acknowledgement as Paker (2007:105) notes. Still, “the vast majority of society did not hear their cries, did not want to hear them, did not call on those who did their dirty work, in fact, some people openly felt “proud” of those who murdered for the state” (Paker 2007:110). Paker referred to former foreign and prime minister Tansu Çiller, who praised a mafia gunman who had killed for the state by saying: “Those who fire bullets or suffer their wounds in the name of this country, this nation, and this state will always be respectfully remembered by us” (Komisar 1997²⁹⁸).²⁹⁹

Millions of people have been at the receiving end of state violence, hundreds of thousands of others were complicit in exercising state violence. As stated earlier, between 30 and 40 thousand people were killed in the armed conflict between the PKK and the state, most of them Kurdish civilians, and several thousands of people were disappeared. Hundreds of thousands of young men fought or are still fighting against the PKK, and ten thousands of young men and women fought or are still fighting against the Turkish army. Besides, at least one million people in Turkey have been tortured since 1980. Adding up some of these figures, Murat Paker (2007:19) argues that since 1980 over five million people have been directly affected by state violence. If the loved ones of those threatened, tortured, disappeared and killed are added to this number, he argues, at least 15 million people in Turkey were directly or indirectly affected by state violence. The 100 thousands of soldiers who fought in the Southeast and the thousands who tortured and sometimes killed detainees are not included in this number. These figures provide an inkling of the magnitude of psychological trauma engendered by political violence in Turkish society.

²⁹⁸ See Komisar’s article in *The Progressive*:
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1295/is_n4_v61/ai_19254727/pg_3,
 accessed September 29, 2010.

²⁹⁹ Things have started to change. Recently nine prison and police officials received heavy sentences for torture. See the Human Rights Watch report:
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/06/03/turkey-landmark-convictions-torture-case>,
 accessed September 29, 2010.

Displaced tumult

The silence characterized above stands in stark contrast to the tumult about what has been termed a ‘violence epidemic’³⁰⁰ or ‘an outburst of violence’. As journalist Neşe Düzel wrote in the spring of 2006:

Turkey is experiencing an outburst of violence. This violence is a very different kind of violence from the collective conflicts and wars between institutions, organizations and states we have long gotten used to. The violence we are going through today is a violence which is shared by a large majority of the individuals in society. High schools have become places where young people beat, injure and kill each other. In front of the schools, where there used to be *simit* sellers, now there are the stalls of knife sellers. These days, bag-snatchers, pickpockets, and thieves are reaching a state in which they can easily murder people on the streets. Mafia and criminal gangs are spreading all over Anatolia. Besides, the newspapers are full every day of women who are battered by their husbands or their lovers. In the Southeast the violence on the streets is experienced in mass numbers it seems. Wherever we turn our heads, we see violence now. How has the violence we already know exists in this society, come to spread like an epidemic disease to people of all ages? (Düzel 2006³⁰¹)

This excerpt from a newspaper article reflects a sense of fear, loss, and puzzlement. The fear is of a violence which seems omnipresent, indiscriminate and irrational. The loss is of the reassuring feeling that as long as people stayed out of public power struggles, be they political or economic, they would not have to deal with too much violence. The puzzlement relates to the how and why of all this. As the journalist emphasizes, violence used to be made sense of in terms of competition between radical political groups, and between radical groups and the state³⁰², but when I lived in Istanbul, views on the incidence and nature of violence had changed. There seemed to be an *idée fixe* that violence was - now - potentially everywhere. The question why experiences and forms of violence changed is far more complex than I can even begin to analyse, but there can be little doubt that widespread armed and political violence had much to do with it. In the above-quoted article, Murat Paker argues that while part of the panic was created by the media, violence did indeed increase. He relates this increase to widespread mostly state-orchestrated political violence, the changed position of women, the insecurity and the ‘uncheckedness’ created by rapid

³⁰⁰ March 18, 2010, Özge Özsağman, anchorwoman of television channel Habertürk, spoke with a psychiatrist about the ‘violence epidemic’. Instructively, the three violent incidents which formed the direct occasion for this program occurred in Kurdish cities, namely Malatya, Bingöl and Urfa.

³⁰¹ In *Radikal* newspaper, April 3, 2006. The article is available at:

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=183285>, accessed March 18, 2010.

³⁰² I might add that the violence which many people perpetrated or suffered in their families used to be regarded ‘private’ and that the violence which teachers inflicted on their students was regarded ‘educational’. Violence in these domains did not count as violence.

modernization, the closing off of opportunities for economic mobilization, and the vast opportunities for people to engage in criminal livelihoods. In the following paragraphs I will focus on political violence in relation to this so-called 'new violence'.

As demonstrated in earlier chapters, over the past decade 'random' criminal violence and 'anarchist' political violence came to be associated with the inhabitants of poor neighborhoods in general and with Kurds in particular. It is striking that even children lost their innocence in this ethnicized crime and danger discourse (Darıcı 2009; Aydın 2009). Over the past few years, Kurdish 'thinner sniffing' and 'stone throwing' children have become an object of fear. In 2006, when there were major Kurdish demonstrations against the government, in Diyarbakir alone, 400 children were arrested according to official figures, and 700 according to unofficial figures (Aydın 2009). In previous chapters I showed that 'the Kurdish family' suffered major blows in the past decades, many inflicted by state authorities. The responses to the 'problem of the stone throwing children' again signify an attack on Kurdish family life.

Not only did many children receive high prison sentences for throwing stones at the police, the families of the children are 'punished' in other ways too. In response to political protest staged by Kurdish children in Adana, the provincial governor declared that if the first responsible (mothers, aunts, and grandmothers) and the second responsible (fathers, uncles, and grandfathers) did not do their jobs, the state would take over the care of these children. As the governor said: "we love you more than your mothers and fathers" and "we will always be on your side if only you come to us" (*yeter ki bize ulaşın*).³⁰³ Research shows that under adverse and violent conditions, for children to possess supportive family networks is a major factor keeping them sane (Boothby 1992; Reynolds 2000:147-148). Clearly then, taking the 'stone throwing' children from their parents would have a lasting negative impact on Kurdish parents and children.³⁰⁴ Such an approach does make sense, however, if Kurds are regarded as uninvited narrative stage crashers.

The failure of the dominant narrative

In the still dominant narrative about the origin of the Turkish state and make-up of the Turkish nation, the Turkish Republic emerged "out of the ashes of a defunct empire thanks to the successful struggle waged against European

³⁰⁴ This was reported on November 20, 2008: <http://www.lpghaber.com/Adana-Valisi-Atis-Cocuklarimizin-Tirnagiginin-Acimas-500-Kilogram-Komurden-Onemli-haberi-141962.html>, accessed April 1, 2010.

³⁰⁵ Recently a law was drafted which revoked the high prison sentences received by protesting children. As Ahmet Altan, a leading journalist at Taraf newspaper, argues in one of his columns, this is a joyous development but it is hardly enough: <http://www.taraf.com.tr/makale/10390.htm>, accessed April 1, 2010.

imperialism by a people united behind its extraordinary leader” (Sirman 2006:35³⁰⁵).

In previous chapters, I argued that the last place where the authorities were willing to tolerate tenacious Kurdishness was in a Kurdish region which was claimed by the PKK. People all over Turkey viewed such Kurdishness as deeply threatening. Militant Kurds were the internal enemy. Still, they were in some respects marginal, after all, the Southeast was not exactly ‘Turkey proper’. However, with the forced migration of Kurds, the Kurdish internal other encroached into the heart of one of the hotspots of the Turkey-to-be-cherished. As Delal Aydın (2009:47) argues, thinner sniffing and streetworking children show that something is not quite going well in Turkish society. The physical presence of these children becomes the ultimate reminder of failure and thus a provocation: they are regarded as redundant, as ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas 1966). Aydın (2009:49) quotes a Turkish racist who writes on an internet forum that Brazil faced a similar problem of drugselling children of inferior origin: “Together with the police, the people who were fed up with this carried out armed raids on their homes and killed them en masse. If the state allows it, the same should be done here”. Although most people in Istanbul would not condone ‘the problem’ to be ‘resolved’ this way, few people try to understand where these children or their ‘stone throwing’ counterparts come from. And while many people in Turkey are deeply sensitive to the suffering of Palestinian children targeted by Israeli police violence, they turn a blind eye on Kurdish children who resort to violence to make themselves matter.

In short, the Kurds have shaken the dominant narrative of state and nation to its core, first by claiming the right for a separate state, then by demanding major changes in the political system and by demanding the right to speak - even teach - a different language, then by exposing the ugliness of mass poverty.³⁰⁶ This narrative of state and nation seems to have arrived at a particularly nasty episode, much nastier for many Kurds, in my view, than for those who believe in the narrative, but it is perceptions that count, and the perceptions of ‘the dominant majority’ are still at odds with those of most forcibly migrated Kurds.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Many of the above-mentioned themes generate questions for further research. Also, there are still no indepth qualitative studies of forced migrants’ work lives, work conditions, the exploitation of children and youngsters, the exposure of

³⁰⁵ Sirman analyzes this narrative, she does not share it.

³⁰⁶ As Nükhet Sirman (2006:36) states, processes of globalization, economic neo-liberalization, in particular the possibility of access to the European Union, as well as internal developments - corruption, the advent of the Islamist AKP, the Kurdish issue, and the visible increase of poverty in the metropolises - have created a sense of Turkey’s sovereignty being threatened and a sense of loss, which is especially sharp among long-standing middle-classes.

workers to (sexual) harassment and abuse, the ways in which dependence on relatives and ('political') friends plays out, and the ways in which individuals resist and subvert control at work by others. Interesting questions are also how forced migrant entrepreneurs adjust to neoliberal demands and what their significance is in the Turkish economy (cf. Leonard 2007; Sassen 1999). Most studies into the work conditions of forced migrants would include many 'non-forced migrants', because workplaces tend to be mixed even when they are dominated by Kurds.

It would be particularly interesting, in my view, to study the impact of forced migration and the current economic climate on the educational opportunities of forced migrant children. As noted in chapter 5, close to an entire generation of Kurdish children was deprived of an education. The impact of this deprivation of the right to education has received little study. Also, little is known about the experiences of forced migrant children and their parents in the field of education. State schools are important sites for the dissemination of Turkish nationalism while bringing together children of very diverse backgrounds. As can be deduced from examples of conflicts mentioned in chapter 8, they are also sites of potential conflict between members of different ethnic and religious groups. I expect there to be vast differences between schools with Kurdish majorities and schools with few Kurdish children, and between schools where any expression of Kurdishness is outlawed, and schools with teachers like the teacher of a child in my research, who said: "I'll teach you English and you'll teach me Kurdish".

As clarified earlier, the forced migrants do not form the only category of Kurds heavily affected by the war in the Southeast. To remedy justified calls (e.g. Malkki 1995) for attention to the position of people who stayed in war-affected regions, more systematic comparison is needed between Kurdish and Turkish regions, between rural and urban settings, and between those who stayed and those who left. A systematic intergenerational approach such as taken by Lena Inowlocki (1993), who studied intergenerational transmission of 'traditions' and stories/experiences among displaced Jews in the US, could produce much insight in the regional diversity of living and 'recalling conditions' for members of different generations, and on cultural negotiations between members of different generations.

However, if there is any one topic that I feel begs further probing, it is health and illness. This research field opens up a wealth of opportunities for a deeper understanding of the position of Kurds in Turkey, and of the consequences of political and other kinds of violence for the people who lived it. If affliction is the embodiment of inequality and violence, as Nguyen and Peschard (2003:467) argue, this "embodiment of inequality calls attention to the different forms through which violence is exercised in a given society and the ways in which the body serves as a register for, or a site of, struggle against forms of domination".

In my chapter on access to facilities for biomedical health care, I analyzed only one aspect of the myriad of relevant issues relating to health, illness and

violence. I emphasized access to biomedicine, because the lack of such access presented itself as a pressing issue. However, the migrants' perceptions of health and illness were not all and not only related to biomedicine. That biomedicine played such a major role in the lives of migrants who were ill or who had ill relatives, may be interpreted as the success of the preferred therapeutic system of those who rule and of those who eke a good living out of biomedicine, the pharmaceutical industry, for example. The emphasis on biomedicine is also an indication of the loss of opportunities to resort to 'old' or 'indigenous' therapeutic systems which used to exist alongside biomedicine. As indicated in chapter 7, the forced migrants lost access to healers and 'healing places' that they used to rely on. Although there were some instances of resort to healers people and healing places in Istanbul, the migrants did not seem to have reconstituted anything similar to the old indigenous therapeutic system. The situation might be very different in other contexts. A full-fledged ethnographic analysis of inequality, health and illness would address questions such as: what is the long-term impact of war and forced migration on people's physical health; what is the impact of imprisonment, torture experiences, the 'low-intensity stress of being Kurdish', and of 'typical forced migrant' work conditions on the migrants' mental and physical health (is it, for example, possible to regard certain afflictions as embodied social memory, cf. Green 1994); to what extent do the forced migrants combine biomedicine, 'old indigenous' and 'new alternative' methods or systems, and what is their social capital worth in any of these respects?

Taking into account that forced migrants interact with non-forced migrants and that Kurds are not the only people who live disadvantaged lives in Turkey, depending on the subject of study, the question should be asked whether researchers should focus on 'forced migrants' alone, or whether they should choose their research population differently.

ONCE AGAIN: THE EVIDENCE OF EXPERIENCE

Studying the forced migration of Kurds was my own safe way of exploring human suffering by focusing on people who had been at the receiving end of severe oppression. Speaking with people about something majorly important for them enables the establishment of an emotional connection between the researcher and the researched. In my view, the 'evidence of experience', the search for which occupied a central place in this dissertation, originates in large part in the emotional connection established between researcher and research participants. The migrants offered their stories as exemplars of Kurdish suffering. There was a tacit agreement between the migrants and me that their sense of loss, their grievances and their mourning would be brought out. Still, I could not take the migrants' emotions and preoccupations at face value. I had to check 'the facts behind them' against human rights reports, compare observations with those of other researchers of similar topics, and to locate and

fit what I heard and saw into relevant academic discourses. The migrants could not impute to me the dream of the Kurdish state or their identification with the PKK, because I hold a more worldly view of the PKK and because I know that Kurdishness is an umbrella which does not keep everybody dry: not every 'Kurd' identifies as Kurdish. Some people who long identified as Kurds, Zazas and Yezidis, for example, now regard themselves as members of separate ethnic groups.³⁰⁷ But the migrants did transmit to me the sense of loss they suffered, the emotional rationality and political legitimacy of their desires, and their deep-felt need for a restoration of their dignity and a safe place to be in this world. I wanted to convey the migrants "sense of meaningful striving" (Mahmood 1996:21) against the odds, and I hope that the anger, loss and mourning which they transmitted to me did not get destabilized in the process of analysis and writing.

In writing this dissertation, I sometimes found myself mirroring the narrative politics of the forced migrants. I finished the field work over five years ago, but if I had told my story three or four years earlier, the storyline would have been different. Over time I reinterpreted and reworked the things that happened during the time period of field work, that is, the interviews, casual conversations, trips to places and so on, in ways partly similar to the ways in which the forced migrants reinterpreted and reworked their pasts. Now, this is a fixed text, not final, but fixated on paper for now. Twenty, thirty years from today Turkey will have changed, the people of Turkey will have changed, and anthropology will have changed. Different grand and smaller narratives will be around and will compete with each other. I do not know if one of the anthropological stories told then will be the story I have told here, if there will be a linear progression of this story, if a major new plot will have developed, if this story will be displaced by another story, or if the story told will be more or less this same story in different words. I do hope, however, that future plots will derive their narratability less from political violence. Even though people and communities that are likely to influence the future of Turkey and of Turkey's Kurds have already created narratives for this future which will inform their actions, the future is still - even - more malleable than the present and the past. Hopefully continuity and change will be such that future stories will be centered less on political repression and violence, and more on the 'small' strivings, hardships and conflicts of everyday life.

³⁰⁷ See Bruinessen 1994 for Zaza nationalism. Zazas speak Zazaca, a language different from but related to Kirmanci, which is the most-spoken Kurdish language in Turkey. Yezidis used to be regarded as Kurds with a different religion called Yezidism. See for the idea that Yezidis are the original Kurds, Christine Allison 2001. The Yezidi Human Rights Organization is an example of a nationalistic Yezidi organization. See: <http://www.yezidihumanrights.org/>, accessed September 29, 2010.

Glossary

'everyday' words, names of villages, and organizations

Note: - lar or - ler makes a noun plural
ç is pronounced as in child
c as in job
ş as is shop
ı as the e in 'women'
ğ is hardly pronounced but connects the vowel before and after it

Terms pertaining to family relations

abla	older sister
amca	father's brother
amcaçocukları	children of father's brother
amcaoğulları	sons of father's brother
dayı	mother's brother
elti	husband's brother's wife
hala	father's sister
nene	grandmother
teyze	mother's sister, also a term of address for middle-aged and older women
teyzeçocukları	children of mother's sister
yenge	wife of a brother, dayı or amca, term used to address someone's own wife or a friend's wife in conversation

Other (everyday) terms

a	
asker	soldier
agha (ağa in Turkish)	tribal leader
atölye	workshop, sweatshop, for example in the garment industry
ayran	drink consisting of yoghurt mixed with water and (usually) salt
aile	family
b	
baskı	depending on the situation: force, coercion, suppression, duress, constraint, repression, domination...
bekçi	watchman
c/ç	
cahillik	ignorance
cemaat	fellowship, (religious) community
çeyiz	wedding trousseau
çırak	apprentice
d	
devlet	state
dede	religious leader of the Alevis
e	
emlakçı	real estate agent
Emniyet	police headquarters (in towns and cities)
ezan	call to prayer
f	

faîli meçhul	actor unknown
g	
gecekondu	poor/squatter neighbourhood
neighborhood	
gundî	Kurdish for villager
h	
hoca	(religious) teacher
i	
ilçe kaymakamı	head official of a district
ilkokul	elementary school, the first five years of compulsory education (eight years in total)
itirafçı	confessor, PKK member turned informer
k	
kabile	clan
karakol	police office, gendarmerie station or headquarters
karşıda	'on the other side' (of Istanbul, either the Asian or European side)
kaymakam	head official of a district, centrally appointed
kıro	boorish, rude and insensitive
korucu	village guard, armed and salaried by the state, ministry of
köklü	rooted
Kürtçü	'Kurdist', lover of everything Kurdish, Kurdish separatist, often used accusatively
Kürtlük	'Kurd-dom'
l	
lise	high school
m	
mağdur	poor, disadvantaged, unjustly treated
medrese	schools for religious learning, banned by the state
memleket	hometown, homeland, one's region of birth
mele	Kurdish word for hoca, religious teacher, village imam
mesai	overtime work
muhtar	elected representative/administrative head of a village or neighborhood
n	
Newroz	Kurdish New Year feast celebrated on March 21 (also celebrated in Iran and other countries in the region)
o/ö	
OHAL	State of Emergency region - Olağanüstü Hal Bölgesi
ortaokul	middle school, the last three years of compulsory education
önde gelen	'people who come first', leading people
özel timler	'special teams', counterinsurgency teams active in combating PKK
p	
panzer	armoured vehicle
patron	boss
s/ş	
şerefli	proud, honourable
sevap	a good deed
seyid	descendant of prophet Muhammed

t

tanıdık	acquaintance
tinerci	someone (often a child or teenager) addicted to thinner
töre	customs, traditions
Türklük	‘Turk-dom’

u/ü

usta	skilled worker
ustabaşı	foreman

v

vali	governor of a province, appointed by the central government (the OHAL-region had its own governor)
vatan	fatherland, motherland, native land, country

y

yabancı	strange, foreign, foreigner, e.g. to a country, region, neighborhood or family
yayla	mountain pasture
yeşil kart	green card, gives poor people access to health care services
yurtsever	patriotic

Villages (their names are pseudonyms)

Alimler village	village of the Günays and Bedrans, located close to Tatvan, entire village was destroyed
Fidanlar village	neighboring village of Alimler, village of Asiye Tancay
Bitek village	neighboring village of Alimler
Dağgülü village	Alevi village, located close to Bingöl and Tunceli, village was emptied but not destroyed
Vadiyeli village	Alevi village, located close to Karakoçan, Elazığ, entire village was destroyed
Hasanlar village	village of Abbas and family (former village guards), located close to Siirt
Çanakçı village	village of the Çeliks who were expelled by village guards, located close to Midyat

Political organizations and parties

AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), right of center ‘Islamist’ party, the party of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Akparti	other name for AKP
ANAP	Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi), right-wing party
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi), Kurdish party, 2009-present.
CHP	Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), regards itself as prime defender of Atatürk’s legacy
DEHAP	Democratic People’s Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi), Kurdish party, 2003- 2005
DEP	Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi), Kurdish party 1993-1994
DTP	Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi), Kurdish party, 2005- 2009
DYP	True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi), right-wing party
HADEP	People’s Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi), Kurdish party, 1994-2003

Hak-Par	Rights and Freedom party (Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi), small Kurdish party
HEP	People's Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi), first legal Kurdish party, 1990-1993
Hizbullah	militant Islamic group, part of which supposedly worked with the state
MHP	Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi), extreme nationalist Turkish party ('Grey Wolves')
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan), started off as a separatist Kurdish armed organization, strives for a form of Kurdish self-rule
Refah Partisi	Welfare Party, Islamist party, changed its name into AKP
Saadet Partisi	Felicity Party, small Islamist party
TBBM	Turkish Parliament (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi)

Other organizations

Başak	Başak Foundation for Culture and Arts (Başak Kültür ve Sanat Vakfı), organization that carries out projects with forced migrants, among others
Göç-Der	Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture – (Göç Edenler Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği), organization for forced migrants
Nurcular	followers of Sait Nurcu, a Kurd from Bitlis province, religious movement, part of which has strong Turkish nationalist leanings
İHD	Human Rights Association (İnsan Hakları Derneği)
İkibine Doğru	left-wing journal, was banned by the authorities
JİTEM	intelligence service of the gendarmerie (Jandarma İstihbarat Teşkilatı)
KAYY-Der	Kığı, Karakoçan, Adaklı, Yayladere, Yedisu Districts Support, Development and Culture Association (Kığı, Karakoçan, Adaklı, Yayladere, Yedisu İlçeleri Sosyal Yardımlaşma, Kalkındırma ve Kültür Derneği), umbrella organization of associations of villages in Bingöl and Karakoçan
Kürt Enstitüsü	Kurdish Institute, research institute, close to PKK
Lokman Hekim Sağlık Vakfı	Lokman Hekim Health Foundation, nongovernmental organization that aims to improve health care facilities for poor people
Mazlum-Der	The Association of Human Rights and Solidarity with Oppressed People (İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar için Dayanışma Derneği), 'Islamic' human rights organization, promotes the human rights of Kurds among others
MGM	Mesopotamia Culture Center (Mesopotamya Kültür Merkezi), cultural organization close to PKK
MİT	National Intelligence Organization (Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı)
Pir Sultan Abdal Derneği	Saint Sultan Abdal Association, Alevi association
TESEV	The Turkish Foundation for Economic and Social Studies (Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı)
TİHV	Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı)

TİSK	Turkey Confederation of Employer Associations (Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu)
TOHAV	Foundation for Societal and Legal Studies (Toplum ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Vakfı), also counsels torture victims
TOSAV	Community Health Foundation (Toplum Sağlığı Vakfı), nongovernmental organization that tried to improve access to health care of poor people, also of (displaced) Kurds

Appendix

Table 5: Families and village communities - Residence, origin, number of participants, living arrangements, contact established					
Family/village ³⁰⁸	Istanbul neighborhood	Province, district	Number of participants	Living arrangement	Initial contact established
Bedrans/Günays and fellow-villagers , Alimler and surrounding villages	Pendik	Bitlis, Tatvan	Over 50	Extended/three-generation households and nuclear households	My husband's relative Gül > her neighbor Cengiz > İbo Bedran ³⁰⁹
Çelik family , Çanakçı village	Pendik	Mardin, Midyat	Ca. 30	Extended/three-generation households	DEHAP-board member > Mahir's wife and children
Demir family and friends , Mainly Agaçlık village	Kartal	Bitlis, center (mainly)	Ca. 30	Three-generation households and nuclear households	'Accidental' meeting with restaurant owner Halit > Zeynep Demir
Cebbar's family , Kulp (town)	Pendik	Diyarbakir, Kulp	7	Nuclear household	Zerda Bedran-Tancay > Mine Cebbar
Havva's family , Tatlıdere village	Pendik	Bitlis, Tatvan	Ca. 10	Nuclear household	Gül > Cengiz' sister > Havva Gürbüz
Seyyid's family , lived in different villages	Sultanbeyli	Diyarbakir	Ca. 10	Seyyid, two wives and children	Celal Akkaya > Seyyid > his wives and children
Abbas' family , Hasanlar village	Sultanbeyli	Siirt, Şirvan	10-15	Three-generation household	Seyyid > Seyyid's wife > her father
Azad's family , Eruh and surrounding	Pendik	Siirt, Eruh	15-20	Extended and nuclear households	Gül > Abdurrahman >

³⁰⁸ All names of villages and families are pseudonyms.

³⁰⁹ "Gül > Cengiz" means "Gül introduced me to Cengiz" and so on.

villages					Azad + Ferhat
Vadiyeli village , different individuals and families	Pendik	Elazığ, Karakoçan	Ca. 15	Extended/ three- generation households and nuclear households	Chairman KAYY-Der > chairman Vadiyeli village ass. > his mother + co-villagers
Dağgülü village , different families	Tuzla	Bingöl, Yayladere	Ca. 25	Extended/ three- generation households and nuclear households	KAYY-Der chairman > Ali > his parents + co-villagers

Explanatory notes:

Family/village

Mostly I researched families. I refer to these families with the names of the people that I had most contact with or that were regarded the head of the family. Also when people spoke about their village, they tended to look at things from a family perspective more than from the perspective of ‘the village community’. People from Daggülü and Vadiyeli had a strong notion of a - still vibrant - village community. I refer to them with the name of their village of origin.

Number of participants:

The number of people I spoke to and socialized with personally differed greatly between families. With certain people I spoke extensively on many occasions, with some I also conducted one or more tape-recorded interviews, with others I spoke only casually, yet others I saw often or/and heard much about but had little personal interaction with. It is therefore impossible to be exact about the number of family or community members who participated in my research. Based on the frequency and intensity of the contact, for each family or village community I made estimates of the number of participants.

Living arrangement

If a family consisted of a husband, wife and children, I refer to it as a nuclear household. If it consisted of brothers or cousins living in the same house or apartment building with their wives and children, I refer to it as an extended household. If a family consisted of a senior couple, their children, and grandchildren I refer to this family as a three generation household. If several senior couples, their children and grandchildren lived together in the same building, I refer to it as an extended/three-generation household.

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Samenvatting

Twee donkerharige meisjes staren naar een gloednieuwe wasmachine. Een paar dagen eerder heeft vader het mysterieuze apparaat vol trots gedemonstreerd.

De meisjes glimlachen onzeker terwijl hun grote bruine ogen de trommel volgen die rond en rond gaat. Het oudste meisje is geestelijk gehandicapt. Zij is niet in staat te bevatten hoe zij zojuist, samen met haar zusje, een ramp heeft veroorzaakt. Haar jongere zusje is nog te klein om het te begrijpen.

Er was niemand in de buurt. Moeder lag in het ziekenhuis voor een operatie, vader was buitenshuis aan het werk. Hun oudere zussen, die op de baby zouden passen, waren buiten aan het spelen met kinderen uit de buurt. Opa - doof en slecht ter been - was op de bank in slaap gevallen. En de baby, hun kleine broertje, zat helemaal onder de poep, hij moest gewoon gewassen worden.

Het jongetje was de enige zoon, geboren na vier meisjes en veel hopen en bidden. Daarom was hij *extra* speciaal.

Dit is een beschrijving van enkele scènes uit de film 'Ik heb de zon gezien' van regisseur Mahsun Kırmızıgül, een film over een Koerdische familie die door het Turkse leger uit haar dorp in Zuidoost-Turkije wordt verjaagd en naar Istanbul verhuist. De pijn van de vader als hij zich realiseert wat er is gebeurd met zijn jongste kind, zijn wanhopige geschreeuw als hij achter de bus aanrent die zijn dochters meeneemt naar een kindertehuis, de verontruste niet-begrijpende blik van de moeder als zij uit het ziekenhuis wordt opgehaald door haar man en huilende dochttertjes, maar zij haar zoontje niet ziet... De tragiek van het aan deze mensen opgedrongen leven in de stad is vlijmscherp in beeld gebracht.

De film is gebaseerd op de ervaringen van Koerden tijdens de nog altijd voortdurende oorlog tussen Turkse veiligheidstroepen en de Koerdische PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan). Deze ervaringen vormen ook de basis van mijn onderzoek.

De strijd tussen de PKK en het Turkse leger begon in 1984, kostte aan meer dan veertigduizend mensen het leven, en leidde in de jaren '90 tot de gedwongen migratie van meer dan een miljoen Koerdische dorpelingen. De meeste dorpelingen werden uitgezet door Turkse veiligheidstroepen of ontvluchtten de armoede, onzekerheid en dreiging die het leven in oorlogsgebied kenmerkte. Een kleine minderheid werd verdreven door de PKK. Het expliciete doel van de ontvolking van het Koerdische platteland door de Turkse autoriteiten was het 'uitroken' van de PKK. Een impliciet doel was de assimilatie van de Koerden.

Juridisch gezien zijn de ontheemde Koerden geen vluchtelingen maar 'intern verplaatste mensen' (*'internally displaced people'*), omdat zij zich bevinden binnen de geografische grenzen van de staat waarbinnen zij verplaatst werden.

Ik noem hen interne gedwongen migranten omdat zij veel gemeen hebben met andere interne (rurale) migranten in Turkije, maar hun vertrek uit het dorp onvrijwillig was.

Tussen 2001 en 2004 deed ik onderzoek in arme wijken in het Aziatische deel van Istanbul, onder Koerdische families uit verschillende regio's in Oost- en Zuidoost-Turkije. Ik sprak uitgebreid met de migranten over de tijd voorafgaand aan de gedwongen migratie en over het migratieproces zelf. Ook onderzocht ik hoe, en met wiens hulp, zij hun levens hadden opgebouwd in Istanbul. Omdat de migranten geen ondersteuning ontvingen van staatsinstellingen of non-gouvernementele organisaties, waren zij aangewezen op hun 'sociale kapitaal', in andere woorden, op de waarde van hun relaties met andere mensen. Dit sociale kapitaal stelde hen, in meerdere of mindere mate, in staat een bestaan op te bouwen in de stad. Ik richtte mij niet alleen op het geweld en de ervaren ontwrichting van het economische, sociale en culturele leven, maar ook op de handelingsruimte die de gedwongen migranten hadden, op de alledaagse aspecten van het leven in Istanbul, en op connecties tussen de pré-migratieperiode, de tijd 'onderweg', en het leven na migratie.

Ten tijde van het onderzoek werd het fenomeen van de gedwongen migratie van Koerden vrijwel niet erkend. Voor zover er aandacht aan werd besteed, in de media of door politici bijvoorbeeld, werd de 'terreur van de PKK' meestal als oorzaak aangevoerd. Met dit onderzoek wilde ik een ander verhaal vertellen over deze pijnlijke episode in de recente Turkse geschiedenis, een verhaal dat de ervaringen en opvattingen van gedwongen migranten centraal stelt. Mijn bijdrage aan de sociaalwetenschappelijke studie van gedwongen migratie en van de effecten van politiek geweld op burgers, ligt in de manier waarop ik 'verhalen' heb gekoppeld aan 'sociaal kapitaal'. Ik maak duidelijk hoe ervaringen met verschillende vormen van geweld, in interactie met andere mensen *en* in wisselwerking met externe omstandigheden, verwerkt en bewerkt werden in verhalen. Daarnaast verschaf ik inzicht in de wijze waarop die gemeenschap van 'mensen die dezelfde verhalen deelden' functioneerde. Dit doe ik door concrete manifestaties van de mobilisatie van sociaal kapitaal, maar ook van de verarming van sociaal kapitaal, in beeld te brengen.

Het concept 'sociaal kapitaal' heeft de afgelopen decennia een hoge vlucht genomen in de sociale wetenschappen en in politiek beleid. De ontwikkeling van sociaal kapitaal wordt soms beschouwd als een remedie voor allerlei maatschappelijke misstanden. Sociaal kapitaal heeft echter niet altijd positieve consequenties voor de mensen die zich er op (moeten) verlaten. Om de betekenis van sociaal kapitaal in verschillende contexten vast te stellen, zijn etnografische analyses nodig van de lokale omstandigheden waarin verschillende vormen van sociaal kapitaal al dan niet ontstaan en van de wijze waarop deze ingezet

worden. Deze analyses dienen historisch, politiek en economisch ingebed te zijn. Dit proefschrift biedt zo'n analyse.

Verhalen zijn geen 'neutraal' sediment van alles wat mensen hebben meegemaakt. 'Het leven zoals geleefd', 'het leven zoals ervaren', 'het leven zoals herinnerd' en 'het leven zoals verteld' zijn niet hetzelfde. Ook al gingen veel van de verhalen van de migranten over het verleden, de context waarin de migranten zich ervaringen herinnerden en verhalen vertelden was het 'toenmalige heden'. Deze context werd bepaald door structurele factoren zoals de economie, maar ook door de contacten die de migranten hadden met andere mensen, meestal andere Koerden, en door de contacten die zij *niet* hadden met andere mensen, meestal Turken. Veel van de verlangens en grieven die gecommuniceerd werden in de verhalen van de migranten, kwamen tot stand - of werden gereproduceerd - in wisselwerking met de mensen om hen heen. Dit waren de mensen die ook het sociale kapitaal van de gedwongen migranten belichaamden.

De uitgangspositie van de gedwongen migranten was slechter dan die van interne migranten uit vroegere perioden en uit andere gebieden. De gedwongen migranten hadden zich minder goed kunnen voorbereiden op hun vertrek en de meeste families migreerden niet geleidelijk, zoals gebruikelijk was, maar in grote groepen. Ze hadden vaak grote economische verliezen geleden, veel migranten spraken weinig Turks, zij hadden weinig vaardigheden die zij in de stad konden gebruiken en konden geen contact onderhouden met hun dorp, omdat de autoriteiten dat niet toestonden of omdat het verwoest was. Bovendien waren de economische omstandigheden en de huizenmarkt in Istanbul voor nieuwelingen ongunstiger dan in voorgaande decennia.

Ondanks de overeenkomsten tussen gedwongen migranten, waren er aanzienlijke verschillen in handelingsruimte. Er bestonden verschillen tussen individuen en families in hoe zij de oorlog meemaakten, in de mate en duur van de repressie waarmee zij in aanraking kwamen, in de mate waarin zij politiek betrokken waren in het conflict tussen de PKK en de staat, de directe aanleiding voor migratie, de wijze waarop men migreerde, en de steun die de migranten ontvingen in de stad. Wanneer en hoe mensen vertrokken werd beïnvloed door de manoeuvreerruimte die zij dachten te hebben – hun inschatting van het gevaar en van hun kansen om te mogen blijven – en hun contacten en investeringen elders.

In het tijdperk waarin de migranten arriveerden, de jaren '90, werden Koerden gediscrimineerd en gecriminaliseerd. Zij werden geconfronteerd met een dominant verhaal: een door de staat gepropageerde visie op de PKK als een bedreiging van de glorierijke met Turks-patriottistisch bloed opgerichte Turkse republiek, en met een dominant discours waarin Koerden 'barbaars' en 'terroristisch' waren. Zo kent vrijwel iedereen in Turkije de uitdrukking 'de beste Koerd is een dode Koerd' (*en iyi Kürt ölü Kürttür*). Hoewel de tijd waarin

Koerden ‘Bergturken’ werden genoemd voorbij was, hadden sommige verdedigers van de Turkse Republiek nog steeds moeite het woord ‘Koerd’ in de mond te nemen. Zij spraken liever van ‘Oosterlingen’. In deze situatie durfden de Koerdische gedwongen migranten - als zij dit al wilden - niet te vertellen wie ze waren en waarom ze naar Istanbul waren gekomen: hun herinneringen werden gecensureerd. De atmosfeer was zo doordrenkt van het dominante discours en verhaal over Koerden dat zelfs hulpverleners die kritisch stonden tegenover dit discours en verhaal nauwelijks in staat waren om, binnen de procedurele en logistieke kaders waarbinnen zij werkten, zinvolle contacten met Koerden te leggen.

Het Koerdische nationalisme van de PKK, en gedeelde ervaringen met staatsrepressie hadden tot gevolg, dat Koerden uit verschillende regio’s en met verschillende religieuze overtuigingen zich steeds meer één voelden. In hun eigen woorden: zij zagen zichzelf met nieuwe ogen, zij waren ontwaakt uit hun slaapstand. Onder de migranten ontstond een dominant Koerdisch ‘tegenverhaal’ (*counter-narrative*) over de positie en strijd van de Koerden in de Turkse samenleving. Dit verhaal werd grotendeels verteld in termen van het gangbare discours over de Turkse staat en de Koerden, zij het dat dit discours ‘binnenstebuiten’ werd gekeerd. In het Koerdische tegenverhaal was niet de PKK maar de Turkse staat terroristisch, waren niet de Turkse soldaten maar de PKK-ers vrijheidsstrijders, was het niet de staat maar de PKK die noodzakelijk en moreel te rechtvaardigen geweld toepaste, en waren Koerden die samenwerkten met de staat, al dan niet onder dwang, verraders.

Dit ‘oorlogsdiscours’ (of ‘discours van zekerheid’ omdat het geen twijfel toestond) incorporeerde een groot deel van de ervaringen van Koerden uit verschillende gebieden. Toch bleek uit sommige verhalen dat de werkelijkheid van de oorlog meer divers was dan op het eerste gezicht leek, bijvoorbeeld dat niet alles wat de PKK deed strookte met de tweedeling tussen de ‘goede PKK’ en de ‘kwade staat’. In het proces waarin de gedwongen migranten het verleden tot ‘beschermd monument’ verklaarden, kreeg niet iedereen evenveel kans om zijn of haar verhaal te vertellen: er was sprake van ‘interne censurering’ van ervaringen, herinneringen en verhalen. De ervaringen van mensen die in de marge van ‘de dominante ervaring van oorlog’ of ‘in de marge van de gemeenschap’ verkeerden, een deel van de jonge vrouwen bijvoorbeeld, telden minder mee.

Diegenen die zich figuurlijk ‘in de marge van de gemeenschap’ bevonden, bijvoorbeeld moeders van kleine kinderen, waren vaak ook degenen die het minst of het laatst profiteerden van in Istanbul geboekte vooruitgang. In Istanbul zagen Koerden dat genderrollen een andere inhoud konden hebben dan men gewend was. De Koerdische politieke partij HADEP/DEHAP/DTP waarmee veel migranten zich verbonden voelden hanteerde een emancipatoir discours. Ook zagen Koerden om zich heen dat vrouwen betaald werk deden en dat

meisjes naar de universiteit gingen. De familiepraktijk was echter weerbarstig. Mede vanwege de economische en sociale druk waaronder Koerdische families stonden in Istanbul, waren familieleden economisch, sociaal en/of emotioneel afhankelijk van elkaar. Soms werden hiërarchische relaties tussen ouderen en jongeren en mannen en vrouwen hierdoor versterkt. Waar sommige tieners manieren vonden om zelf sturing te geven aan hun leven, had een deel van de jonge (getrouwde) vrouwen weinig invloed op belangrijke aspecten van hun leven.

Door ervaringen met repressie in de regio van herkomst, discriminatie in Istanbul, en door de miskenning van de gedwongen migratie, ontwikkelden de migranten een grote mate van wantrouwen jegens vreemden, in het bijzonder ten aanzien van instituties. Daarbij kwamen nog de economische verliezen en het gebrek aan institutionele ondersteuning. Dit alles vergrootte de behoefte en de praktische noodzaak om zich te richten op 'mensen als zichzelf', dat wil zeggen familieleden en dorps- en streekgenoten die ook waren gemigreerd. Zulke relaties en de waarde ervan worden wel aangeduid met de term '*verbindend sociaal kapitaal*'. De verbindende sociale relaties van de gedwongen migranten waren echter beschadigd en gedecimeerd. Veel familieleden en dorpsgenoten van de gemigreerde Koerden zaten in de gevangenis of waren naar elders waren vertrokken. Sommigen hadden zich aangesloten bij de PKK, anderen werden vermist of waren vermoord.

Buiten de Koerden die men al kende vóór migratie, zochten de gedwongen migranten aansluiting bij mensen die tijdens de oorlog 'in hetzelfde kamp' waren geraakt en die hun verhalen over het verleden deelden. Zo ontstond er 'overbruggend sociaal kapitaal' tussen Koerden die voorheen weinig met elkaar gemeen hadden gehad. De Koerdische politieke partij speelde een belangrijke rol in de totstandkoming van zulk kapitaal. Toen mensen vrienden werden en met elkaar begonnen te trouwen, werd dit kapitaal al snel een vorm van verbindend kapitaal. Zowel het verbindende kapitaal (van 'oude bekenden') als het overbruggende kapitaal (van 'nieuwe lotgenoten'), dat al snel transformeerde in verbindend kapitaal, waren vormen van 'horizontaal kapitaal', kapitaal met en van gelijken.

Het nut van deze vorm van sociaal kapitaal kan het best afgeleid worden uit de manier waarop mensen omgingen met crisissituaties. In een land dat niet alleen getekend wordt door etnische spanningen maar ook door een grote mate van structureel geweld, kunnen 'kleine' tegenslagen grote crises veroorzaken. Zo konden conflicten met familieleden, kennissen of onbekende stedelingen verstrekkende en explosieve gevolgen hebben. Een ander voorbeeld is de wijze waarop werd omgegaan met ziekte: veel gedwongen migranten stonden machteloos bij behandelbare ziekten en handicaps. Een mengeling van ervaren en/of reële onmacht, gebrek aan kennis en cultureel gelegitimeerde ongelijke behandeling van individuen binnen families en gemeenschappen, mondde uit in

een situatie waarin sommigen meer dan anderen op de steun van familieleden en vrienden konden rekenen. Het horizontale sociale kapitaal van de migranten bleek dus verre van toereikend om vooruit te komen in de stad.

De gedwongen migranten gingen slechts in beperkte mate contacten aan met mensen die het Koerdische tegenverhaal niet deelden, bijvoorbeeld Turkse collegas. De migranten beschikten ook nauwelijks over verticaal of ‘opwaarts verbindend’ sociaal kapitaal, zoals contacten met machtige zakenmensen, professionals en hulpverleners, die zij zouden kunnen mobiliseren om echt vooruit te komen. Eén van de vrouwen uit mijn onderzoek werd na mijn vertrek schoonmaakster bij een arts en vond door zijn bemiddeling een vaste baan in het ziekenhuis voor haar man. Maar zulke gevallen waren zeldzaam. Dit soort overbruggende contacten pakte bovendien niet altijd positief uit voor de migranten als groep. De enkeling die over ‘verticale contacten’ beschikte, hield deze soms voor zichzelf, zodat machtsongelijkheid binnen families toenam. Machtsongelijkheid kan leiden tot uitbuiting. Uitbuiting van ‘etnische broeders en zusters’ bestaat in veel migratiesituaties, maar heeft meer kans in situaties waarin mensen bang zijn voor ‘de staat’, bijvoorbeeld wanneer zij geen legale status hebben of wanneer zij, zoals de Koerden, een geschiedenis van staatsrepressie met zich meedragen.

Het ‘globale besef van gelijkheid’ dat noodzakelijk is voor het zinvol mobiliseren van verticaal kapitaal door mensen die hulp nodig hebben is nog steeds vrijwel afwezig in Turkije. Mocht dit veranderen, dan nog zullen er structurele veranderingen op het gebied van economie en sociale zekerheid nodig zijn om de gedwongen migranten een basisgevoel van economische en sociale zekerheid te bieden.

Het sociale kapitaal van de Koerden bleek het meest effectief te zijn ten tijde van conflicten. De Koerdische politieke partij trad regelmatig op als bemiddelaar in conflicten, soms zelfs in conflicten met niet-Koerden. De partij borduurde hiermee voort op een oude bemiddelingspraktijk die in oorlogstijd (in sommige regio’s) was gemonopoliseerd door de PKK. In Istanbul versterkte deze bemiddeling de capaciteit van de migranten om als volwaardig mens deel te nemen aan de stedelijke samenleving. De partij bood niet alleen praktische oplossingen, maar gaf in de manier waarop zij dit deed ook kracht en levensvatbaarheid aan het Koerdische tegenverhaal. De mobilisatie van het verbindende en overbruggende sociale kapitaal dat de partij belichaamt tastte de legitimiteit van de Turkse staat nog verder aan. De staat - in feite geen eenvormig fenomeen maar wel als zodanig ervaren - is alom aanwezig in de levens van veel Koerden. Maar de onbekwaamheid van overheidsorganen, invloedrijke politici, en andere hoogwaardigheidsbekleders om gerechtigheid te brengen, heeft een uiterst cynische houding ten opzichte van de staat opgeleverd.

Mijn onderzoek onderstreept dat sociaal kapitaal verschillende uitkomsten heeft voor verschillende leden van een netwerk, dat sociaal kapitaal de tekortkomingen van ‘het systeem’ vaak niet kan compenseren, en dat sociaal

kapitaal geconstrueerd wordt in een politieke context, onder andere door middel van het delen van ervaringen in verhalen. Soms is verbindend kapitaal niet alleen iets dat men aangrijpt om te overleven of zich veilig te voelen, maar is het cultiveren ervan ook een politieke strategie.

De gedwongen migranten assimileerden niet, maar ontwikkelden een oppositioneel diasporabewustzijn: zij voelen zich ‘anders’, velen van hen achten de staat verantwoordelijk voor het onrecht dat hen is aangedaan, en identificeren zich sterk met hun regio van herkomst, ook als zij daar zelf niet meer willen wonen. Tegenwoordig wordt er in Turkije steeds openlijker over de politieke onderdrukking van Koerden gesproken, maar de repressie duurt voort. De vraag rest waar het oppositionele bewustzijn van de gedwongen migranten toe leidt in het huidige, steeds openlijker ‘geëtnificeerde’ Turkije, waarin Koerdische grieven meer bekendheid en zelfs erkenning genieten dan ooit, maar dat eveneens ruimte biedt voor onverhuld racisme tegen de Koerden als groep.



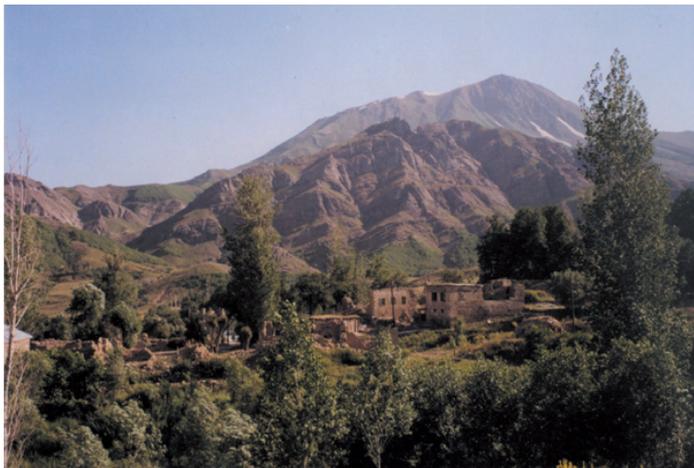
The minibus station in Pendik



A gecekondu garden



Yakacik in winter



A Kurdish village



A street in a Pendik neighborhood



Metropolitan Istanbul



A shepherd is coming home

Curriculum Vitae

Miriam Geerse was born on December 27, 1969 in Dronten, The Netherlands. Between 1988 and 1993, and between 1996 and 1998, she studied Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University. In 1994 she moved to Istanbul for a year to learn Turkish, and worked there as an English teacher. Upon return she wrote her M.A. thesis on ultranationalist Turks in The Netherlands. In 1999 she moved to Turkey again, and lived there until 2004. Between 2000 and 2006, she was a Ph.D. candidate at Utrecht University, largely funded by WOTRO. In 2007 and 2008 she carried out research for the Free University of Amsterdam into perceptions of honor-related violence and the ways in which Dutch organizations deal with this violence. She co-authored the book 'Eergerelateerd geweld in Nederland: Onderzoek naar de beleving en aanpak van eergerelateerd geweld' (2009). Before starting her Ph.D. research and after her return from Turkey, she taught and tutored students at the Department of Cultural Anthropology.



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