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UNIVERSIDADE D
COIMBRA

Ceren Akyos

**DECOLONIZING LIBERATION, DE-PATRIARCHALIZING
THE NATION**

**KURDISH WOMEN'S STRUGGLE AS THE KEYSTONE OF
THE RADICAL DEMOCRACY PROJECT OF DEMOCRATIC
MODERNITY**

VOLUME 1

**PhD Thesis in Post-colonialisms and Global Citizenship, directed by Professor Maria
Paula Meneses and Professor Stephen Bouquin and presented at the Faculty of
Economics of the University of Coimbra**

August 2021





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CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA
E ENSINO SUPERIOR



To make a new world you start with an old one, certainly.
To find a world, maybe you have to have lost one.
Maybe you have to be lost.
The dance of renewal, the dance that made the world,
was always danced here at the edge of things, on the brink, on the foggy coast.

Ursula Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (1989)

Resumo

O Movimento de Libertação Curdo (MLC) têm sido abordado principalmente em termos de nacionalismo, conflito étnico, separatismo, terrorismo e, desde os anos 90 com a mudança ideológica do MLC, de um movimento de libertação nacional que luta por um Estado Curdo independente, por uma democracia radical pluralista no quadro dos movimentos de justiça social global. Eu defendo nesta tese que tanto a micro-análise baseada na construção do estado-nação, e a macro-análise sobre movimentos globais contra-hegemónicos, falham na abordagem crítica, ao manter as meta-narrativas universalistas e o Orientalismo. Estas são análises teóricas, produzidas no Norte Global e a partir de referentes teóricos centrados no Ocidente, acabam por dissolver os processos históricos que têm lugar em extensas zonas de contacto de regiões, com configurações materiais, sociais e políticas específicas. Em suma, acabam por ser representações ocidentais a partir dos discursos prescritivos da modernidade ocidental. Estas análises também negligenciam os processos coloniais e imperiais que ainda marcam os projetos de construção das nações modernas. Convém não esquecer que as diferenças coloniais estão na base do projeto de formação da identidade nacional, que hoje está no cerne da questão curda na Turquia. Igualmente, ao omitirem o colonialismo na sua análise histórica, estas perspectivas silenciam e tornam impensável outras alternativas, provenientes de tradições, práticas e conhecimentos de longa data de povos marginalizados e subalternizados que resistiram e sobreviveram ao colonialismo. Esta tese aborda a Luta de Libertação das Mulheres Curdas (LLMC) como a encarnação destas alternativas históricas, e como a principal força motora descolonial das premissas ideológicas do MLC. O MLC, nos dias de hoje defende a democracia radical, libertação de género e uma sociedade anti-capitalista e ecológica, proposta desenvolvida a partir da Modernidade Democrática, Confederalismo Democrático e Nação Democrática, que desafiam as premissas básicas ocidentais, patriarcais, capitalistas e coloniais da modernidade ocidental.

A fim de ampliar as análises para além dos quadros teóricos acrícos, ocidentais e estadocêntricos, por um lado, este trabalho pretende revelar a ligação entre colonialismo, modernidade e produção de conhecimento, que é constitutivo das configurações políticas e culturais hegemônicas estabelecendo as base do sistema mundial contemporâneo. Por outro, aspira instigar as análises a pensar a partir dos silêncios e ausências produzidos pelo pensamento

hegemónico, de modo a centrar a criação de alternativas emancipatórias nas epistemologias e saberes que derivam das resistências de comunidades que lutam por uma transformação social radical e, especialmente, das mulheres. Para tanto, a base teórica do presente trabalho coloca em diálogo perspectivas interdisciplinares de geografia política, críticas pós-coloniais, Orientalismo, Epistemologias do Sul, teorias feministas e pensamento descolonial. Além disso, este trabalho realiza uma análise histórica crítica, para revelar a origem da questão curda na construção do projeto de estado-nação moderno como parte do colonialismo otomano e também para mostrar a continuidade da mentalidade imperial na configuração da República Turca. Esta análise dá continuidade à análise do início do MMC como parte das lutas socialistas e anti-imperialistas, equipado com um discurso moderno equiparando autodeterminação com a construção do estado-nação, examinando a sua transformação na compreensão pluralista de comunidade, baseada num projeto emancipador ultrapassando os horizontes da democracia ocidental. Além disso, a LLMC e a Jineoloji, ciência das mulheres livres, construída nas experiências históricas e nos conhecimentos silenciados e marginalizados, das mulheres é abordado como o ímpeto por trás dessa transformação.

Histórias de vida e contra-mapeamento são usadas como metodologias nesta tese para reescrever a história desde o ponto de vista das mulheres Curdas e introduzir relatos alternativos de colonialismo, opressão e dominação além do historicismo universal e das narrativas da "alta política", como também, para fornecer às mulheres, meios para contar as suas versões não autorizadas e silenciadas da história. Estas servem também para narrar contra-topografias transfronteiriças de resistência e solidariedade por meio de relatos interligados do outro lado da história colonial. Estas histórias de vida não apenas, colocam em primeiro plano as formas de interseção de opressão étnica, racial, de classe, gênero, religiosa e cultural, mas também, as experiências das mulheres que expandiram os significados de território, identidade, auto-determinação, emancipação e autonomia. Assim sendo, as histórias de vida das mulheres Curdas constroem diálogos entre histórias locais e globais, revelam práxis híbridas contra-hegemónicas, e gramáticas que multiplicam as alternativas presentes e futuras e expandem os horizontes da imaginação social e política para alcançar a justiça social global e a emancipação.

Palavras Chave: Luta de Libertação das Mulheres Curdas, Modernidade Democrática, Epistemologias do Sul, histórias de vida, sociologia das ausências/emergências, zonas de contato, democracia sem Estado

Abstract

The Kurdish Liberation Movement (KLM) has been addressed predominantly in terms of nationalism, ethnic conflict, separatism and terrorism and since the 1990s, with the ideological shift of KLM from a national liberation movement fighting for an independent Kurdish state towards pluralist radical democracy, in the framework of global social justice movements. I argue, both the micro analyses drawing on nation-state building and macro analyses on counter-hegemonic global movements fail to critically address the universalist meta-narratives and Orientalism. These analyses produced in the Global North based on Western-centric theoretical references end up dissolving historical processes that took shape in the contact-zones of broader geographic realms with specific material, social and political configurations in the exclusive discourses of Western modernity. These analyses also overlook the imperial and colonial processes that still bear upon modern nation-building projects. It should not be ignored that colonial differences underlay the shaping of national identity, which today lie at the core of the Kurdish question in Turkey. Equally, by omitting colonialism from their historical analyses, these perspectives silence and render unthinkable other alternatives issuing from the longstanding traditions, practices and knowledges of marginalized and subalternized peoples who have resisted and survived colonialism. This work addresses the Kurdish Women's Liberation Struggle (KWLS) as the embodiment of these historical alternatives and as the prime mover of the decolonial turn of the ideological premises of KLM. Today, KLM advocates for radical democracy, gender liberation and an anti-capitalist ecological society conceptualized under Democratic Modernity, Democratic Confederalism and Democratic Nation which challenge the basic premises of Western-centric, patriarchal, capitalist and colonial modernity.

In an attempt to extend the analyses beyond the uncritical Western-centric and state-centric theoretic frameworks, on one hand this work aims to disclose the link between colonialism, modernity and knowledge production, that is constitutive of the hegemonic political and cultural configurations forming the bases of the contemporary world system. On the other hand, it urges the analyses to thinking from the silences and absences produced by Western-centric modern thinking so as to center the creation of emancipatory alternatives on the epistemologies and knowledges that stem from the resistances of communities that struggle for radical social

transformation, and especially of women. In order to do so, the theoretical basis of the present work puts in dialogue interdisciplinary perspectives of political geography, post-colonial critiques, Orientalism, Epistemologies of the South, feminist theories and decolonial thinking. Further, this work undertakes a critical historical analysis to disclose the origin of the Kurdish question in the modern nation-state building project as part of Ottoman colonialism and to show the continuity of its imperial mindset in the configuration of the Turkish Republic. This analysis continues with the examination of KLM's outset as part of the socialist anti-imperial struggles with a modernist discourse equating self-determination with nation-state building and its transformation towards a pluralist understanding of community based on an emancipatory project reaching beyond the horizons of Western democracy. Moreover, KWLS and Jineoloji, the science of free women, built on the marginalized and silenced historical experiences and knowledges of women is tackled as the impetus behind this transformation.

Life histories and counter-mapping are used as methodologies in this work to both re-write history from Kurdish women's point of view to introduce alternative records of colonialism, oppression and domination beyond universal historicism and narratives of 'high-politics', as to provide women with means to tell their unauthorized and silenced versions of history. They also serve in weaving together transborder counter-topographies of resistance and solidarity through interlocking accounts from the flip side of the colonial history. These life histories do not only foreground the intersecting forms of ethnic, racial, class, gender, religious and cultural oppression but also women's experiences that expand the meanings of territory, identity, self-determination, emancipation and autonomy. As such, Kurdish women's life histories build dialogues between local and global histories, reveal hybrid counter-hegemonic praxes and grammars that multiply the present and future alternatives, and expand the horizons of social and political imaginations for achieving global social justice and emancipation.

Keywords: *Kurdish Women's Liberation Struggle, Democratic Modernity, Epistemologies of the South, life histories, sociology of absences/emergences, contact-zones, stateless democracy*

List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party
CHP	People's Republican Party
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DC	Democratic Confederalism
Dev Sol	Revolutionary Left
DDKD	Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East
DDKO	Revolutionary Cultural Hearts of the East
DEHAP	Democratic Peoples Party
DHKP-C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front
DM	Democratic Modernity
DN	Democratic Nation
DÖKH	Free Women's Congress
DP	Democrat Party
DTK	Democratic Society Congress
DYP	True Path Party
GAP	Southeast Anatolian Project
HADEP	People's Democracy Party
HDP	Peoples' Democracy Party
HEP	People's Labor Party
İAMM	Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants
ISIS	Islamic State
JİTEM	Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Organization
KCK	Kurdistan Communities Union
KDP	Democratic Party of Kurdistan
KİP	Kurdistan Workers' Party
KJB	High Women's Council
KLM	Kurdish Liberation Movement
KNK	Kurdistan National Congress
KUK	National Liberationists of Kurdistan

KWLS	Kurdish Women's Liberation Struggle
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
MKM	Mesopotamian Cultural Center
MLKP	Marxist-Leninist Communist Party
ÖDP	Freedom and Solidarity Party
PAJK	Kurdistan Women's Liberation Party
PJKK	Kurdistan Working Women's Party
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PSK	Kurdistan Socialist Party's
PYD	Kurdish Democratic People's Party
THKO	The People's Liberation Army of Turkey
THKP-C	Turkish People Liberation's Party-Front
TİKKO	Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey
TİP	Turkish Workers' Party
TKDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey
TKP-DK	Communist Party of Turkey-Revolutionary Wing
TKSP	Socialist Party of Kurdistan Turkey
TOKI	Mass Housing Administration
YAJK	Kurdistan Free Women's Union
YJA	Free Women's Units
YJWK	Union of Patriotic Women in Kurdistan
YPG	People's Protection Units
YPJ	Women's Protection Units

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Introduction

We must remind ourselves that knowledge and thinking are
halfway houses, that they are judged when they are set to
work.

Spivak (1996, p. 253)

‘The Kurdish Question’ has been an enduring debate occupying the political agenda, particularly in Turkey, which pivots around issues of nationalism, ethnic difference, minority issues, separatism and terrorism on one hand and equal citizenship, cultural identity, political, social and human rights on the other. Since the ‘90s, there is also a growing line of studies that focus on the ideological shift of *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK, Kurdistan Workers’ Party) as the central agent of Kurdish Liberation Movement (KLM)¹ from the lens of global social movements connected with radical democracy, grassroots politics, self-government and self-determination. In the specific context of Turkey, with the ‘Peace Process’ launched in 2013, discussions on democratic social transformation providing scope for the acknowledgment of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious multiplicity, their equal participation in shaping society, and to a certain degree stronger models of local administration have been invigorated. But unfortunately, these had very short-lived effects before the state discourse resting on the indivisible unity of the nation and territorial integrity started predominating the political climate, reproducing narratives of terrorism and incriminating remarks on the Kurds. The state’s indictment has not only been holding responsible the Kurdish population, politicians or civil society organizations of terrorist acts but everyone advocating for a democratic change including the academics and intellectuals that have called for an end to state violence in the Kurdish regions, return to the rule of law and the reestablishment of peaceful negotiations with Kurdish political actors, criminalizing almost an entire population. The state’s domineering of the permitted discourses without doubt smother constructive and democratic debates, and shroud long-sighted solutions, let alone allowing the recent political and social proposals of the Kurdish movement to be heard publicly. The unmitigated clampdowns of the last several decades on every democratic intent

¹Here it should be noted that Kurdish Liberation Movement is an umbrella term to refer to all the organizations, civil society associations and groups that struggle for Kurdish peoples’ emancipation as well as the democratic civil rights of all citizens with a strong critique against the neoliberal representative democracy and the colonial, patriarchal and capitalist state. Today this movement represents a much more radical and broader social transformation struggle beyond a demand for Kurdish national/ethnic liberation uniting women’s, environmental movements and minority rights. In this work although the focus will be on PKK as one of the principal political actors that brought under the same roof many different groups the diversity of heterogeneity of the movement and today its transnational character should not be overlooked.

of manifold political parties, institutions, and civil society organizations that the Kurds have founded, including the ones in collaboration with other progressive forces; the detention of MPs associated with pro-Kurdish structures or part of the opposition after being expelled from office with charges on terrorism and the ousting of Kurdish mayors to be substituted with government-appointed trustees are clear moves to suffocate the alternatives and the collective call for a peaceful coexistence of different segments of society in Turkey.

Despite all, the Kurdish movement's resolute endeavors continue to attempt bringing together the excluded and marginalized sectors with the intention of restoring the democratic functioning of the political and civil mechanisms in Turkey. KLM has been one of the most inclusive organized political and social structure in the recent decades that has managed to provide space, in parliamentary politics as well as through grassroots associations, for the Kurdish, Armenian, Laz, Roma and Turkish, together with feminists, LGBTI organizations, workers' unions, ecologists and activists that fight for social justice and human rights under the same roof. Moreover the movement has laid down gender parity as a prerequisite in all domains of the social structure paving the way for women, the silenced half of the population, to raise their voice publicly alongside other marginalized communities. These late efforts represent a change in the political strategies and ideological ground rules of the Kurdish movement setting new goals to build self-governance structures beyond the state apparatus so as to give back the power to the people, rather than its former venture aimed at building an exclusively Kurdish nation-state. Without doubt this does not mean that the existing state structures are ignored. On the contrary the proposals laid down by the KLM since the '90s such as the Democratic Modernity (DM) challenging the basic premises of modernity based on an understanding of Western-centric, patriarchal, capitalist and colonial universality; Democratic Confederation (DC) set forth as a governing structure in which the main objective is to restore the agency of diverse peoples as empowered actors in political decision making mechanisms against the monopolistic and authoritarian state model; and Democratic Nation (DN) as the guiding principle of social unity and community that allows for the autonomous co-existence of ethnically, religiously and culturally different groups to counteract parochial, antagonistic and exclusionary conceptions of nationalisms, offer paths to pursue a radical change in the constitutive configurations of modern nation-states.

As it stands, the shift of KLM's position from national liberation towards radical democracy reflects the global transformation of the anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles of the 20th century towards decolonial struggles. The former ones have epitomized colonized peoples'

struggles against material and cultural domination of imperial powers fighting for self-determination conceptualized within the framework of the territorial nation-state and have been instrumental in the independence processes starting with the mid 20th century. While the later ones, whose driving force has been the worldwide indigenous people's resistance from all continents of the world, Afro-descendant movements, rural and peasant insurrections, other dispossessed peoples' resistances and women's liberation struggles, today invoke non-westercentric cosmovisions and knowledges to fight against the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist civilizational world order, offering new potentialities and social and political imaginations for a different future. Against the hegemonic globality that imposes a monolithic, oppressive and unjust order these decolonial struggles embody diversity, dialogue between differences, local/global alliances and hybrid counter-hegemonic grammars and praxes that open up new horizons for our understanding of emancipation, self-realization and construction of a shared future.

Given these premises, both the micro-scale investigations based on the conceptual and methodological limitations of the state-centric perspectives and macro analyses on global justice movements whose theoretical bases derive from Western-centric historical processes fail to convey the scope and extent of KLM's proposals and the new fields of possibilities they beget. While the former links the political, economic and cultural aspects with ethnic difference, it hardly questions how the formulation of differences underlie the historic processes that engender a certain imagining of the modern nation and state and how they bear on the larger structures of oppression, marginalization, systematic discrimination and impoverishment. And while the later challenges the authoritarian character and the legitimacy of the state and question the aftermath of global capitalism and neoliberalism,, they fail to approach with caution universal claims as well as privileged standpoints entrenched in the theories mostly produced in the Global North². Both perspectives on one hand, fall short of operating with imaginaries outside the limitations of universal meta-narratives, be it the nation, the state or globalism, and tend to dissolve specific historical process that take place in diverse geographies in the exclusive discourses of Western modernity.

Especially in Turkey where modern is conflated with that of Western, giving way to seemingly contradictory yet equally pragmatic tendencies in respect to evading the discussions on and responsibility for the colonial past, tackling the matter straightforwardly is long overdue. This over-simplistic equation on one hand produces Orientalist positions

² Ramnath, 2011; Santos, 2012; Santos & Meneses, 2016; Simpson, 2011. Just a reminder; in this work the denominations Global North and Western are not used as geographical spaces but as metaphors of power.

approaching the Ottoman imperial past in terms of political failure, absolutist state of corruption or stagnation at odds with the 'new world' of a secular modernity evaluating it through standards of European political, economic, social and philosophical traditions. This assessment does not only induces a break with the past but renders the imperial history obsolete labeling it as a uniform product of ignorance and backwardness in the face of progress and civilization that simultaneously blacks out diverging world views, traditions, customs, modes of social governance and identities that stood in opposition with the colonial machinery and rationale. On the other hand, examining the past through Western/European civilizational standards produce a backlash for the one's who feel excluded from this new world, that finds its expression in imagining the Ottoman-ruled Arab-Muslim world as a safe haven of tolerance and justice. Today the glorification of the Ottoman past translates into an Islamic nationalism as the guiding principle of the politics and the bases upon which the Turkish society's identity is being rebuilt. Thus, the second standpoint engages with the past to suit its present interests, capitalizing on Western/Eastern, Secular/Religious antagonisms that has troubled the ontological construction of the Turkish nation and state since its inception. This piecemeal engagement with the imperial past for one thing helps formulating a partial affiliation with the greater Islamic culture with superior moral values that fell under the colonial rule of the Western/European Christian world in alliance with the Westernized elites who betrayed the nation. This historical reconstruction serves the current government to claim the role of the custodian of the 'Great Eastern civilization', the disenfranchised and subalternized Muslim *Umma*, and liberate the former territories of the Ottoman empire from the foreign yolk. Simultaneously, this narrative casts a veil over manifold violences committed, the usurpation of other people's lands and resources, the subjugation of their religion, language, customs, and laws and the population engineering under the colonial rule and justifies the current imperial politics and the revival of colonial tactics pursued in the domestic and foreign arenas in the guise of fight against terrorism and national security.

That brings out once more the questions over the 'Nation', both as a territorial and administrative unit, nationality as an exclusive marker of identity, and the intra-imperial conflicts of the 19th century as the background of their conception. These phenomena have drastically changed the political, economic and social circumstances, not only in Turkey but throughout the world, and yet have been obfuscated by the lack of critical engagement with the colonial past. Inasmuch as "the most widespread political and geographical export of imperialism was certainly nationality" (Ashcroft, 2016, p. 3). While colonialism as a long-

established system of oppression, dispossession, marginalization and violence continues under new arrangements, nationalism in equally transformed configurations serve out to secure the prominence of today's colonial nation states in the new global political architecture and geo-strategic alignments.

Post-colonial theories, the Modernity/Coloniality criticism and Subaltern Studies have contributed greatly, through the perspectives of a wide array of social disciplines and geographies, to disclose the aftermath of the European imperial expansion and conquest over the rest of the world. Their analyses have pointed out on one hand the historical, technological, socioeconomic, political, philosophical, moral and mental effects of this violent and unequal encounter restructuring relationships, power dynamics, and models of social organization in the colonized territories. On the other they served in highlighting the role that anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles have played in overcoming domination. As such, these studies disclose how colonialism embodies not merely a physical violence appropriating territories and wealth as resources, enslaving people, genocides, forced displacement or imposition of colonial institutions and political practices but also a paradigm that seeks to represent the world through the particular perspective of Western-centric rationality whose outcomes have been coercive cultural, social and political assimilation and the conquest of the cultures and ways of thinking of the colonized territories' inhabitants. This epistemic colonization on one hand aspires to domesticate the diversity of the world according to its scientific references considered as a universal form of knowledge and on the other enforces a singular Western-centric way of perceiving and making sense of the world. Consequently, colonialism means a material as well as social, cultural and mental dispossession that deprives the colonized peoples of their self-determination in the sense to think and decide for themselves in their own terms creating their non-existence. This in return, is used as a justification to withhold their right of sovereignty paving the way for artificial symbolic and physical frontiers to be laid down by imperial powers. Alongside exposing colonialism as a complex economic, political, social and cognitive project, the insights these works have provided also challenge both the non-existence of other ways of knowing and the binary oppositions on which the Western knowledge is founded that consider the Others of lesser ontological value, such as modern/primitive, civilized/uncivilized, culture/barbarism, master/slave, man/woman, white/black/mestizo, colonizer/colonized. Further, they have pointed out to hybrid and heterogeneous agencies as a strategic political project that empower fluid subject positions comprising the epistemological anchors of counter-hegemonic

resistance. Meanwhile, these reflections, especially of the subaltern studies, have highlighted subaltern positions which stand outside any given hegemonic articulation and thus cannot be comprehended through dominant viewpoints and values nor decoded with the tools of Western knowledge. This on the other hand, rather than implying the absence of the subaltern voice, draws attention to the incapacity of dominant epistemologies, theories and methods to perceive the consciousness, self-representations, grammars, ways of enunciation, and agency of the people who are excluded from Western modern narratives and the silencing structures they produce.

In view of these reflections, the anti-colonial struggles have also been subjected to criticism for operating with Western/European master-narratives and conceptual apparatus. These critiques are especially directed at the embracement of the idea of universal order of reason and progress that characterized the modern civilization whose standards have been shaped by the West's/Europe's trajectory and nationalism that defined the only possible form of modern political identity, subjectivity and collective consciousness. Further, the exclusive focus put on class and ethnic/national struggles as a response to historical oppression and the overriding of other forms domination such as gender, that have predominated the ideological framework of the socialist anti-colonial struggles have been pointed out as one of their fundamental blind-spots. These blind-spots have been considered to be the source of reproducing the silences prevalent in modern narratives in thinking about emancipation. Especially the women's mobilization within the anti-colonial and anti-imperial liberation struggles geared to achieve national independence have challenged the deferral of women's emancipation to post-independence and thus eclipsing patriarchy as a fundamental component of oppression by fixating on nation-building. Women within these struggles put on the hotseat the preponderance of men's ideals that have shaped the formulation of the 'free nation' and thus overshadowing women's desires, interests and subjectivity; the silent consent with women's subjugation through the control of gender roles and women's sexuality and the inherent male-dominant mechanisms within the proper movements. Recently, these narratives coming from women who struggle within anti-colonial national liberation movements are being given their well-deserved attention particularly with their confluence with the rising Black, Latin, Asian, African, Middle-Eastern, Muslim and indigenous women's resistance among other ones that defy the white-Western primacy in feminist thought. The impetus of these mobilizations draw attention to Third-World feminisms that has been marginalized in feminist scholarship of the Global North and extend the analytical focus on domination and emancipation beyond the

neglected category of gender/patriarchy highlighting the mutual constitutions of ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexuality and nationality crucial for hegemonic projects. The standpoints of these non-Western and non-white women's movements not only demand an intersectional and multi-layered analysis of domination but also point at the situatedness of knowledge production. These perspectives compel Western feminisms that universalize all women's experiences and construct normative and exclusionary subjects first to take into account radical translocational positionalities structured by the interplay of differences. And further they expound the complex political consciousness developed by subordinated and marginalized women who are part of communities in struggle from different geographies of the Global South.

Kurdish Women's Liberation Struggle (KWLS) is part of this resurgent anti-colonial resistances and global justice movements of communities who do not only fight against the colonization of their territories, the systemic exploitation of the natural world and the humans, but also against hegemonic configurations that shape the social, the political and the economic structures of the society, the dismantling of existing local social relations and world views. Hence these represent struggles for self-determination not only on political and economic levels but in terms of recovering other ways of knowing and interpreting the world against the Western dominance. Seen from the perspective of dominant Western interpretation of the reality and analyzed through liberal conceptions of equality, freedom and justice these women's struggles end up being decontextualized and turned into fetishized/aestheticized images. A clear example of this is the representation of YPJ women guerrillas in the Western mainstream medias, eclipsing their motives of taking part in the anti-colonial struggle and what liberation means for these women. Indeed, Kurdish women's claim of liberation is not only about gender equality within the existing system but addresses the interconnected structures of domination underpinned by patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism to offer radical solutions based on epistemologies that enlarge the repertoires of social emancipation.

On the other hand, KWLS does not simply contribute to the global struggle against patriarchy and multiple domains of oppression but beyond that offer alternative theoretical insights contributing in overcoming the impasse in which the critical thought produced in the Global North finds itself, whose premises remain incapable of resolving the problems caused by colonial modernity. Jineoloji, the women's science, developed as a theoretical and epistemological framework based on Kurdish women's insights, their knowledge and practices provides an alternative to incite an epistemic break with hegemonic Western world

visions and canons of knowledge production in order to map out truly post-colonial and decolonized understandings. The markers of such a paradigm shift which can expand the horizon of possibilities within which a radical social transformation could be fashioned are outlined in Öcalan's *Sociology of Freedom* (2009a). In his writings Öcalan advocates for a de-linking, a radical break with dominant imaginaries and ways of thinking that sustain the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist world order and cater to the functioning of hegemonic structures. And alternately, he sets forth a new epistemological frame as a way to recuperate longstanding traditions predicated on the subaltern, silenced, marginalized experiences, particularly women's standpoints, consciousness, knowledge and practices that have survived without being totally assimilated into universal accounts of the Western-centric capitalist modernity, imperial globality and patriarchal order. Jineoloji, applies the concept of de-linking in re-constructing the past through the ancestral mythology and the discounted accounts of Kurdish women. Jineoloji's analyses first of all foreground the inextricable relation between the subjugation of women and the nature/life and the rise of a hierarchical, hegemonic, exploitative and male-dominant civilization systems. These explorations set forth how these civilizational systems have been predicated on the superiority of man/human, and the will to master *over* life personified by male gods, rulers, religious figures, warriors. Further, they extend the analyses to expose how today's patriarchal nation-states are backed up by mythology, monotheistic religions, modern philosophy, history and science. Jineoloji equally denounces the monopolies of androcentric and anthropocentric, profit-oriented knowledge production whose inception served in the dehumanization and non-existence of the colonial 'others' and the civilizing mission and was instrumentalized in covering the real economic, military and political goals of imperial powers. This instrumental knowledge is condemned for formulating the rationale behind the structures of hegemony while providing the tools of governance and today for serving to environmental, social, economic destruction and interest of capitalist economy that has always allied with power structures to colonize lands, people and territories in order to sustain its constant growth subjugating life to the demands of accumulation. Yet, Öcalan's proposals are taken even further by Kurdish women, going beyond dialectically opposite ways of thinking, the old and the new, West/East, modern/traditional, civilized/ primitive, colonizer/colonized, universal/particular and forging dialogical connections with perspectives put forth by diverse struggles and women around the world. Against the monolithic modern thinking and its abstract universals, KWLS seeks out connections with other locations and practices and creating networks that promote pluriversality which can help disengage with dominant mental constructions that cripple our

political imagination. This, I argue, should be treated as the contribution of KWLS in the contemporary decolonial projects that create transborder contact zones in which a counter-hegemonic globalization can prosper embodying the true complexity of the world.

Particularly at the present moment when the protracted wars in the Middle-East, in which Turkey is striving to get the upper hand, involving the same superpowers -this time not as empires and but nation-states- who have been the main actors of the mapping out of national borders in the Middle-East during the WWI are reshuffling the political, economic, social and territorial order of the same regions, the rapacious competition over the natural resources or the arm trade appetizing all the global players alike, and the business transactions celebrated discretely, or not so discretely, lurking in the background confirm that behind the discourses of national security, territorial unity, defense of democracy against terrorism or dictatorial states lies imperialism and colonialism. And this seems to be the case in the rest of the world, markedly present in the recent attempts of USA and Russia to gain control over the bordering territories, beyond their endeavors in remote regions of the world, using the imperial rationality that underpins the foundation of these world powers. Simultaneously, contrary to the assumptions of mainstream theories of globalization that dismiss nationalism as inoperative in a world of supra-territorial connections, revanchist nationalisms prevailing in the narratives of all these actors today preside over the global realpolitik portraying an image of a hostile world in which the nations are constantly in attack against the inside and outside enemies. Their discourses revive the colonial differences of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language and in the case of the Middle-East tribal identities to govern the territories in question through deepened social polarization. On the other hand, state-led politics of imperialism and nationalism are being challenged both by transnational corporations that are immune to the legal and financial sanctions and rising independence movements at the heart of global power hubs. If we look at Europe for instance, rising nationalisms seem to be polarizing societies internally while casting doubts on the Union from Greece to Britain and deepening the economic and political cleavages between North and South. From these fissures surface debates on autonomy reaching back to unsettled colonial questions, like in the revival of the Catalan independence movement alongside many other less visible regional ones throughout the European territories giving voice to historically created cultural, linguistic and identity alterities conducive to social and political marginalization and economic inequalities. In other geographies, the claim of independence capitalizing on ethnic and religious animosities similarly sparked by old and new colonial administrations translates into

a will to benefit from the neoliberal system's blessings as a fully independent state rather than an upright opposition to the inequalities created by global capitalism as in the case of referendum celebrated in Iraq by the self-ruled Kurdish region. It becomes more manifest that the neoliberal politics and its footing based upon a Western-centric modernity, referred as the Capitalist Modernity in Öcalan's writings – today manifest in governance models oscillating somewhere between authoritarian capitalism and populism – remain ineffective to resolve the world systemic crises. Emerging in the territories where the entangled colonial and imperial history of the Occident and Orient has left deep marks on the social, political, ideological and economic configurations and that still bear on the current global context, the KLM and KWLS contribute in the much needed decolonizing turn connecting their anti-colonial/anti-imperial struggle that advocates today for the construction of stateless autonomy, an anti-capitalist, ecological society and gender liberation with ongoing resistances and global justice struggles against the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist world order on a global level. Today the movement's narrative foregrounds a pluriversal understanding of territory, identity/belonging and sovereignty that cannot be fit into monolithic modern political imaginaries.

In order to capture the diversity and amplitude of these experiences that cannot be reduced to absolute binary oppositions on which the Western-centric thinking derives from, the methodologies used in this work draws on perspectives that makes room for connections to come to the fore. Therefore, this work hopes first to bring out the extent to which colonial and imperial history was part of intense and complex encounters that took place in the "contact zones" where disparate cultures met and confronted one another often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination (Pratt, 1991, 1992) but also exchanged and adopted each other's symbols, ideas, techniques, languages and cultures. And at the same time it aims to put the accent on these social spaces as the settings for converging forms of resistances and partnerships that were built, unbuilt and re-built in different forms against the empires, their strategies of colonial governance and subjugation. However, the accounts of those who are subjected to most acute and systematic forms of injustice, subordination and exploitation by capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal structures are excluded from the colonial archives, and their knowledge is discarded as local, traditional or backwards. This epistemicide was a constituent part of Western/European colonialism that privileged modern science over all alternative knowledges which did not only involve the waste of other ways of giving meaning to the world but also the destruction of social practices and the disqualification of the social

agents that operate according to such knowledges. However, colonialism never managed to have total control nor obliterate them and indeed these knowledges have laid the foundations of the grammars of resistances of today. Thus, the Epistemologies of the South (Santos, 1995, 2016, 2018) as a set of inquiries into the construction of knowledge born from the practices and lived experiences of anti-imperial struggles will be one of the central methodological pillars of the present work. With this the work aims to display the emergent epistemic alternatives³ that constitute the building blocks of envisioning concrete utopias against all systems of oppression and injustice, map out strategies, multiply the possibilities and expand the repertoires of social emancipation to transform the present and the future. The variety of struggles and alternatives they bring forth demands a spectral methodological vision that allows different ideas, presuppositions and theories to get in dialogue and ask questions from many different perspectives, that is their interplay creating an “ecology of knowledges” that acknowledges the plurality of truths (Santos, 2010; Santos et al., 2004). From this interplay emerges new configurations and compositions deriving from different narratives, languages, and histories giving way to new realities and perspectives that challenge singular truths which increase the heterogeneity of future possibilities.

On this account, this work proposes to address the Kurdish issue putting in dialogue interdisciplinary perspectives and negotiating between the multidimensional viewpoints of political geography, post-colonial critiques, Orientalism, feminist theories and decolonial thinking. Moreover, it aims to undertake a critical recovery of the past as a way to intervene in the universalist ‘History’ from the vantage point of the power centers and unearth the silenced yet interlocking narratives and experiences from the flip side of the colonial history. This way the work hopes to bring into focus the silenced histories of the ones who were subjected to the colonial violence as a first step to openly talk about the systematic annihilation policies, deportations, uprooting of the peoples, land appropriations, burnt villages, habitat destruction, forced disappearances, homicides, pitting communities who lived for centuries on the same territories, sharing the same myths, traditions, songs, happiness and sorrows against each other. With that the work intends to embark on telling stories not only of the Kurds but of the Armenians, the Assyrians, the Greek Rum, the Jewish, the Arab and the Turks, in short of all the peoples’ who shared life experiences untold by the authorized versions of the national history. First and foremost, initiating dialogues to talk about colonial violence, its aftermath and the current inequalities underpinned by these should be seen as a form of justice that on one hand acknowledges past abuses and on the other restores the recognition of colonized

³ Meneses, 2014; Santos, 2006, 2018; Santos et al., 2007; Santos & Meneses, 2016

peoples' history that has been actively produced as non-existent by official narratives, allows them to build a collective political memory in their own words that redeems for the absences and makes them knowing subjects. Settling accounts with the distortions of colonial history is also a condition for social justice, so that past and present injustices can be treated beyond being merely a Kurdish problem but as part of Turkey's colonial heritage and a problem that needs to be resolved through everyone's efforts in order to build a common and radically democratic, and decolonial future. On the other hand, in the face of colonial historicism and the universal narratives of the empires, states, nations, of the wars and of the powerful, this work centers on a counter-historical perspective centered on the lived experiences of the Kurdish women that have different stories to tell about the colonialism, subjugation, oppression *and* resistance but also reveal above mentioned entangled stories of the peoples that go beyond national and ethnic boundaries. Here, *counter* does not simply mean in opposition but an effort to unfold collective pasts of different peoples with rich histories and alternative accounts to tell, in defiance of their non-existence produced by colonial Western-centric modernity, as to fashion locally, regionally and globally interconnected and plural historical narratives challenging the legacies of colonial representations and to discuss sovereignty beyond their dividing lines. In this fashion, women's accounts expose the historical significance of reinterpreting the meanings of territory, identity, self-determination, emancipation and autonomy established on pluriversality that re-frame relations outside patriarchal, colonial and capitalist structures and beyond the political and administrative configurations of nation-states through an alternative thinking of alternatives that allow diverse peoples and communities to build radically democratic societies. Correspondingly, this work aspires to recount the background of DM, DC and DN through the life histories of women, their struggle against intersecting forms of oppression, grammars and practices of resistance and personal interpretations of world historical events. Moreover, the Kurdish women's life histories as members of people scattered in different geographies that today remain mainly within the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran but also include diasporic communities principally in Europe inherently carry along memories from contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective collide and intertwine. These narratives reassemble and recover diverse experiences, ideas, images and cartographies of belonging and un-belonging and accounts of dehumanization, exclusion, dispossession and exploitation. Today the transnational character of KWLS incorporate other elements such as class, race, religion, culture, geographic location among others laying bare multiple domains that colonial domination act on and introduce perspectives from different subject positions to these

histories exposing the heterogeneity of women and their life experiences. The multi-locationality of these narratives also transcend geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries and tell interconnected stories of neo-colonialism, neoliberalism and new configurations of patriarchy linking local and global histories. Moreover, they also weave counter-hegemonic inheritances that strengthen each other. Focusing on these narratives to set in motion a discussion of the past that unveil possibilities casted-off and effaced from our collective memory will help multiplying the present and future alternatives that disprove the inevitability of what *is* and inspire what *can* be, enlivening the faith in the possibility of radical transformation and becoming its trailblazers.

In view of these, this thesis aims to explore: To what extent the overshadowed experiences of Kurdish women refashion the global History of colonialism and imperialism by casting light on the intersecting forms of ethnic, racial, class, gender, religious and cultural oppression in the formulation of colonial differences disregarded in national liberation discourses and the canonical historical works; How do their narratives interlace histories of violence and resistance of different communities divided, classified and controlled within the fixed borders of modern nation-state and whose past is silenced, customs, habits and identities disassociated from each other through the official colonial/national historical accounts; What is the role that women's connected histories, experiences and practices play in transforming the basic premises of Kurdish national liberation struggle towards a new social and political framework to build a democratic and plural society and allow manifold communities to self-govern themselves beyond the oppressive and exclusionary structures of nation-states and How do women's marginalized knowledges and practices today contribute in the construction of emancipatory theories and decolonial political projects of global social justice through transnational alliances.

By delving into these questions this work intends to bring to view colonial processes sidelined in the Western-centric narratives of world history but also within that try to relocate the locus of enunciation to oppositional identities and resistances of marginalized and subalternized groups with the intention of connecting local and global histories. In this way the objective is to expose continuities as well as intertwined nature of world historical processes in which West/Europe is only but one of many geographical locations from which modernity was produced, not only to provincialize the West/Europe but to focus on its multiplicity. Moreover, this shift of locus allows for homing in on oppositional and resistant subjectivities, practices, and knowledges that have survived being assimilated into Western-centric colonial modernity

produced in contact-zones to usher present and future utopias to build decolonial, anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal alternatives. Finally, this work also hopes to contribute to creating an ecology of knowledges that acknowledge the plurality of epistemologies and worldviews through dialogues, mutual learning and solidarity between counter-hegemonic knowledges, grammars and praxes both from the North and South while highlighting the sidelined potential of resistance of the Global South so that we can create cartographies that expand the social and political horizons of radical social transformation.

In Part 1, rather than a literature view of the analytical approaches that tackle the Kurdish question from a state-centric perspective this part will propose a theoretical and methodological framework that centers on the relation between modernity and colonialism underlying the conditions that engender a modern world view whose highest form of political organization became the nation-state. The objective here is to get beyond the impasse of the discussions locating the anti-colonial liberation struggles in an either/or position against the state or reducing their complexity to ethnic and national conflicts, and rather spotlight the imperial mindset and the colonial differences that played on nation-state's inception. In order to do so, post-colonial, feminist and decolonial theories will be put into dialogue to show the inextricable link between the universalization of the monolithic conception of modernity based on Western experiences, historic events, developments and thinking and colonialism. Here it should be reminded that colonialism is not only understood as Western/European imperial political, military, and economic expansion and hegemony but also as an ontological and epistemological condition that validates Western/European superiority by excluding and producing non-existence of other modes of being and knowing. In contrast, this part aims to urge our analyses to thinking from these absences and marginalized epistemologies not to pluralize Western-centric modernity but to transform its fundamental premises. As such, Third-world feminist and decolonial proposals will be brought into the discussion to expand the horizons of our imaginaries of a different world and producing knowledge. In this manner, the discussions in this part intend to contribute to analyses on global social and cognitive justice by taking into account alternatives propounded by subalternized and marginalized communities resistances as proposed by the Epistemologies of the South. Finally, diaspora will be addressed as the figurative terrain and breeding ground of potential dialogues and encounters that transcend geographical and psychic boundaries of nation-states providing room for pluriversal counter-hegemonic epistemologies, resistances, life-ways, standpoints and practices to strengthen each other.

Part 2, will trace the ethical and political issues that bear upon decolonial research methodologies, including the standpoint of the researcher. Further, it will focus on the urgency of re-writing history from women's point of view to introduce alternative narratives of colonialism, oppression and domination beyond historicism predicated on meta-narratives of territorial conquest, economic and political domination, and the inter-state relations, that is the 'high-politics', considered constitutive of civilization and thus part of universal history. In order to do so it will aim to bring in silenced and sidelined experiences of women to make visible their role in world historical developments and struggles against oppression and redeem the one-sided narratives of modern history. Life histories will be discussed as a method, counterpoised against the supremacy of written historical accounts, as to provide women with means to tell their un-authorized versions of history in their own words. With that, the methodological choice aims for restoring women's agency, while unsettling the power relations with respect to positions of researcher- researched, knower-known as a means to decolonize the research process. These will provide the basis for tracing out counter-maps that go beyond the physical and cognitive borders of the empires, nation-states and global dividing lines to bring into open counter-topographies uniting the local and the global against neo-colonial, neoliberal and patriarchal oppression. These counter-maps are hoped to destabilize the two-dimensional Cartesian mapping to open up the prefigurative imagination to the infinite complexity of the world.

Part 3, will tackle Ottoman colonialism and the modernizing efforts during the *Tanzimat*, the 'Reordering' period in the context of 19th century global imperial contest in African and Middle-Eastern lands and the subsequent inter-state competition. This historical focus seeks to highlight how colonial practices were brought inside the domestic territories and borderlands of European empires that would be determinant in the shaping of nation-states. This chapter will propose exploring religion, rather than race, as the determinant factor of colonial difference not only in the mutual construction of the 'Occident' and the 'Orient' but also of Ottoman colonialism. The historical analyses will address the role of religious differences in parallel with the civilizational hierarchies based on the ethnicization of complex and heterogeneous tribal communities. The arguments in this part aim to reveal, first, how these elements of colonial difference were used to justify colonial practices of demographic engineering and the unmixing of multi-confessional and multi-cultural populations to incorporate/assimilate certain identities or eliminate them during the 'Turkification-Islamization-Modernization' of the empire. Equally it is hoped to explain their role in the

insertion of territories, resources and people into world capitalist markets and the creation of fixed territories of the state connecting the colonization of the Balkan and Middle-Eastern borderlands to Anatolia. Finally, it will analyze how the 'Kurdish Question' has been the outcome of the incorporation of the peripheral zones to the center through the sedentarization and territorial fixing of mobile populations to the land. Further, this part will discuss the configuration of the modern state apparatus, its disciplinary, military, economic and political practices and methods of governmentality that dismantled not only the former administrative autonomy and local economies but also social structures, vernacular customs and heterodox traditions. In brief, the analyses are aimed at disclosing the aftermath of Ottoman colonialism modeling fragmented, hierarchized and homogenized populations through violence and genocides that pitched communities against each other at a moment when the imperial and national were coalescing and normative national subjects were being shaped.

Part 4, will focus on showing the continuity between the empire and the republic despite the positivist and secular republican rupture that aimed to erase the traces of the imperial, Islamic past. It will examine how the authoritarian nation-building process to create a modern and Western society was indeed carried on with the same imperial mindset. This part will argue that the republic have turned the colonial assimilation and elimination mechanisms used against non-Muslim populations of the empire towards internal others whose pre-capitalist, traditional life ways, heterodox and vernacular customs and cultural, linguistic and religious heterogeneity stood in the way of uniform incorporation of diversities in the modern nation. It will center on the internal colonization process carried out in the name of ending religious reactionism, tribal resistance, banditry, and prehistorical customs that in practice aimed at destroying traditional forms of social life and self-governed political and economic practices as the constitutive elements of Kurdishness through forced settlements, deportations, military campaigns, execution of tribal and religious leaders, genocides, dispossession and disciplining through forced education. It will also examine how colonization was gradually redressed as a problem of underdevelopment and regional backwardness silencing its ethno-political aspect, that paved the way for the transformation and unequal economic integration of rural peripheries, exploitation of natural resources and workforce with developmental measures and transfer of capital to local elites institutionalizing feudal forces. Further it will explore how destroying the places of historical heritage and memory, inscribing ethno-nationalist symbols of the Turkishness on the physical space would boil down to the strategies of forgetting, postponing and canceling of the Kurdish identity. Finally, it will tackle how Kurdish ethnic

identity has been racialized, and criminalized with the massive migration towards big cities where Kurdish political identity would be radicalized following the destruction of the natural environment, devastation of local economies and the sociopolitical rural fabric.

Part 5, will explore the inception of the Kurdish National Liberation struggle within the context of military coups, and the rising socialist, anti-imperial left-wing struggles, both against the Turkish colonial state and the Kurdish feudal and bourgeois strata. It will explore how PKK that became the dominant actor of the national liberation with a discourses equating sovereignty and self-determination with the establishing of an independent state through armed struggle emerged as a response to state's construction of the national identity, the denial of Kurdishness and violence legitimized as a national security issue that disguised the political, economic and social implications of continuing colonization. This part will also put in historical context the Turkish-Islam synthesis starting with the '80s that pioneered the neo-Ottoman discourse of the current government, leveraging multiculturalism and Muslim identity politics to mask the countries integration with global neoliberal capitalism, the subsequent deepening of precarization and economic deprivation, and increasing clampdown on democratic rights. Furthermore, it will highlight the changing nature of the strategies of material, political and cultural subjugation of Kurds from state of emergency, village evacuations, military interventions, extrajudicial arrests, imprisonment of Kurdish MPs to continuing regional development and today urban transformation projects. The discussions aims to show how these strategies are used not only to destroy Kurdish historical space, or militarize it while enabling expropriation of resources and dispossession but serve in stigmatizing the urban poor as terrorist and aim eliminating populations that inhabit territories where international gas pipeline and energy projects are being negotiated among international actors. Finally, it will discuss the changing discourse of KLM towards radical democracy without the state and the building of a plural, anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal and ecological society with the collapse of real socialism and inefficacy of anti-colonial/anti-imperial nation liberation movements to stimulate real emancipation. In addition, this part of the work seeks to show the role that the rising social justice movements which transcend ethnic/national liberation claims and bring in a wide array of democratic, ecologists, feminist workers' and indigenous struggles demands to the center of politics play on the transformation of KLM.

Part 6, will discuss Kurdish women's role in introducing gender alongside ethnicity in the national struggle as well as thinking about colonialism and decolonization. It will tackle how women's active participation and mobilization both within the revolutionary movements,

traditional party politics, including PKK, and in public and private sphere not only challenges the patriarchal roots of state, family, kinship structures, traditions and the nation based on masculine ideals but also place gender liberation at the heart of social emancipation. Also, it will address the interconnected systems of power dynamics related to gender, ethnicity and class and the gendered nature of colonialism and state violence that mark Kurdish women's lives. It will argue that women's struggles in these multiple domains underlie the current ideological framework of KLM and its proposals for the creation of political, economic and social institutions that ensure radical democracy, autonomy, and the building of an anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist, ecological society that harbor social diversity and plurality. Further, this part will explore KWLS's theorizations as a decolonial turn that proposes a profound change of mindset through the deconstruct of patriarchal mentality as the grounds of all kinds of oppression. The arguments in this part will center on the way these theorizations underpin the construction of non-hegemonic and non-hierarchical subjectivities and relations through a radical break with dominant imaginaries and ways of thinking that sustain oppression which would be the cornerstone of self-determination. Finally, Jineoloji will be tackled as a methodology to systematize the marginalized knowledges, creations, histories and traditional practices of women as a tool of unearthing emancipatory alternatives to forge epistemologies and praxes for global social transformation and justice. Equally Jineoloji will be explored as a method to produce cross border knowledges that come from the resistances of women globally, their multiple struggles from different geographies, from anti-imperial South to counter-hegemonic North, strengthening concrete utopias against patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism.

The final part consists of diasporic Kurdish women's life histories that narrate the history of colonialism,. These narratives include the stories of their communities, their families, their mothers and grandmothers, in which occupation of territories, breaking up of social relations and uprooting of communities revealing the connected histories of multiple ethnic and religious groups that inhabited the same territories. Further they unfold what colonialism meant for these women and how it shaped their resistances. These life histories also expand to include diasporic experiences and migrations, new shapes that colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy take as well as transborder solidarity and alliances with other women mapping out their proper understanding of liberty. Here it is worth noting that these narratives do not adress liberty only in terms of ethnicity and gender but in the face of multiple and interconnected forms of oppression, marginalization and dispossession. Moroeover, these life

histories give the hints of what revolution, self- determination, and autonomy means for Kurdish women.

I. Part I Theoretical Focus

I.I. Nation-State at the Juncture of Imperial Entanglements, Modernity and Orientalist Knowledge

The analysis of anti-colonial national liberation movements, such as the Kurdish case, in many of the scholarly work have been explored through theories on of the nation, nationalism, ethnicity and their relationship with modern state building that on one hand make use of these concepts without questioning the primacy of Western/European experiences in their universal construction, nor the partiality of these accounts that left out the historical entanglements with broader geographic realms with complex material, social and political configurations that did not match Western modular understandings of these phenomena. This Euro-centrism prevailing social sciences, expresses itself through the historiography, parochialism of universal assertions, exaltation of the Western civilization, its Orientalism, and its attempts to impose a theory of linear progress that takes sociopolitical arrangements that issue from Western historical processes as the norm (Wallerstein, 1974). Further, what is much more notable in these academic works is the absence of addressing colonialism and imperialism, as key components of Western modernity and history that has to do with the partial construction of the very idea of the West itself. However, the entangled processes between colonialism, imperialism and nation-states that has been marginalized and downplayed in the writing of Western history should indeed be brought back to the center of our analyses so that the enduring colonial legacies that came to shape the nation-states of today can be placed in its historical context (S. Berger & Miller, 2015b; Bhambra, 2007).

The vast majority of the canonical analyses grounded the emergence of the nation-state as a result of the large scale social and economic transformation from agrarian feudalism to industrial capitalism, embodying the emergent notions of reason, individuality and progress brought on by Enlightenment philosophy and a particular way of mobilizing, organizing and legitimizing political power predicated on the secular rule of the people who are assumed to share a common ancestry over a fixed territory set off with the French revolution⁴. These accounts were grounded on the idea of a shared universal and historic trajectory in which progress meant a linear passage from the former power based on kinship and religion and extended rule of the empires towards the nation-state, the former belonging to a pre-modern and the later as the zenith of European political project of modernity (Latour, 1993). Smith

⁴ Agnew, 1994; B. Anderson, 1983; K. Anderson & Smith, 2001; Anthony, 1990; Brenner, 1999; Gellner & Breuilly, 2009; Hobsbawm, 1990; Renan, 1990; Smith, 1988, 1989; Tilly, 2017; I. M. Wallerstein, 2001; Weber, 1976

(1988) argued that this “myth of the modern’ nation marking a radical break between agrarian and industrial, traditional and modern, society ,and it views human history as ultimately progressive in which being modern equals to having a nation and the opposite refers to a pre-modern era. Further, Andreson argued that this break marking a ‘new beginning’ consequently produced a ‘colective amnesia’ crossing-out the continuity between the imperial rule and the modern world system predicaed on nation-states. In fact, the world in practical terms never matched the imagining of it as composed of sovereign nation-states. Indeed, during the long and turbulent centuries between the 18th-20th Centuries, nation-building and national identities took shape as a consequence of the empires’ relations with their colonies, the post-colonial trajectories on one hand and the inter-imperial conflicts on the other. The era of the emergence of nation-states was the era of the partition of the world in the context of inter-imperial competition, more and more evident during the 19th and 20th Centuries, which was paralleled by the extension of colonization. The states that were claimed to represent the modular form of nation-states were very much colonial empires however hard it might seem to imagine these two allegedly incompatible entities⁵. In this regard, as Calhoun duly affirmed “...the forging of European national states was never purely a domestic affair, nor even simply a combination of domestic affairs with European international relations. It was importantly tied up with the development of colonial empires. (Calhoun, 2007, p. 33). Already at the turn of the 20th century, imperialism in reality was “the expansion of nationality” (Hobson, 1902, p. 6). On the other hand, nation-building, or at least the initial phase of it, was not achieved until the end of World Wars⁶ within the European territory and the last ones to become nation-states were the imperial colonial states of Europe until their colonies formally gained independence (Mongia, 2002 in Gupta, 2004, p. 269). That is to say, the ‘nationalization’ of the global power system was not only the outcome of one sided colonial

⁵ Bassin, 1987; Berger & Miller, 2015a; Calhoun, 1993; Spivak, 1989; Walby, 2003. The intense pursuit of colonial acquisition of the Europeans began taking place at a pace far greater starting with the 18th Century and intensified even more in the 19th C. As Strang maintains, “In the hundred years between 1780 and 1880, new colonies were formed at the rate of five a decade. Between 1880 and 1910, new colonies were formed at four times this rate, or twenty per decade...and by 1914 about 85 per cent of the earth’s land surface consisted either of colonies (or former colonies) or colonial powers (Strang, 1996, p. 27; I. M. Young & Levy, 2011, p. xi). Further this period, in the 1880s and 1890s by Germany, Italy, Belgium, the United States and Japan, followed by other imperial states joined the ‘traditional’ colonial powers of England, France, and Russia in the imperial competition. Also not only the geographical focus of colonization shifted from the Americas towards Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific but also colonization henceforth involved the incorporation of more or less intact societies (Bassin, 1987, p. 475).

⁶ The end of the WWI provoked heated debates about autonomy, sovereignty and if not equal citizenship of the ethnic groups who did not fit into the dominant ethnic categories of the nation-states yet; “The League model of collective minority rights thus found itself widely discredited in the wake of the Second World War. For all of the ravages wrought by mass murder, forced population transfers and border changes during 1939–1948, national and political space were still far from congruent in post-war central and Eastern Europe.” (D. J. Smith & Hiden, 2012, p. 4),

domination but with decolonization that the world of nation-states came to take shape⁷. On the other hand the Western-centric historical periodization of nationalism overlooked the relations between metropolitan states and their conquered colonies and territories (I. M. Young & Levy, 2011, p. xii).

As a matter of fact, historicism is what made modernity, capitalism and nation-state things that originated in Europe and became global spreading outside it, positing historical times as a measure of cultural difference between the West and the non-West in which the later was associated with the traditional, local and backwards (Chakrabarty, 2000; Said, 1994; Werner & Zimmermann, 2003). This conception of Europe/West not only in its geographical sense but through the universalization of an idea of progress underpinned by the values and standards of the Western civilization as the unique meaning and direction of history, that is the imposition of a monoculture of linear time served in the creation and legitimization of unequal relations of social power (Santos, 2006a, 2016). Further, "The dominance of "Europe" as the subject of all histories is a part of a much more profound theoretical condition under which historical knowledge is produced in the Third-world" (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 29).

The marking of difference also signified the classification and ranking of non-Western cultures, peoples, notions as inferior and also the homogenization of fairly heterogeneous realities generate an epistemic exclusion through their particularization, marginalization and pathologization (Meneses, 2008b, p. 77). Thereby, the practices and knowledge produced outside beyond Western world are made insignificant, irrelevant and ahistorical (Meneses, 2007; Santos, 2001). Valentin-Yves Mudimbe who directed attention to the colonial encounters that have shaped Africa. in his analyses has charged the Western knowledge of ministering to the Eurocentric project of 'Africanism' as the construction of an image of a single 'Africa' according to colonial or imperial standards homogenizing the multiple identities of the diverse peoples, simplifying non-Western realities and silencing local voices by analyzing them through Western codes, models and epistemes. He asserted that the Western knowledge was grounded on an "epistemic ethnocentrism" which "[is] the belief that scientifically there is nothing to be learned from "them", [the primitive, the savage] unless it is already "ours" or comes from "us." (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 15). Indeed the colonization meant the marginalization and repudiation of the knowledges of colonized peoples and of the diversity of their cultures and cosmologies as expressions of irrationality,

⁷(Bhabra, 2016, p. 201; Cooper, 2005; Duara, 1996; Kelly & Kaplan, 2001)

of superstition, or their abstraction, at best, to practical and local forms of knowledge whose relevance was dependent on their subordination to modern science. The civilizing projects of the colonizers resulted in the subordination of colonized peoples' customs to the law of the modern state, their practices to the capitalist economy and the reduction of the variety of their forms of social organization to the state/ civil society dichotomy (Meneses, 2006).

Postcolonial scholarship in general has been integral in questioning precisely this relation between power and knowledge drawing attention to the role that the creation of the colonial difference played in the Western claims on universal knowledge. The modernity/coloniality school, centering on the Colonization of America and the control of the Atlantic after 1492, argued that the assumption of the universal validity of Eurocentric experiences and values and their naturalization created a 'myth of modernity' (Dussel, 1997), that justified the colonization as a civilizing mission which would emancipate the pre-modern, barbarian, underdeveloped indigenous people. The modernity/coloniality scholars argued that race has been the major category of difference used in the classification of the colonized subjects and the systematization of geo-historical, temporal and spatial hierarchies following a linear evolutionist perspective based on Eurocentric definitions of modern, civilized and developed. Thus, the myth of European superiority operating hand in hand with the colonial difference acted as the legitimization of the colonial administration, subjugation and the articulation of labor, space and peoples according to the needs of the capitalist and colonial modern world-system (Quijano, 2000). Further, this combination on one hand set in motion the 'coloniality of power' (*ibid*) which meant the coercive dissemination of a value system and practices stemming from an Eurocentric vision of science, technology, knowledge and culture based on modern rationality imposing dominant ways of perceiving the world in which Europe was registered as the center of enunciation. And on the other, masked the invisibility and dehumanization, that is the creation of non-existence of the colonial Others through the exclusion of local forms of knowledges and belief systems that do not conform to scientific explanations of the world giving way to the 'coloniality of knowledge' (Mignolo, 2011) through which knowledge about the world was produced exclusively from the privileged side of the colonial encounter.

On the other hand Kandiyoti warns that postcolonial studies equally runs the risk of reproducing the spatialities and temporalities of Eurocentric narratives of modernity "to the extent that they privilege a particular type of colonial encounter between the capitalist metropolises of the West and their colonies or semi-colonies in the rest of the world"

(Kandiyoti, 2002, p. 286). The supposed unidirectional narrative of modernity as world-view that was produced in Europe as the ‘center’ and was then imported to its peripheries silence the specificity of the colonial practices and the historical conditions of modernity in other imperial contexts excluded from the idea of Europe. However “[e]very colonial encounter or ‘contact zone’ is different, and each ‘post-colonial’ occasion needs ... to be precisely located and analyzed for its specific interplay” (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 207).

Edward Said’s canonical work *Orientalism* (1978), considered as an inaugural text for post-colonial theory and criticism in the field of literary and cultural analyses, has been pivotal as he brought home the colonial encounters to the contact zones between Europe and the Middle East where the boundaries that divide them were ambiguous and the colonial difference was established principally through religion and not race. Orientalism relocated the analyses on colonialism in a specific geography and period starting with the late 18th century when the first waves of decolonization in the former overseas territories of the old empires triggered a change in imperial power relations followed by a new wave of territorial expansion led by emergent grand powers in African and Middle-Eastern lands. This new wave engendered a colonial and imperial encounter between the Arab-Islamic world and the Christian Europe marking of the Otherness of the Islam and relegating the whole set of social, cultural, political, economic, philosophical, military, technological, and scientific, in short civilizational developments of the Islamic world to a bygone era that Europe moved on from, converting itself into the ultimate ideological and geographical reference point. Said explored in detail how the West, through its relation with the Middle East and Islam, invented imaginary geographies of the Orient through images of savagery and exoticism that supposedly laid beyond the limits of the Western world. His work has been significant on one hand as it revealed the way the Western Orientalist discourse produced the East as stagnant, backwards, despotic, ignorant, hence always inferior and lagging behind a superior, civilized and developed European and how in virtue of this superiority, the Western imperialism over the East would be justified. As such Orientalism was a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient “by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (*ibid.*, p. 3). On the other hand, his analyses pointed up how the selective adoption of a Greek and Roman cultural origin and a Christian religious and cultural European identity took shape through the omission of extra-European influences, be it the considerable number of non-Christian Europeans, Jews and the

Muslims within Europe or the 'external' Muslim and Arab ones. In fact, this way the Oriental did not exclusively mean an inhabitant of a geographical area but would come to mean a member of a subject race (*ibid.*, p. 92). This way, the Orientalist construction of the world meant the usurpation of the significations and representing functions of elements that are born out of other ontological and epistemological contexts and the overriding of these historical realities. This, may be, what colonialism comes to mean for many that fall between the cracks of this imagined division, the ones who are condemned to a silent past and refused entrance to a present. Yet, he also hinted at the paradox that the construction of East and the West as ontologically and epistemologically distinct entities entailed: This binarism was at the same time what established the idea of Europe inasmuch as Europe consolidated its identity through defining the 'Other' (*ibid.*, p. 7). Said this way pointed at that the mutual constitution of "Occident" and "Orient", or rather the implications of the elimination of Orient and Islam from the production of an effective history of modernity and how this gave rise to the misrepresentation of the West itself.

Here the context of this work will entail opening a parenthesis in Said's thinking or rather making a reminder in terms of what he also has missed out. While he quite rightly brought into focus a period when imperial territorial and epistemological borders were to be redefined over the course of the 18 and 19th centuries, the centerpiece of Said's explorations was the colonial encounter between the British, French and later on the American empires on Arab lands at a specific historical moment. As Bryce advocates this critique on one hand excludes the Ottoman's from the model of high colonialism examined by Said and on the other keep reproducing the singular and binary center-periphery perspective implying an opposition between the West and the East, the modern and the traditional and yet the age-long existence of the Ottoman Empire during which it shared an important geographical space as well as a cultural and civilizational legacy with Europe complicates the terms of the encounter that cannot be explained through these downright binarisms (Bryce, 2013). On the other hand, Said in his later work *Culture and Imperialism* (1994, p. xxx) in which he re-examined his former arguments, would remark that he British, French, and American imperial experience "has a unique coherence and a special cultural centrality". This implied that other imperial formations such as the Russian, the Ottoman, and the Austro-Hungarian cannot be explained through the experiences created by the European colonialism and should be addressed in their distinct historical and contextual patterns, but also through their connected paths of modernization. As such, Orientalism becomes an important starting point for this work to

shine light on the Ottoman colonialism that has been omitted from the imperial history writing and disclose how nationalism has taken different forms as part of the connected histories of what has hitherto acknowledged as separate entities and show the interrelated historical processes that have shaped not only nationalisms but anti-colonial liberation struggles on both sides, that still continues to shape people's lives in the zones where late imperialism and the building of nation-states took place dividing peoples, geographies, cultures and civilizations. In fact, "The end of Empire has merely revealed most states to be imperial" (Simpson, 1996, p. 255), and hence it is fundamental to reiterate that even after the formal independence that came with the anti-colonial struggles, in the so called post-colonial states, colonialism and imperialism did not come to an end and the political and territorial expansion of colonialism across the globe, the incorporation of foreign lands and peoples into the national-imperial states under the framework demarcated by the metropolises is still an ongoing process under different forms of neo-colonization.

Indeed in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said examined how the globalized processes triggered by modern imperialism brought closer the realities of the colonizer and colonized, making the overlapping experience of the West and 'its Others', especially the East, their co-existence and the interdependence of different and seemingly oppositional cultural terrains a prerequisite in understanding history. With his arguments in his later work, Said have managed to unsettle the insurmountable colonizer/colonized distinction bringing into attention their mutual constitution and subsequently impaired the conviction that it was the colonizer who defined the colonized and rendered it powerless. His line of reasoning thereby reinstated the agency of the colonized and made room for narratives that speak from the connected histories of the two that allowed constructions of the colonized to have an influence the colonized culture as an expression of resistance. While he reminded that the historical experiences of resistance against empire that came about with decolonization across the Third World with the assertion of nationalist identities to confront domination and claims of self-determination created a possibility of advancing knowledge and rewriting history from alterity including the point of view of the excluded, he contended that these two camps situated themselves on the plane of an intransigent opposition, they fed off each other reinforcing the homogeneous and reductionist ideas of nations, geographies, countries and cultures.

Effectively, one of the core claims of emancipation the anti-colonial nationalist discourses laid out was the reclaiming of history, the power to self-representation and construction of a national identity against the colonial domination and the expropriation of the past through the

Western master-narratives (Guha, 2003; Meneses, 2011b). Especially Subaltern scholars whose critiques drew on re-thinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism and Western domination argues that Third-World anti-colonial nationalisms in search for authenticity in an attempt to refute the colonial claim that backward nations cannot modernize themselves, accepted the very intellectual premises of Western modernity and endorsed the universalization of the nation-state as the most desirable form of political community whose history was written by Europe (Chakrabarty, 1992b, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993a, 1993b). They argued that anti-colonial nationalisms did not dismiss the idea of ‘modernity’, the very idea whose epistemic foundation, frameworks of knowledge and representational structures corresponded to Western colonial domination nor its concomitant values such as Reason and Progress or the agency and history of the nation, and ended up consolidating its universality while reproducing the oriental divisions of backwardness, ignorance and inferiority within the nation⁸. As Cooppan express “If, in the various moments of late imperial sovereignty, anti-imperial revolution, and postcolonial independence the discourse of national has turned on a certain placing of nations and national subjects, it has equally depended on their displacing: their existence at once inside and outside certain topographies and temporalities of identity (the territorial fix, the developmental time line)” (2009, p. 275). Moreover, Chakarabaty (2009) asserted that in setting the West as the archetype of modernity and progress, and ‘the people’ as lagging behind, the modernizers of formerly colonized countries, either dismissed the cultural diversity or placed it on a hierarchical scale of civilization letting the chance of preserving and bringing into view the world’s plural heritage slip into oblivion. In a similar vein, Chatterjee argued that the interiorization of the modular form of political identity embodied by the nation-state propagated by Western modernity as the only form for the rest of the world to chose from, but always from a site of difference set the limits of anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial states; “Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state.” (1991, p. 11).

Further, the universalization and unquestioned adoption of the national historical narrative, that on one hand eclipsed the diverse nationalisms being charted to build imperial nations at the heart of empires and on the other the heterogeneity and variety of political identities and practices that prevailed against the homogenization efforts of the nation-building (Cooppan, 2009; Spruyt, 1996). On the other hand, the Subaltern group also focused on challenging the

⁸ (Chakrabarty, 1992a; Chatterjee, 1993a; Guha, 2003; Prakash, 1992, 1994)

colonial and elitist narratives and its representations, making use of the Gramscian ideas on class struggle and the denial of political voice to social groups that are excluded and displaced from the socioeconomic structures and denied access to 'hegemonic' power. They were interested in exploring the historiography of the 'politics of the people' surfacing in the popular mobilizations of the peasants, the urban proletariat, the tribals, the ones excluded from the caste systems, or other groups' attitudes, ideologies and belief systems that have been silenced due to their belonging to certain class, cast, age, gender, ethnicity and office or in any other way and overshadowed by the elites' culture, the history of states and nationalism as well as the Marxist historiography exclusively grounded on class consciousness (Guha, 1984). The term 'subaltern' itself became a core concept with Gayatri Spivak's essay '*Can the Subaltern Speak?*' (1988), as a category that included all that has no voice in the dominant construction of identity and subjectivity and one that is situated in a constant place of irreversible alterity. For the subaltern theorists, the condition of subalternity was not solely contingent upon the Western colonial representations of the non-Western colonies but equally reproduced by anti-colonial nationalisms, the state actors, national elites and the nationalist historiography that emerged during the struggles for freedom overshadowing the actions and politics of 'the people' within that history⁹. Likewise Spivak underlined that not only the texts of empires but also "the great narratives of nationalism, internationalism, secularism, and culturalism", recurrently used by the anti-colonial accounts, reconstructed subalternity (1990b, p. 112). Given this, the Subaltern Studies, took on the task of reintroducing the left out elements, namely the subaltern as the subject of her/his proper history. These, marginalized histories provide a different reading of history from those of the elite accounts, that recount from the silences and uncover "the subaltern's myths, cults, ideologies and revolts that colonial and nationalist elites sought to appropriate and conventional historiography has laid to waste" (Prakash, 1992, p. 9). So, for Prakash the purpose was not just recovering the subaltern autonomy but situate subaltern as "a position from which the discipline of history can be rethought" (Prakash, 1994, p. 1489). In this manner, Duara argued that history can be rescued from the nation, expanding the narratives to the multiple imaginations of subjects whose identifications were not limited to ethnic, national, linguistic or cultural communities but were multiplex, historically changeable, fluid and internally conflicted (Duara, 1996). And yet, in order to restore the subaltern's history as part of the global history, Chakrabarty argued that the supposed universality of Europe, its reason, science and modern values need to be 'provincialized' (1992b). To him,

⁹ (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 200; Chatterjee, 1993b, 1993a; Guha, 1984, 1997, 1999)

provincializing Europe was first, to evince that European ideas are in fact drawn from particular and local intellectual and historical traditions and therefore cannot claim universal validity. And second, to lay down the history of modern Europe as an integral part of global imperialism. Further, provincializing entailed acknowledging that modernity and the alleged universalist thought is not only a European construction but has already been influenced by other particular histories that follow imperialism.

Consequently, what has been referred to as the postcolonial came to involve the history of oppositional criticisms of and resistance to Western colonialism and imperialism as well as their universal knowledge claim; that is the ideological and political response of the subalternized and marginalized rather than simply describing a system that comes after colonialism as the prefix *post-* may suggest. Then, the *post-* in postcolonial should be understood “as a marker of a conceptual move going beyond existing theoretical understandings of the world” (Bhabra, 2007, p. 15). Spivak similarly, considered postcoloniality as contravening the imposition of Western knowledge “in terms of reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of [its] value-coding” (1990a, p. 228). And yet she also hinted at the limits of the ability of Western discourse addressing problematic nature of the representation of subaltern subjectivity whose voice, claims and agency get appropriated and assimilated in the colonial, and equally nationalist postcolonial, epistemological trajectory that limits the grammars through which the ‘other’ comes to know and narrate its ‘self’ and consequentially misrepresents and speaks for the ‘other’ (Spivak, 1999).

Over and above that Spivak’s compelling reflections also stood out in showcasing the brutality of modern reason, its silencing discourses and patriarchal codings that reduced women to epistemically violated and historically muted subjects whose existence was obliterated (Spivak, 1988). Although many interpret Spivak’s words as referring to women’s marginalization as a terrain of disempowered passivity she was in fact adverting the patriarchal structure of modern reason and knowledge that excluded other ways of experiencing the world, acting in it and interpreting reality subjugating knowledges that issue from these. This way, Spivak’s questioning has shined light on the relation between knowledge production, power and gender.

I.II. Western Knowledge, Colonialism and Gender

Critical feminist theories, despite the common belief, did not simply bring in ‘women’s issues’ to the agenda of scholarship but first of all have been of crucial importance on challenging the heteropatriarchal foundations of Western knowledge and pinning on its connection with domination. Feminist criticism have embarked on exposing the fallacy of Western science’s claim to objectivity and impartiality, “the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere” (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), and repudiated the universality of modern reason and knowledge arguing that knowledge production was situated and constructed from the standpoint of particular social positions and locations of ‘White European Man’, of the technological, late-industrial, militarized, racist social order¹⁰. Feminist theories fleshed out how the Western modern philosophy and science was grounded on the separation of sexes and the hierarchical opposition between masculine and feminine, in which reason, mind, rationality were constructed as the privileged domain of Man as the archetype of human and the master through the exclusion and devaluation of everything defined as its contrasts such as the emotions, the body, the animal, the primitive, the non-human world as part of the sphere of feminine associated to irrationality, passivity and codified as non-agents/non-subjects¹¹. By conceiving these opposites as a separate and inferior, on one hand man was conceived as the subject of knowledge whose construction mirrored their concerns while women became objects of inquiry and observation. Paramount in these criticism is the way they foreground the epistemologies, ethics, and politics of the dominant forms of science, its theoretical and methodological assumptions as androcentric, And in doing so, feminist critique argued, the modern science fixed the men’s perspectives it as the universal norm and the exclusive and authorized view point that manifested itself as an ideology and tool for control and domination, systematically silencing the women, decontextualizing their experiences, misrepresenting their interests and distorting their subjectivity and identity¹².

Further, the tight-knit link between the androcentric epistemology of science and the subordination of women was expanded by ecofeminist and indigenous theories to include the nature and the native people categorized as the feminized ‘others’ as to disclose their silencing

¹⁰ (Abu Lughod, 1998; Bordo, 1987; Collins, 1993; S. Harding, 1991; S. G. Harding, 1987; S. Harding & Hintikka, 2003; Hartsock, 1983a, 1983b; Irigaray, 1987; Longino, 1987; MacKinnon, 1982; Narayan et al., 2000; D. E. Smith, 1974, 1987)

¹¹ (Beauvoir, 1949; Bordo, 1986; Griffin, 2016; S. Harding, 1982; Keller, 1984; Lloyd, 1984; McMillan, 1982; Plumwood, 1993)

¹² (Harding, 1987, p. 198, 2004; Hartsock, 1983b; MacKinnon, 1982; Smith, 1987)

and subjugation by the patriarchal modern reason. Ecofeminists argued that the vision of the world framed by the modern reason separated society/man from nature/woman defining the later as a *terra nullius*, a resource empty of its own purposes or meanings, and hence available to be conquered, ruled over, molded and cultivated for the purposes of the interests of the ones who are attributed with intellect and thus justified their colonization in the name of progress and growth¹³. On the other hand, critical feminist theories, have elaborated on the entwining of the domination of nature, through the insistent image of nature as female, associating the two with reproduction, fertility and sexuality, and drew attention to how this turned the female body and sexuality the subject of control but also naturalized the life-giving and life-sustaining work of women. Making use of theories on the capitalist political economy in the analysis of patriarchy, these theories drew attention to the exploitation of women's unpaid care and subsistence labor as the bastion of primitive accumulation, capitalist relations of exploitation and the basis of the social division of labor¹⁴. Among these thinkers, Maria Mies (1986) and Vandana Shiva (1989) made explicit that the contemporary world system depends on the subordination and exploitation of women, nature and colonies, the latter underlining the consequences of the Western modern world view on the colonized non-Western and non-white people's lives. In *Ecofeminism* (1993), they argued that the destructive effects of modern science are felt most by women particularly those living in the 'underdeveloped' South, extending the outlook to integrate gender, race, ethnic and class oppression with that of the domination of nature while creating a dialogue between Western and Southern feminist critiques of modernity, colonialism and imperialism.

Beyond women's subjugation, exploitation and incorporation in the capitalist economies as commodities, the sexual and racial hierarchies implemented by Western thinking played even a more important role in colonialism, that operated through the violence subjected on female bodies. In the European cartographic imaginary the physical possession of the colonized lands acquired a symbolical feminine nature drawing a parallel between the physical possession of women while this turned sexual violence into one the mostly recurred violent strategies of colonization and of 'taming the savage natives'¹⁵. In this regard, feminist analyses maintained that the social institution of patriarchy was fundamental to European military conquest, colonization, economic exploitation of indigenous people, racism and classism, arguing that civilizing colonialism was indeed inherently gendered (Spencer-Wood, 2013).

¹³ (Griffin, 2016, p. 201; Mies & Salleh, 1990; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Plumwood, 2003; Shiva, 1989)

¹⁴ (Merchant, 1990; Mies, 1986; Mies et al., 1988; Silvia, 2004)

¹⁵ (Goldstein, 2001; Mama, 1997; Pratt, 1992; A. Smith, 2005)

On the other hand, despite the indisputable contributions of Western feminist thoughts in grasping the true nature of the patriarchal system and of their analyses on the role that science has played in its sustenance, their blindspots have also been indicated by non-Western feminist thinkers who have called into question addressing women's oppression through the overly monolithic conception of patriarchy without any clear understanding of the intimate inner workings of its culturally and historically distinct arrangements nor paying attention to the multiple axes of domination that play on women's subjugation. Especially the Third World, Black, Hispanic and Asian and indigenous feminist¹⁶ thinking have brought to attention the essentialism in White feminist movements and theories formulated within colonial cultural frameworks which assume 'Woman' as a homogeneous and cross-culturally identifiable category representing a unified voice that overshadowed the experiences, agency and praxis of women in colonized contexts¹⁷. These multiple feminist perspectives have questioned the historical construction of gender and pointed out the need to unpack the intersectionality of race, class, culture, sexuality, ethnicity and religion *inter alia* moving from a conception of difference between women and men to an awareness of difference among women¹⁸. Further, post-colonial feminisms have argued that by omitting the specific historical, socioeconomic and geo-political realities encountered by non-Western women in the Global South Western feminisms reproduced the axioms of imperialism while created an universalizing sameness categorizing women outside the Western context that disregarded the diversity of their conditions, identities and distinct interests (McClintock, 1993; Mohanty, 1984, 2003a, p. 200; Spivak, 1988).

In *Under Western Eyes*, Mohanty (1984), explored further the privileged geographic positioning of knowledge production favoring feminist perspectives that originate in the West. Her work has exposed the parallelisms between the patriarchal Western humanism as an ideological and political project that represented itself as the center through the peripheralization of the 'East' and 'Women' as its Others and the reproduction of images of

¹⁶ I am aware of the problematic use of 'feminism' to refer to women's experiences and identities outside West. Here my intention is far from accommodating women's differences in a terminology that derives from a specific historical experience of the west, and efface particularities nor do I intend to pretend the universal validity of the word feminism and or present it as an adequate measure of women's agency obliterating geographic, historic and cultural differences. Yet, for the sake of a mutual understanding, I use the term to refer to women's theories and praxis that scrutinize multiple sites of oppression, silences and marginalization caused by the inextricable triad of colonialism-patriarchy-capitalism and the struggles that stem from women's experiences against these. I will pick up on the complexity of identifying women's struggles from diverse parts of the world as feminist along this work.

¹⁷ (Anzaldúa, 1990; Collins, 2003; S. G. Harding, 1987; hooks, 1984, 1984, 1989; Lazreg, 1988; Lorde, 1980; Minh-Ha, 2009; Mirza, 1997; Mohanty, 1984, 2003a; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Ong, 1999; Oyewùmí, 2011, 2011; Paredes, 2010; Rhode, 1990; B. Smith, 1977; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989)

¹⁸ (Anthias, 2002; Collins, 1993, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989, 1990)

‘third world women’ in these particular feminist writings as ‘underdeveloped’, ‘uncivilized’ judging the social, legal, economic, religious, kinship and familial structures that shape the reality in which these women’s subjectivities take shape” according to Western standards. Mohanty made explicit that the representations of non-Western women in Western feminism set in motion a colonialist discourse defining, coding and maintaining first/third world differences and transformed oppressed women into the “oppressed third world women” as victims of social, economic and cultural conditions, male violence and colonial processes and not as agents capable of counteracting oppression and enact their own strategies, disregarding their autonomy. Moreover the Western discursive supremacy portray a monolithic and singular image of the ‘third world’ and the ‘third world women’ that suppress the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question which implies a violent structural domination, “that both signifies and blurs the functioning of an economic, political, and imaginary geography able to unite vast and vastly differentiated areas of the world into a single “‘underdeveloped’ terrain” (Sangari, 1987, p. 217).

The Orientalist implications of Western feminisms victimizing non-Western women result in eclipsing these women’s agency and consciousness while sidelining their struggles in the global narrative of resistance against patriarchy that feminist theories formulate, subsuming these under the particular locationality of their analyses and discourses, that is the geographical as well as the epistemological context of their production (Kandiyoti, 1988). As Sandoval has stated, “Hegemonic feminism appears incapable of making the connections between its own expressions of resistance and opposition and the expressions of consciousness in opposition enacted amongst other racial, ethnic, cultural or gender liberation movements” (1991, p. 11). Especially in regards to women’s active participation in national projects certain feminists condemned the women pushing for gender liberation within anti-colonial and national liberation movements as misguided as nations and states are regarded as entities based on women’s subordination and nationalism deeply opposed to women’s interests (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1999; Morgan, 1984, p. 198). Even in some cases, women who gave primacy to autonomous feminisms organized around gender justice forced their fellows affiliated with national projects to “adopt an un-hyphenated ideology and approach” renouncing nationalisms (Vickers, 2006a).

Indeed, feminist research has been fundamental in bringing into the open the gendered nature of nationalism and the delineation and institutionalization of gender difference by nationalist

processes (Ranchod-Nilsson & Tétreault, 2003)¹⁹. Feminist critiques demonstrated that the legitimization of authority and the political project of the nation-states are carried out through the definition of women's position and role (Kandiyoti, 1991; Mohanty, 1984). They also argued that women have been inherently situated as the 'boundary subjects' whose sexuality and bodies were controlled and put at the service of the nation in order to secure the limits of nationhood, especially one that is based on the ethnic/racial purity, associating women tightly to community, territory and the future of the nation²⁰. The nationalist processes attributed women the roles of biological reproducers of the nation; the transmitters of culture and state ideology including the patriarchal family structures through state sanctioned roles of mothers and teachers; social reproducers of national and ethnic differences; and as participants in political identity struggles²¹. On the other hand, feminist theories also argued that not only women and femininity but hegemonic notions of masculinity and men's roles have been defined by nationalism and as a consequence equally demarcating men's relation with the nation. While men are imagined to be the agents of the nation, or through the association of national strength and military power with masculinity have been conceived as potential martyrs/soldiers/heroes, the ones who protect the nation, women are never imagined as key players but passive beings or symbols relegated to the role of mother/wife, and who are in need of protection regardless of the role they play in the construction of the nation.²², . In the same way, feminist critiques maintained that state, power, citizenship, revolution or democracy as concepts forming the basis of our modern understanding of the political, are essentially "masculinist projects, involving masculine institutions, masculine processes...in which...roles embedded are written primarily by men, for men, and about men" (Nagel, 1998, p. 243)²³. These analyses on nationalism and the state sustained that the states' gendered policies, practices and institutions control and marginalize women not only through definition of different roles, representations and status for men and women but also by contriving gendered bodies and subjectivities used as means of domination that sharpened the defining lines of citizenship²⁴. By defining the public political space constituting the sovereign state as

¹⁹ The list is indeed quite long, see (Jayawardena, 1986; McClintock, 1993; A. Parker et al., 1992; J. J. Pettman, 1996; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996; Walby, 1992).

²⁰ (Eisenstein, 2003; C. Hall, 1993; Kristeva, 1993; Mulholland et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989)

²¹ (Elshtain, 1991; Mayer, 2012, p. 201; Nagel, 1998; V. S. Peterson, 1994; J. J. Pettman, 1996, 1996; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996; Whitehead et al., 1993; Yuval-Davis, 1993; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989)

²² Such that, rape, for example, is considered as one of the 'dishonoring' crimes in war, as a direct offense to the nation. In this sense, war is played out between men with and through women's bodies, and in ways that are both material and symbolic (Mulholland et al., 2018).

²³ (Connell, 1995; Pateman, 1989; S. Peterson & Runyan, 1991) are other scholars who propose similar arguments.

²⁴ (Kaplan et al., 1999; Mayer, 2012, p. 201; Mies, 1986, p. 198; Peterson, 1992; Pettman, 1996; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996; Ranchod-Nilsson, 1997)

the terrain of men, women have been contained in the private sphere of the household, the familial domain, the realm of affection and spirituality, and thus excluded from the 'horizontal brotherhood' that defined the nation, downgraded to a migrant status and rendered devoid of civil rights²⁵.

I.III.Moving The Center: Anti-colonial Feminisms and the National Question

While women's exclusion from taking part in the governance of political regimes that denied them citizenship have created a certain demonization of nationalism in Western feminism, on one hand their analyses have been based on an uncritical acceptance of the universal validity of the foundational elements of Western nation-states, such as modernity, secularism, capitalism and liberal democracy and seldom tackled how other configurations of nation and state influenced women's mobilizations (Vickers, 2002). Further, Western feminist critiques of nationalism and nation-state overlooked the implications of belonging to a state's dominant national, cultural, racial, ethnic, class based communities and heteronormative sexual definitions or to those of minority or oppositional identities that involved different relationships with the nation for different women (Pettman, 1996; Vickers, 1984).

In contrast, for non-Western women, and especially for the ones who have been taking part in anti-colonial struggles, race, ethnicity or nationality formed within specific political, social and cultural structures and as defining notions of identity have been important elements in shaping their mobilization against domination and subjugation (Jacoby, 1999; Kandiyoti, 1991; Ray & Korteweg, 1999). Indeed, as opposed to the common belief that places the non-Western women in a powerless and victimized position against nationalist subordination that deprives them of their agency, the women partaking in anti-colonial movements proved that they are not passive spectators but had "... clear visions of how they wanted their lives to change as a result of their involvement in the nationalist movement" (Ranchod-Nilsson, 2000, p. 170). The Western feminist criticism on nation building processes overlooked how women and men imagine national communities, participate in state formations in very different ways and may even support different national projects²⁶. Herein, postcolonial feminisms made important contributions to uncover the various ways women who were both subjected to

²⁵ (Alexander, 2014; Chatterjee, 1991; Elshtain, 1991; Enloe, 1993; Pratt, 1990; Ranchod-Nilsson, 1992)

²⁶ (Enloe, 1989; Jayawardena, 1986; McClintock, 1995; Walby, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 1993; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989).

national structures, yet were differently but equally engaged in their construction, challenged and reshaped the nationalist projects and the male-dominant definitions of women's position in society (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989). Of course, this is not simply to declare nationalism as a liberating tool casting aside critical analyses on anti-colonial liberation movements and their relation to gender. Postcolonial feminist critiques have argued that women in anti-colonial nationalist processes have been equally objectified, as symbols of the national emancipation, as repositories and guarantors of the past, and of the national essence by the modernizing elites or revolutionary leaders (Chatterjee, 1989; Jayawardena, 1986). Further, Enloe expressed:

Yet nationalist movements have rarely taken women's experiences as the starting point for an understanding of how a people becomes colonized and how it throws off the shackles of that material and psychological domination. Rather, nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope. Anger at being 'emasculated' – or turned into a 'nation of busboys' – has been presumed to be the natural fuel for igniting a nationalist movement (1989, p. 44).

Taking the fight against colonialism and capitalism as the subject matter of emancipation, anti-colonial mobilizations most of the time sidelined patriarchy as a peripheral question that would wither away once the struggle for national liberation was attained²⁷. In exchange, these movements brought to the fore women's mobilization as a fundamental issue in the building of a free nation (Alexander & Mohanty, 2013; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996). In a number of armed anti-colonial struggles the nationalist gender discourse gave prominence to the image of warrior women who, as good patriots, took up arms in defense of the home country and its children (Eisen, 1984; Urdang, 1979, 1989). However, women's participation in the efforts to create liberated nation-states have not necessarily translated into emancipation of women. As Spivak highlighted, "even if, in the crisis of the armed or peaceful struggle, women seem to emerge as comrades, with the return of the everyday and in the pores of the struggle, the old codings of the gendered body, sometimes slightly altered, seem to fall into place" (1989, p. 113).

On the other hand, in many anti-colonial contexts, women's organized struggles have managed to initiate intense debates on 'the woman question' within the national liberation and on the democratization of the proper movements, struggling to include gender liberation in the political agenda and to push for broader transformative goals while resisting co-optation by nationalist discourses²⁸. By participating in the nationalist movements, in many parts of

²⁷ (Alexander & Mohanty, 2013; McClintock, 1995; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996; Ranchod-Nilsson, 2000)

²⁸ (Abdo, 1991; Alexander & Mohanty, 2013; Heng, 1998; Moghadam, 1994; Ranchod-Nilsson & Tétreault, 2003; Tétreault, 1994, 1996; Urdang, 1979, 1989; Vickers, 2006b)

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, women have managed to advance policy reforms regarding legal status, conditions of employment and education, voting rights and political participation etc. (Jayawardena, 1986; Ranchod-Nilsson, 1992). Moreover, women's movements have not been carried out only to be treated on an equal footing with men in terms of state policies or political structures but took place against the backdrop of persisting patriarchal, religious and feudal structures, exploitative local rulers and traditional family structures that nullified women's existence. And as such fighting against colonialism did not only mean fighting against imperialist domination or a conflict between colonizer-colonized but also one between men and women within these movements (Ranchod-Nilsson, 2000). Thus for women, even though things seemed more promising in terms of progressive gender politics at moments of national mobilization or on the battlefield, it was quite clear that women needed to wage a continuous struggle to assure gender liberation even after national independence has been achieved (Mama, 1997; Urdang, 1979, 1989). That is why taking part in nationalist struggles provided women with the opportunity of breaking out of the confines of domesticity as the existing framework of relations in which women's subordination has been traditionally located, entering in the public arena and challenging the subject position of the patriarchal nationalist men (Enloe, 1993). As a result, women's participation in anti-colonial projects on one hand positioned women's emancipation as a fundamental and inextricable part of national liberation on the other altered the projects themselves reconstructing the patriarchal meanings of nationalism and redefining the community in its new national manifestation as a truly democratic body²⁹.

In the last decades, decolonial indigenous and communitarian feminisms, as well as the feminist approaches to anarchaindigenism have been offering decolonial perceptions to tackle women's struggle from a standpoint framing emancipation in relation to communal sovereignty as opposed to individual liberation or individual rights going beyond the confines of nationalism and nation-states (Paredes, 2010). First of all, indigenous feminisms demonstrate how the colonial, modern Western-centric capitalist processes, with the racial hierarchy and gender politics indoctrinated into all patriarchal administrative machinery, the insidious paternalism of monotheist religious and educational systems have disintegrated the communitarian relations, ritual thinking, collective decision-making, and communal land use practices and economies in which women had political influence both deriving from their collective strength and as representative of their communities, in the resolution of internal and external inter-tribal conflicts, and as the ones who collectivized the traditional knowledges

²⁹(Enloe, 1993; McClintock, 1995; Walby, 1992; West, 2014)

regulating social relations, between human beings, the natural environment and the non human sphere³⁰. Decolonial feminist theories argued that the heteronormative Western coding of gender served as a powerful tool of domination that on one hand implemented polarized conceptions of masculine/feminine and man/women deepening and hierarchizing the already existing differences that were not necessarily based on biological/anatomical distinctions which not only shrouded the diverse ways non white and non-Western peoples and cultures conceived their bodies but also dismantled the lived practices that organized these societies by defining women in an inferior position to man (Lozano, 2010; Lugones, 2008; Segato, 2014). On the other hand, they evoked how the imposition patriarchal structures, laws and systems of governance, including the modern state, ushered in by Western colonialism and modernization introduced vertical and hierarchical sociopolitical organizations handing in the power and control over the production, including the production of knowledge and the collective authority to man transforming women, land, animals and territory to their property and possession and instruments of labor owned and controlled by the male heads of family, tribes or ruling class (Cusicanqui, 1997; Paredes, 2010). This way these theories traced how colonial racial and economic power relations were and remain profoundly gendered, creating a double economic, political and cognitive domination of the colonized women, and highlighted patriarchy as the fundamental foothold of (neo)colonialism and (neo)imperialism³¹.

On the other hand the perspectives indigenous feminisms present, moving beyond the struggle for gender equality, uncover the strong tie between sociopolitical, economic and cultural injustices inflicted by colonialism and practiced against the entire community, the deterioration of their well-being and aspire to vanquish the colonial structures that oppress both women and men though at different levels³². However, indigenous feminisms equally draw attention to the need to analyze the relation between hegemony and patriarchy not only as a result of colonization but also as a reality that has resided in the precolonial cultures insisting on establishing women's liberation as a precondition to society's emancipation and decolonization³³.

Moreover, indigenous women's theories do not settle for simply putting on center stage a systemic analysis of colonialism, exploitation and oppression underpinned by the patriarchal order but its radical transformation through epistemologies, methodologies and theories foster

³⁰ (Goodleaf, 1995; Hogan, 1981, 1981; Mba, 1982; Oyewùní, 2011; Steady, 1987, 1987; Sudarkasa, 2005; Sunseri, 2000; Wane, 2011)

³¹ (Paredes, 2015; Smith, 2008, 2011, 2017)

³² (Fiske, 1996; Hogan, 1981; Nkenkana, 2015; Sunseri, 2000; Wane, 2011)

³³ (Arvin et al., 2013; Lasky, 2011; Paredes, 2010; Segato et al., 2011; A. Smith, 2010, 2015)

alternative modes of liberation that are not necessarily 'new' but bear the traces of non-hegemonic thinking drawing on the ancestral knowledges and collective thought overshadowed by Western-centric modernity and colonization and reduced to 'pre-modern' (Lugones, 2010; Maese-Cohen, 2010). Further, the theorizations of women bring in frameworks of self-reliance, self-determination and empowerment that not only rely on women's traditional power but ones that took shape during the resistance against colonialism and imperialism (Steady, 1987). As such, these perspectives bring in dialogue decoloniality with postcolonial studies in order to unthink colonization both as a historical process and also its contemporary forms. Viewed in this way, the articulation of ancestral visions and the recovery of historical communal practices on one hand accommodate possibilities of imagining communal projects that destabilize normative notions of the nation and sovereignty based on control over territory and closely bounded and ethnically defined communities and exploring conceptions that are not captured by the colonial, hierarchical, violent, coercive and patriarchal nation-state apparatus towards communal construction of self-government predicated on interrelatedness, reciprocity and mutual responsibility; of community based on nurture and care for not only human beings but also the nature and an idea of autonomy that respects multiplicity and acknowledges other peoples and communities' right of existing and deciding over their lifeworlds³⁴. Further, indigenous feminisms establish a different registry to approach emancipation from a viewpoint that understands relations within local and global landscapes to build networks between counter-hegemonic resistances and across geographic, political, ethnic or any other identitary positions. As such sovereignty, territory, political power and self-determination is not demarcated by the politics of traditional imaginings of Western political science but requires an intersectional analysis and a praxis to de-center and undo multiple axes of oppression based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class (Anthias, 2011; Lasky, 2011).

Further, decolonial indigenous feminist theories provide a conceptual framework to reflect on the geopolitical, spatial and body-political situatedness of knowledge production insisting on the imperative think and theorize from the counter-hegemonic inheritances of communities who have suffered the aftermath of the colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy (Cabnal, 2010; Mohanty, 2003; Smith, 2011). These resistances, land-based practices and knowledges provide tools to advance democratic societies with a new political culture beyond the limitations of the Western liberal formulations of nationhood. Instead, new stories drawn from the subjugated knowledges of oppressed people, and ignored part of Western culture can be

built on notions of radical democracy, solidarity and mutuality constructing links and coalitions between different geographies to protest against local nationalisms, religious fundamentalisms, dominant heteropatriarchal configurations and also global imperialism (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Plumwood, 2003; Shiva, 1989). Here, 'feminist democracy', offers a strong argument for decolonization not only in epistemological sense but also implying a transformative collective or organizational praxis centered on thinking beyond colonialism through action and reflection, advocated Alexander and Mohanty (2013). Feminist democracy calls for building transnational feminist alliances inclusive of multiple/plural ways of being in the world, rejecting impositions of singularity or universality that challenge colonial hierarchies within the state and interstate system in which non-Western feminisms and place based struggles come to the foreground, envisioning decolonization and enacting self-determination for all³⁴. Nevertheless, against the limitations of the identity politics, the question should be whether it is possible to create non-hegemonic selves and movements by creating affinities and connections between differences, and multiple, over-lapping, and interacting qualities of others that cannot be ignored as the basis of a global solidarity, a space of encounter between women whose liberation claims are shaped by different historical, cultural and colonial contexts³⁵. However, the claims of transnational feminism should not infer liberal politics of multicultural recognition that contains social differences within a capitalist state-led discourse disarming the struggles for liberation waged against the modern liberal state and transforms them into instruments that assure the system's continuity (Povinelli, 2002). Quite the opposite, this implies broadening the unit of analysis from local, regional and national towards highlighting the entanglements of global processes of capitalism and colonization to focus on cross-border feminist practices and struggles for global justice that provide alternatives of social justice to revert the disastrous outcomes of neo-colonialism, neoimperialism and neoliberalism and through collaboration solidarity among women from North to South, East to West (N. S. Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Mohanty, 2003b).

A crucial element of focusing on how these entangled processes of colonialism and its new forms is to engage with historic, affective, social and political dimensions of how the logic of empires locate and shape the multiple trajectories that have displaced peoples from local and global sites. The transnational dimensions of local struggles on one hand complicate how the colonial dynamics operate differently in each context but also intersect in ways that are not

³⁴ (Alexander & Mohanty, 2013; Castree, 2004; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Shaw, 2004; Soguk, 2007)

³⁵ (Abu Lughod, 1998; Ainger, 2002; Collective, 2002; Givers, 1988; Marcos, 2010)

contained in local spaces and on the other bring in dialogue decolonial projects in order to compare diverse strategies to create common methodologies and course of action. Diaspora in this sense accommodates a perspective to approach the intricate processes of global imperialism on the local level within the context not only of nation-building projects but also of efforts that exceed the parameters of individual nation-states and brings forth spaces of encounter in contested geopolitical spaces at the heart of metropolitan colonial states in which resistance just like people and ideas travel and strengthen each other to build a common workable future and for finding new solutions decentering the West as a reference point.

I.IV. Diaspora as a Third-Space: Disrupting Borders, Connecting Histories

Diaspora, represents figurative and material dislocations to territories outside peoples' native lands, where their identities have initially taken form, as a result of colonial relations and mechanisms clearly linked to wars, political turmoils, persecutions, crisis, occupation and inevitably the politics of dispossession that follow, and today requires a re-thinking of neo-colonization, and with it including the refugees, the minorities, the material aspects of migrant labor and vicious forms of exploitation abusing the informal conditions of the people deprived of rights in the perspectives that uncovers different angles in the analyses.

Diaspora has been theorized initially charting out the notions of displacement, deterritorialization dispersion, and thus ineluctably referring to a 'home', a center, a locus, from where the dispersion occurs, and in return homelessness, exile, a homing desire, attachment-detachment and myths of origin and roots, the invocations of a native culture, native land and native community, a common identity hard to conceive isolated from the imaginations and the boundaries of nation, ethnicity and borders³⁶.

On the other hand, diaspora has been used to counter the the ascribed, monolithic, unbroken and deterministic identities, the binarisms of colonizer/colonized, white/black, East/West and the primordial definitions of ethnicity and nationness that marked by the colonial relationships and imperial processes to bring in the irrefutable and in a way discomfoting presence of the colonized others and their subjectivity to accentuate their crossing and transgressions through the emergence of a new topography of diasporic identities that outlive these structures taking shape through cultural connections and narrated from multiple and shifting locations and

subject positions forged in terrains of constant flux³⁶. As such diaspora has offered possibilities for postcolonial discourse counterbalancing the narrative of fixed origins, nations and their cultures and traditions in their ‘purity’ with notions spreading out to the terrain of hybridity, in-betweenness, doubleness, transculturation, creolization, métissage, implying new alignments made across imperial borders through the long history of confrontations between unequal cultures and forces and insurgent, composite, heterogeneous and intercultural subjectivities that negotiate and contest the enforced differences and that live with and through them by fracturing, disarticulating and reinscribing the colonial politics of representation and master-codes of the dominant culture while reassigns a symbolic meaning otherwise to the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity 37.

The transgressive potential ascribed to diasporic subjectivity through hybridity and multiplicity on one hand has provided a theoretical and political utility that brought to the fore counternarratives of cultural difference that reinstated the subjugated their agency and power to unsettle, transcend and influence patters of overpowering difference, fixity and domination. Moreover, these perspectives have built the groundwork for later on explorations of diaspora focusing on the rapidly changing forms of transmobility, the flows of people, capital, commodities and with them information and culture, that takes shape within the time/space of globalization processes and crossings of multifarious borders, both material and immaterial, political and analytical. These perspectives built on the myriad dislocated sites that diaspora offers to contest the hegemonic, homogenizing and normative delineations of identity and difference, and the prefiguration of new relations of citizenship breaking up with the undisputed definitions of belonging that ties the subject to the global political system of nation-states, and the vulnerable position that the diasporic subject finds herself/himself in as an outsider (Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Dayal, 1996; Trinh, 1991). In view of these, diaspora space came to be examined as the realm of manifold intersections between spaces and affinities, heterogeneous terrains of contact zones that take shape in the midst of local and global positions where contemporary form of transcultural and transnational identities emerged (Brah, 1996). This transcendence is employed as something positive used in favor of the excluded as Ong remarked, “Trans denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to transversal, the transactional, the translational, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of state and capitalism” (1999, p. 4).

³⁶ (Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Clifford, 1994; R. Cohen, 1996; Gilroy, 1993; S. Hall, 1990)

However, Dayal expressed reservations about the dangers of the transvaluation of diaspora's deterritorialized critical consciousness and the invoking of the multiple attachments, identities and differential meanings of belongings inciting a global thinking that disunites the boundaries of the modern nation that might fall into a rootless cosmopolitanism that does not share the same cultural location with the refugee and exile for whom diaspora is not always a voluntary condition (1996, p. 49). Cho (2007) similarly has argued that cosmopolitanism from the vantage point of a liberal democracy and citizenship promotes difference and diversity to assimilate them, dissociates diaspora from the histories of colonialism and imperialism, the processes of racialization, globalization, transnationalism and postcolonialism, of grieving for losses and dislocation. Further other scholars called into question whether the transnational referent is sufficient to declare the destabilization of unities around nation or ethnicity (Anthias, 1998; Tölölyan, 1991). Despite the putative weakening of the nation-state, Tölölyan drew attention to exacerbated nationalistic, ethnic and religious fundamentalisms, essentialist, intolerant identity politics reproduced and reinforced by diasporic communities (Tölölyan, 1996)³⁷. Indeed, mobilizing collective resources, identities and loyalties to articulate causes that support the homeland, formulation of expectations on its future, claims-making strategies to influence homeland politics as well as the transnational political militancy becomes important features in defining the tie between diaspora and place of origin or the symbolic space of diasporic 'imaginary' (Axel, 2002; Brubaker, 2005). Diaspora reproduce and reconstruct this imaginary through community institutions like associations, civic organizations, political enterprises of lobbying and mass media and communication networks (Hassanpour, 2003; Sökefeld & Schwalgin, 2000). Further, there are considerable examples in which national-liberation struggles begin to take shape and organize in diaspora miles away from the original homeland, such as the Kashmirs, Sikh, Indonesians, Tamils, East Timorese and Kurds among many others, contributing to the strengthening of national belonging and identity by keeping alive the legacy of liberation struggles in the home country or even become the agents of their formation³⁸.

At the same time, the overriding focus on the homeland that inflates ethnic and national identities divert attention from long-standing, structured inequalities of class, race, gender and sexuality (Anthias, 1998; Braziel & Mannur, 2003; Dayal, 1996). Feminist scholars have placed special emphasis on how the gendered nature of diasporic experiences have been concealed in theoretical accounts of diaspora overlooking the reproduction of the patriarchal

³⁷Anderson (1992) in his critique of nationalist discourses have also pointed out "long distance nationalism" that reproduces exclusive notions of community and belonging.

structures drawing on kinship networks, religious and cultural traditions, norms and values that make gender, women's roles and sexuality central concerns of diasporic ethnic projects and normalize male experiences (Anthias, 1998; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005; Brah, 1996). Instead they have suggested that theorizing diaspora should address how the cultural and structural shifts in diaspora influence women in the face of systems of gender subordination and whether it produces more emancipatory and liberating experiences or not (Anthias, 1998). Moreover, they drew attention to the diverse ways assimilation and discrimination operates on racialized subjects, working-class, migrants or for others who are situated at the intersection of multiple differences under multilayered and intersecting contexts of (post and neo)colonialism, neoliberalism, and transnationalism. Especially, in times that global capitalism's and neo-colonialism's new, more mobile and fluid spatio-temporal configurations alter our understandings of boundaries in which identities take place, such as the nation and state, the frameworks of analyses on diasporic identities uncoil towards landscapes of the complex translocational positionalities faced by those who are at the interstice of a range of hierarchies and locations which are not fixed but involve shifts and contradictions (Anthias, 2008, p. 5).

Taking into account the fluid, changing, negotiated, historical, locational, situational and diverse subject positions then would allow for exposing how the political agendas and organizational modes of diasporic communities are not fixed but constantly shuffled. Nevertheless, Dayal attests, "To resist the homogenizing tendencies of "diversity talk" one must recognize the constitutive heterogeneity of diasporic positionalities and affiliations, and the shifting (self)-identifications and unpredictable alliances of the diasporic transnational" (1996, p. 50). Brah's words also tellingly argue that:

These processes of political identification—of the formation of 'communities in struggle'—do not erase the diversity of human experience; rather, they enable us to appreciate the 'particular' within the 'universal', and the 'universal' within the 'particular'. However, this politics of identification is only meaningful—indeed, only possible—if it is based on understandings of the material and ideological basis of all oppressions in their global manifestations; of the interconnectedness as well as the specificity of each oppression. And it is only meaningful if we develop a practice to challenge and combat them all...[B]ut we need to make connections with wider national and global struggles and movements (1996, p. 93).

Seen in its diversity and simultaneous situatedness of diaspora offers possibilities for a politics of location forged across boundaries of gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, culture, religious or language, aiming to build a common project of affinity and emancipation founded on a translocal ideology of decolonization among communities that have been subjected to

different historic processes of capitalist exploitation, occidental domination, patriarchy and other multilayered forms of oppression and unite practices and cultures of resistance, social struggles and political organizations (Brah, 1996; Patterson & Kelley, 2000). This political project becomes evident in the engagements of “Global North’s Southern others,” namely diasporic communities living in the North, translating homeland struggles to Northern audiences that unsettle the Northern political sphere and impel an engagement with other worlds (I. Demir, 2017). Consequently, diaspora as a space of cross-border movements and encounters create a terrain for solidarity and bottom-up affiliation not only among communities from different Global Souths, which had not traditionally engaged with one another but also with Northern counter-hegemonic globalization projects laying out a “subaltern cosmopolitanism...whose claims and criteria of social inclusion reach beyond the horizons of global capitalism...that fight against the economic, social, political and cultural exclusion generated by the most recent incarnation of global capitalism, known as neoliberal globalization” (Santos, 2007, p. 64). In this sense diasporic alliances claims go beyond the idea of a neoliberal inclusiveness, and further provide the context in which diverse struggles can learn from each others while shifting the reference of meanings, of identity, belonging, modernity, citizenship, resistance and liberation from its Western location towards the ones produced within the global struggles carved out in the South (Santos, 2000, 2002b). Further, the convergence between different struggles generate opportunities of decolonization in the face of Western colonialism and modernity that have produced multiple forms of diasporic placelessness not only in geographical but also epistemological terms (Kim, 2019).

On the other hand, diaspora as a space of contact zone between communities whose struggles are built on different historical, geo-political and cultural experiences require an intercultural translation in order to recover the connection among different critical knowledges and practices made invisible, positioned as binary oppositions such as South-centric and North-centric, popular and scientific, religious and secular, female and male, urban and rural (Santos, 2016). Yet translation can be highly ethnocentric when the Other is be made intelligible in the language and value system of the dominant, when the later’s values are decontextualized and appropriated (Venuti, 1986). To overcome this unequal relation and the erasure of one of the sides in question, humbling one’s dominant self, identity, culture and values, trying to not only understand the other but unfamiliarizing with one’s own identity and history, learning to see ourselves from a different and critical lens is necessary (I. Demir, 2014). Transnational feminism has taken translation as central issue making possible the

praxis of political solidarity that connects and disseminates women's knowledges across borders, time, geographies, builds bridges between world that seem poles apart and as an epistemological project that creates critical feminist thinking through a simultaneous self-reflexivity and interconnectedness to serve as politically empowering alliances³⁸. As Butler (2004) has framed in reference to Gloria Anzaldúa's work, it is possible to produce a multicultural understanding of women or indeed of society if we exist in constant translation, that makes us realize that our capacity for social transformation is precisely found in our capacity to mediate between worlds and cultural connections that make us who we are. Nonetheless, to avoid the sidelining of racialized, ethnicized, non-Western and Third-World women's epistemologies in the ranks of counter-hegemonic feminism, it is necessary to make visible and intelligible their organizational practices, counter-hegemonic inheritances, discourses and epistemologies (Arvin et al., 2013; Smith & Kauanui, 2008). This calls for theorizing from different geographical and bodypolitical positions based on epistemologies born out of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal struggles that bring out a radical thinking and politics that trouble colonial systems of knowledge as well as its institutions of domination.

I.V. Decolonizing and Pluralizing Knowledge: Epistemologies of the South and Ecology of Knowledges

In the previous sections this work has attempted to map out diverse approaches drawing on postcolonial, feminist and decolonial perspectives to expose the connection between the knowledge production based on the universalist Western understanding of the world, the androcentric nature of it and the role that scientific rationality and methods have played in the creation of the myth of Western modernity. While these theories clearly laid bare how the universal truth claims were directly linked with the institutionalization of the Western colonial project, this should not mean that the Western critical tradition has been a homogeneous totality and indeed it has involved a vast array of theories that have been discarded or marginalized as they collided with the political motivations of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy at the roots of Western modernity. Without getting into an extensive account of these critical traditions within the Western thinking, suffice it to say that their these arguments

³⁸ (Ahmed, 2000; Castro & Ergun, 2017; Costa, 2014, 2016; Costa & Alvarez, 2014; Mohanty, 2003a; Swarr & Nagar, 2012)

have been crucial in showing on one hand the rigidity, dogmatism limits of scientific rationality questioning its claims of absolute truth or objectivity, whose superiority was secured by excluding other diverse forms of acquiring knowledge based on senses, cosmovisions, spirituality or experimental reasoning that open creative visions of understanding the world and on the other how this mythical nature operated hand in hand with power to bereave people of their autonomy and subject them to authority of the state, exploitative economic structures or other systems of domination rather than solving the pressing social problems³⁹. Certainly, Aimé Césaire, one of the most prominent anti-colonial intellectuals, had long since denounced the Western civilization's incapacity of resolving the problems that have issued as a result of its own ways of thinking; "Le fait est que la civilisation dite "européenne", la civilisation "occidentale", telle que l'ont façonnée deux siècles de régime bourgeois, est incapable de résoudre les problèmes majeurs auxquels son existence a donné naissance" (1955, p. 44). Beyond this incapacity, Santos pointed out how the myth of omnipotence created around Western-centric knowledges results in a massive epistemic violence, destroying an immense variety of ways of knowing that prevail mainly on the other side of the abyssal line in the colonial societies and sociabilities (Santos, 2018). The elimination of other knowledges from the modern understanding of the world not only restrained the autonomy of non-Western societies to represent the world in their own terms and starting from their own experiences and subjectivities but also prevented the proliferation of new critical theories that can foster social emancipation (Bhambra, 2009; Santos, 1995a; Santos & Nunes, 2004). Indeed, the monolithic modern reason have given way to neoliberal worldview embodied in the mantra "There is no Alternative", deepening social inequalities between the richer and poorer countries as well as but also between the different social classes in the same countries, and ecological catastrophe, dispossession and deterritorialization without precedent, curbing social rights, creating legal mechanisms for wage slavery and unjust transnational agreements that allow the plundering of the Global South forcing people scratch a living out of the dry ground, provoking wars and with it global refugee crises, commodifying not only natural resources, health, education and even bodies but also knowledge, and criminalizing any kind of resistance that complete the task of dispossession and extermination initiated by colonialism not only in the far away lands but also in the self-proclaimed geographies of freedom, equality, democracy, justice and human rights in the

³⁹ Feyerabend (1978, 2011[1993]) has been one of the important figures that directly criticized scientific knowledge and its methods denouncing its tyrannical character and advocated to divorce science from state authority so that plurality of knowledges can have equal weight in shaping a free thinking and autonomous society that reject domination

Global North where the surveillance politics and authoritarian, racist and fascist models of governance become the rule and the mainstay of the permanent global crisis today. In defiance of the imposition of an unjust work order counter-hegemonic global resistances are taking place bringing to view non hegemonic relations based on autonomy and horizontal decision making, nondestructive economic structures, redistributive and egalitarian mechanisms that counteract the destructive outcomes of developmentalist extractivist growth, and social relationships based on mutual responsibility and care and building alliances engaged in radical social transformation for the collective creation of a just world. These practices equally multiply and democratize insurgent knowledges that open new horizons and disclose broader landscapes of epistemological and political possibilities. On the other hand, these are discarded or reduced to nonexistence through the ways of knowing that underlie hegemonic modern epistemology.

In order to save our imagination of another world from the grip of the modern monolithic thinking and the impasse of hegemonic neoliberal globalization Santos, proposes the “sociology of absences and emergences” (2002a). The former “show[s] that what does not exist is actually actively produced as non-existent, that is to say, as an unbelievable alternative to what exists” (Santos, 2012, p. 52) while the later proposes “...a future of plural and concrete possibilities, utopian and realist at one time, and constructed in the present” (*ibid.*, p. 54). The objective of the sociology of absences is to reinstate what has been omitted as possible alternatives to hegemonic experience and thus reestablish their credibility and validity. This way not only the field of credible experiences is widened but also the possibilities of social experimentation in the future are increased beyond the limits of Western-centric knowledge production (Grosfoguel, 2011; Santos, 2016). In order to do expand the vision of our analyses that can promote new repertoires of social emancipation it is urgent to take into attention epistemologies and practices that challenge colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy, to radical proposals that demand social, political and systemic change (Santos, 2016; G. H. Smith, 2000). “Epistemologies of the South”, proposes creating an alternative knowledge experiences, practices and grammars of resistance of social groups from the Global South subjected to injustice, oppression and systematic destruction of their life-worlds by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, that account for emergent epistemic alternatives to reinvent social emancipation, fuel future possibilities and introduce methods to transform the planetary consciousness⁴⁰. On this account, this proposal also engages in

⁴⁰ (Meneses, 2008c, 2014; Santos, 1995b, 2016, 2018)

excavating silenced traditions, experiences, outlawed life ways, prohibited languages and marginalized cosmovisions left out from the set of universal valid truths and made unimaginable by looking into those sites were these emerged to reclaim them to frame a new kind of post-abysal thinking (Santos, 2000, 2007). The recognition of these omitted visions of the world, epistemologies, identities, and practices on one hand herald the possibility of a global cognitive justice intimately linked to global social justice (Santos, 2007). On the other hand, they promote an " alternative thinking of alternatives" (Santos, 1998), or "radical imagination", that is the ability to imagine the world, life, social institutions as they might otherwise be and not only dreaming of different futures but bringing those possibilities back from the past to work on the present. The reawakening of befogged realities corresponds to the idea of "not-yet conscious", advanced by Bloch (1923, 1959), as the undisclosed dimensions of reality lying at the heart of concrete utopias unfolding possibilities thus far concealed or ignored, and not just the actual, to envisage a radically better present and future. Utopia similarly was conceived as the driving force behind all revolutionary action for Landauer, known as the 'philosopher of utopia', which did not necessarily mean to invent the new but to reactivate the old libertarian potential (1907, 1919). the same token, utopia can be taken as the driving force to inspire action and new forms of sociality drawing on the past, telling different stories about how the world came to be the way it is, remembering the power and importance of yesterday's struggles, and keep them alive in the present (Khasnabish & Haiven, 2014). Then again, the imaginings of utopia is not exempt from the serious critique of the past and present (Levitas, 2013). Khatibi for instance identified this critique as a "pensée autre" (1983) that not only questions the Western-centric system of thinking but also the groups, communities, movements and peoples' former social, cultural and political frameworks that are not always liberating or critical enough to change unequal realities. If anything, the prominent feature of postcolonial utopianism is critique that re-conceives the present by re-telling the past, resisting to the tyranny of history and transforms it together with structures reminiscent of imperialism (Ashcroft, 2016, p. 10). Talking from a different place, utopia aims to transform practices and mindsets, in order to create a new emancipatory common sense, that can be outlined epistemologically (Santos, 2003) becoming the cornerstone of a "prudent knowledge for a decent life" (Santos, 2002b, p. xvi) against the dominant paradigm of colonial, capitalist and patriarchal order. Then the emancipatory conceptions become "prefigurative politics" that sustain relationships, decision-making, cultures and experiences that embody the desired society (Boggs, 1977; Breines, 1989). The vision of utopia located in emancipation and freedom, brings about the transformation of

coercive power, a certain kind of *praxis* rather than a specific mode of representation (Ashcroft, 2016). Utopia addressed in parallel with the Epistemologies of the South as a means to learn from the anti-imperial South, then comes to mean the reappearance or recuperation of longstanding alternative traditions and practices of difference that have been rendered invisible or unthinkable yet have survived at the intrusion of colonialism and are being practiced in ways irreducible to capitalist and imperial globality (Conway & Singh, 2011; Escobar, 2004). Accordingly two principal issues come to the fore in relation to the methodological aspects; the first is how to tackle the knowledge production that derives from the lived experiences and practices of the subalternized peoples that challenge the canonical theories and dominant understandings of the world serving as the basis to resolve their immediate needs and the second is how to broaden the horizons of knowledge resetting the relation between different types of epistemologies decentering the power over knowledge as well as dissociating it with monopolistic structures and institutions, or any kind of authority placed over the people.

Particularly in the context of anti-imperial struggles and emancipatory projects whose claims and criteria of social justice reach beyond the horizons of equal citizenship, legal rights or self-determination defined by the Western democracy under the administrative structure of the nation-state and whose conceptions of community, territory, history and memory cannot be reduced to the modern Western temporalities and spatialities nor social or cultural constructions, the first point entails recognizing marginalized traditions based on shared authority and governing in common that represent local ways of resistance against colonialism (Amster, 2009; Lewis, 2017; Smith, 2005, 2008). Parasram (2015) argues that this resistance is based in a body of millenary knowledge that is based on a signification of territory, free from the boundaries of state and nation, that cannot easily fit into state-centric political history, not because it is not sophisticated enough but quite the opposite is open to pluriversal understandings of how territory and sovereignty might be constituted⁴¹. These positions offer a fresh decolonial thinking against the limitations of the nation-state and spatial and political range of practical solutions to modern/colonial territorial dispute. If taken seriously, these other possibilities refashion a world outside the dictates of Western-centric world-system, not as the only legitimate way of being in the world but multiple options to outweigh the violence enacted by the standardizing understanding of the modernity. Multiplicity, here, presupposes as cosmopolitan epistemology that promotes pluriversality and diversity, rather than abstract universality, that value de-hierarchized differences first to create

⁴¹Similarly see (Amster, 2009)

dialogue among knowledges and to further decolonization and creolization (Santos, 2018). This expansion and amplification would not only make room for an ecology of knowledges but also underline the diversity of geographies and places of enunciation (Santos, 2002a; Santos & Nunes, 2004). In this manner, it becomes possible to expose that knowledge that is pure and complete in itself has indeed never existed but it has always been produced through constellations of knowledges opening up the way for intercultural dialogues Santos & Nunes, 2004)(Santos et al., 2004). These dialogues provide a scope for the proliferation of a politics of cultural diversity and mobilization of different collective actors, vocabularies of struggle and resources that not only can become an antidote to totalitarianism but also entail a re-imagining of the nation, sovereignty and autonomy in collective and non-territorial terms established on diversity, heterogeneity and epistemological pluralism. Once our ways of seeing are freed from the hypnosis of state-centered histories (Scott, 2009), the unquestioned ways through which institutions of colonially administered modernity lose extraterritoriality opening up the limits of what is possible and what is not, and far from seeking only revolution or the overthrowing of the state, focus our attention on the creation of change and alternatives in here and now (Graeber, 2009; Milstein, 2010; Shantz, 2016).

Yet, another important point is also to cast a light on the overlooked resistances and struggles against domination that are overshadowed by macro narratives or the ‘Revolution’ rather than the multiple revolutions and transformations that happen in ‘lesser’ or ‘smaller’ stories of the everyday. Accordingly, this demands revealing the multiple and simultaneous revolutions that unfold and diverse histories of women who took part inside and outside the organized nationalist movements as actors, pushed aside as lesser narratives by the ideal-typical model of revolution drawing on men’s accounts and particular narratives of anti-colonial liberation (Sylvester, 1990). Shedding light on these, would mean, as Sheila Rowbotham framed, a “rediscovery of our own history – the history which has been obscured and neglected, just as the specific interests of women have been obscured and neglected, within the dominant ideology of capitalism, but also, sadly, within the male dominated revolutionary movement” (1972, p. ix). Moreover, re-writing and multiplying these accounts through women’s counter-narratives should be seen as a decolonial turn to free the imagination from the patriarchal history writing and its macro-narratives as well as a contribution to epistemological pluralism breaking away from hegemonic knowledges, shifting the frames of these and cultivating a fuller understanding of the notions such as politics, democracy, justice self-determination and emancipation. Grounding a methodology on these counter-narratives contribute to

problematizing the symbolic order of things and offer a vision through which decolonization can be laid out differently on the much larger macro terrain.

Yet, as the overall framework of how research should proceed, its rules, views, beliefs, and values, traditional methodologies need to be critically questioned so that new questions that address the problems engendered by old and current forms of colonization, capitalism and patriarchy can be asked. Decolonizing the research then would entail centering on the perspectives and experiences of the marginalized subjects so their struggles can bring in emergent forces that produce alternatives as crucial means for the production of a knowledge for social emancipation and decolonial futures (Santos & Nunes, 2004). This methodological reconstruction cannot be addressed detached from epistemological concerns bearing upon who are considered as cognitive subjects, the 'knowers' or not and the inclusion of different kinds of knowledges whose validity should be acknowledged alongside modern positivist science. Acknowledging the diversity of knowledges equally implies the recognition of diverse standpoints and historical experiences that create situated knowledges. Subsequently this requires redefining the limits of knowledge production beyond Western-centric experiences as well as its androcentric standards. Accordingly the role of the researcher also needs to be reconsidered not just as someone who analyzes and describes reality using existing theories and research procedures but with a responsibility to unlearn dominant patterns. This responsibility would lead to considering the potential outcomes of including distinct standpoints in the general structure of dominant theories and their fundamental questions that inform the research. Consequently, methodological issues urge us to approach the ethical and political dimensions of doing research, the influence of the situatedness of the researcher in the intersecting racial, ethnic, class, gender and cultural structures, as well as the power relations that these imply. These reflections help us invalidate the objective and neutral character of scientific knowledge and hierarchic subject- object relations to think about how these can be transformed into subject-subject relations through methods and construction of knowledges in which privileges can be used to link research to social struggles against oppression. I argue that the historical legacy of resistances and the perspectives and roles of silenced subjects, especially of women and non-Western peoples, in all its complex and often contradictory manifestations, need to be given central place so that the social transformation they have brought about can also alter the dominant methodologies and methods of research in order to decolonize it. In this way methodological concerns inevitably touch upon questions of methods such as collective research, the critical recovery of history as well as reflecting on

how academic practices can be linked to transformative social praxis and action so that the anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist epistemologies and knowledges can become considerable future alternatives. To this end, the next part of this work will approach methodological concerns that have guided the research process as well as my position as researcher and the challenges I encountered in undertaking an investigation together with the women that take part in the KLM.

II. Part II Methodological Challenges

II.I.Thinking, Speaking and Acting: Ethics and Politics of Engaged Research Methodologies

The previous discussion aimed to shed light on the principal issues that bear on treatment of the new political project advanced by the Kurdish movement, gathered under three main ideological frameworks DM, DC and DN that draw on the marginalized knowledges and traditions which provide guidelines for the building of anti-patriarchal, an anti-capitalist, and anti-colonial future and a free society managed by autonomous communities beyond the rule of nation-states. The diverse post-colonial, feminist and critical political theories were put into dialogue to lay out the relation between colonialism, capitalism and Western modernity that lies at the core of current global injustices, dominant economic, political and social structures that sustain hegemony, exploitation and marginalization while at the same time bringing out alternatives that are silenced by the acknowledgment of Western understandings of the world as universal truths so that they can foster decolonial alternatives for the collective construction of a just future for everyone. Although these perspectives do not target specifically the local historical context of colonialism as a modern political project innately connected to the foundation of independent nation-states in the former domains of the Ottoman empire, that is the imperial history of Turkey, they are indeed chosen to situate the Kurdish liberation struggle as part of the global history and underline the importance of tackling it as part of the entangled relations that are sidelined by dominant historical accounts predicated on Western experiences as a way to provincializing Europe as the only center and introduce diverse histories, geographies and social, political, economic and cultural processes that equally played out a crucial role in the construction of the world-system. Much as it is important to clarify the theoretical choices that provide the framework of this work so history can be told from other overshadowed accounts, in this case the account of the KLM, so that discarded historical alternatives can come into light, it is important to situate my personal interests and my own trajectory that led me to undertaking a thesis that takes on rewriting of history not just as the sight of revealing other truths that are not authorized by official histories of states but as a personal matter of assuming responsibility in taking a stand against injustice. This should not be understood as a way to center on the importance of the researcher but to the contrary foster thinking about to the political nature of knowledge and its production, its situatedness indicated before against the claims of value-neutral, objective claims of scientific research, that calls for reckoning how the race, class, culture, ethnicity/nationality,

age, gender as well as the life experiences, political beliefs, desires and interests of the researcher, that is the 'politics of location', influences the framework, the questions asked and the methods used in research as feminist thinkers brought to attention (Harding, 1987; Rich, 1984). While the politics of location urges, particularly Western women, to self-reflexivity about their privileges and critically situate their own perspective, it is equally important to place emphasis on ethics and commitment to the transformative potential of knowledge production as well as a consideration of to whom we, as the researchers, are accountable to particularly if the explicit end goal of research is social change.

Engaging in social change through research, on the other hand, demands reframing the individual position of the researchers in a way to highlight solidarity which doesn't simply mean producing critical theories to disclose how oppressive social structures and exploitative power relations are reproduced and legitimized but approaches research as a praxis that arises from anger springing from injustice and a refusal to accept its inevitability to challenge and transform these taken as a process of mutual self-liberation through militant research⁴². This foregrounds the relational ethics of struggle and mutual solidarity that enables constructing grievances and aspirations of geographically and culturally diverse people as interlinked beyond the local and particular that recognizes and respects differences while at the same time recognizing similarities (Olesen, 2005; Routledge, 2009). While political engagement and the acknowledgement of diversity allows for cross-cultural dialogues to be built on the common ground of commitment to social transformation and realize fieldwork centered on the interactions between the researchers and communities positioning the the voice of the researcher among a plurality of voices of multiple subjects, and move the locus of field work to multi-sited spaces⁴³ they do not automatically do away social hierarchies based on historical, geographic, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries, or the baggage of imperialism nor with the persisting gaps between Western knowers and representers, and non-Western knowns and representeds (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Smith, 1999). Indeed, engagement requires an epistemological positioning that brings forth the potential of marginalized perspectives, recovers subjugated knowledges that challenge colonialism and oppression as part of collective and democratic knowledge production essential to realizing social justice⁴⁴. Nevertheless, establishing the capacity to see from the perspective of the marginalized might

⁴² (Adams, 2012; Amster et al., 2009; Graeber, 2004, 2009; Shukaitis et al., 2007)

⁴³ For feminist theories on reflexive anthropology and dialogical ethnography see (Abu-Lughod, 1990; E. Anderson, 1995; Enslin, 1994; Hernández, 2016; Stacey, 1988) and for engaged relativisms in ethnographic work (Marcus, 2010; Marcus & Fischer, 1986)

⁴⁴ (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Brah, 1996; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Harding, 2004; Mohanty, 1984, p. 198, 1995, 2003a; L. T. Smith, 1999)

also entail the risk of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions (Enslin, 1994; Haraway, 1988). To avoid this, Haraway reminds us to bear in mind the partiality of every identity, and knowing oneself or the other as an act never finished, whole, “always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another” (1988, p. 586). The links built between these parts then allow us produce knowledge within “webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology” (*ibid.*, p. 590). Then again, the focus placed on the possibility of uniting multiple locations, positions, identities and subjectivities is not to assume a postmodern possibility of untroublsome contact on equal terms with differences that accommodate the possibility of confluence. No matter how much out work strives to create a medium through which marginalized experiences and knowledges shape the theoretical premises and methodologies, I find it important to underline here that this work is not claiming to represent an authentic view of the perspectives of people at think from outside the limitations of modern critical thinking first because decolonization is not taken as an end goal but a process which is constantly open to transformation. I am not aiming to discuss at length on decolonizing research, as decolonizing epistemologies coming from the indigenous and non-Western feminist thought are already addressed previously in this work. But it is important to point out the works of scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Chela Sandoval, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa who underscore decolonial research that constantly seeks to frame methodoloies and approaches to research that foreground the knowledges, voices, experiences of communities in struggle that fight for anti-colonial liberation and the proper analyses of their social, material and cultural conditions in connection with activist researchers and scholarship that takes an active and clear counter-hegemonic position in doing research that supports the aspirations of these communities, their struggles of self- determination and global social justice while striving to transform the colonial institutions of research. These perspective create theoretical terrtories across multiple borders of subjectivity be it gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age ethnicity, or the role we play in our community/group/society, and our personal and political stance. In this way the possibilities of mapping out methodologies that favor global exchanges, and create new oppositional subjectivities and agencies, new forms of political alliances from the contact zones with a grounded sense of our commonalities and differences that allow us to understand ourselves in relation to others and the society in order to change it multiply. Furhter, I find it important to reflect on the role that our position as militant researchers in opposition to dominant discourses and hegemonic structures and similarly the

set of questions that move us concerning power, domination, and representation play in unsettling the boundaries of colonial, patriarchal and exploitative methodologies of research even though we are not 'native' members of communities in struggle but chose to take a stand against injustice on tricky grounds of in-between identities that challenge unbridgeable, binary and rigid differences by identifying ourselves with these communities with a complex awareness of our situatedness and outsider/insider position. With this in mind, this research instead of claiming a truly decolonized position, proposes smaller steps to eliminate colonial, patriarchal and extractivist modes of knowledge production trying to "democratizing the social relations of research" (Salazar, 1991), that is by forging relations of affinity, solidarity and a commitment in transforming the conditions of oppression and being actively involved in the political struggle for that (Enslin, 1994; Mies, 1991). Having said that, one of the dilemmas that an outsider/insider researcher like myself faces is the inevitable question of positionality which implies that my views and the place where I think, speak and act from is an inevitable part of this work which brings me to my personal trajectory.

II.II. Situating the Researcher, Positioning the Research

The chief motives behind this thesis are rooted in my personal convictions about the urgency of counteracting the devastation triggered by the global neoliberal project by reinventing practices of radical social emancipation that create a new ecologies of counter-hegemonic alliances and alternatives against the imposing logic of the oppressive and unjust world order sponsored by the states whose politics ensure the continuity of exploitative economic and social relations, dispossession, violent disciplining of bodies and minds, militarized landscapes of new imperial expansion, ecological collapse that deepens dispossession and poverty, the unbridgeable gaps between the rich and the poor of the world and polarized societies ruled under free-market rules, bloodthirsty nationalisms, religious fundamentalism or organized racism in guise of liberal-representative democracies. My political ideology and identity have taken shape during many years of militancy, in many different places in Europe away from my country of origin, taking part in autonomous spaces that experiment with multiple forms of resistance to the status quo through the building of horizontal and non-hegemonic relations outside conventional and hierarchical political institutions and pursue building of alternatives based on grass-roots democracy as part of the global social justice

movements and transnational activist networks. These spaces have been the background of mutual sharing of experiences, languages, stories, ideas, repertoires of struggle and direct action and theories that strengthened my ideals on the creation of solidarities across borders that aim for the creation of new commons as a global front of anti-capitalist resistance. In these spaces I have not only experienced how to build communities whose force comes from organized collective action but also was introduced to new worlds of radical imagination fostered by the anti-globalization struggles sparking since the 1990s from the Global North to South; marked by the indigenous and peasant struggles against the neoliberal reincarnation of colonialism through land grabs, privatization of natural resources and destruction of the life spaces as well as the destruction of local autonomies that inflamed uprisings from Chiapas to Cochabamba, Buenos Aires to rural areas of Brazil to Cancún alongside the impoverished regions of Asia from Philippines to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan among others spreading to the geographies of the Global North from Seattle to Quebec City, to European cities like Rostock, Gothenburg, Genoa, Paris, Madrid and Prague and many more that all mobilized against the international trade agreements and enforcement of financial policies controlled by the richest countries of the world in league with transnational corporate oligarchies and international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization [WTO] who dictate bailout packages and austerity measures to the peripheral economies of the world producing the widening of the global wealth gap, poverty, unemployment, undermining the livelihood of the people and food safety while opening the floodgates of marketization and privatization of public services such as education, health and social security and dismantling of existing civic and labor rights and protections. In parallel, transnational feminist movement has been an essential actor in the growing anti-capitalist and anti-imperial resistance articulating and consolidating the cross-sectoral localized, grassroots struggles of women worldwide, through networks such as the World March of Women (WMW) closely associated with World Social Forum among many others bringing to attention the unequal consequences of neoliberalism experiences by women, especially of the Global South, the feminization of poverty; the multiple oppressions that the migrant women are subjected to due to gender, class, ethnicity, race; the increased burden of reproductive and productive work and the invisibilization of the caretaking assumed by women including alimentation, health, agriculture; the undermined effects of wars and militarization brought about by neo-imperialism on women ranging sexual violence, crimes, drugs, human trafficking and sex trade while foregrounding the women's role and struggles in democratic, sustainable,

equitable and gender-just social, economic and political transformation and the recuperation of land and territories in the face of capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy.

Alternatively, in the European continent the fervor of anti-globalization movements gave rise diverse mobilizations from Italy to France to Germany against mega-infrastructure projects, through public-private partnerships in which the profits would flow into the hands of the later, such as high-speed railways lines, dams, airports, mines, power plants and nuclear waste storage with destructive economic, social and natural impacts. These mobilizations also brought about occupation of lands, such as the ZAD (Zone à Défendre) or Hambach Forest, where these projects were planned putting on the public agenda the defense of nature and ecosystems against the greedy neoliberal development as well as the recuperation of collective farming benefiting local communities and building grass-roots networks to develop alternative economies, climate and environmental policies as well as social relations that counteract global capitalist destruction. In the urban areas aside from public demonstrations in defense of public services and housing rights, squatting became a widely used tactical political tool to draw attention to the creative destruction of cities in the service of global capital through politics of urban entrepreneurialism, gentrification, urban renewal and mega-projects that turn urban centers into merchandise for the use of tourism, finance, culture and sterilized and securitized spaces of middle class consumption, and the consequent privatization of public space, the unjust distribution of urban goods, destruction of neighborhoods, the ghettoization, segregation and the clearance of the urban poor and precarious communities from the city centers, as well as the economic crisis and real-estate bubbles fueled by an investment boom on construction and the speculation on housing stock that not only subjects the basic right to housing to real-estate market rules and privatization protected by unjust property laws promoting capitalist accumulation but also led to a surge in evictions, social displacement and a new homeless crisis borne out of an affordable housing crisis. The urban movements and squatting also shed light on the relation between the neoliberal urban policies and their incremental adverse impacts on refugees, migrants and racialized populations, struggling to create spaces where everyone inhabiting the urban space including marginalized populations can exercise the right to the city and get involved in urban politics and affairs. The spaces re-appropriated by urban movements provided experiences where alternatives that transform everyday lives can be put in action through direct democratic forms of decision-making and autonomous self-management without being

absorbed in political parties or unions of the left, thus redefining the meaning of political action and liberal democracy.

The connections forged between transnational counter-hegemonic mobilizations and resistances building North-South solidarities, have bourgeoned common repertoires of action varying from Juntas de Buen Gobierno, popular communal councils and assemblies, autonomous productive and distributive structures such as agricultural terrains, food cooperatives, factories, community gardens, social centers, community radios, multilinked bartering networks, migrant solidarity groups, housing rights organizations and much more uniting peasants, workers, students, landless people, indigenous, rural communities, women, youth, LGBTI+ groups, refugees, migrants, ecologists, peace movements, animal liberation movements, in sum a wide range of actors not only radicalizing democracy but fostering the imagination of another world as well as the hope in our collective force.

This tremendous effervescence expanding the horizons of imaginary landscapes and reviving the faith in global change against the exhaustion of possibilities, the privilege I had in partaking in those spaces where stories, narratives of popular resistance, ideas and praxis were shared across borders brought me back to Turkey to *Gezi* Resistance where I reconnected with a histories that I have lost central importance for me but has always been part of my personal story. The following years during which I got involved with various collectives and groups that I have not been in contact with until then also inspired for me a growing interest in Kurdish politics especially with the emergent visibility of renewed political proposals based on the autonomous organization of every ethnic community, confessional group, gender specific collective or youth to radically change the idea of democracy and self-determination not grounded on the universalist, homogenized model of nation-state with its internal and external borders but one that is pluralist, open to different political formations and one that gives back power to the people. These proposals framed as Democratic Modernity have presented another vision of society as an alternative to the dominant understanding of modernity inseparable from linear progress and development based on capitalist relations and instead conceives a an ecological society grounded on an ethical economic model that respects life invalidating the superiority of human as the only rational being that possess the power to dominate and exploit nature in order to satisfy its needs replacing it with an idea of social ecology based on freedom, diversity and mutuality. This idea of ethics that oppose hierarchy and domination also set forth gender liberation restoring women's agency and will, subjugated in a similar way like the nature, not merely as

a means to overturn patriarchy but as to empower a knowledge deriving from millennial experiences of women that are very much present in the collective memory of many different communities in Turkey and indeed compose one of the main pillars of ‘traditional’ culture. While my approximation with the Kurdish politics had to do with the convergence of this new ideological framework of the movement with libertarian, ecologist and feminist ideals that form part of my identity, and with the enthusiasm bred by this fresh outlook offering real sovereignty of the people at a time that the frustration with the neoliberal politics disguised in representative democracy was becoming tangible, it also provoked a lot of personal questioning of my privileges and a rethinking about the hushed up histories of the numerous peoples who have inhabited the same lands since thousands of years but have been denied their rights to co-exist peacefully. Although *Gezi* uprisings represented a milestone in terms of new global social movements whose interests, demands and political strategies differ from the traditional left whose discourse is based on class struggle, it stimulated extensive debates on the history of resistance and the legacy of multiple and diverse actors with different backgrounds who all strived for democratization, putting an end to the military tutelage on politics, social and economic justice and the recognition of political, cultural, linguistic and religious pluralism, along the years I spent in Turkey. Given the context I became more and more interested in this historical legacy, that I have already been acquainted with owing to my upbringing in an environment in which the left-wing struggles for freedom, political, economic and social equality, progressive and secular values to build a modernized country, the intellectual debates around these values and the anti-imperialist resistance led by workers, students and peasants against the external and internal impositions of capitalist world order and the democratic achievements during the years of turmoil that witnessed two military coups have been part of the stories that shaped my political ideas and identity. Then again hand, I also grew a keen interest in the stories of the peoples, the so-called ‘minorities’ whose suffering was not only caused by class oppression but had to do with the historical injustices that underlied the foundation of the Turkish republic, with its authoritarian construction that forcefully and violently assimilated differences in its unitary construction of the nation, that is stories that are not only overshadowed by nationalist history but also the left-wing discourses that advocated for a social revolution in which identity differences were considered a digression from the ‘socialist cause’. It goes without saying that the suffering lived by the Greek Rum, the Armenians, the pogroms, exiles and the killings during the social turmoil of the 70s and 80s have always been part of the stories I heard in conversations in my family, as part of the ‘shameful past’ of the republic but always with the background of relating these

occurrences to the fight between social forces that supported exploitative capitalist politics to gain power and wealth and the ones that fought for equality, freedom and justice. Getting to know the life histories led me to question other reasons that has always been in the way of building a just, free and equal society that has to do with the historical and systemic injustices which go beyond the ideological premises of socialist revolution and political economy that silence the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic differences as the basis of subjugation and especially avoids touching upon the colonial and imperial past that lies at the heart of social traumas in Turkey. Realizing the importance of this imperial past, which historically has been the terrain of conservative and right-wing intellectuals and politics, made me realize that without settling accounts with this silenced past there is no possibility to come up with solutions for a peaceful co-existence among Armenians, non-muslim communities, Kurds, Turks and anyone who continues living on these lands. That is to say if we are concerned with democracy, justice, peace and equality it is urgent to assume responsibility in the face of oppression and injustice having their origins in the history much more older and complex than the one fashioned by the Republic, involving multiple local and global actors and today needs to be tackled in the same way that connects local and global histories.

On the other hand, my encounter with Kurdish women who live in diaspora, where our paths crossed, made me become aware of the amplitude of eclipsed stories and experiences that not only challenge standpoints of the major political actors be it local or global, national or imperial that have been dominating the narratives of modern history but also uncover marginalized subjectivities, traditions, lifeways and knowledges, and entangled experiences that on one hand draw a much more complex map of the world beyond national boundaries but also provide insights for building alternative futures transcending the limited lexicon and praxis of socialist and nationalist revolutions. Consequently, the initial hypotheses of this work; How does the new ideological framework of Democratic Modernity produces political subjectivities beyond national ethnic identities building alliances between different social actors whose demands relate to diverse forms of oppression and hegemony; How do the concrete proposals propounded by the Kurdish movement strengthen alternatives of autonomy and self-government against the state; To what extent this new political discourse challenge the dominant conceptions of democracy and How is Democratic Modernity as a project of radical social transformation situated in the global map of anti-capitalist counterglobal movements to build real democracy, and social justice; What are the theoretical and practical contributions of this project in the global and transnational resistance evolved into How can

the history of oppression, colonialism be retold from the experiences of Kurdish women; How do these narratives connect the history of diverse communities subjected to oppression; What other elements of colonialism do they shed light on beyond the nationalist discourse; What role do Kurdish women's historic experiences and marginalized knowledge play in the transformation of the Kurdish liberation struggle closely associated with ethnic identity; How do women's stories in diaspora map out a fuller cartography of (neo)imperialism, (neo)colonialism, capitalist exploitation and patriarchy while producing alternatives from the contact zones of transborder alliances and How do they contribute in the construction of emancipatory theories and decolonial political projects for global social justice.

In the light of these, this work involved first of all a lengthy historical investigation on Ottoman imperialism, at times overwhelming and complicated owing to the great amount of studies on the subject and the novelty of history as a field of study that I have never delved into academically but have always been interested tangentially. Especially the post-colonial perspectives and the questioning of Western centric modernity, its partial historical narratives and binary frames forced me to search for perspectives and analyses that approached the global history of imperialism and the role that Ottoman's played that call into question civilizational oppositions and hierarchies in order to shine light on their mutual construction. Re-centring the locus to these connections was on one hand has been vital to show that the course of historical events that engendered colonialism, capitalism and hegemonic structures of modernity were not particular and singular developments emerged in the West/Europe and influenced the rest of the world but other geographies have gone through historical, economic, political and cultural developments that both had an impact on the global history and produced specific forms of oppression, hierarchization and marginalization as well as resistances and alternative mechanisms that challenged universal configurations. While the literature view took me more than a year to figure out relevant works that help me devise an analytical framework that does not approach Ottoman imperial formation as a failed state and thus play down its importance but bring out diverse political structures, agents and forces that opposed each other to gain power in and against colonial administration in which local autonomy has always been a central issue, build connections between the imperial political structures and the development of capitalism not only on a local scale but in the global context and bring in theories that tackle state formation predicated on the cultural and social specificities in the Middle-East, without this historical analysis it would not be possible to make sense of the continuity of colonialism that lies at the roots of the building of the

modern-state and bears upon the current problems around self-determination and the Kurdish question. This historical analysis helped me to identify the mainspring of the conflicts that today are oversimplified into ethnic and religious terms not starting with the foundation of the Turkish Republic but at the time of the formation of modern imperial nation-states as the universal administrative structures which homogenized complex religious, linguistic, ethnic, cultural and socio-political organizational structures that have been discarded as pre-modern and backwards and fixed the motley, hybrid and mobile populations whose long and connected histories and interactions have been overshadowed by the official historical narratives. Consequently, the lengthy historical examination of the Ottoman imperial history not only aims to recover the importance of the sidelined phenomena that occurred as part of the world imperial history but foreground the complex and entangled histories of all the peoples' who have lived and continue to live together in the territories of an old empire and who have suffered violence, dispossession, displacement and genocides during the never accomplished 'transition' from empire to republic, like Armenians, the Greek Rum, the Jewish, the Arab, the Assyrian and the Turcomans just to name some. Further, it is hoped to shine light on the historical traces of oppositional developments and worldviews that today make a comeback with the emancipatory project of the Kurdish movement with DM, DC and DN.

On the other hand, while trying to shape this plural historical perspective that aims to establish the centrality of realities, narratives and experiences excluded from the official history and its monopolizing and homogenizing discourses within the limits of conventional historicism it became more and more evident that women, their accounts, experiences and resistances of daily life have always been excluded from the accounts of wars and politics whose subjects are empires, states, political figures or revolutionary movements told by men for other men. To set straight the partial and one-sided perspective of history writing, the next part of this work has been undertaken in various locations in Northern Europe, in the Netherlands, France and Germany, together with women who are affiliated with Kurdish civil society foundations and especially with women's autonomous organizations in diaspora and take part in the pedagogical and research activities of the Jineoloji Committee of Europe, doing interviews to re-tell the history from the flip-side. Although women's accounts constitute the main body of counter-narratives, I have consulted numerous written documents such as the guerrilla women's memoirs and testimonies, the newspapers, journals and books published by various Kurdish institutions and especially by Jineoloji Committee and

documentaries and visual material focusing on the lives of emblematic Kurdish women who have been important figures in the women's emancipation struggle both in the political and public arena to become familiar with Kurdish women's reality and create a solid support for the research that can reflect their version of history with minimal intervention as possible . Also, the diasporic context in which the work has been undertaken brought me in contact with 'internationalist' women from different cultural backgrounds who work with Kurdish women in various civil society organizations and associations and academics who work in close contact with Kurdish women in diaspora. The conversations I shared with them, bot the internationalist and Kurdish women, as well as the common experience we had during conferences and workshops in which I took part in both as participant and in organization as well as the unwritten stories, sometimes personal but most of the time about the leading women of their communities, traditional figures, grandmothers, mythical female characters that are the symbols of resistance, guerrilla fighters, women who spent days and nights in front of prisons in the the squares manifesting for their children and for liberation, the one's who sustained families and made possible that the life went on during war times, the ones who organized popular struggles, all shaped my ideas that are reflected in this work and encouraged me to me to think about how to write these women's histories without being unfair to this legacy so that their histories are not simply *added into* history but reflect their agency and the way they see, think about and tell their own lives. Further, my objective in exposing women's life histories has been to politicize a memory of resistance that weaves together stories from different parts of the world so that both the complexity of the past and present can be evinced, connections between different histories of domination and oppression can be built while alliances between emergent subjectivities can be forged to create counter-maps of alternatives can also be forged to transform the present and the future. For this reason, reflecting on history has been a fundamental part of the methodology that I will turn to next.

II.III.Whose (Hi)story Is It?

The key role that the writing of history, one that is spatially and temporally centered in the West, played in the creation of colonial conditions has already been argued in the previous chapters of this work. Indeed the universalization of the historical master-narratives of

modernity based on Western experiences set the stage for the colonization, predicated on the idea of civilizational progress, inflicting territorial dispossession, destruction of cultures, elimination of millennial traditions, and knowledges through forced implementation of rules and laws, specific models of political, social and economic administration depriving people from their liberty, and needless to say lead to genocides and extermination of peoples and plunder of water and lands, the nature (Gomes & Meneses, 2011; Meneses, 2016). The writing of history entailed the silencing and omission of knowledges based upon realities that did not match the Western understanding of the world and as such the exclusion of cultures, practices and other histories from the evolutionist time line of modernity. The enforced silencing and forgetting of these have been the central moments of colonization, and so that being the case, questioning colonialism demands the historicization of the spaces and times that are removed from the Western-centric world history challenging its mediated absences and the singularity of the locus of enunciation (Meneses, 2011a). Moreover, taking into account the absences and nonexistence created by the universal historical narrative signifies rethinking the previous structures of knowledge and questioning modernity itself that bear upon their omission (Bhabra, 2007; Meneses, 2011a). On one hand, this makes possible deconstructing the myth of universal history by bringing in histories discarded as particular and local that in effect disclose the untold parts of the global history of coloniality and modernity (Mignolo, 2012, p. ix). Shedding light on these ‘local’ histories consequently means stating clearly the history of the ‘West’ cannot be told without incorporating the histories of the ‘rest’. This way, the marginalized realities, identities culture and peoples through the “imperial imaginary” can be included in giving the full account of colonialisms foregrounding the fact that it is not just a one-sided process in which the colonizer is the only subject fashioning the identity of the colonized but involves constructions that are forged in “contact zones” where the impositions are contested and subjects are constituted in relation to each other (Pratt, 1992). Consequently, history can be broadened to involve the interlocking understandings and practices rather than the disjunction, the separateness or apartheid that partial accounts of colonialism have been built upon. In this manner the historical vision can be enlarged towards the intersections of multiple contacts in which Europe is only but one of the geographies where these take place and not the center anymore while establishing historical connections between other regions of the world stripping Europe/West from its historical privilege (Meneses, 2011a). Also, a historical approach that highlights the entangled histories, *histoires croisées* (Werner & Zimmermann, 2003), connected histories (Bhabra, 2007; Subrahmanyam, 1997) helps positioning modernity in a frame of interconnections and

networks of peoples, geographies and ideas that transcend the boundaries established through the Western monopoly on the whole system of representation, and its meta-narratives prefiguring a domain of new facts, new voices deconstruct the monolithic idea of modernity and open new future possibilities. Such that a re-thinking and re-writing of the past make way for exposing the dismissed elements from the colonial modernity. As Mudimbe has stated “[T]he colonial library negate[s] the possibility of a plural rationality and history; the more recent theories impose them, and would even extend to the understanding of marginalized experiences in the Western culture itself” (1988, p. 208). Only through recognizing that these other histories have always and already been present in Western modern history but written out of it, can we begin to move towards the development of histories that encompasses the plurality of human communities and their respective narratives (Bhambra, 2007, p. 105). Further, this would allow us to reread history “not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (Said, 1994, p. 51). Looking into history through the intersections then would also allow us to bring out the potential of realities that have survived colonialism and imperialism or have remained inaccessible to their domination and that challenge the universalisms of Western social, political and theoretical categories, imaginaries and institutions (Chakrabarty, 2000; Said, 1994; Werner & Zimmermann, 2003). However, this should not necessarily lead to a wholesale and indifferent praise of the end of master-narratives nor of the plurality and difference falling into a relativism, but should help in the recreation of narratives that tell the unjust relations of power as well as unearthing the histories of resistance coming from multiple sites that were not given place in the world historical narrative up till now (Chakrabarty, 2000; Gomes & Meneses, 2011; Santos, 2006b).

To that end, the universal narrative of modernity reproduced by nationalist projects that limit the field of possibilities also need to be questioned in order to bring to light struggles and resistances that have been relegated to premodern and thus pre-political (Chakrabarty, 1991; Guha, 1984, 1999). In this regard historiography that disavows the spatial, temporal and mental boundaries set by nationalism not only help defy the pre-existing cartographies and claim the once colonized freedom of our imagination, as Chatterjee called for (1993b) but also multiply the subjects of history and other constructions of the political in the face of standardization and unifying narratives. A postcolonial re-writing of history as such involves taking a closer look to the ‘other’ histories that were pushed aside as simply local, tribal, traditional,

backwards or underdeveloped during the mapping and historicizing of the new nation, that come from various ethnicities, religions, languages, identities, most of them who inhabit the rural, their imaginaries and constructions of the same territory (Meneses, 2011a, 2014). Consequently, centering the historical narratives on these “provides a way of incorporating the experiences of ‘others’ without reducing their experiences to ‘deviant’ particularity or as mere supplements to existing categories” (Bhabra, 2009, p. 70). Moreover, this inclusion denotes a theoretical and epistemological shift that allow for the mutual re-construction of knowledge allowing for diverse interpretations of the world to emerge (Gomes & Meneses, 2011; Meneses, 2014). Yet the plurality of geographies and subjects of history need to be broadened to translocating the locus of enunciation in order accommodate a variety of gender, racial, ethnic and religious identities so that we can truly think and theorize from and with difference (Chakrabarty, 2000; Meneses, 2013a; Said, 1994; Wa Thiong’o, 1993).

That being said, it is noteworthy to consider where one is looking to construct alternative ways of thinking, theorizing and historicizing to break up the modern/colonial silences. Here, remembering and memory play an important part. It is through the act of remembering and the selection of memorable moments of the past we construct/re-construct both the past and the future. Still, even the most revolutionary schools of thought have a complicated relation with the past. Marx (1852) for example, referred to tradition as a burden, “a nightmare that on the brains of the living, and believed that the new world that a revolution would beget was only possible when one moved without recalling the old; “when [one] forgets his native tongue”:

The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot take its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped away all superstition about the past. The former revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to smother their own content. The revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead in order to arrive at its own content.

This indeed, echoes the impossibility of the coexistence of the abyssal line and the linear time that the modern reason engenders. In this respect, remembering becomes an act of resistance as opposed to the invisibilizing and the forgetting while history becomes the site of struggle where European modernity tries to appropriate other collocations of memory (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 37). This does not imply evoking a romanticized idea of precolonial traditions and cultures meshed with the rational utopias of anti-colonial nationalisms based on Western notions of modernization and development in history writing (Berger, 2004) (Berger, 2004). Differently, a rewriting history can bring in multiplicity of locations where the political consciousness of the marginalized challenge the legitimate versions of the past inscribed in

political narratives and the monopoly of experts using memory as a form of epistemic disobedience from the standpoint of otherness that underlie different praxes of struggle for justice (Martínez, 2013; Meneses, 2011a, 2013a; Vázquez, 2009). In this way, history becomes the tool of a postcolonial method that places the memories of the people relegated to the ‘third world’ and the ones of the ‘first world’ on the same cognitive map with an ability to read the past and present at once (Bahri, 2004, p. 195). This kind of approach expresses the double vision of the postcolonial that works “‘backwards’, in terms of reconstructing historical representations, as well as ‘forwards’ to the creation of future projects” (Bhabra, 2007).

While reconceptualizing history through the plurality of memories and historical narratives “involves an obligation to think of identity process” and of “spaces of democratizing memory and of the knowledges that they convey” (Meneses, 2011a, p. 133), several questions come in sight. For example where to place women in these accounts? Or the migrants? The undocumented workers? The ones who cannot be contained in the clear-cut definitions of modernity/coloniality nor in the black and white oppositions and binarisms but reside in hybrid categories and the ones who do not fit in the identities fabricated within the borders of nation-states nor through colonial relations but through both local and global flows that engage with modernity in different ways and reconfigure the perspective from which dominant historical narrative is written. Featherstone draws attention to “the discovery of the lesser traditions of history, the suppressed history of outsider groups such as women, slaves, ethnic minorities, the various ‘step-children’ of Enlightenment, whose significance was ignored in narratives held together by the sense of the unified onward drive towards progress” (2006, p. 485).

Feminist thinkers have argued that the modern rationality dividing public-private spheres, the first conceived as the sphere of men’s business, wars, diplomacy, nation-building, governance, economy that are matters of high politics and activities constitutive of civilization and the second as the sphere of the family and the home under the man’s or state’s power in which women are condemned as the caretakers, concealed women’s actions outside the private sphere and trusted them aside in a marginal position as politically and thus historically irrelevant and thus excluding women’s history systematically from ‘universal’ history ⁴⁵. Drawing on this absence, they advocated on one hand for the restoration of women’s voices, activities and consciousness so that they can regain agency while drawing attention to how the

⁴⁵ (Gadol, 1976; Lerner, 1975, p. 197; J. J. Matthews, 1991; Narayan, 1999; Pateman & Shanley, 1991; J. W. Scott, 1986; Spivak, 1988; Wiesner-Hanks, 2005; Zinsser, 2000)

inclusion of women's histories disclose other turning points in the world historical development which have been invalidated by the evolutionist narratives of civilization and universal progress and ⁴⁶. Scott argued, for if "women's subordination past and present was secured at least in part by their invisibility, then emancipation might be advanced by making them visible in narratives of social struggle and political achievement" (1996, p. 2). On the other hand, feminist scholars laid emphasis on the perils of simply adding women's narratives in the male-defined historical canons, calling these efforts as compensatory history writing that does not challenge the androcentric parameters of historiographic tradition, and thus fails short of providing previously overlooked facts and reveal how women's historical experiences can indeed contribute to a different production of knowledge (Lerner, 1975, p. 197; J. J. Matthews, 1991). Given that, some feminist analyses insist on re-writing a distinct form men's, reflecting the female experience. Nevertheless, it is no less problematic to argue for a women-specific historical rewriting that overlooks the fact that women's experiences are part of the global course of events. Instead, Gadol (1976) argued that the shift in the historical perspective better be thought not from a secondary, auxiliary or totally distinct but a *relational* perspective democratizing the vision of history. However, de-centering the male subject in historiography does not fully call into question the specific processes of knowledge production within determinate traditions that exclude women in participating in them nor the universal concepts and categories that ignore the specificity of women's experiences (Hawkesworth, 1989; Lerner, 2004). Basing the construction of a radical epistemology that aims to transform the wider historical discipline should then involve addressing silences, challenging absences so that women can reclaim the value of their own experiences, and provided with the possibility of self- definition⁴⁷

Nonetheless, the a singular and timeless idea of Woman reduced to uniform and ahistorical category as previously addressed overlooking the differences among women has been stressed by scholars stressing the impossibility of assimilating culturally, historically and geographically different experiences in universalizing paradigms and a unique history. Scott argued that the true "work of historical recovery turned up women whose difference from 'us' needed to be acknowledged and explained" (1996, p. 3). On the flip side, a mere recognition of difference or acknowledgment of diversity in rewriting 'herstories' that tries to forefront previously ignored subjectivities, such as black, Muslim, indigenous women, is not devoid of the risk of fitting them into received categories of modern, liberal or feminist or interpreting

⁴⁶ Felski, 1989; Gadol, 1976; Lerner, 1975; Matthews, 1986; Pateman & Shanley, 1991; Rowbotham, 1990

⁴⁷ (Gadol, 1976; Glenn, 2000; J. Matthews, 1986; Pedersen, 2000)

their actions in terms of recognizable within the dominant Western knowledge and so reproduces distances and hierarchies that disregard their complexity and richness (Sarkar, 2004). This inclusion settles the differences almost as cultural artifacts divorced from political and economic conditions while silencing the experiences of women in relation to colonial processes (Sarkar, 2004; Zinsser, 2000). Moreover, it monopolizes the epistemic ground in which women's agency is theorized as if it can explain any context in the same manner erasing the diverse gendered emancipatory or liberating strategies, other more collective forms of resistance deployed not only in the public but also the 'private' sphere (Ali, 2007; Sarkar, 2004). Consequently the all encompassing claim of diversity forecloses the possibilities of questioning modern Western concepts and categories of democracy, social justice, equality, gender, women, human rights, from the standpoints that are fashioned in other geographies and contexts. Shohat argues;

In the face of Eurocentric historicizing, the Third World and its diasporas in the First World have rewritten their own histories, taken control over their own images, spoken in their own voices, reclaiming and reaccentuating colonialism and its ramifications in the present in a vast project of remapping and renaming. Third-World feminists, for their part, have participated in these counternarratives, while insisting that colonialism and national resistance have impinged differently on men and women, and that remapping and renaming is not without its fissures and contradictions (2004, p. 183)

However, as this work accentuated before, the main objective is to tell multiple versions of history that transform the assumption of fixed identities and binarisms inflicted from outside or self-constructed, a critical re-writing of history that encourages intercultural dialogues without taking refuge in relativist platitudes nor suppressing heterogeneity of subjects, their culturally and politically complex background but firmly grounded in the local and particular experiences that speak back to the monolithic global historical narratives (Morgan, 2009). These are counter-histories marginalized, distorted or erased by the official histories, told in multiple contact zones, and in-between spaces "threaded within, between, underneath, around, inside, and outside of sanctioned colonial, national, and transnational histories bearing witness to the living past, the present, and the future, belying officialdom's visible and invisible technologies of power to silence, deny, and obliterate" (Castañeda, 2003, p. xii). Then, the aim of pluralizing history becomes the reconstruction of the cartography of knowledges and experiences through a translation and dialogue between epistemes and counter-hegemonic practices bearing the memories of colonialism and anti-colonial struggles that extend the cognitive possibilities of modern social sciences beyond their limits and serve as a blueprint of future praxis (Meneses, 2011b; Santos, 2006b; Santos & Meneses, 2014, 2016).

Making room for plural and intersecting voices that complicate universal master-narratives is an indispensable step that takes history from postcolonial towards decolonial, as decoloniality is primarily an intervention in epistemology. And yet, this does not resolve the matter of colonial regimes of representation and legibility that assimilates subjectivities, identities and practices into its own codes and references. In this regard, Western theorizations of historical resistance and struggles, deriving on certain forms of visibility and subjectivity taking shape in the public sphere and within the domain of the Political with its rules and institutionalized praxes needs to be decolonized and its methods need to be reconsidered in order to grasp the historical significance of other forms of resistances that are composed of the experiences of marginalized women like the peasant, the indigenous, the poor or the grandmothers women who may not have written books or taken the central stage in popular uprisings nor demonstrations in the streets and yet have made resistance against colonialism part of their everyday life (Paredes, 2010). Equally, our works need to acknowledge that silences or a certain invisibility is both a practice and a site of potential resistance and resurgence that evades colonial comprehension and control and marginalized communities are not responsible for sharing their knowledge so that it can be accommodated into commodified forms of legibility, be manipulated as resources in academic works but keep producing their own knowledge about themselves and for themselves in their own communities. Moreover, the scholarly work needs to learn how to be humble in its claim of 'giving voice' to the subaltern and rethink its privileges as well as accepting its limits. Nevertheless this does not mean that the efforts to decolonize knowledge production should be renounced and new methods need to be reconceptualized so that other forms through which a sense of belonging to communities and places, a collective memory and resistance, that transfer knowledges can be the centerpiece of decolonial research. This leads the research to approaching the methods and the principal issues that underlie the reasons why they have been employed as a means and an intent to decolonize the ways of doing research.

II.IV.The 'Other Women's' Herstories

Decolonial research is engaged in giving visibility to other libraries and knowledges beyond Eurocentric and Western-centric ones developed in the global North, which are based on other epistemological orders and cartographies of meaning. But beyond that decolonizing

knowledge also means being the search for liberating perspectives that undo the epistemological colonization of the mind and the depletion the cultural values of the marginalized and subalternized groups so they can regard as valuable their own believes, traditions and knowledge as the basis of a self- understanding outside of the disdaining, exoticizing and marginalizing classifications and representations of the imperial West. As such decolonization would mean for subalterns the claim of ownership of their ways of knowing, imagery, and agency as creators of their own cultures and lifeworlds, that is the seizing of sovereignty and autonomy in belong to one's own culture, the capacity to know, interpret and represent the world independently (Meneses, 2014; Smith, 1999). On the other hand, research undertaken in Western institutions bring up several aspects in terms of how to provide scope for other 'voices' to express their own realities and the channels through which these are transmitted. While speaking, writing, publicly manifesting, engaging in politically recognized institutions to claim subjectivity constitute the commonly approved sphere in which the resistances and struggles are codified, and their claims is purportedly revealed in the West, the question remains if there exist other forms through which non-Western subjectivity is materialized outside these culturally specific intelligible forms. This is a question that this work cannot answer in its full account yet it remains one of the driving force and the major component of the constant interrogation behind the search for 'giving voice' to women's accounts that cannot be reduced to Western understandings or interpretations of reality. The emotions/affectivity, their embodiedness, symbols, imaginaries, rituals, sounds, dances, smells, tastes, all that is not 'palpable' yet create identity, a sense of belonging to communities and places, a collective memory and resistance, that transfer knowledges and thus make up the historical map and narratives still needs to be explored if we want to answer the question, 'How to 're-write' history of women if some of us do not use only words to communicate?' (Meneses, 2013a). Nevertheless, this is not to overlook the strategies of subaltern communities to make visible and intelligible their struggles in the departments of Western academies that which have historically tied to the colonial project nor the efforts of solidary social scientists engaged in a consistent critique of dominant epistemologies and offer their work to be a source of militant knowledge to strengthen struggles of social justice against capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. Without doubt the former efforts of post-colonial intellectuals have been invaluable in "address[ing] the metropolis using the techniques, the discourses, the very weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European, now adapted either for insurgency or revisionism at the very heart of the Western center", as Said had expressed (1990, p. 29) but today decolonization

offers different paths that can fundamentally alter the frameworks of knowledge which also provides possibilities for the ‘colonizer’ to start seeing and understanding the world through the contributions of non-colonial languages, epistemologies, cultures, subjectivities and practices that help overcoming the loss of critical nouns in Western-centric critical theory (Santos, 2016). There are major accomplishments brought about by methods that respect traditional forms of communities to reflect their worlds views, ways of life, tell about their struggles, aspirations of justice, dignity and self- determination such as the projects of oral-history which allow for intercultural translation and emergence of an epistemic diversity as the basis of any decolonial project and provide scope for developing hybrid theories and pluriversal knowledges.

With the inspiration taken from decolonial oral history projects in this thesis life histories and counter-mapping have been chosen in order to give the central place to women’s narrations of their own history in their own words and deciding on what needs to be told about themselves and the rest of the world and through which alternative maps that transcend physical and cognitive borders of nation-states connecting transnational geographies and resistances can be drawn are chosen as the main methods. Through life histories, this work also aims to expose the heterogeneity of experiences and differences among women to question a homogeneous and unitary identity and definition of ‘Woman’. Their stories also show the possibilities of appreciating collective forms of agency and resistance that women have historically deployed within the ‘private’ sphere- and hence made less visible – to cope with (gender) oppression. Further, life histories are chosen especially for their orality, a source principally excluded from the legitimate sources by many historians. And yet, orality for certain communities is an essential part of the culture and an essential tool of knowledge transmission. For the Western-centric knowledge, oral traditions and stories are associated with the tribal, the backward, the local although they are in fact the peoples’ instrument to resist colonialism by taking force from the native culture. In this sense, through life histories of women the thesis hopes to take a first step to look for ways to decolonize the proper research. To the same extent, the work will seek to tell the stories of colonialism and resistance through the proper words of the Kurdish women, that are much more straight forward and accessible to many people who have gone through similar experiences compared to the highly specialized academic language used by a limited number of people and addressing to a very limited public. Also, life histories are especially favored in order to offset the researcher-researched, subject-object polarities and try to construct horizontal dialogues

between peers as much as possible. At the very least, it aims to break up the observer-observed relation as to try empower women in a research that is centered on their life histories. Thus, women's life histories are hoped to facilitate dialogue and collaboration not only with the academic world but more importantly with other communities who keep resisting colonialism. Finally, through these narratives, the work aims to create a medium in which multiple and intersecting issues affecting women's lives as well as the differing forms of resistance create a collective political memory that can contribute to future struggles. And especially, in a context such as Turkey in which unique histories, languages, traditions and material cultures of many different ethnic and religious communities were silenced through colonial violence, life histories are vital to uncloak stories of colonialism in order to finally make amends and also help surface a much needed polyphony as the prerequisite of a common future. This work advocates that decolonizing the imperial history of Turkey indeed passes from multiplying the voices and stories to break up with the homogenizing stories of the nation-state that distorts realities for its own continuity.

It goes without saying that the conversations during which the women were asked to tell their life histories, my concerns, interests and questions have probably influenced what I was told and what women kept to themselves. This means oral methods are not unmediated but are co-created sources including the researcher and the narrator. In this co-creation, our differences such as the social positions, culture, class, ethnicity, race, political ideologies, sexual identities *inter alia* do play an important role in what is being said, how it is being said as well as what is kept silent. Further, I find it important to note here that my way of interpreting the information confided in me also plays a role in the outcome. For this reason, the life histories, in the context of this work are complemented with counter-mapping, that aims to avoid this simplifications and the distortions that can stem from the multiple interpretations.

Especially, given that the interviews were done in the course of radical political transformation and in the midst of Turkey's heavy attacks on the Rojava autonomous zone, the clashes with ISIS, the Syrian central government, the invasion of Afrin canton, mapping provided a tool that can touch upon the highly sensitive subjects such as nation, nationalism and territory without hurting feelings or offending anyone but bringing out these issues in a less intrusive way. Further, mapping through life histories offered a way to patch together the long divided territories, peoples, cultures and memories. Similarly maps that have been the tools of domination and division are reworked in this work to be used against colonization and to contest the standardizing, exclusionary and immutable discourses of the nation-states. Up

against the violent erasures, silences and gaps inherent to colonial maps that are drawn upon territories, this thesis will try to expose different histories and relations that construct alternative imaginations of geographic understandings. Thus, mapping will be used not in the two-dimensional visual plane of cartography but as a tool of social justice that disputes the colonial descriptions of space, time and memory. As such counter-maps bring into the open histories and conceptions of space and territory that differ markedly from those represented in maps produced by modern and colonial rationality, or state's whose fixed borders separate historically co-existing populations and confine them in the homogeneous and highlight intransigent spaces of the nation. Alongside histories of colonialism on local and global levels, through the mappings of resistance and empowerment the work aims to be a medium to invent counter-maps that go beyond the borders of the empires and nation-states and global dividing lines to create new horizons. These geographical imaginations will be handled as important sites of struggle that can nourish future action and inspire counter-topographies of resistance, solidarity and collective production of a different future. So against the fixed borders that prohibit permeability and mixing, the counter-mapping will be used as a method to weave together women's life histories as a palimpsest with various visible and intermixed layers. Finally, diaspora inevitably has shaped the choice of counter-mapping as a method since both are subjected to limitations, borders as well as openings and entanglements that help entwining the histories of exploitation and subordination but also of resistance both in the distant homeland and the here and now of diaspora. As a final note to the method, the order of the life histories of women have been changed by me – just like the names of the places and peoples if and when used- according to different unifying threads such as belonging, unfamiliarity, territory, identity, forced displacements and creation of non-geographical homelands among others that the narrations inspired. This way I, as the researcher, will be assuming the role of stitching together these life histories to tell an overall account, which obviously could have been patched together in many different ways through other lenses. There is no specific reason for the order of the stories but it definitely took shape through off the record conversations with women, other quotidian issues we talked about, just like the poems, songs and books that were exchanged between us.

II.V. Life Histories

The way the marginalized groups ideas and voices are transmitted and its medium have been a rather scrutinized issue as addressed at various points of this work. While the Western-centric methodologies and methods have been criticized for muffling the voices and minimizing the agency of the groups in question or interpolating what has been expressed by them, decolonial thinking propounds methodologies and methods that challenge the ‘imperial eyes’ of dominant modes of doing research and its totalizing, singular, universal and linear narrative (Smith, 1999). The question ‘Can indigenous methodologies exist in Western academy’ (Kovach, 2010) is a pretty legitimate one raised by indigenous scholars themselves. And as I have stated before this work does not claim to be an exemplar but aims to base off of decolonial methodologies and methods as to venture in experimenting ways of decolonizing the proper research.

Oral histories, its counterpart story telling⁴⁸ that is frequently referred to among indigenous methods or personal narratives and life histories⁴⁹ used in feminist works provide one part of the methods used in the present work. Firstly, considering that orality is principally excluded from the legitimate sources for many historians, reinstating it as a valid source of truth against the vaunted superiority of the written word (Henige, 1988) would help including realities and stories of communities for whom orality is an important part of the culture. As Newman expresses, “Without doubt, oral history is potentially a skill for reproducing political memory, a method accessible for the first time to the silenced, the inaudible, the disenfranchised: women, men, working classes, ordinary people” (2003, p. 9). Also such a method is hoped to challenge the written production of knowledge that is particularly inaccessible to the people outside the academy or unfamiliar with a highly specialized language used by a limited number of people and one that precludes the possibilities of dialogue and collaboration (Patai, 1994). Viewed in this way oral history is not only a method but also a theory and a way of conceptualizing history (Okiihiro, 1981). What is different in this kind of theory is that the views of everyday people, eliciting life histories is an antidote to an overly elitist perspective in most historiography (Henige, 1988). Thus, the personal histories of Kurdish women in this work are used as a way of counterbalancing the considerably academic language of the work and to show that history can be told in a different way. Also their stories are meant as means to make the work intelligible to other women who might not be comfortable with theoretical frameworks but could empathize with these stories one way or another. Secondly, from a

⁴⁸ (Cruikshank, 1988; Grele, 1991; Lawrence & Paige, 2016; Newman, 2003; Okiihiro, 1981; Qwul’sih’yah’maht, 2005; Sium & Ritskes, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002)

⁴⁹ (S. N. Geiger, 1986; Maynes et al., 2012; Mbilinyi, 1989; Personal Narratives Group, 1989)

Western-centric view oral traditions and stories are associated with the tribal, the backward people, the local although for the anti-colonial thinkers they have been regarded as the colonized's instrument to resist colonialism by taking force from the native culture⁵⁰. So they represent the one's who are pushed out of Western modernity civilization and its dominant structures like the nation-state.

Likewise with the modernization project of the Ottoman empire and its continuation with the Republic of Turkey, the existing cultures of non-Muslim and eventually non-Turkish subjects were suppressed and thus the ancient and unique histories, languages, traditions and material culture of these communities were ignored. Only recently work that questions the absence of non-Turkish subjects' histories from the official historical material and the history of the Republic while undertaking oral history studies in Turkey in order to democratize historiography started being produced⁵¹. These oral histories are indeed urgently needed, especially in Turkey, to de-centralize and decolonize Turkish historiography. Moreover, in this work they will be used as counter-narratives to state-sponsored historiography of the modern nation-state.

This way on one hand the storytelling will be used as as a tool to transfer silenced truths, events and knowledges to do justice to marginalized peoples' histories and not only give them equal value in the historical narrative but also carry them into the present (Kovach, 2010; Qwul'sih'yah'maht, 2005). These stories are also hoped to contribute creating a collective memory and keeping it alive (Grele, 1991; Hareven, 1996; Smith, 1999). In the specific context of this work, this is not only hoped for the Kurds but also the Turks and the rest of the peoples who live in Turkey as a step to relieve the social amnesia, make those 'particular' stories part of the official history of Turkey and open up ways to close the gap between communities. As Smith (1999) commented oral histories also help articulate multiple facts with regard to history and events, and I believe that decolonizing the history of Turkey passes from this multiplication of the voices and stories to break up with the homogenizing stories of the nation-state that distorts realities according for its own continuity. I also see this as part of doing justice to people who have suffered oppression, negation and violence, a justice of recognition in terms of dignity, identity, history, and collective biography, as Fraser says (2010). Further, oral history, specifically the life histories of Kurdish women in diaspora, is chosen as a method to "weave evidence of our multiplicity" (Creamer, 2006, p. 530), as

⁵⁰ See for instance Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (1963)

⁵¹See (F. Aras, 2016, p. 201; R. Aras et al., 2012; Durakbasa & Ilyasoglu, 2001; Işık, 2009; Neyzi, 2004a, 2004b; Seloni & Sarfati, 2013)

women, a category with which I also identify myself with. And yet in this work de-homogenizing the category of 'Woman' is also one of the objectives which I hope to achieve through the life histories of numerous women that picture differing visions of place, of family of community, war, peace, poverty, loss, trauma and violence, who outline clashing visions of justice, point out intersecting oppressions of gender, ethnicity, class, being a migrant/outsider and sometime even mirror hegemonic discourses but also talk about resistance, struggle, liberty and desires. They do not only talk about their lives but the lives of their grandparents, mothers but also their daughters and granddaughters. So, more than recurring to oral history as a means of integrating woman into historical scholarship based on canonical sources that neglected women's lives (Sangster, 1994), it also tries to locate a women's past that is real and knowable (Tilly, 1989) just like Jineoloji, the Kurdish women's science, also aims to do. With these life histories, the work also aims to create counter-stories in order to understand and transform established truths, to contest the ascribed definitions of nation, liberation, revolution, equality, justice, belonging and identity. This can also be seen as to explore the construction of women's historical memory, see how they rationalize, feel and make sense of the social and material structures that shape their lives⁵². Further, oral histories serve as a medium to accentuate how women confront multiple forms of oppression, express their own experiences, perceptions and subjectivities to reposition themselves as actors of emancipation and as a way to strengthen their knowledges to guarantee their place in public and political life (Vargas, 1992). They equally point out how they understand colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy through the narration of daily lives, as opposed to the complex theories of social sciences as well as the dominant understanding of politics that excludes women's experiences, accounts and knowledges.

What's more, life histories make up a method informed by interdisciplinary feminist debates about research, its objectives, question authority, audience and who benefits from the research (Geiger, 1990). In this work, these stories are especially favored first in order to offset the researcher-researched, subject-object polarities and try to construct horizontal dialogues between peers as much as possible. With the interviews, or rather dialogues, the Kurdish women are given space to occupy the position of tellers instead of listeners, which tends to be the case in conventional research methods, and the researcher engages in listening. Most of the time methods used by social sciences seem impracticable to the ones who do not come from within the academia or scientific fields. Through story telling as a performance not alienated from the daily lives of the people like, this work aims to forge closer ties with the

⁵² (Grele, 1991; Patai, 1994; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Sangster, 1994; Shostak, 2009)

women and create conditions of dialogue similar to the ones among family members, friends or communities. Of course these ties were not created ‘under laboratory conditions’, through artificial interventions but during the time I shared time and space with women. During almost a year I got involved in the activities of women who take part in civil society groups- including the women’s autonomous Jineoloji Committee in Europe- and Kurdish local assemblies that are part of the DC in France, Germany and the Netherlands where historically the Kurdish diaspora that emigrated from Turkey has been the most organized in relation with the political wing of the KLM. The interviews were done with women with whom I hope to have built relations of trust and solidarity and the work was being discussed with them as it was being framed as a way to involve them more. The idea of life histories as a method to re-write women’s history was already being discussed within the jineoloji committee as a powerful means to intervene in official history writing and accordingly I have discussed the thesis project and what I was aiming to achieve with it with other women who work actively in the committees to ask them their opinion, comments and critiques. The main topics to lead the dialogues were decided together with these women, so that the research agenda can also be opened up to articulate what is of importance to the women and to redirect our gaze to overlooked topics. Life histories also bring light to women who shaped lives and communities, who have been models although these were left silent, and also create a setting in which women can talk about their traumas, multiple forms of oppression they endured and keep enduring, their desires and what emancipation/liberation really means for them. Equally, the life histories are used to create plural narratives that do not only talk about the past but also the present and the future.

And yet, oral histories are not unmediated, as the source is co-created by the researcher and the interlocutor. And in this co-creation our social positions, culture, class, ethnicity, race, political ideologies, sexual identities *inter alia* do play an important role in what is being said and how it is being said as well as what is kept silent (Sangster, 1994). Not to forget, the Kurdish women told their life histories in Turkish, that is a colonial language for them and even for some one that they learned not at home but in an older age when they started interacting with others in the public spaces. Although all of the women interviewed spoke Turkish fluently, expressing themselves in their native tongue would undoubtedly give way to different and richer accounts. Added to that is my ‘halfie’ position, that in some cases makes me a stranger, in others ‘one of us’ as owed to the solidarity and common ground based on liberation that I share with the women and rarely a stranger, certainly bore upon the

information revealed in our dialogues. Also their knowledge of my ideological sympathies, combined with their own, could also have shaped our interviews. On account of this previous information and preconceptions that people naturally have, some aspects could have been given more emphasis and some were papered over -although I did not feel this was the case at any point of the interviews. These are being mentioned here following the need to point out the limitations of the research, especially if the basic premises are based on the partiality of truth and subjectivity as feminist research hold forth (Geiger, 1986).

Similarly, life histories or any kind of oral history is highly subject to memory and thus is always susceptible to some kind of selection, bias, evasion or interpretation. In that sense the representation of history, including oral history, is itself a contested historical event (Newman, 2003). But maybe more than claiming to be an uncontested truth the significance of life histories is that they provide mechanisms to explore the construction of historical memory and illuminate the collective scripts of a social group (Sangster, 1994) contending the dominant narratives that distorts particular realities. As much as it is important to acknowledge that gender, race and class, and ideologies shape the construction of historical memory, it is equally telling to track down histories of struggle – anti-colonial, anticapitalist, anti-patriarchal- of oppression, and occupation and the historic relation to armed struggle, collective resistance, and liberation life histories can privilege suppressed accounts and voices that contest dominant narratives of justice, complicate power relations and invite us to revise our histories. Forasmuch as life histories can combine reflection, interpretation and analysis to uncover and re-discover the meaning of personal or collective experiences.

On the other hand, this does not only refer to the interpretation of the narrator but also the researcher. As Geiger (1990) drew attention to, the researcher's interpretation of the facts and events do not have to be the same as the same way the narrators interpret themselves or their lives. This does not take away the responsibilities or the care that the researcher needs to assume in relation to the people who collaborate in the research. Certainly, women of the oral historian's community make up a significant part of the audience for the work and the interpretations produced by the researcher, as they have undoubtedly occupied a prominent place in the researcher's life and opinions for the length of the period of the research that cannot be reduced to or objectified as simple data, as she further points out.

For this reason, the oral histories, in the context of this work are complemented with another method, that of counter-mapping, that aims to avoid this simplification and the distortions that can stem from the multiple interpretations. Given that the interviews were done in the course

of radical political transformation on one hand and heavy attacks on the other, that is in the midst of conflicting emotions, when Rojava autonomous zone was consolidating its social union and the political system built by different groups living in the area and yet the clashes with ISIS, the Syrian central government were still going on and especially when one of three cantons, Afrin, was invaded, plundered and torn down by the mercenaries backed by Turkey, mapping through life histories seemed like a way to patch together the long divided territories, peoples, cultures and memories. Further, maps that have been the tools of domination and division are reworked to be used against colonization and to contest the nationalist and homogenizing discourses of the states. Here I should note that to my surprise even in moments of warfare, in none of the women's accounts Kurdishness was the centerpiece of the narratives – never referred to attack or accuse other ethnicities of the dominant nations that have been colonizing their territories – but other forms of oppression, such as class and gender were made more apparent. In this respect, life histories in this thesis make up the basis of mapping a collective autobiography portrayed by the women of Kurdish diaspora in their own terms, symbols, culture and imaginaries while recovering their memories (Davies, 2000; Davies & Gannon, 2006). Yet mapping will not be used in its material sense to draw out and delimit territories in its strict sense. When mapping is set side by side with memories it should be pointed out that the memory of space is never only visual. This memory is equally shaped through sounds, smells, tastes, bodily practices, the ways people move in space, its nature, the seasons, and its connectedness to other places among many other sensory cues (Green, 2013). So the maps are permeated with emotional histories and geographies, food/eating/cooking together, dancing, singing, rituals and celebrations, in short, all cultural elements through which people define their identity, their sense of belonging and their resistance beyond the visual plane of cartographic maps (Meneses, 2013b). Having said that, it is one of the downsides of a written work that does not provide favorable means to transmit this non verbal forms of expression that get lost in translation. Even so, this work will attempt producing 'memory maps' (Davis, 2004) that articulate individual or collective knowing about lived experiences, local histories, embodied narratives. This makes a map more than a spatial record but a holder of history, personal or communal; past and present and future (Vaughan, 2011). This being said, it should not be forgotten that the data uncovered with these narratives and memory maps are not meant to create generalizing representative knowledge but highlight conditional facts specific to the group in question and embedded in their temporal context. The act of remembering is called into play also as the means for drawing parallels between the concept of self-defense lime-lighted by Kurdish women and self-defense as the

preservation of identity. Further by documenting what *was* and *is*, it is hoped to provoke the radical imagination for *what might be*.

II.VI. Counter-Mapping

Maps, contrary to the common view, do not simply represent the world but it produces the world through socially and politically formulated set of symbols and categorizations and political constructions. On that account maps are always situated, ideologically loaded to convey particular messages and mirror power⁵³. It has been argued that cartographic knowledge and mapping is integral to the modernist enterprise itself (Cosgrove & Martins, 2000). And that being so they have served in controlling, subjugating and colonizing populations. So, since their conception they are deeply implicated in the colonial project and the rise of capitalism (Huggan, 1991; Pickles, 2004). It is equally argued that maps' advance is parallel to the rise of the modern state and served in the interests of nation-building (Anderson, 1983; Seed, 1995; Wood et al., 2010). So, on one hand maps reflect colonialism, property ownership, national identity, race, military power, bureaucracy and gender and in exchange they serve to ideologically form communities and mark out relationships through demarcating territories, controlling lands, resources, commodities and people while inscribing boundaries, identities and subjectivities (Pickles, 2004; Piper, 2002). That is why, "Mapping is epistemological but also deeply ontological – it is both a way of thinking about the world, offering a framework for knowledge, and a set of assertions about the world itself" (Kitchin et al., 2009, p. 1).

When modernity, colonialism and mapping addressed together, it is possible to see clearly that the colonial project relies on the map and in turn the map relies on colonial aspirations (Kitchin et al., 2009). For instance, the imperial landscapes in colonized territories were mapped out using local knowledge that has been translated into tools to serve the needs of the colonizer, with indigenous territories scripted as blank spaces, empty and available for the civilizing Western explorer to claim, name, subjugate and colonize (Akerman, 2009; Edney, 1997). Further, the interests cartographical knowledge represented most often meant that

⁵³ (Anderson, 1983; Crampton, 2011; Edney, 1993, 1997, 1999; Kitchin et al., 2009; Pickles, 2004; Wood, 1992; Wood & Fels, 2008)

some people were pushed 'off the map' because of the erasures, silences and gaps inherent to their design and that also preclude empowerment (Eades, 2015; Wood, 1992).

Yet the fundamentals of mapping and cartographic knowledge do not go without criticism. Critical cartography was being formulated with the 1990s as a critique of the power of mapping, its form and content and at the same time proposed to undo the very premises of the (1995)scientific outlook behind map-making with a strong influence of indigenous struggles⁵⁴. The epistemological troubling of maps as representations of power-knowledge created a set of methods that put new mapping practices into service of militancy, social movements and community justice (Crampton & Krygier, 2018). The term counter-mapping was first introduced by Nancy Peluso (1995) after the indigenous Indonesian communities' map-making practices to challenge the state's formal maps, contest existing state-run systems of management and control and to claim their rights to territories and natural resources⁵⁵. Thereby, methods such as social cartography and counter-mapping emerge as predicated on critical cartography, allowing us to ask different kind of questions that challenge predominant power effects of mapping and identify the cracks of existing positions serving as a strategy to un-border reason (Firth, 2014; Harris & Hazen, 2005; Ruitenberg, 2007). Like so, on one hand, critical cartographers coming from subaltern or marginalized groups can help problematize axioms and normative claims mirrored in cartographic processes justifying the repercussions of Western modern and colonial reasoning on colonized peoples' lives and evince that the maps previously seen as objective are in fact fractured and particularistic (Middleton, 2010). On the other, hand critical maps used as tools of social justice can also dispute the colonial descriptions of space, time and memory. By bringing into the open histories and conceptions of space and territory that differ markedly from those represented in maps produced by state agencies or private companies, counter maps set against multiple senses of place and time, thus invalidating the binaries such as civilized, developed vs. savage, backwards resulting from Western-centric modern and colonial rationality. Yet parallel to undoing the established cartographic discipline and the mentality underpinning it, it is crucial to document and register the people expelled and erased from dominant cultural and physical landscapes, dispossession of territories, forced displacements, genocides, that is a comprehensive account of colonization and make visible the connection between territory and

⁵⁴This especially left a substantial impact on North American cartographic studies. For distinguished work on critical cartography from North America, see (Harley, 1988; 1989; Harley & Woodward, 1987; Rundstrom, 1991; D. Wood & Fels, 2008); for works approaching indigenous cartographies (Aberley, 1993; Rundstrom, 1991; Turnbull & Watson, 1993); and a short literature on native map-making practices (Gossen, 1974; G. M. Lewis, 1998, p. 199; G. M. Lewis & Woodward, 1999)

⁵⁵ For others see (Denniston, 1994; Gatmaytan, 2000; Harris & Hazen, 2005; D. Wood et al., 2010) .

identity, the processes of exclusion and erasure to re-situate facts on the map once again (Segalo et al., 2015). Goeman in *Mark My Words* (2013), in which she reveals settler colonialism in North America as an enduring form of gendered spatial violence and the imaginative alternatives to such violence created by native women, highlights that the ‘real’ of settler colonial society is built on the violent erasures of alternative modes of mapping and geographic understandings. She expounds how these territories’ social, economic, political, and inherently spatial construction has a history and a relationship to people who have lived here long before Europeans arrived in parallel to a history of colonization, imperialism, and nation-building. Then again Goeman also highlights the imaginative creation of new possibilities “beyond a recovery of a violent history of erasure and [that] provide imaginative modes to unsettle settler space” (*ibid.* p. 2). In her writings re-mapping not only seeks to regain that which was lost and returning to an original and pure point in history but instead understanding the processes that came to define current spatialities in order to sustain vibrant futures.

On that account, the role of mapping in social change will be explored in this work as maps can “provide the very conditions of possibility for the worlds we inhabit and the subjects we become” (Pickles, 2004, p. 5). This, alternatively is a way to inventive maps that go beyond received ideas and order to create potentials for revolutionary imagination and create new geographies⁵⁶. Counter-maps are not necessarily progressive but geographical imaginations are indeed important sites of struggle (D. Wood et al., 2010). This idea has been articulated by many since what Deleuze (1986) called as a “new cartography” as a practice that creates new political geographical possibilities and other, different realities rather than just representing or analyzing existing ones. In this sense, counter-mapping also has a pedagogical side to it that helps us question the spatial models and representations that delimit possibilities of imagining differently, and provide a sort of prefigurative imaginaries that can pluralize the futures going beyond the hegemonic constructions (Firth, 2014; Nandy, 2000; Stavrakakis, 2011). Especially when considered how colonialism depends on imposing a “planetary consciousness” and naturalizing geographic concepts and sets of social relationships, as Goeman (2013) expresses, re-mapping can be a powerful discourse to unsettle the imperial and colonial geographies and the boundaries, like state, that affect our current actions as well as the way we think and imagine in the world. With this pluralization and diversification, it becomes possible to shift away from the historical monopoly of the state on the cartographic truth (Elwood, 2008). This is “the geographical imagination” (Harvey, 1973), the ability to

⁵⁶ (Cobarrubias & Pickles, 2008; Holmes, 2003; Segalo et al., 2015)

link a social imagination, the co-creation of possibilities to a spatial-material consciousness. It also suggests to put geographical imagination in the service of radical practice to give shape to new grounds in real life, here and now but also project them to the future.

In this work diasporic Kurdish women's life histories and memories will be the basis of these alternative mappings without forgetting that in any given context there will be multiple, competing and overlapping discourses. The multiplicity of these narratives are hoped to cancel out the fixed, totalizing or idealized representations of truth and rigid boundaries and enable to "open up meanings, to uncover limits within cultural fields, and to highlight reactionary attempts to seal borders and prohibit translations" (Paulston, 1999, p. 977). Diasporic women's discourses map out the structural colonial inequalities in contact-zones where various cultures, identities and subjectivities encounter, clash and interweave both in their 'homelands' and their receiving countries and thus laying bare multilayered oppression and the varying scales of these from local to global. Diasporic mappings are, for that, important for mapping metropolis from within, its power-lines and geographies while they also offer possibilities of mediating (Awan, 2011). Counter-mapping in this work is employed as a contribution to the detailed accounts of the production of injustice and processes of dispossession within and across sites of the Global South from the lens of women, and aiming to bring together these "counter-topographies" of resistance, solidarity and collective imagination as Katz theorized (2001). In doing so, I hope to multiply the 'margins', not in a geographical sense that are defined in reference to a center or centers but places that are not totally dissolved in hegemonic orders and thus by giving them prominence level out the overestimated significance attributed to the center(s). Of course, this is without assuming the "sameness of oppression" (Mohanty, 2003), but also avoiding the reproduction of 'otherness' as in a binary system but rather highlighting the "'otherhow[s]'" as the multiple possibilities of a praxis" (DuPlessis, 1990, p. 154). Against this background, this work follows suit the arguments that maps are like propositions about the construction of meaning and conduits of possibilities as basis for action (Corner, 1999; Dodge et al., 2009; D. Wood & Fels, 2008). Ensuing from their cognitive character maps "fire up thinking spaces" (Dodge et al., 2009, p. 14) that rouse action and they uncover realities previously unseen or unimagined (Corner, 1999, p. 213). Building on these ideas, the Kurdish women's life histories will make up the map of possibilities that have been shrouded and can guide future praxis.

On the other hand, in the field of counter-mapping, the limitations of Cartesian mapping in representing local geographic knowledges and framing the infinite complexity of local places

and peoples on the planet within was heavily criticized (Hodgson & Schroeder, 2002; Wainwright & Bryan, 2009; Walker & Peters, 2001). More, by using ‘the master’s tools’, the risk of the containment of indigenous cartographic knowledge into state and colonialist discourses and as to bolster property rights and political authority have been pointed out (Rocheleau, 2005; Wainwright & Bryan, 2009). In response, this work will draw on the argumentative and metaphoric more than material capacities of (counter)map making to expose to view different histories, prove the existence of different narratives beyond the borders of nation-states and imperial cartographies and generate new possibilities, desires and imaginaries. Simultaneously, through the agency of life histories, make visible contemporary intersecting oppressions on both local and transnational level. Further, it is hoped to lead the way to envisaging maps that lay down new emotional histories and affective geographies and thus examine non-normative geographies as a form of decolonization⁵⁷. Although the present work manages to go beyond the merely visual domain of cartography and trail into the linguistic, textual and more personal domains, it still needs maturing to bring out emotions and senses as ways of knowing, being and doing in the broadest sense.

These mappings will be underpinned by the data collected in archival research first using official documents that reveal the relationship of the empire and the republic with that of Kurdish geographies cultural and politically, as well as the documents (memoirs, articles, videos etc) produced by the Kurdish people on the internet and in the archives of the various organizations linked with the KLM in Europe in reference to identity, liberation struggle and gender among other issues. I include in this list the books, articles, songs and tales that the people with whom I spent almost 2 years with during the research suggested me to read or listen to. Although these documents will not be visible to a large extent, they sure guided my conversations with women, brought me to a closer understanding of how they define liberation, belonging and identity, and shaped my perspective that has influenced without doubt the framework of this work.

In sum, life histories and counter-mapping will provide the basis of first, re-writing official historical accounts and bringing into light obscured aspects of colonialism in the case of the Ottoman empire and the following republic, evince their continuity today expanding the view towards diaspora and focusing on contact-zones. The simultaneous view on multiple levels, over and across borders and sharp divides aims to set side by side the differences and otherness imagined in binary terms and in hierarchical settings, in order to un-draw borders

⁵⁷ (K. Anderson & Smith, 2001; Craine & Aitken, 2011; Dodge et al., 2009; Thien, 2005; Thrift, 2004)

that divide and create in their place connections and intersections. And from these connections, the work hopes to inspire the steps to decolonization and bring out the trails of alternative futures, especially in context of Turkey.

In fact, as the life histories of Kurdish women unfold in the penultimate chapter, they map out the same story, but differently, that the previous theoretical and analytical parts of the work try to illustrate. In such a way, the work becomes palindrome-like which can be read either starting from the theory to end with women's narratives or the other way around. Yet it goes without saying that women's narratives voice the story through the everyday life experiences and with a different lexicon that takes out the edge off the exclusive theoretical terminology and mode of expression and bring it back on its feet on a much more familiar, accessible and intelligible level. These narrations undeniably illustrate the encounters, the conflicts and the hybridizations in between the porous contact zones of empires, how regional, imperial and national boundaries meld into one and other – same in the Balkans as the Middle East- just like the cultures of different ethnicities, religions and languages, very much similar to the entwined histories and fate of Armenians and the Kurds. Simultaneously, they reveal the violence induced by colonialism, the population control and displacements, the genocides alongside the resistances. Equally, they talk about the changing configurations of oppression as well as the ones that continue in contemporary forms, forced migration, poverty, marginalization and otherness including the diasporic context. And just as importantly, these stories focus on gender as a domain of colonial control and domination as well as one bearing decolonizing and liberating potentials. Finally, through these stories the work intends to demonstrate that as much as the circuits of power are entangled so are the dispossession, destruction of the territories, of local communities, the nature and resistances that link us. It is precisely for this reason that the decolonization and depatriarchalization of the world is not only the problem of the subaltern but all of ours. By the same token, it aims to show that the struggle of the Kurds cannot be separated from the global redistribution of justice, liberation, democratization and depatriarchalization that is only possible following alternative ways of thinking, living, feeling and doing outside the hegemonic configurations.

III. Part III Historical Roots Of Colonialism as a Modern Project In Turkey

III.I. Locating the Ottoman Empire Where Modernities Collide

Recalibrating the hyperbolic value attached to Western modernity is a fundamental challenge for postcolonial studies and yet in doing so these have not yet been able to completely overcome fixations on particular periods and geographies, which Dipesh Chakrabarty has described as the “inequality of ignorance” (Chakrabarty, 1992a). Alternatively this work suggests to rethink modernity from the spatialities and temporalities where diverse modernities collide. As Cooper suggests a fuller version of modernity needs to place the histories of the continental empires that shared space and time with the European colonial empires of the 19th and 20th Century, such as the Habsburg, the Russian, and the Ottoman, and even those empires that lay outside Europe, notably the Japanese and the Chinese (2005, p. 22). The Ottoman imperial historiography ““perched” between Western historiography, on the one hand, and the study of the “Muslims/Middle Easterners who matter” (i.e. Arabs, Jews, Iranians, Indians), on the other.” and as a ““major non-Western sovereign state whose destinies were in many ways intertwined with the destinies of India” (Deringil, 2003, pp. 314–315) hence can serve to rewrite the idea of Modernity from its “impregnant silences” (Prakash, 1992).

For this reason, I underline once more the necessity to analyze the construction of modernity at a moment of the emergence of the idea of nation-states and the parallel global territorial reordering from the contact-zones that can multiply the meanings of both the modern and shed light on the continuity of the imperial in the national but also open up spaces for the emergences of alternatives that survived through the nation-states. Parasram substantiates that:

There are histories and genealogies of thought predating and persisting alongside allegedly ‘universal’ Eurocentric ideas throughout the long process of colonialism.... Yet such a proposition is nearly inconceivable within the genealogy of modernist thinking that has constituted itself for many hundreds of years on silencing and erasing the legitimacy of Other systems of knowledge through discourses of ‘primitiveness’ and ‘lack’ (2015, p. 55).

The Ottoman historicism, for most part also suffered from the obsession of taking the state as the marker of the highest model of social evolution in the hierarchical conception of civilization (Guha, 2003, p. 41), which echoed in the repeated viewpoint that approach the Ottoman imperial history through the narrative of stagnation, failed modernization and the unidirectional and methodologically nationalist reading of Ottoman decline (Abou-El-Haj, 2005; Adanır & Faroqhi, 2002; Finkel, 2005). The first outcome of this is the exclusion of the

Ottoman imperial policy from modernity and hence the history of the nation-states that came to take shape with its dismemberment. Whether in the Balkans or Middle East proper; Egypt, Lebanon, Serbia, Albania or Turkey, the Ottomans in any of those nation-states are relegated to a past that is not included in the official construction of the new nation although all these territories physically, politically and socially are shaped by the common modern imperial legacy (Philliou, 2008). Tying to analyze the Ottoman empire with reference to Eurocentric construction modernity and nation-state leaves out the constant negotiations that shaped both the ideological and territorial construction of the imperial nation-states by treating processes that diverge from the modular accounts or anomalies that would sooner or later end-up conforming to it although the imperial designs within Europe- such as the Austrian Empire or the Ottoman's- yet considered to be exterior to it have survived well into the twentieth century, if in different forms (Kadercan, 2017, p. 4). And since the 19th up until today very different imperial and national shapes keep constantly eliding the national and the imperial in the same territories of Middle-East (Berger & Miller, 2015a, p. 2).

To the contrary, since its onset the Ottoman empire, as with Turkey that followed, was/is constructed as a mirror with which the idea of modern Europe was formed partly as a consequence of defining what was not-European (Yapp, 1992). The Western European classification of the world would constantly redraw a border to define the imperial difference of the Ottoman and Russian empires to sustain its internal civilizational unity but this difference was not the same as one drawn between European and the Indian or the Black (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006)⁵⁸. Far as it concerns the formation of Modernity and the idea of 'Europe', Kappeler (2011, p. 479) suggests that, the Russo-Ottoman entanglement have been saliently neglected in the analysis of "imperial intersections" and these empires were marginalized, though this marginalization was only form a Western European perspective. In Goffman's words, "When viewed from the West the Ottoman polity seem to have arisen like a monster out of the Byzantine ashes. Evil or not, as the successor to a major Christian and Mediterranean civilization, both European and Ottoman considered the new state very much a part of the European world" (2002, p. 12).

⁵⁸In the dominant Western historical accounts Ottomans were represented as plundering barbarians, Muslim invaders -at times simply referred to as "Turks"- encroaching the Christian Europe with the take over of Constantinople from the Byzantine Empire at the end of the 15th century by the former. This image transmuted to Oriental despots during the 16th and 17th centuries and by the 19th century Ottoman's were no more considered to be a menace but were seen as the Sick Man of Europe and at best the Eastern Question (Çırakman, 2004; K. Parker, 2013; Worringer, 2004). These portrayals are on one hand reveling of how the imperial differences between Europe and the Ottoman's were shaped, reshaped and maintained through particular geopolitical chronology in reference to political, philosophical and economical benchmarks of the European modernity excluding the Ottoman's from this reality.

Notwithstanding, trying to analyze the Ottoman empire with reference to Eurocentric approaches leaves out the constant negotiations that shaped both the ideological and territorial construction of the imperial nation-states by treating processes that diverge from the modular accounts or anomalies that would sooner or later end-up conforming to it although the imperial designs within Europe -such as the Austrian Empire or the Ottoman's- yet considered to be exterior to it have survived well into the twentieth century, if in different forms (Kadercan, 2017, p. 4). And since the 19th up until today very different imperial and national shapes keep constantly eliding the national and the imperial in the same territories (S. Berger & Miller, 2015b, p. 2).

In similar fashion, Cole and Kandiyoti assert that in territories that did not conform the linear path of the development in accordance with the political, economic and social dynamics of Europe, the state elites “clearly could cobble together new “national” political arrangements without their countries first undergoing the large-scale shift from agrarian to industrial capitalism or from kin-based to individualist conditions”, such as in the cases of the formerly Ottoman Balkans in the 19th century, the Arab lands in the 1920s, and British India (2002, pp. 194–195). Additionally, bringing in the colonial legacy on the nation-building in Middle East and Asia, alongside the historical specificities of their colonial encounters should also take into account “the very different modalities and temporalities of their insertion into world capitalist markets” (Kandiyoti, 2002, p. 282).

During the 18th-19th Centuries when the European empires were not only fighting to acquire more colonial territories outside Europe but were also competing with each other within the boundaries of the continent, the Ottomans would find themselves within a complex power balance of the realignments of the imperial and colonial relations as well as territories in which they would be pushed to a peripheral status in the capitalist economy (Islamoğlu & Keyder, 1977; Kandiyoti, 2002). With this redefinition of Europe's boundaries, the landlocked ‘Eastern frontier’, including both Russia and the Ottomans -and later on Turkey-, both of which were also as the two great geo-political entities that stand in a relation of perpetual inclusion and exclusion with Europe ‘proper’ would provoke the greatest cause for concern (Outhwaite, 2006 cited in Bhambra, 2009, p. 3). And it is during this period that most of the Middle Eastern and Central Asian nationalisms would grow out of or up with World War I under the complex relations created by the challenge of European imperialism, colonialism and capitalist competition and almost all national borders of these post-colonial states were result of an outside imposition that have very little to do with pre-existing ethnic, religious

and linguistic boundaries (Choueiri, 2005; Prashad, 2008). However, with the divide-and-rule policies carried out by European powers in the Eastern Mediterranean the porous boundaries were forced into well-defined and uniform borders, triggering sectarian tensions and laying the grounds for “the perpetual ‘condition of colonization’ registered in the area following World War I” (Kamel, 2016, para. 3). Thereupon, tackling nationalism not merely focusing on its origins or as an achievement but “a highly contested and negotiated phenomenon that was formed within a larger context of global geopolitical, capitalist and ideological changes” (Gupta, 2004, p. 277) would help us bring in the role of imperial contests and their consequences in varying nationalisms that were being modeled. In fact, during the 19th Century, “the Ottomans were also facing the very same contradiction that the Russians, Germans, and British (in Ireland as well as India) were facing: *how to square the business of empire with the idea of nation and the governing practices of a modern state.*” (Mikhail & Philliou, 2012, p. 738 emphasis added).

Many already challenged the idea that nationalism engendered nations as Gellner and Breuilly suggested (2009, p. 53) by underlining the state’s practices in shaping nationalism⁵⁹ and the identification that nationalisms created with the state and not with the imagined nation to be (Amin & Kaplow, 1982; Connor, 1978; King, 2002). And yet it should be reminded that “Modern nation-states have to confront or engage with other, including historical, representations of community” (Duara, 1996, p. 9). The nation-state building efforts of the 19th and early 20th centuries meant the exercise of population politics that was beyond mere territorial adjustments. The creation of modern rationalized bureaucratic states with unitary and centralized administrative, legal and political institutions, military organization, education system, the use of icons and symbols like the national flags, formulation of a common history, culture and language would be the instruments for the fabrication of a shared national identity, and all these practices were already taking shape within empires whether in Western Europe or not. Moreover, these modern institutions were also tools of the implementation of a disciplinary power both impacting particular societies by creating specialized and separate functions out of the local practices in order to turn them more efficient and productive and in parallel molding a modern individual as the political subject obedient and loyal to the modern states (Mitchell, 1991; Pettman, 1996). The use of modern technologies, the standardization of weights and measures, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers, the changes in tenure system, the design of the territorial fabric, the organization of transportation and so on, served as the means to create the state as the controlling authority on its territories.

⁵⁹ (Amin & Kaplow, 1982; Cole & Kandiyoti, 2002; Rucker, 1998)

As Scott framed “In each case [of], officials took exceptionally complex, illegible, and local practices, such as land tenure customs or naming customs, and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored” (1998, p. 2). Further, states also homogenized political identities through the incorporation of differences along lines of ethnicity, nationality, race, class, gender, locality or some combination thereof that hierarchically and territoriality organized subject positions in ways that shape individuals and collectivities into normative national subjects that disguised differences within the state⁶⁰.

Modern state also meant the formulation of ‘citizenship’ consistent with the territorialized and demarcated ideals of the nation building that created differences between and within the imperial states replacing the previous vaguer idea of frontiers as well as the contingent, negotiable and porous identities that empires harbored. Nevertheless, all the modern colonial empires at some point created "imperial imaginaries" (Pratt, 1992) by defining the boundaries of belonging and loyalty to authority while simultaneously accommodated diverse local elites and practices. Indeed, maintaining the colonial required maintaining differences through coercive and/or administrative work that had to be grounded not only discourses but also institutional practices to work (Chatterjee, 1993b; Cooper, 2005).

However, the administration of difference depended on the mobilization of certain characteristics to achieve the nation in distinct imperial territories. Chatterjee (1993b) claimed that the colonial difference created variations in the forms of governmentality in the metropolitan zones than in diverse colonies. And so were the forms the construction of national state and identity that worked through the simultaneous assertion of similarity and difference depending on whether it was enacted in the metropolitan heartlands of empires or in their colonies (Balibar, 1990). While the analyses of the European colonial empires and their colonies based this difference to a great extent on race as the defining element of the metropolitan national identity (Handler & Segal, 1993, p. 1), these identities were also profoundly entangled with national identity formation in colonial—and early post-colonial—countries as well as with imperial encounters (Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996, p. 174).

Nevertheless, when the subject matter in question is the Ottoman Empire situated at a “contact-zone” itself, where the nation building process took shape within the context of the simultaneous processes of decolonization and the territorial foundation of global interstate system under the influence of differing interests of various imperial powers (Gupta, 2003;

⁶⁰ (Chatterjee, 1993b, 1993a; Goswami, 2002; Jayawardena, 1986; Peterson, 1992a; Pettman, 1996; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989b)

Strang, 1996) tackling these colonial encounters, the implementation of colonial practices and the differences that served in their use only in relation to ‘racialized Others’ prevents us to see the diverse form colonial state-formation projects took shape (Ivarsson & Rud, 2017; D. Scott, 1995). Göçek claims that religion and the fluidity of identities; articulating the ethnic, cultural, linguistic bases of imperial domination have been highly ignored in postcolonial studies and yet are essential to analyze the colonial formations in the Middle East and besides necessary to break the ‘rule of colonial difference’ strictly predicated on race (2013, p. 79). Also she adds that in the Ottoman empire imperial management of cross-cutting identities, differences was not carried out the same way; “the Ottoman “colonial” attitude toward the nomads or ethnic Arabs may be similar to or different from the officials’ attitudes toward the Greek Rum, Assyrian, Armenian, and Jewish minorities, Alewites, Kurds, and Circassians of the empire; the nature of this possible difference needs to be analyzed in depth” (*ibid.*, p. 91).

Indeed empires who maintained ambivalent relations with Europe like the Russian and the Ottomans, that Tlostanova named “Janus-faced empires: one eye is pointing toward Western capitalist and dominant empires, while the other looks toward their own colonies” (2003) had their proper ways of managing their colonial subject. Since the 90s the growing domain of postcolonial studies that take the 19th Century started exploring the Ottoman agency, specificity and its colonial practices as a subject matter. These works, deeply influenced by *Orientalism*, by looking at the Ottoman practice especially at the Arab lands, discussed Ottoman colonialism under the rubrics of ‘Ottoman Orientalism’ and Ottoman man’s burden’ (Makdisi, 2002a); ‘Orientalism *Alla Turca*’ and ‘Ottoman civilizing mission’ (Herzog & Motika, 2000), ‘modern Ottoman imperialism’ (Makdisi, 2002b, p. 30), ‘colonial *Ottomanism*’ (Kühn, 2007, p. 318), ‘borrowed colonialism’ and ‘the Ottoman colonial project’ (Deringil, 2003). Although their effort to bring in the Ottoman absence in the colonial world history as well its ‘peripheries’ into the study of colonialism in the specific context of the Ottoman empire is of great significance to break the prevalence of historical narratives from the imperial center, analyzing the colonial practices in the local context of the peripheries, or in other words ‘provincializing’ the Ottoman history, they tend to tackle the modernization efforts and the colonial practices from the supposed unidirectional narratives of Western encroachment and on the other matching these practices to the ones of the European colonial administrators crossing out the specificity of the Ottoman context (Dirlik, 1999; Faroqhi, 2010). And thus, analyses based exclusively on an Orientalist perspective focusing on the power of cultural representation continue leaving out the material and political specificities

that stemmed from the Ottoman imperial project disguised behind the ‘Ottoman Orientalism’ as well as the construction of colonial difference with reference to other imperial project.

Most of the postcolonial literature have primarily formed its arguments from a developmental perspective entrapped in the barren binary oppositions of East–West, tradition–modernity, and indigenous–foreign or center-periphery model -although has been discredited for the fixity it implies for unequal power relations (Cole & Kandiyoti, 2002)⁶¹. In this sense bringing in the specificity of the Ottoman empire, “a state that was simultaneously European yet whose broader cultural and political presence diminished the centrality of ‘European-ness’” (Bryce, 2013, p. 108) destabilizes the inherent privileging of Western hegemony over knowledge and opens up possibilities to create new approaches from the silences and absences (Brower & Lazzerini, 1997; F. Göçek, 2013; Makdisi, 2002a). Further, the specificities of the Ottoman colonialism thus turns the common European colonizer vs. non-European colonized framework on its head (Deringil, 2003; Minawi, 2016).

Ottoman empire, unlike most of the European empires whose colonial experiences were shaped in relation to overseas colonies which did not share the direct state frontiers with the metropolitan states, was a land-based empire whose colonies were part of its contiguous territories. Further, since its outset, the Ottoman empire’s territories were “well-connected domains” (Firges et al., 2014) that bridged local populations not only across Asia Minor and Mediterranean under a common world but also across more distant areas in Europe, Africa, and the Fertile Crescent (Faroqhi, 2004; Greene et al., 2000). Thereby the Ottoman history as a state as well as its frontiers and lives of imperial subjects were highly entangled on a global scale, very much unlike the sealed identities and civilizational frameworks that are propounded by nationalist and Eurocentric narratives (Firges et al., 2014; Kafadar, 1995). As Burbank and Cooper point out:

Empires, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as in the sixteenth, existed in relation to each other. Different organizations of power-colonies, protectorates, dominions, territories forced into a dominant culture, semi-autonomous national regions-were combined in different ways within empires. Empires drew on human and material resources beyond the reach of any national polity, seeking control over both contiguous and distant lands and peoples (2010, p. 7).

That is why the institutionalization of the imperial nation-state building needs to be tackled as a process unfolding in continuous relationship with surrounding areas that were going through the similar imperial state formation processes (Kasaba, 2011, p. 8), that Minawi called “the

⁶¹See (Stoler & Cooper, 1997) for an extended critique of the essentializing nature of mainstream postcolonial discourse.

frontiers-cum-borderlands” (2016). Whereof, this works suggest to tackle the imperial nation building process from the “imperial intersection” to expose the dynamics of competition, imitation and shared borderlands with constantly changing dynamics of local power relationships as well as the great variation of centers (Karpat & Zens, 2004; Minawi, 2016).

III.II.From Imperial Contact-Zones to Settled Frontiers of the Nation

These borderlands were on one hand were in-between zones populated by heterogeneous and malleable identities, with not only great ethnic and religious diversity but multiple overlapping cleavages based on language, geography, religion, class, kinship *inter alia*. considered to be traditionally incompatible with the modern state power (Bartov & Weitz, 2013; Maroya, 2003). And owing to their location, they have always been subject to dispute among multiple sovereign authorities whose control meant the both the external demarcation between these authorities and also internal between the borderland populations and the center. Thus, they were subject to the construct of political imaginaries in which nations and empires were made (Gratien, 2015). Maroya defines these colonial frontiers as:

... a geopolitical area at the edge of politically and militarily controlled imperial space: a zone of transition of low administrative intensity outside the centers of empire. It represents an intellectual space as well as a political one, a gray area at the edge of the ‘known’ — where knowledge defines an empire as much as the actual physical boundaries — and a mythology of rugged, untamed lands full of high mountains, savage tribes and brave adventure. The frontier in imperial imagination is both the domain of the undomesticated frontier-dweller and the zone behind which lurk the ambitions of the other imperial powers – at the edge of ‘civilization’ but between ‘civilizations’.(2003, p. 271).

That is why, during the reshaping of imperial borders, especially during the 20th Century, these were the places where the state authorities attempts to fabricate the nations would be felt the most through the population settlement/displacement policies to homogenize and control this hybrid and disorderly territories; the replacement of traditional, religious, familial and ethnic political authorities by the single secular national one; and the supplantation of local institutions and cultures with the centrally controlled ones. Particularly at moments, like the 19th and 20th centuries when the imperial states were in constant warfare to redefine nationalizing territorial borders which meant an an urgent need to modernize military institutions, and the issuing fiscal burdens for their sustenance as well as massive

demographic shifts which all required the implementation of centralizing administrative and legal policies to control not just populations but also the territory and the trade.

For the Ottoman empire, by the 19th century its disparate frontier lands that represented boundaries between the Ottomans, Habsburgs, and newly independent Balkan states; between the Ottomans, the Persians, and the Arabian Peninsula; and the Ottoman frontier on the Indian Ocean shared important features. These borderlands were prone to breaking away from the control of the central government and the Ottoman state, between the 1870s and 1910s underwent major changes to retain these threatened territories through administrative measures, as Rogan (2003) stated. In his words, “What is clear is that each generated a complex history of accommodation and resistance that is as much a part of the history of the *Tanzimat*, *Hamidian* and Young Turk eras as the better-known history of the Ottoman central lands.” (*ibid.*, p.1)

So, starting with the 19th century, just like the rest of the world, the Ottoman empire’s state-building methods would be adapted to the new demands of imperialism and the new modernization strategies would be put into effect to incorporate the empire into the capitalist logic of expanding Europe (Keyder, 2018, p. 33; Minawi, 2016, p. 3). The internal modernization and centralization process of the Ottoman empire, starting with the *Tanzimat*, the ‘Reordering’ period in 1839 with the reform edict and that ended with the First Constitutional Era with the establishment of the First Ottoman Parliament in 1876, entailed a reorganization of the administrative, legal, military and religious institutions, as well as the legal basis of Ottomanism, the unity and equality among the multi-religious and ethnic groups with the idea of universal law and individual citizenship. The secular redefinition of the *millet* system (comprised of Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Jewish as the non-Muslims and the Muslim *millets* in general lines) holding together the heterogenous populations of the empire meant the elimination of group interests within society and their replacement with general interests best represented by the state (Heper, 1980, p. 91).

Concurrently, the Ottoman territories would be shaped through the wars between the empires implying the hardening of state borders and the homogenization of society on a global scale in the course of the imperial nation building processes and massive demographic changes as well as the various nationalism gaining foothold to trigger anti-colonial compositions in its different parts, especially the zones that border other empires. Even though the Ottoman Empire would never be formally colonized, between the 18th-20th centuries it lost most of its territories either as a result of the imperial competition as in its African and Middle-Eastern

borders - Algeria (1830) and Tunisia (1881) to France followed by Syria and Lebanon as mandates; Egypt (1882) to Britain who would gain control of Transjordan (today divided into Palestine, and Jordan) and the provinces of Mesopotamia uniting them under Iraq as well. and later on Libya (1911) to Italy – or with the post-colonial nation states that were emerging in the Balkan lands - starting with Serbia in 1804, at its frontier with the Habsburgs, and within a century including the independent states of Greece, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania.

On the other hand, Darling reminds us that borderlands were not only separations but ts where people, goods and ideas were channeled and exchanged, where there were mutual interactions and continuities that affected the multiple parties involved in their creation (Darling, 2012; Greene et al., 2000). This implied at once the coexistence of diverse populations and cultures and violence at these borderlands. The emerging nationalisms that broke up the Ottoman territories at the end of the 19th and the beginning of 20th Centuries, then, should be regarded within these circumstances in which neither nationalisms nor identities were created from one center and in which the local actors with versatile loyalties went along with, resisted or appropriated the transformations deriving from various centers of power in accordance with disparate, locally grounded interests and consciousness. As Göçek (2013) affirms, this brings out the need to underline the agency of imperial communities like the non-Muslims, Kurdish tribes or Chechen, and Circassian immigrants in negotiating their particular interests with the Ottoman capital, Western Europeans, and their local counterparts and not as single-handedly othered, excluded or exploited subjects⁶². As Cooper suggest “The most powerful empires were often in danger of being hijacked by their agents, by settlers, or by indigenous collectivizes in search of alternatives to cooperation with an imperial center.” and the effects of these relations were shaped less by grand abstractions than by complex struggles in specific contexts, played out over time (Cooper, 2005, pp. 23–24).

In this work, I contend that the modernization of the Ottoman empire with the intention to centrally control the society took place in those borderlands both in the Arab territories, the Balkans and although most of the literature ruled out in the lands where most of the Kurdish population was settled from the borders of Caucasus to the South-eastern frontiers of the empire. In Philiou’s formulation:

It would be during this long final half century, from the 1856 promulgation of the Tanzimat to the demise of the Sultanate in the wake of the First World War, a phase replete with contradictions between progress and violence, national and imperial,

⁶²Also (Dirlik, 2002, p. 436; Maroya, 2003, p. 269)

that 'Europe' would take shape in contrast to the 'Balkans' and the 'Middle East.' And it is this phase, when the dizzyingly complex world of Ottoman subjects and rulers was ripped apart piece by piece, that is inextricable from the Ottoman legacy remembered in the modern trouble spots of the Middle East and Balkans (2008, p. 669).⁶³

And these events that took place in these territories where various imperial projects collided in return would be the constituent elements that prepared gradually the foundations of the Turkish-state that would be founded on the same territories where the imperial center of the Ottoman empire resided.

As Bozarlan (2013) also brings to attention "Si la Turquie a une histoire propre, expliquant la formation d'une société et d'un espace politique qu'incarne la République turque depuis 1923, elle participe aussi à des histoires balkanique, caucasienne, moyen-orientale et nord-africaine, autant d'espaces dont l'évolution a été déterminée, jusqu'à la fin du XIX e siècle, voire au-delà, par la gestion impériale ottomane". Although, it is important to call attention to the instance of the continuity between the Ottoman empire and the Turkish republic together with its complex relations like Mardin's (2018) analyses reveal, in *After Empire*, but equally important is the different characters and legacies which modeled the nation-states that broke off from the imperial peripheries compared to the ones surfacing in the imperial core domains, which Barkey called the "rump state" (2018, p. 104).

Within the realm of imperial competition, borderlands would become the major sites of imperial wars⁶⁴. At the same time these territories were turned into laboratories of demographic engineering, that ended up in violent processes of incorporation of the subject territories, playing off populations against one another, dividing highly diverse groups many of which had religious and ethnic counterparts and kin across one or several multi-ethnic and multi-confessional imperial borders. Said noted:

As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness. And, insofar as these people exist between the old and the new, between the old empire and the new state, their condition articulates the tensions, irresolutions, and contradictions in the overlapping territories shown on the cultural map of imperialism (1994, p. 332).

⁶³ Eric Hobsbawm (1990, p. 23) has suggested that the mid-19th-century shift in Europe towards a conception of nation based on ethnicity came about in part as a result of the unification of Germany and Italy, the partition of Austria-Hungary, the Polish revolts, and the ethnically based movements among Balkan peoples for independence from the Ottoman Empire.

⁶⁴For Ottoman Borderlands see (Agoston, 2003; Ateş, 2013; Bartov & Weitz, 2013; Karpat & Zens, 2004; Kühn, 2003a, 2003b) and especially for the imperial strategies in Kurdish zones (Öz, 2003; Sinclair, 2003) among others.

Indeed, “migration has always been central to the making, unmaking, and remaking of states” (Brubaker, 1997, p. 155). And this “unmixing of people” provoked the dissolution of multinational empires by the shrinkage of the political space and the reconfiguration of political authority along national lines that resulted in the emergence of a set of new nation-states. As for the Ottomans, it has been demonstrated that most of the changes begun in the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century continued throughout the Hamidian period during which military force and inter-group rivalries would be put to use in order to secure the homogenization of the social fabric and absolute state sovereignty (Berkes, 1964, p. 255; Lewis, 1961). Zürcher already argued, “It is now generally recognized that the long reign of Abdülhamit II (1876–1909) in many ways laid the foundations of what became modern Turkey” (2010, p. 274). Over the period of Ottoman empire’s passage from an ‘empire of conquest’ to a ‘sedentary monarchy’ (Faroqhi, 2010; Kasaba, 2011; Zürcher, 2013), the different strategies that Ottoman’s used in each colonial territory, be it the Balkans, the Arab provinces or in the core areas, would become complementary maneuvers and take shape in mutual interaction as part of the imperial project. Also, the former colonial differences would be resuscitated and old methods would be restored in the trenchant transformation of the social structure to lay the foundations of a nation-state and national identity.

Here, the timing of the Ottoman imperial nation building project is also significant. Baker (2018, p. 61) points out that Ottoman imperial project began at the same time that settler colonialism and Atlantic slavery began and European trading companies, like the British and the Dutch East Indian, were expanding colonial power so a comparative history of empire might ask how these imperialisms were informed by each other. And indeed, the settler colonialism whose form took shape in sedentarization policies was an important part of centralization and nation-state formation in non-Western cases”. First of all, these wars would be the main defining factor of state building⁶⁵ and the national character not only in terms of religious but civilizational differences. During the course of the perpetual warfare between the Russians and Ottomans, a new border would be built on one hand separating the Orthodoxy and Islam, forcing the populations to clarify their religious affiliations and on the other the nomad and the settled (Aksan, 1999). Although the historical analysis attaches more importance to the Russian empire, one also should not forget the contest between the Sunni Ottoman and the Shiite Iranian identities places as two antagonistic identities which marked another abyssal

⁶⁵ For more detailed analyses on the relation between war and state-making (Skocpol et al., 1999; Tilly, 2017b) and for feminist perspectives (Charlton & Everett, 1989; Peterson, 1992; Pettman, 1991).

difference. The cross-border space that constituted the intersection of Ottoman, Persian and Russian empires was indeed the site of imperial differences and constant flux of communities and identities. Moreover, in the course of time, the diverse factions united under different churches would gain a 'national' character intermediated by imperial players which shaped politics of nation-building and national identities both in Ottoman empire and the rest of the imperial world around it (Karpas, 1973, 1982). Certainly, the struggle between various actors, the Russian, French, British and Ottoman to hold sway over religious groups, not only in the frontier zones between the Russian and Ottoman but also in the Middle East, very much similar to the contemporary geopolitics would define the future of these regions⁶⁶.

On one part, the insertion settlement of Muslim populations coming from the Balkans in strategic places in Anatolia would not only serve for the increase in agricultural production but also as the means to avoid the creation of territories of non-Muslim majority (İpek, 1994; Karpas, 1985, p. 198; Şeker, 2013). The inflow of Muslim populations with similar ethnic identities into Ottoman territories would further serve in the re-formulation of an Ottoman 'nationality', namely the idea Ottomanism, under the flag of religion but also in the construction of many ethnic or tribal nationalisms⁶⁷. So it would not be wrong to assert that "religious ethnicity underpins many nationalisms in the global South and the manner in which supposedly "universal" social formations can often be successfully co-opted for national purposes" (Cole & Kandiyoti, 2002, p. 191). As Sir Lewis Namier once said that "religion is a sixteenth-century word for nationalism" (Marx, 2005, p. 25). Modern nation-builders in fact invoked religion for purposes of social and political mobilization strategically using past symbols to subvert the present, and as Safran argues, which meant the replacement of one (tribal or imperial) political order by another, a national one (2007, p. 34; also Kedourie, 1993).

Simultaneously, the mobility as well as the economic, cultural and administrative autonomy of the Empire would become cause of concern as the state's need to centrally control its territories would increase. On the economic level during the imperial wars, the former borderlands, mountain passes, waterways and highland pasture lands considered 'worthless' or 'unused' until then would attain value for imperial administrations to be used as military outposts or economically developing areas over the course of confrontation between imperial interests (Blumi, 2003). In fact, the restructuring of the existing tax and land revenue systems

⁶⁶ Interestingly, the 'Sick man of Europe' was coined by the Russian Tsar Nicolas I around the same time to define the Ottoman Empire when it was losing territory on all sides against the rising imperial powers including Russia.

⁶⁷ (Berger & Miller, 2015b; Glenny, 2000; McCarthy, 2001; Yeğen, 2004)

would not only be related to the financing of the military power but also take place in relation with the centralization of the Empire that would transform the local administrative, legal and economic structures starting from the borders and in time spreading to the core territories. First, together with the migrations, the ethnic and religious identities became primary factors in the disputes that emerged during the appropriation of the lands by the Muslim refugees in which formerly Christian populations dwelt that were being opened up to cultivation by the central state (Fratantuono, 2019; Terzibaşoğlu, 2004).

Alongside the settlement of Muslim refugees, the simultaneous forced settlement of nomadic tribes would be brought into play in order to meet the current needs of the territorial state being built and be combined with military, economic and cultural concerns such as the monetization of the economy through tax farms and new land and property legislation to promote the changes. In the south and south-eastern borders of the Ottoman domains in the Arab territories, that separated a sedentary and nomadic populations as well as agricultural activity from nomadic pastoral herding quite similar to the borderlands with the Russian Empire, the clash between the central state and tribal confederations with relative autonomy would be the underlying reason of the forceful sedentarization of the tribes – including the Arab Bedouin as well as Kurdish communities⁶⁸. At the same time, the parallel economies that these local tribes had long established or “illegal” economic activities like smuggling and brigandage would also be targeted in an effort to economically integrate boundary areas (Blumi, 2003). Further, the new Land Code was almost certainly intended to offer nomadic tribes a bait to settle in easily acquirable arable lands” (M. V. Bruinessen, 1992, p. 182). Anderson (1984) notes that with these restructurings, the tribal organization of nomadic pastoralism and the kinship ties as their constitutive part were severely undermined.

Further, as Köksal (2006) draws attention the sedentarization of tribes and centralization was one of the key elements of nation-state formation under the colonial rule. This involved the increasing control of local administrations primarily applied in the Balkans and West and Central Anatolia dividing the former semi-autonomous regions into smaller units that can be easily controlled. Although, from the beginning the administrative readjustments were conceived to expand further into most of the Ottoman domains, including remote places such as new as Yemen and Libya which was eventually established by the Provincial Reform Law of 1864 (Akiba, 2007)⁶⁹. Put it briefly, in the course of the transformation towards a modern

⁶⁸ The list of works that approach sedentarization as a strategy of population control and colonization is long, see (Asan, 2016, 2019; Bektaş, 2019; Blumi, 2003; Çiftçi, 2018; Dündar, 2013; Halaçoğlu, 1988; Kasaba, 2011; Khoury & Kostiner, 1990; Köksal, 2006; Minawi, 2016; E.-J. Zürcher, 2013)

⁶⁹Also (Kühn, 2003a; Rogan, 2002)

state, “while the frontier might not have needed the state, by the second half of the 19th century the state needed the frontier” (Rogan, 2002, p. 9). The agency of the groups who have been marginalized under the labels of ‘bandits’, ‘savages’, the ones who resisted progress, in shaping these changes thus is not to be overlooked, contrary to any state-centered perspective is willing to admit (Blumi, 2003, p. 256).

Altogether, the major goal behind the modernization process was to extend state hegemony into the farthest lands that were not under state’s direct control and end the former local autonomous structures (McCarthy, 2001). As Scott (2014: xi) said referring to Ernst Gellner “‘Ethnicity’ and ‘tribe’ begin exactly where taxes and sovereignty end”. Calhoun reminds “The eradication of once quasi-autonomous cultures, or their reduction to mere regional dialects or local customs is continually echoed in the subordination of once vital (and perhaps still important) differences in the construction of national histories” (2007, p. 53). Thus, the migrant settlement polities in the Balkans, the North African provinces and Anatolia could be seen “as integral to Ottoman internal colonization, state building, territoriality, and population politics...to create, identify, and place “ideal” Ottomans, to categorize and make legible populations and spaces, and to disrupt and erase existing communities” (Fratantuono, 2019, p. 2). All things considered, modernization strategies were meant either to incorporate/assimilate certain identities relating them to certain spaces, time sequences, characters or to eliminate them; “...subdue[ing] the multiple, the discontinuous, difference into the realm of presence” (Vázquez, 2011, p. 28). Through a systematic production of geographical imagination and social engineering “...the space of the state was domesticated as the proper place of the nation. This was the spatial matrix within which local communities hence could be inscribed, fixed, and ranked” (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001, p. 11). The negative classifications and representations, for instance ‘backward’, served for this purpose while at the same time benefited an internal colonization process in which cultural domination was exacerbated with an economic one.

The concept of internal colonialism has been used globally in a wide array of contexts to explain diverse situations of geographically-based patterns of systematic inequality through material exploration and political subordination by the destruction of local values and systems of social organization of groups deemed ethnically or racially distinct than the dominant identities or their administration through a group of intermediaries co-opted from the colonized group; subjugation and acculturation via the imposition of the dominant culture, language, religion or ways of life that do not occur only through the use of violence but also

resorting to humanitarian discourses justified by the favorable impacts of civilization (Hind, 1984). Yet the increasingly frequent use of the concept issued from neo-Marxist scholars' analyses as part of a larger critique of development ideologies and dependency theories to outline systems of stratification that emerged in postcolonial societies in which class lines and cultural/civilizational distinctions overlapped and reinforced each other, particularly in Latin American and later on in the North America in Black and Chicano literature, to explain the racial effects of poverty and isolation on indigenous communities⁷⁰⁷¹⁷². These studies had strong political implications upholding the existence of 'suppressed nations' within nation-states and thus, it is not surprising that the internal colonialism has become increasingly popular among groups who claimed greater political power and autonomy (Stone, 1979)⁷³⁷⁴.

From this standpoint, internal colonialism has opened up to discussion a broader spatial and temporal model referring to dynamics that cross colonialism from economic and symbolic angles in the context of peripheral modernity, inter-national and global power systems; that is to think the notion of 'internal' both in relation to the impacts of global systemic and anti-systemic movements and within national context to understand the historical particularities (Martins, 2018). In this respect internal colonialism also highlights the connections between colonial conditions within the borders of modern nation-states and intersecting borderlands from the historic situations of indigenous and hybrid populations that inhabit these spaces (Chávez, 2013). Further, internal colonialism bridged the theories on settler colonialism,

⁷⁰ (Blauner, 1969; Casanova, 1965, 2006; Cotler, 1970; Gutiérrez, 2004; Hicks, 2004; Cusicanqui, 1991; Stavenhagen, 1965; Berghe, 1978; Williams, 1977)

⁷¹See (Martins, 2018, para. 12); "In the post-independence context, throughout the 19th and 20th, descriptive information were necessary for the management of the national territory and to the political and legal organization of the community and oligarchic groups. In the second moment, throughout the 20th and 21th the postcolonial thought moves progressively for the critique to the domination and exploitation in the national and international contexts. The intellectuals came to raise some deeper understandings regarding the issues of national development, dependency, imperialism, social movements and democracy. This is the context of the emergence of the Internal Colonial criticism. In the Asian and African contexts, oftentimes, Post-Independence thought coincides with the emergence of Internal Colonialism".

⁷² Internal Colonialism has been applied to many different contexts all around the world, from Middle-East and Africa to Asia, Australia to South-Africa, Canada among many others that include 'internal colonies' of Europe such as Wales, Scotland, Pyrenées. For a list of references on studies that are based on the notion of internal colonialism in various geopolitical frameworks see (Hicks, 2004; Hind, 1984).

⁷³ As Casanova expressed "Aparecieron ligados al surgimiento de la nueva izquierda de los años sesenta y a su crítica más o menos radical de las contradicciones en que habían incurrido los estados dirigidos por los comunistas y los nacionalistas del Tercer Mundo. Aún así, puede decirse que no fue sino hasta fines del siglo XX cuando los movimientos de resistencia y por la autonomía de las etnias y los pueblos oprimidos adquirieron una importancia mundial. Muchos de los movimientos de etnias, pueblos y nacionalidades no sólo superaron la lógica de lucha tribal (de una tribu o etnia contra otra) e hicieron uniones de etnias oprimidas, sino que plantearon un proyecto simultáneo de luchas por la autonomía de las etnias, por la liberación nacional, por el socialismo y por la democracia. La construcción de un Estado multiétnico se vinculó a la construcción de "un mundo hecho de muchos mundos" que tendría como protagonistas a los pueblos, los trabajadores y los ciudadanos (2006, pp. 411–412).

⁷⁴ For works on colonialism from different geopolitical contexts see (Comaroff, 1991; Das, 1978; Gouldner, 1977; Mettam & Williams, 2001; Murphy, 1991; Williams, 1977; Wolpe, 1975; Zureik, 1979)

borderlands theories and migration, disclosing how certain identities in contiguous societies under colonial conditions became racialized (Chávez, 2011; Veracini, 2013; and for a critique Byrd, 2011). Alternatively, other scholars used the term to show the overlooked analogous colonial relations between patterns of colonization in over-seas territories and that within metropolitan boundaries of the European or Western states in regards to its peripheries and pointed out the striking similarities in the discourses of internal colonization and European imperialism (Hechter, 1972)⁷⁵. In fact internal colonization was a common phenomenon in Europe surfacing in the states' social engineering and population management attempts by means of scientific, technological, economic and political interventionist policies during the interwar period (Grift, 2015). Johnson and Coleman expose how the creation of internal differences and othering processes constituted the groundwork to define the modern nation-state that entailed the intentional construction of “backward” regions, that were indeed deviant forms of life, as antithetical to national norms(2012, pp. 863–864)⁷⁶. They refer to Yiftachel (1998) who similarly disclosed the bordering processes within nation-states, the formulation and maintenance of internal frontiers, as instrumental both to justify interventions in economically and culturally ‘weaker’ regions and simultaneously forged the unified nation⁷⁷.

Meanwhile, these broad outlines of internal colonialism need to be studied with respect to context sensitive parameters. Verdery (1979), for instance, in her historical study of inter-ethnic tensions in the Habsburg empire noted the manner in which the dynamics of internal colonialism could vary according to a society's position within the world economy. In addition, Osterhammel (2010) proposed an examination taking into account the differences of internal colonialisms by introducing the idea of “colonialism without colonies”, which does not suggest the absence of relations of subjugation but situations when colonial dependence is not established between metropolises and far-away colonies but between dominant centers and subordinate peripheries situated in the interior of nation-states or spatially congruous empires.

⁷⁵Also Grift, 2015, p. 145. And for a special emphasis on the inquiry of German colonialism see (Kopp & Kopp, 2012; Liulevicius, 2009; Thum, 2013)

⁷⁶Also (Sidaway, 2000, pp. 18–19)

⁷⁷Scott's work, *Seeing Like a State* (1998, Chapter 2), also makes it abundantly clear that state-making was already an act of internal colonization making use of practices such as the creation of cadastral maps, the imposition of surnames, and the reorganization of urban space that served the common objectives of state simplification and legibility whether in colonial or ostensibly national settings. Eugene Weber in his book *'Peasants into Frenchmen'* (1976) in the same vein had suggested that nation-building itself can be understood as a colonial activity, an issue further raised by Fernand Braudel (1990). See also Dirlik; “Nations, even in their origins in Europe, implied the establishment of boundaries and the imposition on disparate local populations of uniform administrations that erased pre-existing practices of social regulation” (2002, p. 436) and (Krige & Wang, 2015)

Most of the time, colonial developments in these circumstances took shape under migratory and settlement schemes of groups of people loyal to the metropolis in frontier areas to make use of ‘unoccupied’ land, often far from empty but instead populated by people with diverse national or ethnic backgrounds or ways of life, to initiate economic and social progress and increase cultivation by means of modernization of agricultural production as well as security (Moses, 2008). In fact, prior to the internal colonialism as a concept gained prominence, Lenin (1956) had already depicted the Russian Empires colonization policies through the forced migration of populations from the center to its outer steppe regions in order to introduce commercial farming and its inseparable connection to the development of industry in its core regions . Later on Gouldner (1977) maintained the same line of arguments to prove the continuation of domestic colonization of the rural areas by the urban-centered power elite under the Stalinist rule and how peasants became Soviets’ Indians and the countryside a continental reservation.

Very much alike, the Ottoman colonial practices assumed increasingly at the end of the imperial rule the same patterns. Fratantuono (2019) mentions how the word ‘*kolonizasyon*’ (Tr. colonization) was being employed in the records of the Foreign Ministry for settlement permission under the 1857 regulations to refer to placing newcomers and immigrants as agricultural producers in areas of low population. Also the nomadic populations whose acculturation to the metropolitan culture was never desired by the elite (Aksan, 1999) that inhabited the colonial borderlands which were simultaneously buffer-zones against the competing powers would be used as fighting force to do the “dirty work of government” (Maroya, 2003). As Kasaba’s work (2011) exhibits, at the end of the empire the usually pastoral tribes which were most often in set at odds with the sedentarizing impulses of the imperial administration were leveraged to rid the empire of groups that were considered to be a peril to the unification of the nation. The *Hamidiye* cavalry units, a tribal militia composed of mostly Kurdish tribes that operated in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman empire would be formed around the same time and “was put into play in the complex game of power that involved the Ottoman state, Kurdish tribes, Russia, the British, and settled Armenian and Kurdish villagers (Klein, 2012b, p. 147). Both religion and the partial incorporation of menacing populations, such as the Kurds, and the pitting groups against each other paralleled by the changes in the economic and land structure would be the underlying reason behind the Armenian genocide. Göçek (2011), for instance, argues that not only Armenian but also the Greek and Kurdish issues initially all originated during the Ottoman era, specifically as a

consequence of the imperial interactions between the Russians and the Ottoman's at the end of 19th Century.

The same use of binaries between 'civilization' and 'underdevelopment' were to be continuously used by the Turkish republic as the justifying arguments of the state policies of migration and settlement that were closely connected with the nationalizing measures, with heavy implications on Kurdish populations⁷⁸. The policies and practices that perpetuate conditions of internal colonization visible not only in the symbolic violence but socioeconomic inequality including education, public safety, health, employment, cultural production *inter alia*, the plundering of nature and the exploitation of workforce would focus on the Kurdish areas of the Turkish state. İsmail Beşikçi (1990) would be the first scholar to name Kurdistan as an inter-state colony whose work inspired following scholarly analysis on the economic, social and political conditions of neo-colonialism of the Kurdish populations⁷⁹. Further, these works have proved systematic violence and the instrumentalization of indigenous populations to control the dissident elements to be the very nature of the state's ethos; whose undeniable continuity becomes more and more self-evident in the contemporary policies of the Turkish state.

Therefore, this work sustains that, the foundations of the Turkish nation-state's key characteristics would be laid already with the colonial difference constructed not only in religious terms but also through the encounter between the Ottoman center and its borderlands inhabited by the nomadic and tribal populations that defined the terms of national belonging. Such that, it is significant to take into account how the institutionalization and hierarchization of differences that define the boundaries of the national identity in the Ottoman context took shape across evolving circles of inclusion and exclusion predicated on differing ethnic and religious affiliations (Aksan, 1999)⁸⁰. Calhoun noted that nationalism in this sense "is not simply a claim of ethnic similarity but a claim that certain similarities should count as the definition of political community" (Calhoun, 1993, p. 299; see also Barth, 1998). What is called race in much of the postcolonial literature is in reality a variant of ethnicity and ethnicity itself is not only a category that differentiates groups linguistically and culturally but in its core serves in the hierarchical categorization of various dimensions of identity that are territorially fixed and conflated into a signifier that serves in the disqualification of certain

⁷⁸ (Ayata, 2011; S. Bozkurt, 2014; Heper, 2007; Ülker, 2008; Üngör, 2008b)

⁷⁹See (Yarkin, 2019)(Yarkin, 2019) for more.

⁸⁰Also for the construction of national identity in colonial/post-colonial contexts see; (Eisenstein, 2003)

life-styles from membership to the national community (D. R. Reynolds, 1994)⁸¹⁸². Moreover, ethnicity is invented in the course of cultural, political, and economic struggles during the construction of the nation, working up the two as mutually constitutive of each other (Alonso, 1994; B. Anderson, 1983; Sollors, 1989). And that being said, this should not mean the disregard of with what consequences ethnicity was ‘invented’ (Rosaldo, 1990, p. 27). Alonso (1994) raises the question that the creation of subordinated ethnic subjects with respect to their asymmetric incorporation and appropriation and their differentially situated territoriality in relation to spaces of production, distribution, and consumption during the imagining and building of nations should be tackled with greater attention. Thereby it becomes possible to make sense of ethnicity, on one hand, as partly an effect of the particularizing projects of state formations that produce hierarchized forms of imagining peoplehood (Duara, 1996). And on the other, the role of the reciprocal construction of ethnicity and nationalism, especially within anti-colonial struggles that embrace an identity of the self through the countering of colonial oppression and negation of prior identities which provide the basis for contemporary self-identifications, comes into view⁸³. However, Dirlik (2002) reminds that this identification creates an indifference in terms of the reconfiguration of these identities through contemporary restructuring of power evident in the changing practices of capitalism and the nation-state. Geertz (1967) also asserts that ethnic sentiments become politicized and indeed artificially constructed when formerly autonomous societies are forced to reorganize into state-level social systems and the emerging global structure of capitalism through colonization. That is why, as Calhoun maintained, ethnicity thought in terms of the basis of a dominant identity implies autonomy tied to a modernizing state while in respect to communalisms and tribalisms that involve kinship relations and group solidarity are seen as reactionary, anti-modern and divisive (Calhoun, 1993, 2007).

Though, it is relevant to note how ethnicity came to replace what formerly had been subsumed under the tribal or cultural, as a consequence of the dismissal of the word ‘tribe’ in the 70s by many scholars who considered tribal structures in non-Western settings analogous to ethnicity as it appeared in Western societies in an effort to eliminate the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy in anthropological perspectives (L. D. King, 2002). In that

⁸¹See also (Alonso, 1994; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996; Szwed, 1975) and for race (Gilroy, 1990)

⁸² Chakrabarty remind that the administration of ethnic identities by the political institutions needed the same fixed and discrete categories that were used in racist discourses and politics and were turned into divisions that are not permeable that created chasms between diverse groups which cannot be drawn together. In this manner, he highlighted the parallelism between race and ethnicity as categories that define difference and maintain subordination (Chakrabarty, 2002, pp. 95–96).

⁸³ (Anderson, 1983; Gellner & Breuilly, 2009); and for a perspective based on race and nationalist see; (Dirlik, 2002; Fanon, 1952, Chapter 5)

respect, it would be pertinent to question whether this might come to mean that there were other forms of identity more pertinent than ethnicity in the (pre)colonial period. The fact that many of the ethnic groups are not only defined in relation to the state as subordinate internal and cross-cutting identities, but also the states polities were intended to discipline multi-ethnic populations in composition is overlooked by many postcolonial analyses. Further, alongside the central place that ethnicity occupied rather than race in the South, the equally pivotal role of forced migrations in the overlapping imperial spaces is central to the understanding of the dehumanization of the subjects of ethno-political violence and the hardening of symbolic boundaries through the translation of these multiple identities into ‘racialized differences’ (Baker, 2018).

Within the scope of the Ottoman empire, Kasaba’s work exposes how tribal identities came to be codified as ethnic alterity and highlights how tribes and state took shape in a reciprocal yet antagonistic relationship in the continuous conflicts of legitimacy and ruling power (Kasaba, 2011). This idea is certainly not new. Ibn Khaldun, as early as the 14th Century, in his work *Muqaddimah* (1378) had already studied the rise and fall of the state through his theorizing of the civilizational differences, that he defined as *umran*, between nomadic tribes and sedentary societies; the former defined as *badawa* and the later as *hadara* in his thinking⁸⁴. Yet, *umran* was not the equivalent of civilization in the European hierarchical sense but a process which escaped binary conditions and that delineated manifold modes of living in relation to diverse communities (Schaebler, 2004). For him tribal groups held a strong *assabiyah*, solidarity or group cohesion, among members whose core is the lineage or the community itself, which enabled them to defeat sedentary people, those settled in urban areas. *Assabiyah* was not just a feeling but a collective action (Hassan, 2010). Khaldun predicated that in the nomadic tribal civilization the hierarchies or subordination did not exist and each one of the members of the community shared the reputation of the group and yet these tribesmen gradually became absorbed into a sedentary lifestyle, to which he attributed all forms of social and moral corruption that came with the luxury normally found in the city, and consequently *assabiyah* eroded while a sort of hierarchy developed among the members, with certain individuals achieving political office or land and others having less power, authority and property (Önder & Ulaşan, 2018). So in fact Khaldun’s idea on state’s appearance was a cyclical construction in which ruling tribes settled into a life of sedentary existence and formed hierarchical structures or dynasties causing their decline to be replaced by other nomadic groups with

⁸⁴ Ernst Bloch ([1935] 1962) made similar comments about how representations of self and the construction of life worlds related to ideologies of sedentary life and mobility.

strong solidarity. In such manner, civilization was laid out in multiple forms and temporalities that coexisted, interacted, interrelated and mutually defined each other. There is evidence that Ottoman's were influenced by Ibn Khaldun's ideas on statecraft (Gratien, 2015; Kafadar, 2001; Kasaba, 2011), especially during the 18th century, and applied it selectively to understand particular social arrangements and how these could be altered to secure state's authority (Fleischer, 1983), and hence the whole rhetorical devices used by them during the 'civilizing missions' of the late period in order to avoid being overthrown by the nomadic tribes that were part of the empire. Nonetheless, the term 'civilization' started being used in varying meanings in the beginning of the 19th Century when the Ottoman officials and diplomats started building stronger connections with Western Europe⁸⁵. The Ottomans used the conception of civilizational difference that Khaldun laid out between the sedentary and nomadic societies and modes of life in a way that settled and urbanized cultures were thought superior and amalgamated it with the European ideas of a universal civilization, a higher level of social order opposite of ignorance, stagnation, primitiveness and an unproductive existence which was essential for the modernization and development of the Empire and yet eliminating its Christian traces (Karpas, 2001). This interwoven ideas of various civilizations within the Ottoman framework would be the driving force behind the modernization and the-state making.

This being said the unitary state that was being constructed was impracticable without some co-operation from the provinces, particularly from the local notables. As far as the tribal populations were concerned, Ottomans found it easier to control the far away domains— both territorially and administratively -through the leaders of these inherently mobile groups (Kasaba, 2011). For instance, the Tribal School established in Istanbul to enroll the sons of leading tribal sheikhs from Syria, Arabia, Libya, and Kurdistan was an Ottoman device to transform tribesmen into Ottomans ⁸⁶.

Alternately, in the Balkan provinces, the expansion of the state school system, the imperial schools, together with the new administrative structures in the provinces, provided the local notables with the opportunity to obtain offices in the provincial bureaucracy that paved the way for the structuring of a new ruling class and their incorporation into the Ottoman system and in return the securing of the balance of power between the imperial center and the peripheries⁸⁷. After all, being Ottoman meant having some kind of relationship with the ruling

⁸⁵ (Baykara, 2007; Güler, 2006; Ramm, 2017; Schaebler, 2004)

⁸⁶ (Hourani, 1969; Rogan, 2002). See also (Deringil, 1998, p. 67):“the transformation of ‘peasant into Frenchmen’ paralleled the ‘civilizing’ or ‘Ottomanizing’ of the nomad”

⁸⁷ (Akiba, 2007; Deringil, 1991; Evered, 2012; Finkel, 2007)

dynasty and being part of its administrative structure (Mikhail & Philliou, 2012). Moreover, the military modernization and the structuring of the education system were the two main areas that the Ottoman empire got more and more involved with Western Europe. With the modernization efforts of the army arose the need of creating military academies to educate the recruits, a special treasury to pay them and modern hospitals to heal them (Göçek, 2011). And from these institutions part of the administrative elites of the CUP (the Committee of Union and Progress), also known as the Young Turks, who compelled the constitutional period of the Ottoman empire and became nationalist forerunners of the Turkish republic would emerge⁸⁸. The nationalists, typically were members of subordinated ethnic, religious groups who had been educated in the imperial capital, employed in bureaucracies or somehow significantly involved with the imperial system (Calhoun, 1993). And anti-colonial nationalisms would be bestirred by these native functionaries who were both of the new structure of power and shut out from its rewards, and were keenly aware by virtue of their colonial education of the fundamental differences that distinguished colonial rule from national politics in Europe (Dirlik, 2002, p. 436). In the same manner, Young Turks were a constitutive element of the Muslim groups who lost their homelands at the end of the Balkan wars, resenting the loss of status and privileges against the non-Muslim minorities whom they saw as benefiting from the change in the imperial rule with the notion of equality brought by Ottomanism and reforms (Duguid, 1973; E.-J. Zürcher, 2002). Further, the national identification based on Turkishness framed by Young Turks would eventually pave the way to the elimination of the non-Muslim communities – especially the Greek Rums and the Armenian - through collective violence committed in the name of establishing a nation-state (Göçek, 2011, p. 4). Gellner's proposition on nations being an invention of nationalism, a simple awakening too self-consciousness, is questionable yet he might have been right in suggesting that nationalisms needed some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on (1964, p. 168). These constructions played on the prior differences and hierarchies, not only ethnic like the vast majority of postcolonial analyses argued but also the multiple transversal identities, by marking internal Others existence in order to construct the self-identity of nations⁸⁹.

Meeker upholds a matching argument for the Ottoman empire;

So the Empire generated a state people even before the Republic generated a state people. The capacity of the imperial project to mobilize the population would have a direct bearing on the capacity of the national project to mobilize the population. For to reform a state people that already existed, it would be necessary to address the very elements that composed that state people, replacing in each instance an

⁸⁸ (Aksan, 2006; Bozarslan, 2010; Hanioglu, 2001; Hanioglu, 1995; Zürcher, 2014; 2002)

⁸⁹ (Alonso, 1994; Balibar, 1990; Chatterjee, 1993b, 1993a)

imperial formula with the equivalent of a national formula: hats for turbans, shoes for slippers, tubs for hamams, a romanized script for an Arabic script, a secular law for a sacred law. This means that the Republic would inevitably feature a derivative and imitative character with reference to the Empire (Meeker, 2002, pp. vxii–iii).

Raccioppi and See (2003) evidence the ways in which colonialism and post-colonial states structured ethnic confines out of kinship networks and how these were used to exacerbate inter-ethnic rivalries by referring to Horowitz's (1985) work which elucidates how claims to legitimacy of colonial policies, simultaneously consolidated group identities and created divisions of 'advanced' and 'backwards' groups. And this hierarchy of different modes of living and time became the basis of independent nation states that continue to operate within the old colonial legacies (Duara, 1996, p. 6). Historical inquiries on the Armenian Genocide have already explored in length the continuities between the Ottoman social engineering and population politics increasingly getting apparent during the *Hamidian* period and the following Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918) as well as the Kemalist era (1919–1950)⁹⁰. So while the anti-colonial claims of the state elites set out nationalism as an ideology to be a form of egalitarianism, this on one hand obfuscated domination and violence as the basis of the state-building and on the other rationalized the social relations that are organized through hierarchical placement of peoples under nation-state system (Sharma & Wright, 2008). Notwithstanding, nationalism is a matter that cannot be narrowed down merely into the singular and particular ideals of nationalizing elites and instead should be tackled as a multi-faceted construction in relation to different ideologies and power centers and various groups of people embedded in these as actors holding power to influence this construction (Ahiska, 2010). The context in which multiple nationalisms emerged in the Ottoman empire likewise was a process shaped by numerous actors from state elites, to nationalist activists, entrepreneurs and colonizers, ideologues, locals and newcomers and equally a breeding ground of opposition to these emerging nation-state ideals (Kafadar, 1995). Although with the Young Turk revolution "individuals were forced to pick a side – Muslim or Christian, Greek or Bulgarian, Arab or Turk... there were some, perhaps many, that refused to opt for the national project (Philliou, 2008). Also, until the I WW, the transformation in political representation before stiffening in nation-state form had gone through experiments of some sort of local federalism accommodating the interests of diverse local elites and local practices that a perspective assuming an inevitable transition from empire to nation-state eschews⁹¹. Instead, Abou-El-Haj (2005) suggests to consider nation-state as one of several choices for the

⁹⁰ (Akçam, 2013; Dündar, 2013; Fratantuono, 2019; Gingeras, 2009; Şeker, 2007; Üngör, 2012a)

⁹¹ (Abou-El-Haj, 2005; Kostopoulou, 2016; Mikhail & Philliou, 2012; Tezcür, 2010)

political re-organization of the society during historic junctures of transition, and therefore acknowledging the existence of alternatives.

This implies first conceding the state-building as a process that is neither inevitable nor linear but historical and contingent that requires constant mediation to keep them going (Pettman, 1996). And on the other hand, analyzing the historical conditions of the appearance of nation-state as the dominant organizational form prepares the grounds for its demise and the eventual materialization of alternative spatial and political formations (Gupta, 2003). After all, not all the states discarded alternative forms of organizing power (Vickers, 2006a).

Further, what is more pressing is to affront the interpretations of modernity exclusively in reference to state formation, such as the literature on multiple modernities, that limits the multiplicity of modern condition to the multiplicity of national routes to it, by bringing in the global context of multiple, divergent but interconnected trajectories of socio-spatial change shaped in relations and dynamics at play with other wider regional, national and transnational arenas that enable the understanding of critical practices (Delanty, 2006a; Hart, 2002). The modernizing nationalist narratives already privilege a certain conception of nation, also at display in anti-colonial nationalisms, which on one hand overrode other identities within a society-such as religious, racial, linguistic, class, gender, or even historical ones-to encompass these differences in a larger identity and on the other ostracized the communal and political constructs of certain groups, the forms of government, economic organization or way of life proposed and lived by them out of history and modernity (Mignolo, 2011). However, even when such a neutralization has been temporarily achieved, the way in which the nation is represented and voiced by different self-conscious groups is often very different (Duara, 1996; Walby, 2003). The colonized whose incorporation into the dominant ideals of nation-state has never been complete as they were never thought of as part of the colonizing 'nation', kept fostering alternative collective communities and accounts of nationhood within the ambiguous and transformable borders of national identity (Duara, 1996; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996). Keyder (2018), in his inquiry of the Ottoman empire's legacy, calls into question the recounting of the story of state formation by looking instead into the histories of the subaltern, which he suggests still focuses on the formation of the nation-state and instead propounds exploring historical alternatives at the moment of collapse of empires. In this manner, it becomes possible to focus on the non-official imaginative geographies and spatial relations that "provide an analysis of the 'other side' to the state project of constituting national landscape" (Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996, p. 112) that revoke the

incommensurability of other forms of organizing life that could not be totally worked into the naturalized collusion of people and territory under the nation form. In that vein, modernity might be seen as a condition of translation that arise out of the encounter of the self and the Other, local with global, past and present in response to civilizational and historical interactions as well as conflicts (Delanty, 2006b). Dealing with modernity, not as the product of the unique conditions of local narratives, regardless of its geopolitical location, allows seeing the bigger picture composed of global histories that are not ranked and categorized according to linear understanding of progress versus backwardness but as intersecting and cyclical processes. Then, it also becomes plausible to give weight to the realities that presided the same spatial and temporal framework of Eurocentric modernities and yet excluded from official narratives as alternatives which unseat universal and almost sacrosanct truths that confine the imagination.

In conclusion through the inquiry of the Ottoman colonialism this work pretends to disclose first the contexts of colonial encounters, imperialism and nation-state building that unfolded during the 19th century Ottoman Empire, which was to be taken over by the Turkish Republic carrying on the same civilizing logic and similar strategies of an imperial and colonial mentality manifest in the ethnic/religious Othering, dispossession and the extermination of ethnicized elements, starting with the Greek Rum and Armenians and continuing with the Kurds, and the eradication of autonomous structures as constitutive to this modernizing project. Respectively the Ottoman and Turkish cases will be approached not just as a means to broaden the Eurocentric reading of modernity but as a moment in which distinct social and political forms which could not be completely colonized and thus contested dominant modern/colonial and nation-state centric world system unrolled simultaneously. Through the inquiry of the colonial conditions that externalized the sociopolitical organization immanent in the historical memories and life forms of various Kurdish communities as well as their continuity which bear in themselves decolonizing potentials, this work also aims to contribute to the probability of restoring of much more inclusive and liberating alternatives that undermine universal and dominant forms of organizing life and override their inevitability.

III.III.The Ottoman's as a World-Empire

The Ottoman Empire ruled over the vast territories of the Eastern Europe, Asia Minor, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa, its domains spread over three continents during almost over six centuries (1299-1923). It was in the middle of the land and overseas trade routes that linked Asia, Africa and Europe, hence at the crossroads of local and global flux of people, goods, ideas and various identities that both constituted the empire's social structure and created the spaces of encounter between other imperial powers. During centuries, the Ottoman Empire expanded over new territories incorporating multi-confessional, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic populations under its rule. Administratively, the Ottomans inherited forms and institutional elements of different empires that existed previously -be it Mongolian, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk and Islamic-⁹²;; reworked and merged these into the imperial structure and through time adapted themselves to the processes taking place both in the direct neighboring territories of the Persian, Russian, Habsburg empires and the others with which it had a continuous relationship whether through wars, trade or diplomacy. In other ways, the well-connected domains of the Ottoman empire were entrenched in a network of imperial encounters that differed in scale and intensity as part of the worldwide sociopolitical and territorial transformations.

Undoubtedly, this is not to disregard how the Ottomans established their rule both in the core and the borderland territories through military conquests but also by strategies of colonization, to spread a Muslim-Turkic character in the new lands, by the use of pioneer *dervishes*- the members of mystical brotherhood- the sedentarization of nomadic populations, particularly Turkomans, and deportation of 'hostile' elements in the annexed territories especially in the Balkan lands that served in the homogenization of the rural tissue and the transposition of the imperial mode of urban life. While dervish sheikhs played a significant role in the spread of Islam by enabling the incorporation of pagan and local non-Muslim beliefs into popular Islam, thus making the conversion more palatable to the new Muslims, they also played a considerable part in the establishment of cultural, economic, and even political institutions in the new territories, foundation of urbanized settlements as well as increasing agricultural production on the lands that were given to them in return for their military and missionary

⁹²) There are numerous works on the formation of the Ottoman empire, of which the most well-known are the studies of (Barkey, 2008; H. Bozarslan, 2013; Goffman, 2002; Inalcik, 1997; Lowry, 2003; Wittek, 1982) for their scholarly quality

services in the conquest⁹³. Further, both the settlement of the nomadic groups and *sürgün* (Tr. Deportation) of rebellious groups, whether Muslims or Christians from the occupied Balkan lands -peasants with insufficient or infertile lands, the poor, the idlers and the nomads- to distant parts of the empire as preconditions of security, expansion or increased agricultural production were complementary methods of Ottoman conquest⁹⁴. This way, Bozarslan (2013) states, the colonization meant not only a population engineering but also the subjugation of non-Muslims to new modes of life, that is the imperial core's traits of an ideal society. On the other hand, the Ottomans incorporated large numbers of preexisting Christian feudal notables into the military and ruling class, functioning as local administrators and granted them fief lands in return for an annual military service (Inalcik, 1954; Lowry, 2003). Besides, the Ottomans adopted the *devşirme* system, a "child levy", and indeed a form of slavery, signifying the selection of the children of their Balkan Christian subjects who were then converted to Islam, taught Turkish and trained in the military or civil service of the empire, to be sent back to the places where they came from to operate as Janissaries -the elite infantry units (Lowry, 2008). Indeed, this carrot and stick policy, the incorporation both by force and the adaptation of the imperial system to the local needs integrating a patchwork of regional traditions and customs paralleled by providing privileges such as land concessions to the local elites that collaborated in the conquest of the frontier territories, who would then become the march lords of the empire, served in the integration of notables in the Ottoman system. (Barkan, 1938; Lowry, 2013). To be able to govern this multiplicity of practices, peoples and territories, the Ottoman model of governance was based on a constellation of local notables, religious functionaries and military leaders, called *ayan*, notably present in the borderland provinces equipped with their own private militias, with tax-gathering privileges and bestowed with political authority that governed the empire as a whole in the 17-18th centuries and constituted a tributary hub-and-spoke structure that connected the central Ottoman state with the rest of its territories⁹⁵. In the Arab provinces, this group of urban intermediaries was composed of sheikhs, tribal and military leaders, rich merchant families and *ulema* -religious teachers of the Islamic community such as theologians, canon lawyers (muftis), judges (qadis), professors (H. Bozarslan, 2013; Hourani, 1969; Karpas & Zens, 2004). So, the

⁹³ See (O. L. Barkan, 1980; M. Belge, 2005; Inalcik, 1954). Also as Lowry (2013, p. 6) claims; "It was there [in the Balkans] that the state's institutions were forged, and it is against this background that we must seek to retrace the real Ottoman "origins," i.e., within a geographical and cultural milieu in which the Muslims themselves were a distinct minority.

⁹⁴ See (Barkan, 1942; Finkel, 2007; Halaçoğlu, 1988; Inalcik, 1954; Orhonlu, 1987; Şeker, 2013)

⁹⁵ There is a lengthy literature on the Ottoman Empire's administrative system but for basic and well founded works see (Barkey, 2008; Faroqhi, 2010; Hourani, 1969); alongside studies of Şerif Mardin, Halil İnalcık and İlber Ortaylı on Ottoman empire

Ottoman colonial administration in order to guarantee its dominion, reinforced and sometimes even reinvented the power of traditional authorities, and in a very pragmatic way allowed the pre-Ottoman local communal organizations and their leaders to rule – evidently to a certain extent but with a relatively large *marge de manœuvre*- in their own territory (Agoston, 2003) as long as they abode by the rules of the Sultan and fulfilled their fiscal duties. This decentralized administrative system facilitated incorporating new conquered lands and co-existence of numerous communities with linguistic, religious, and ethnic differences without being separated by ethno-nationalist conceptions. Individuals of diverse backgrounds Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Turks, Laz, Circassians, Georgians, Bosnians, Albanians, Arabs, Persians, Jews and -not to mention some smaller groups of Hungarians, Poles, Russians, Italians, Frenchmen and Germans -built and sustained the imperial project over its lifetime and were part of its governing institutions in different levels (Kafadar, 1995). Thus, “Ottomans negotiated between the contradictory, yet also complementary, visions and organizational forms of urban and rural; nomad and settled; Islamic and non-Muslim; Sunni Muslim, Shiites, Sufi sects; scribes and poets; artisan and merchants; peasants and peddlers; and bandits and bureaucrats” (Barkey, 2008, p. 7). This meant that multiple laws and customs, forms of revenue management functioned differently at the same time, and subgroups did not follow the same legal statutes under imperial rule negotiating within multiple frontiers that created direct and indirect vertical relations of imperial integration coexistent with horizontal relations of segmentation (Barkey & Gavrilis, 2016; Karpat, 1982).

This medley of social fabric was controlled and managed under the *millet* system that distinguished the numerous communities as Muslim and non-Muslim subjects no matter where they resided in the empire whose rights as groups were represented by intermediaries responsible from governing their communities in terms of religious and legal realms and in resolving internal and external conflicts⁹⁶. During the late Ottoman period, the number of recognized *millets* mounted to thirteen, each headed by its *millet Başı*, the primary representative directly accountable to the sultan and responsible for collecting the tax from his followers and each millet was a hierarchically organized religious body with a decidedly

⁹⁶This is not to imply that Muslims and non-Muslims were entirely equal; for example the non-Muslim communities' whose freedom and rights were considered to be guaranteed by the Muslims were liable to an extra tax burden, the *cizye*, that the Muslims were exempt from or only the Muslims could bear arms. Bozarslan (2013) stated “Si l’empire connaît des phases de grande tolérance, le système zimmi n’introduit pas moins une inégalité structurelle, qui se traduit dans nombre de domaines, du droit de porter des armes ou de monter à cheval à celui de construire des lieux de culte, ou encore à l’obligation de porter des couleurs distinctes. Certains documents du début du XVI^e siècle montrent également qu’il est interdit, sous peine d’exécution capitale, de dresser les croix sur des chemins ou de faire sonner les cloches . Il est vrai qu’on n’observe pas de prosélytisme auprès des communautés non musulmanes de l’empire (à la différence de la pression agressive de l’État à l’encontre des musulmans non sunnites)”.

political function (Aboona, 2008; Masters, 2004). There was an overarching Muslim millet but no Turkish, Arab or Kurdish one, the Orthodox Christians included Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Arabs, Bosnian Serbs, and the Christians of southern Albania, while Jews and Armenians composed the rest of the non-Muslim subjects alongside Nestorians, Chaldeans, Syrians (Catholic and Orthodox) who were considered different communities (Belge, 2005; Lewis, 1961; Luke, 1936). On the other hand, this seemingly autonomous structure benefited the state control over diverse groups through religious leaders that acknowledged sultan's authority and acting in accordance with state's interests while isolating these communities from each other and thereby preventing the consolidation of large-scale territorial movements against the state (Akça, 2007; Barkey & Gavrilis, 2016; H. Bozarslan, 2013).

Nevertheless, this administrative and fiscal structure and the identitary arrangements that upheld the social fabric of the expanding empire started being remodeled over the period that the Ottoman s started losing ground in imperial politics. Indeed, the Ottomans who impelled European explorations to search for new routes to access raw materials that came from Asia with the take over of Constantinople in 1453 and thus collaterally take part in the colonization of the Americas, in the 17th century, like other European imperial states such as Venice and the Habsburg Empire, began to struggle with limited financial and organizational capacity to maintain and defend dispersed territories. This was compounded by a structural shift in the focus of world trade from the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic and East Asia, favoring the ascendant imperial powers such as the English and the Dutch (Finkel, 2005; Goffman, 2002; Ortaylı, 2004). Abou- El- Haj (2005) propounds that the 17th Century actually had been the outset of privatization of property and the experimentation with taxing to increase surplus product and resources for the benefit of the ruling elites and wealthy provincials that both disrupted the old administrative and political order and changed in the relationship of the state's subjects to the land. He suggests that *Tanzimat* reforms that aimed to respond to economic crises and the changing world political economy were in reality a culmination of state practices that had their roots in the aforesaid 17th Century and were not only a consequence of the European models for change as advocated by many historians. Further he suggests that not only due to the peasant rebellions against revenue extraction and privatization ending up in intense social conflicts but also in the face of external aggression, the central state had become greatly dependent on the provincial magnets for security and armed forces in the wars with foreign powers. In practice, over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries local dynasts and notables had amassed significant power vis-à-vis the central state

(Özkaya, 1994). Karpat (2003), confirms that in the following 18th and 19th centuries, the privatization of the land regime and the emergence of the new elites would indeed constitute the foundation of the current national states in the Balkans and parts in the Middle- East.

Certainly, in the 18th century the empire would start losing the first lands to the Russian empire, and fail to keep possession of its Balkan lands at its frontier with the Habsburgs, due to nationalist revolts. These losses would follow at an increasing pace over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, for instance during the years of Scramble for Africa that would be rounded off with the Berlin Conference in 1884, carving up the continent into countries that disregarded the cultural and linguistic, geographic boundaries of the indigenous populations and superimposing arbitrary lines which merged disparate groups within the confines of nation-states, the Ottoman Empire would loose most of its African territories as a consequence of negotiations between world imperial powers.

At the economic front, during the 19th Century the Ottoman empire also would go through the Great Economic Depression of 1873–96, the largest long-term price deflation in modern history, resulting in overwhelming trade and budgetary deficits. And around 30 percent of the entire government revenue went directly into the coffers of the European-controlled Public Debt Administration (Akarlı, 2006). Further, the former system of bilateral treaties named capitulations that conceded trading prerogatives such as tax exemptions and low customs to non-Muslim subjects that traded with European partners were extended and became more and more frequent in the hope of securing the empire’s place in the world-economy centered on Europe⁹⁷ preparing the grounds for the penetration of European capital in Ottoman markets by facilitating trade activities of European merchants as well as a number of local ‘*protégés*’, some of whom were authorized to operate full-scale *fondachi*, factories, and similar trading ‘colonies’ on Ottoman soil and restricted the empire’s control over its economy (Howard, 2016; Özsu, 2012). For instance, the Levant Company, a British chartered company monopolizing especially on textile exports with established commercial centers in Aleppo, as well as Constantinople, Alexandria and Smyrna controlled not only the eastern Mediterranean trade, regulated the tariff for the price at which the European merchandise sent to the Levant were to be sold but the mercantile consul had jurisdiction over civil and commercial disputes among the company employees, workers as well as other British citizens residing in the Ottoman Empire and was one of the reasons of British interest in the Middle East and the Mediterranean lands of the Ottoman Empire in order to secure the “overland” route between

⁹⁷ For the terms of most capitulations see (Bozarslan, 2010; Susa, 1933; Boogert, 2005)

the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, as the most important route for communications between London and India (Epstein, 2015; Wood, 2015)⁹⁸. Moreover, other imperial powers such as France with longstanding economic investments and military ties and Germany with railroad-building initiatives, along the last centuries of the Ottoman Empire, became influential actors in the empire's internal politics (Strang, 1996, p. 38). In consequence, both the debt-accumulation and the relations of dependence engendered by the influence of a variety of Western laws and economic dominance established conditions for the Ottoman empire similar in many respects to those in operation in colonial and quasi-colonial territories (İslamoğlu & Perdue, 2009).

On the other hand, these ascending powers all sought to a certain extent the existence of the Ottoman empire to consolidate a sphere of colonial influence in its territories, albeit in different forms than previous periods of colonial supremacy, and also to prevent Russia from gaining ground. A look back in the instance of the Crimean War (1853-1856) discloses for example how the displacement of populations along religious lines was actually part of global imperial politics. During this war, the French and the British got involved on the side of the Ottomans against Russia as part of the strategy of the former two to hinder the latter's advance (Figes, 2011) and what happened in the Ottoman- Russian borderlands was the re-location of the contest between Russia and France over the privileges of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in the Middle East, Holy Lands of today's Palestine⁹⁹, unsurprisingly very much similar to contemporary geopolitics. The protection of the Christian populations would be a frequently used narrative when it comes to the foreign intervention in the Ottoman Empire, yet the differentiation and control of the populations along religious lines was not the result of the encroachment of European powers but also part of Ottoman empire's imperial strategies. Ottomanism was propounded in the 19th Century *Tanzimat* period in the belief to inspire the loyalty of non-Muslim groups and avoid separatist tendencies by forming a direct and identical relationship between the government and its

⁹⁸For another view of foreign intervention through the global adjustment of the economic, financial, political and legal systems as a form of informal imperialism and extraterritorial control as marks of the 19th century imperialism focusing on the European imposed tariff regimes, agreements and concessions favoring European companies in non-Western contextst such as Ottoman Empire, China, Thailand, and Iran among others see (Kayaoglu, 2010). And also Strang (1996, p. 39); "Turkish public finances were run by the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, a body staffed largely by European officials. The Sublime Porte traded reform for European guarantees. For example, an unpopular edict providing for religious freedom for Christians was worked out by British, French, and Austrian ambassadors in 1856; its promulgation facilitated Ottoman entry into the Concert of Europe"

⁹⁹ Interestingly, the 'Sick man of Europe' was coined by the Russian Tsar Nicolas I around the same time to define the Ottoman around the time that it was loosing territory on all sides against the rising imperial powers including Russia.

citizens under a uniform and centralized administration working with its own rational principles of justice, applied equally to all and yet ended up breaking the former millet system by transforming multi ethnic and religious groups into minorities and majorities¹⁰⁰. On the other hand, the equality of all citizens on one hand was a strategy to thwart the influence of Great Powers on the religious groups in the Ottoman Empire and on the other was considered to be means to mobilize the masses behind the state against the local notables to undermine their role as intermediaries (Heper, 1980; Hourani, 1969; Karpas, 1972). Nonetheless, contrary to the Ottoman's expectations, the promotion of liberal economic policies and the freedom of private enterprise, together with the deviation of the churches from the religious activities towards engagement with states legitimizing nationalist principles would stimulate the ethnicization of non-Muslims communities that prepared fertile ground for the developments of separatist tendencies (Kamouzis, 2012; Karpas, 2001).

All of this, on the other hand, is not to reduce the Ottoman history to the history of wars or suggest that European imperial infringement was the only reason behind its demise but show that the empire was embedded in the imperial contest between various centers of power, involving both control and leveraging of religious identities¹⁰¹ and economic competition in the course of changing configurations of capitalist accumulation, as part of new colonial arrangements were no more taking place in forms of direct occupation but foreign interventions that all reshaped the Middle- East.

In the second half of the 19th Century the Ottoman government started undertaking a series of modernizing reform to adapt the state to the modernizing global political system as well as to changing capitalist economies and conditions of the world markets that included the reorganization of the fiscal system, a new land code as well as a common measurement system, the foundation of a central bank and stock exchange, the construction of roads, canals, rail lines, telegraph networks and post offices, the foundation of printed press, together with the foundation of ministries such as education, public health, the establishment of mass schooling with the first universities and scientific academies, the realization of the first population census and the implementation of universal conscription. Over this period, the government paid particular attention to the construction of modern transportation and

¹⁰⁰See (Çolak, 2006; Heper, 1980, p. 198; Karpas, 1982, 2018; McCarthy, 2001; Onar, 2009; Quataert, 2005)

¹⁰¹For instance Akarlı highlights: "In contrast to the basically liberal mood that had prevailed earlier in the century, religious fervor was becoming an increasingly conspicuous aspect of internal and international politics in the age of high imperialism with rapid industrialization and its concomitant social problems. It is not a coincidence that the Dreyfus affair, the Zionist movement, and the Irish question emerged in this period, just as the laicist French government made peace with the church and worked hand in glove with militant missionaries around the world." (2006, p. 350)

communication networks and economic infrastructure investments in Anatolia as well as the Arab and North African territories which have always been the vital locations that provided the capital with primary assets such as gold coming from Sudan and Egypt and resources such grain products, cotton and spices, soap, olive oil, especially from Syria, which were also the basic goods of international trade with Europe (Inalcik, 1997). The urge to control the domestic markets and compete in the international arena, leading to transformative steps, in order to improve the economic and political integration of the distant provinces, notably the Arab ones, into the Ottoman state, and to facilitate the transportation of military forces, not only changed the economic structure of the Ottoman territories but also remodeled profoundly the administrative and the social arrangements.

On another note, on the eve of WWI most of the infrastructure construction such as canals railways and ports not only in Anatolia, and Arab territories were mostly funded by foreign investment including Britain, France and Germany and if not technological expertise of the foreign engineers were sought for their design. Notably the foreign investment in railways had been a matter of imperial competition to profit from the agricultural potential of the Ottoman territories and ports but also link the far-flung European colonies in order to transport goods and boost industrial development. Most of the infrastructure building in the Balkans were realized by the British, French, Austrian, Belgian and the German companies to open up many new trade opportunities with western Europe while the British capital had a great share in the construction of railroads especially in Egypt, to shorten its reach to India, while Germans were involved in parts of the Anatolian railways and especially the Baghdad railway, to connect Berlin with Baghdad, from where they wanted to establish a port in the Persian Gulf¹⁰². In the meantime, Syria became a region of particular interest and the scenery of contest between the French and British due to its close relevance to Hejaz railway, the only transport infrastructure entirely funded by the Ottoman government with the grants of its Muslim subjects, as well as the ones such as the Muslims of South Africa (Kologlu, 1995). Indeed, the Hejaz Railway which had one end in Medina, northern Saudi Arabia and ended in Damascus, Syria passing over Transjordan where it opened up to the Mediterranean sea in Haifa and Acre ran through the *hajj* pilgrims route and had been a Pan-Islamic project of great significance for the Hamidian regime to assert a unifying Islamic identity and legitimize the sultan's religious authority at a time of political, economic and social turmoil proving the

¹⁰²See Pamuk (1987) for foreign investments and trade in the Ottoman Empire at the age of imperialism. Also, Earle (1923) for an interesting survey on how the construction of this railway set the scene for imperial competition among Great Powers, although his work omits the Ottoman interest and role in its construction.

Ottoman capacity in mastering modern technology while had a direct bearing on the Bedouins, urban Arabs and amirs of Mecca (Özyüksel, 2014; Talbot, 2015). Alongside the railroads, telegraph lines, and improvement schemes and the construction of dams as well as large-scale irrigation projects, such as the Konya Valley irrigation project, granted to the Anatolian railway company with German capital (Ş. M. Hanioglu, 2008; Özyüksel, 2014), and the Hindiyya Dam 1911-13¹⁰³; in Iraq on Euphrates river as part of the irrigation project of Mesopotamia with the help of British engineers (Money, 1917) constituted the Ottoman initiatives to modernize production and create an economy capable of competing in the global economy while conceding rights to foreign capital to utilize the water resources and conduct exploitation of mineral and oil in the territories of investment. Although the production of goods such as silk, carpets, glass, agricultural goods besides minerals, gas and tobacco grew these did not amount to a major boom in the development of Ottoman industry (Hanioglu, 2008). Here, it is hard to dismiss the fact that Middle East is a ‘shatterbelt’, as coined by Cohen (2014) whose internal division and fragmentation has been intensified by pressures coming from competing powers. Hence, as a region, its transformation has been shaped by the actions of not only the regional powers but also of the great powers who sought to control the use of the region’s vast energy resources or prevent or limit a rival’s access.

Nonetheless, this is by no means to dismiss the relevance of Ottoman colonial policies in shaping the sociopolitical and geographical structures of its colonial domains. As Minawi (2016) expresses, in *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*, although the relatively weak position of the Ottomans vis-a-vis its neighbors compelling them to accept unfavorable economic and political arrangements that makes it appear as if the empire was partially colonized by its powerful allies, Ottomans sought to avail themselves of the situations by doing what all the empires were doing around the time to take part in the new world order when notions of sovereignty are changing but also to guarantee its very own sovereignty playing other empires off each other in order to maintain autonomy. Minawi affirms that the Ottoman Empire was actually striving to figure out new ways of exerting rule in Africa, just like its contemporaneous empires the British and the French, not only by expanding the role of state institutions in the provinces, through the extension of infrastructure such as telegraph lines as well as diplomatic maneuvers to assert claim to sovereignty by proxy of the provincial officials or local leaders but also by relying on international legal terms. Referring to these

¹⁰³An interesting work on how Ottoman’s used water warfare and the disruption of the ecosystem to weaken certain tribes controlling areas around Euphrates river by changing the course of the rivers or constructing canals and dams to dry out or flood the areas that sustained their livelihood see (Husain, 2014)

international agreements, Ottomans claimed parts of Sub-Saharan Africa as the “hinterland” of their remaining North Africa provinces like it did during the Berlin Conference, and even organized military campaigns to expand its territory into regions such as modern-day Yemen.

Further, the infrastructural investments and technological advances benefited the Ottoman government to ensure labor flow from rural to urban areas to resolve manpower shortage in further production, tying underdeveloped areas to the developing markets by opening remote areas to capital investment as well as controlling tribal populations that have been until then fairly autonomous in economic and political terms. The settling of the Muslim immigrants coming from the Balkans along the railways with the concomitant enactment of the Land Code in 1869 that established private property and commodity-producing households by authorizing the distribution of the state lands and issuing title deeds to these families in Anatolia on one part (Pamuk, 1987, Chapter 6). And yet differently in the rural south in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq and South-eastern and eastern Anatolia, the land code that was intended for settling the tribes, Arab, Bedouin or Kurdish, as a means to increase tax revenue, production and security, induced the emergence of absentee lords or local tribal chiefs and sheikhs who became a rentier class making use of the laws to obtain personal estates and large tracts of lands as well as their proxies benefiting from these transformations, and parallel buttressing feudal or semi-feudal relationships while relegating the rest to share cropping tenants¹⁰⁴. So in practice, the state’s plan to weaken the local sheikhs backlashed and yet both the changes in the land structure, the following transition from nomadic to agricultural life and the technological advances such as the railroads, dams and canals, that served in the expansion of cultivable land and in the effective centralization of the Ottoman administrative, political and economic structures vitiated tribal composition, crossing over and dividing the lands that upheld these communities and undermining the traditional economic organization based on long distance transport and animal husbandry requiring extensive pastureland¹⁰⁵. As might be expected, these changes aroused unrest in tribal society winding up in rebellions, especially within the segments that were adversely affected the most, while through inducements and alliances Ottoman or not, the imperial powers with direct stakes in the region had to incorporate the local power-holders in the new system for the survival of the state or cooperate with them to control the regional economies (Hathaway, 2002; Karpat & Zens, 2004; Rogan, 2002). Consequently, the state’s penetration in the tribal society together

¹⁰⁴ See (Aksan, 1999; Bektaş, 2019; Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1983; Ş. M. Hanioglu, 2008) For the Iraqi territory and Bedouins see (Baer, 1957; Nakash, 1994)

¹⁰⁵ See (Akarlı, 2006; Bektaş, 2019; Nakash, 1994; Rogan, 1994; Shahvar, 2003)

with the settlement process disrupted the internal functioning of these societies based on traditions and customs as well as internal organizational dynamics. For instance, the sheikhs who served as symbols of the ancestors, as arbiters in internal disputes regulating the communal order and peace became severed as these figures started participating in the imperial hierarchies at the expense of their communities and gain a superior status in relation to their kin or in some instances they were replaced by aghas, while creating disunion within the ruling households of the tribes and thus inducing inter-tribal conflict (Bektaş, 2015; M. V. Bruinessen, 1992; Haj, 1991; Miles, 1919). The state's modernization and centralization policies held sway predominantly in territories populated by Kurdish communities not only altering the semi-sovereign social structures but also their relationship to state power as well as with the rest of the indigenous populace that inhabited the same regions, such as the Armenian, Chaldaean and Nestorian Christians and Assyrians, Yezidis or Turcomans among others, defining the imminent conflicts that would issue from these prelude the WWI.

III.IV. Kurds as the advantaged subjects of the Ottoman rule

The diverse Kurdish peoples roughly inhabited the territories shaped by several mountain chains, the Taurus to the Northwest and Zagros to the East, the area spreading over the upper Mesopotamia plains bounded by the Tigris-Euphrates river system, two of the most significant water-courses in the Middle-East, towards the highlands of Armenia passing through Lake Van and down in the East reaching towards Lake Urmia in Iran expanding to Northern Iraq in the South. The region, apart from being home to the headwaters of two of the most significant water-courses within the Middle East also possesses important oil and mineral deposits. It was also crossed by major overland trade routes between Asia, Europe, Russia, and the Arab Middle East¹⁰⁶. All of which increased, and continue to increase, its importance in terms of interstate control and conflict. On the other hand, the Kurds, until the twentieth century, have been sharing these territories with Armenians – the other major indigenous community especially in Eastern Anatolia- Turcomans, Arabs, Zaza, Jews, Christians, Yezidis and other sects and several other small ethnic and religious groups- such as the Syriacs (also named Assyrians or Arameans), who included all Aramaic-speaking

¹⁰⁶During the Achaemenid period, King Darius' Royal Road, from Susa to Sardis via Arbil, ran through Kurdistan. It later lay along the Silk Road, and all major routes from East to West, until the opening up of sea routes in the fifteenth century. For the British Empire, it lay on the overland route to their imperial jewel, India (O'Shea, 2004)

Syrian-Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, Nestorian and Chaldean Christians and even some Gypsies named *Poşa* or *Lom*- adding up to the ethno-linguistic and religious medley of these lands¹⁰⁷. And that is why the extent of the Kurdish lands are difficult to define with precision not only due to the lack of documentation and investigation but the nested nature of different cultures and ethnicities as well as the conflicting claims made by the various groups and the sensitivity surrounding such a long-standing border zone. As a consequence, all these identities overlapped instead of being considered as belonging to internally homogeneous, sharply differentiated, externally or hermetically bounded social units, creating ethnically mixed villages and multiple loyalties¹⁰⁸. The Kurdish people have not belonged to a single religion or have not spoken a single Kurdish language; there are different religions/sects and dialects in the region (Bruinessen, 1992, 2000, 2005). Despite being far from homogeneous, tribal or kin-based affiliation and those of territory, being neither purely one nor the other, constituted the basis of the Kurdish social organization although belonging to a tribe was not grounded in religion or to a certain extent ‘ethnicity’¹⁰⁹ though most of the large tribes have a

¹⁰⁷For a historical investigation of how the designation “Kurd” had ambiguous meanings due to the interwovenness of different groups, cultures and languages in the region, see James (2014); for the blending of Arab Bedouin and Kurd based on a supposedly common way of life almost synonymous with ‘nomad’ or *Ajam* (non-Arab/Iranian) due to linguistic difference by Arab authors; or as a consequence of shared living spaces with Armenian through the indistinct use of the term *Zûzân*, known to be used in eastern Armenian dialects as a pasture in the mountains and used today to refer to summer pastures in Kurdish and employed to define a specific geographical and territorial complex inhabited by Armenians and Kurds (2007). The author calls attention to the political undertone of both the use and vagueness of these terms that put to use to differentiate or on the contrary shroud difference in order to claim superior ethnic origins. Similarly; in the *The Kurds: An Encyclopedia of Life, Culture and Society* Maisel quotes “citing the work of 10th-century scholar Hamza al-Isfahani, Russian-born orientalist Vladimir Minorsky noted that the Persians “were accustomed to call the Daylamites “Kurds of Tabaristan” as they used to call the Arabs “the Kurds of Suristan, i.e. of Iraq ...” further observing that other Arab and Persian authors from the 10th century used the term to describe “all Iranian nomads from the Western Persia, such as the tent-dwellers of Fars” (Minorsky, 1943, p. 75) the Persians “were accustomed to call the Daylamites “Kurds of Tabaristan” as they used to call the Arabs “the Kurds of Suristan, i.e. of Iraq...” further observing that other Arab and Persian authors from the 10th century used the term to describe “all Iranian nomads from the Western Persia, such as the tent-dwellers of Fars”. This has led a number of scholars to conclude that the term Kurd was originally a socioeconomic designation, being synonymous with the term “nomad,” and only later came to refer to a specific ethnic community (Jwaideh, 2006; Nikitin, 1956). And also McDowall (2005, p. 9): “But we also know that by the time of the Arab Muslim conquests of the seventh century AD, the ethnic term “Kurd” was being applied to an amalgam of Iranian and iranized tribes, some of which may have been indigenous “Kardu”, but many of which were of semitic or other ethnic origin. In Israel today there are Jews who describe themselves as Kurdish, and we can describe the Assyrian Christians who coexist with Muslims in Kurdistan and speak one of the Kurdish dialects, as Kurdish by culture also. Although the Kurdish people are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, they embrace Jews, Christians, Yazidis and other sects (e.g. the Alevis of central Anatolia, and the Ahl-e Haqq in southern Iranian Kurdistan)...Arab lineage among the Kurds is not all imagined. Arab descent had a very special practical role among the Kurds for both religious shaykhs and for the chiefs of tribal confederations”

¹⁰⁸ See Sykes (1908) for a detailed monograph on the Kurdish tribes of the Ottoman Empire in 1908, in spite of the non-negligible prejudiced, Orientalist language he used, almost to the degree of racism, with detailed accounts of knit together elements of culture, garments, languages and tribes locations and migration routes exhibiting the coexistence of diverse ethnic groups within the tribal structure.

¹⁰⁹ “Most Kurds in Turkey have a strong awareness of belonging to a separate ethnic group...There is, however, by no means unanimity among them as to what constitutes this ethnic identity and what the boundaries of the ethnic group are.” (Bruinessen, 2000, p. 613)

hierarchical structure, with a leading lineage, a number of commoner clans/lineages, client lineages and subject non-tribal peasantry in which Armenians, Nestorians, Assyrians or Yezidis among others constitute the populations under the vassalage of these tribes. Bruinessen defines the Kurdish tribe as “a socio-political and generally also territorial (and therefore economic) unit based on descent and kinship, real or putative, with a characteristic internal structure..It is naturally divided into a number of sub-tribes, each in turn again divided into smaller units: clans, lineages, etc [or larger tribal confederations]...Actual political allegiance to a lineage becomes more important than real kinship” (1992, p. 51). While tribe is taken as the primary structure, the Kurdish populations have been fairly heterogeneous composed of non-tribal – especially in the low-lying areas in the foothills and on the plains- pastoral (semi-)nomadic and sedentary agriculturalist groups combining transhumant animal husbandry (McDowall, 1996, 2005). The mountain tribal nomadic lifestyle with that of the plain’s agriculturists was in symbiosis and thus trade and exchange took place between a variety of lowland centers and Kurdistan’s diffuse population (O’Shea, 2004). Aghas and sheikhs, as religious leaders, are the main figures with political influence who administered justice and impose solutions to settle inter-tribal feuds and represented the tribe in relation with the outside state structures (Bruinessen, 1992).

Since the earlier times the Kurdish independent tribes resided the borderlands of many different dynasties and empires, at times fighting against and at others collaborating with these¹¹⁰. And after the mass conversion to Islam, between the seventh and ninth centuries, most of the time fought for the Islamic dynasties as military allies (Arfa, 1966). As O’Shea argues “[T]his region forms the cultural margins of several adjacent territories, and certainly it can be demonstrated that it has long acted as a buffer zone, both by accident and design, between rival regional and colonial powers all parts of Kurdistan are marginal, ethnically, geographically and economically to their host states, and exist as classic frontier regions (2004, p. 10). During the 16th and 17th Centuries, they would be the main power-brokers in the course of the contest between the Iranian Shi’i Safavid dynasty and the Ottomans, that would play an important part in the formation of “oppositional” Alevi and “establishment” Sunni identities in the Ottoman Anatolian territories,[that] still resonate and are imagined today” (Houston, 2007, p. 404), while the Kurdish complicity with the Ottomans in overcoming the Shiite would contribute to the Islamisation of the rural areas, their integration in the imperial system and the spatial and temporal legitimization of the Ottomans as the supreme representative of the universal *dar al-islam* (house of Islam) (Bozarслан, 2013). In

¹¹⁰ For an early history of the Kurdish tribes see (McDowall, 1996, Chapter 2; Özoğlu, 1996)

that sense the Kurdish populations living in various territories of the empire were “among the ‘privileged’ subjects of the Sultan during the Ottoman period, as part of the dominant Muslim majority and thus the relation between the Kurds in Anatolia during the Ottoman period was through religious – Sunni -proximity rather than ethnic ties as opposed to the Shiite Kurds in Iran (S. Şimşek, 2004).

Constituting a buffer-zone in the polynodal realities of the Middle-East, during the reign of Sultan Selim I (1512–20), an important Kurdish figure Idris Bitlisi was charged with establishing an administrative framework of the Kurdistan in return for their services in fighting off the Iranian forces to secure the Eastern borders of the empire and Kurdish prominent families thus gained important positions in the newly formed semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates as local rulers with hereditary land rights and exemption from taxes or other Ottoman interference, with total authority to decide on the successor rulers of these units¹¹¹. The parts of the Kurdish territories that were not given autonomous administrative status were divided into some twenty *sanjaqs*, some of which were to be governed by centrally appointed *sanjaqbegis*, while in others, called *ocaklık*, *yurtluk* or *Ekrad beyliği* ('family estate' or 'Kurdish sanjaq') governorship was to remain within the Kurdish ruling family, in which the central government had the right to intervene, but only members of the ruling family were eligible for office¹¹²; an agreement as part of the balance of power and mutual interdependence between the state and the influential tribes -not only Kurdish but also Turcoman and Arab- in the frontier zones.

This new administrative structure indeed was fundamental for the Ottoman state which needed to restructure the dispersed Kurdish political groups into more uniform and less threatening units above the tribal level and preserve and consolidate the political power of the Kurdish nobility (Özoğlu, 2004). Consequently, Özoğlu (1996) and Bruinessen (1992) claim that, due to the unequal relation between the State and the tribes and emirates, it could be assumed that they were in fact State's creation. However, Kurds were not passive partners at all in the state-tribe interaction; during the 16th Century the Kurdish allegiance to the Safavid and Ottoman empires fluctuated depending on their political interest while by becoming part

¹¹¹ (Gunter, 2009; Maisel, 2018; McDowall, 2003; Özoğlu, 1996)

¹¹² (Bozarlan, 2013; Bruinessen, 1992; Öz, 2003; Sinclair, 2003; Tezcan, 2000). Also as Agoston asserts (Agoston, 2003)(2003) during the 16th Century the Ottomans were forced to follow a flexible administrative practice in most of its frontier provinces accepting the pre-Ottoman administrative, legal and economic arrangements and had to rely on village headmen, "elders" or "notables of the province" (*a'yan-i vilayet*), who were wealthier peasants generally chosen by their fellow-villagers from within the community, in places such as Hungary and Georgia alongside Eastern Anatolia.

of a larger and stronger political structure, the Kurdish *beys*, secured and consolidated their political power over their subjects (Özoğlu, 2004).

However, during the 19th and early 20th centuries the rationalization and centralization of provincial administration, paralleled with the interventions in the regional economies, the transformation of property relations stemming from the commercialization of agriculture and the settlement of the tribes¹¹³ as well as the outside interference in Anatolian as well as the Middle Eastern territories of the empire would alter greatly the status and administrative organization of the Kurdish tribes. Correspondingly the tribes, and mostly the local elites, would start pursuing private interests and increase of their political and economic resources while the state would attempt settling nomads and take over regional trading center and routes affecting the tribes relation to land – shift from nomadic to agricultural economy, shrinkage in pasture lands and the breaking down of large units working in agriculture or the increase of sharecropping- and to one another (Klein, 2012b). It is well documented that the state managed to carry out sedentarization mainly through mediating with tribal authorities or through agricultural incentives and subsidies to make settlement appealing to the peasants (Köksal, 2006).

With the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman empire and the contraction of its territories tightened by Russian, French and British expansionist ambition and also with the numerous revolts – not only in the Balkans but also such as the Egyptian governor Kavalalı Mehmed declaring an independent state and even marching into Syria in 1831 and a year later penetrating deep into Anatolia- the Empire would be squeezed into Anatolia which was already going through intense population changes not only with the Muslim immigration from the Balkans, Crimea, and Caucasus, dealt previously in this work, but later on between 1912-1924 alone, the population exchanges between the Ottoman empire and Greece increasing the Muslim inflow mostly during the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). During this turmoil the Ottoman government, in an effort to establish control over its remaining territories notably in the frontier zones, started appointing governors and military commanders from the imperial center to remove the semi-autonomous Kurdish tribal leaders from their ancestral fiefdom¹¹⁴. Also, with the provincial reform of 1858 the Ottoman's

¹¹³See Jwaideh (1984) for the implications of land tenure policies and social change in Iraq during late Ottoman times

¹¹⁴The main disaffected centers that the two sultans successfully sought to subdue were as follows: “1. The Mamluk dynasty of Baghdad. 2. The local ruling family of Abd-ul-Jalil of the pashalic of Mosul 3. Various Kurdish emirates spread over many regions of ancient Assyria and upper Mesopotamia, notably 3a. The emirate of Baban (region of Sulaimania), b. The emirate of Soran (Rawanduz), c. The emirate of Bahdinan (Amadia), d. The emirate of Botan (Jazerah), e. The Kurdish section of the emirate of Hakkari and many other centres in

reorganized the administrative arrangements to strengthen the central control and also to avoid forming large provinces with powerful governors specially in the areas with complex ethnic compositions while incorporating the local notables in the provincial bureaucracy, in fact the government sometimes even redefined administrative borders to adapt them better to zones of influence of the various tribes (Aydın & Verheij, 2012). With the reforms, Macedonia and Albania inhabited by Slav, Greek, Albanian, and Turkish populations was divided into five provinces, whereas Eastern Anatolia inhabited by Armenians, Kurds, and Turks, the number of provinces was increased from three to five in the 1870s as part of the policies to further reduce the size of these sub-units to better manage them¹¹⁵. Yet, in contrast, Diyarbakır Province, at the end of the 19th century, considered still the capital of Northern Kurdistan remained a supersized administrative entity, was enlarged up to the city Van, located on the Caucasian border, encompassing parts of the modern Turkish provinces of Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Elazığ, Batman, Siirt and Şırnak, as well as parts of today's Northern Syria and Iraq as the centers will to unify and rationalize the military and administrative resources especially in the big urban centers of the peripheral territories (H. Bozarslan, 2018; Tezcan, 2000). Diyarbakır was denominated as the 'Kurdistan Eyâleti' (Kurdistan province) recognizing the region as a political and administrative unit rather than just being a geographical identification, between 1846 and 1867, as a move to aim establishing direct control over Kurdistan (Özoğlu, 2004, pp. 61–62). Diyarbakır, After the Conference of Berlin (1878), became known to Europeans as one of the six 'Armenian vilayets' - Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Mamuretülaziz/Harput, and Sivas as part of historical Armenia, which widely overlapped with Kurdistan- the area in which reforms for the benefit of the Armenians were to be applied (Jongerden & Verheij, 2012)¹¹⁶

On the other hand, despite the aims to centrally control the empire, the Ottomans were aware of the force of the local leaders in mobilizing important economic resources and large numbers of fighters, and thus in this period they pursued, at least to a certain extent, politics of manipulating the various groups in the region so that no one element became powerful enough to challenge Ottoman sovereignty and subsequently supporting and empowering particular tribal leaders against others (Dağ, 2014; Duguid, 1973; Özoglu, 2012).

present-day southeastem Turkey. 4. Many powerful Arab tribes, in particular the Shammer Jarbah. 5. The Yazidi tribes of Sinjar and Shaikhan. 6. The independent Syrian Jacobite tribes of Tur Abdin. 7. The independent Assyrian (Nestorian) tribes of Tiyari and Hakkari" (Aboona, 2008, p. 160). See also (Arakon, 1995; Aydın & Verheij, 2012; H. Bozarslan, 2010; Maisel, 2018) for more on the topic

¹¹⁵ (Akiba, 2007; Duguid, 1973; S. J. Shaw & Shaw, 1977; E. J. Zürcher, 2014)

¹¹⁶For an inquiry on the resistance and Kurdish rebellions triggered by the reforms see (Atmaca, 2019; Dağ, 2014)

Nevertheless, with the overall dissolution of the emirates, leveraging the power vacuum, religious *sheiks* replaced the *aghas* as mediators in tribal disputes, building vast fortunes and tribal followings (Bruinessen, 1992; Vali, 2016). On the other hand, rather paradoxically when considered the centralization efforts, during the Hamidian period in the 19th Century, the Ottomans activated a multitude of antagonistic Kurdish tribes and a substantial number of tribal confederations or individual tribes replaced the few dozen former autonomous or semi-autonomous Kurdish polities, becoming the most important political and social components in Kurdistan while deepening the feudalization of Kurdish society (Bruinessen, 2019; Celil, 1992; Yadirgi, 2017).

Sedentarization and the transition to agriculture were two indivisible strategies that buttressed the feudalization creating differences between the settled and nomadic tribes, favoring the economic status of the sheikhs and turning them into landowners and thus alienating them from their tribes as they became accountable for the organization of forced labor and other communal works serving the state and the central authority rather than the community interests. Consequently disputes on land and water started arising and the sheikhs had to do the arbitration that generated relations of patronage while the tribal society became more and more fragmented and group solidarity diminished. This meant the dissolution of customary laws and rights that regulated tribal communities and in fact benefited the Ottomans that aimed to "civilize" the nomads, instill the sharia among them, and force them to settle their disputes in religious courts rather than according to tribal custom, in which the sedentarization served as a tool (Deringil, 1991). Although most of the Kurdish tribes were Sunni Muslims, sedentarization and the concomitant transformations aimed at the Sunnification of the 'heretical', that is the heterodox populations -such as the Alevis, Yezidis etc as it would become apparent in the state's later crackdowns on these communities and the subsequent revolts- which can be understood as a policy of internal colonization and to legitimize the Hamidian political power internally (Deringil, 1998). Be that as it may, even while the Ottoman Empire was undergoing partitioning and its politics of population control through forced migrations and sedentarization, the circulation of people within its borders continued. As Kasaba asserts, "In addition to pastoral nomads, migrant workers, especially Greeks and Kurds, moved back and forth between various regions of Anatolia and between Western Anatolia, the Aegean islands, the Greek mainland, and beyond. Pastoral nomads and other rural people traveled long distances to work in harvests in Southern Anatolia, and itinerant

merchants continued to conduct business that straddled the rapidly changing borders of the old and new states (2011, p. 234).

On the other hand, many emirs who did not accept the weakening of emirates' authorities and fought against the center were sent to exile with their family members as far as Albania, Crete, Mecca, Tunisia and Egypt¹¹⁷. Conversely, in the regions subdued by the center, men were immediately forced into military service and ruthless taxation was introduced (Aydın & Verheij, 2012). The Ottomans also employed too often during this period tribal irregulars raised by the Kurdish sheikhs; among those fighting with the Ottomans in the Crimean War against Russia was the Caf tribe becoming one of the largest Kurdish tribes at the turn of the 20th century in Southeastern Anatolia and Northern Iraq or Kara Fatma of the Cerid tribe who led her men to the front and was put on a salary by the central government (Kasaba, 2011).

Yet, it was also quite frequent that the tribes or even the antagonistic leaders in the same tribes allied themselves with different states that were the Ottoman Empire, Iran and Russia in the late 19th century – for instance the Alevi Kurds of Dersim, during the Crimean War in 1854, and 1877-7 or Bedirhan Bey¹¹⁸, the leader of Cizre-Botan's traditional ruling house- and since World War I with Britain, playing off the states against each other according to their interests (Bruinessen, 2000; Eppel, 2014). In a period when several empires were going through turbulent times that were to be decisive in their ends, Kurds as the inhabitants of the borderlands that became a matter of the wars vacillating between imperial powers to secure their conditions was almost inevitable. And with the WWI, the political circumstance in both Ottoman and Iranian Kurdistan changed as Russia and Ottoman forces clashed on these territories ignoring Iranian sovereignty in the process – indeed very much like what is going on today's Syria. Many Kurds in this period served in the Ottoman military fighting against Russia and took part in Ottoman operations in Mesopotamia (Maisel, 2018)

During this turmoil, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century, there were several revolts headed by sheikhs, leaders of the mystical religious sects (*tarikâts*) who came to play increasingly prominent political roles after the 1850s. Özoğlu (2004) notes that in the

¹¹⁷)Atmaca, 2017; Hanioglu, 2008; Köksal, 2006; McDowall, 1996=

¹¹⁸ Bedir Khan family was known for the resistance to imperial powers as well as being renegades as well as siding with different powers. Muhammad Bedir Khan was known side with the Ottomans in the Ottoman–Egyptian conflict, took part in the slaughter of 7,000 to 10,000 Nestorian–Assyrian Christians in 1843 and was awarded an Ottoman military rank, while his grandson the Abdurezzak, began touring the Ottoman-Iranian frontier, building support for an anti-Ottoman rebellion and to secure an independent Kurdistan, and for sought the support and protection of Tsarists Russia (Eppel, 2008; Maisel, 2018; McDowall, 1996) and for a detailed discussion of the relations between Bedir Khan and the Nestorians, see (Jwaideh, 2006). The Russians also fomented the tribes, not only the Bedir Khan but also the Alevi Kurds of Dersim during the Crimean War to constitute an insider counter-power in the Ottoman territory (McDowall, 1996)

Kurdish provinces the local notables belonged mostly to the Sufis, especially the Naqshbandis, descending from the Kurdish tribal nobility, and also from families whose leaders managed to secure local administrative positions and in some cases these categories overlapped. Later on these groups took the lead in ‘nationalist’ revolts. Although the definition of ‘nationalist’ needs to be analyzed carefully here as the tribal and communal relations that make up the idea of a Kurdish ‘nation’ is quite different than the state’s claims on the Turkish ethnic-nationalism. The largest and most significant of these revolts were those led by Şeyh Übeydullah, in 1880, and ultimately Şeyh Said in 1925. The Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt in 1880 instantiated how Kurds were not indeed passive pawns in the imperial conflicts and were aware of the idea of nationalism’s increasing importance, when the Naqshbandi Sheikh Ubeydullah rallied some twenty thousand Ottoman and Iranian Kurds to claim an independent Kurdish state, against both the Ottomans and Iranians, and explained to British officials that he was rebelling in the name of the Kurdish nation (Ateş, 2014; Reynolds, 2014). Yet, Martin van Bruinessen, in his *Agha, Sheikh and State* (1992) has demonstrated that this rise to power of the sheikhs and the resulting tensions and conflicts were not entirely ‘nationalist’ claims but was partly a consequence of the Ottoman centralization, that triggered the unseating of local Kurdish leadership and later on against the Republican secular reform of the 1920s¹¹⁹.

In the late 19th century several events would define the transformation of the eastern borderland provinces whose importance was largely determined by threats across borders: The competition between Iran and the Ottomans, and later on the wars with the Russian empire; the population shifts leading to sedentarization¹²⁰ and Muslimization of Anatolia becoming an official nation-state building policy notably with the CUP government; the newly acquired rights for the Christians with the Tanzimat reforms combined with the increasing economic inequality between the Muslims and the Christians of the Empire; growing importance of urban non-Muslims in global trade, finance and industry together with the buttressing of nationalist interests, particularly the Armenian nationalism supported by the Russian Tsar, leading to the plans to establish an independent Armenian state – in the Lake Van region, territories inhabited equally by the Kurds -with the Treat of Berlin in the aftermath of the Ottoman Russian war and the appearance of the Armenian revolutionary/nationalist movement Hunchak (Reynolds, 2011, 2014; Verheij, 2012); the disturbances caused by the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes pillaging the settlement of

¹¹⁹ See also (Ainsworth, 1842; Aydın & Verheij, 2012; Jongerden & Verheij, 2012)

peasants, to which most of the rural Armenians in the Eastern regions belonged, on their seasonal migrations (Aydın & Verheij, 2012; McDowall, 2003).

The disastrous events that would follow, the unleashing of rampaging violence would take place especially in the six eastern provinces, Diyarbakır, Harput, Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, and Sivas districts. Home to a considerable number of Kurds as well as Armenians and under the watchful eyes of both by the European administration to oversee the realization of the reforms that would benefit the Armenian population and demarcated by the Ottomans under the jurisdiction of the Fourth Army, much like a region under ‘State of Emergency’ rule, curiously resuscitated by the Turkish republic a century later (Klein, 2012b; Üngör, 2012a).

III.V. The Creation of the Sociopolitical space of the Kurds: From Settlement to Genocides

Over this period, the Ottoman government activated its policy to conquest and control and yet not de-tribalize the “tribal zone” in its periphery in order not to sacrifice their military potential but still tie the Kurds to the empire, integrate and ‘civilize’ (Bruinessen, 2019; Klein, 2012a). Ironically to fend off the external threats and increase its grip in the frontier zones, the state was dependent on nomadic or semi-nomadic, largely Kurdish, tribes. The state policies of the *Hamidian* period oriented towards the Kurds aimed at selectively co-opting some of the tribes and tribal leaders to be able to re-integrate the seemingly ungovernable eastern Anatolian regions into the empire.

In 1891, the Ottoman regime gathered some of the (Sunni Muslim) Kurdish tribal leaders -and some Turcoman and Arab tribes -to form the Hamidiye Light Cavalry regiments to back up the regular military. At the end of the 19th century there were around 55 regiments commanded by their own tribal leaders under the command of the military general who reported directly to the sultan whereas the Ottoman civilian administration had no jurisdiction over these regiments (Klein, 2002). The main purpose of *Hamidiye* was to control the frontier zones with Russia to counterbalance not only the growing Armenian revolutionary movement but also, through tribal proxies, establish effective control over the local population, whom the state barely was able to tax or conscript such as the Kurdish (semi-)nomads but also the Armenian and Kurdish peasantry liable to the *aghas* beyond state’s control (M. V. Bruinessen, 2019; Jongerden, 2012; Klein, 2011, 2012b). One of the common practices of the Ottoman

authorities during this period was to settle groups from the *Hamidians* in Armenian villages gradually becoming the owners of the land, livestock, horses, and crops and forcing Armenians to become simple laborers (Yadırgı, 2017).

Further, these units also were envisaged to integrate the Sunni Muslim Kurds into the Ottoman state system (Duguid, 1973) which was also enabled through the *Aşiret Mektepleri* (The Tribal Schools) that provided education and later on incorporation in the ruling class of the sons of the Hamidian tribal chiefs (Akpınar, 1997; Bruinessen, 2019; McDowall, 1996). Rogan saw the tribal schools as part of state's efforts to incorporate the tribes not just into the political system, but as a means to "advance the state-sanctioned supranational identities of Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism among the marginal communities inhabiting the frontiers of its Arab and Anatolian province." (1996, p. 83). Moreover, the state sought to rein the rebellious families, whose leaders were forced into exile, by recruiting their sons who were educated in the tribal schools into the higher levels of the state bureaucracy, as had happened to the Kurdish lord of Cizre, Bedir Khan Beg, and the religious leader Sheikh Ubaydullah of Hakkari, both of whom led large-scale uprisings that were considered proto-nationalist by later generations (Bruinessen, 2019; Jwaideh, 2006). These two constituting the tribal policy of the Ottoman empire, consolidated on one hand the tribal leaders local power and loyalty to the state while extending Ottomans' indirect rule over the region.

On another note, some of the tribal leaders taking part in *Hamidiye* regiments were notorious bandits and raiders whose incorporation to the cavalry meant state backing meaning virtual impunity, and concession of numerous titles, ranks and even salaries, and complete freedom of action in pursuit of wealth extracted from the Armenian and Muslim peasantry and townspeople in addition to increased power at the expense of other rival tribes introducing a fracture in the Kurdish tribal order (Akçam, 2006; Bruinessen, 1992, 2019; Duguid, 1973; Klein, 2011, 2012b)¹²⁰. One of the most sought after booty the Hamidian regiments were after

¹²⁰ Bozarslan would report referring to the words of Bedir Khan on Kurds and Armenians, "Before [Abdülhamid II] ascended the throne, the Kurds were knowledgeable and civilized people, having brotherly relations with Armenians and avoiding any kind of confrontation. Then what happened? Did [Kurdish] civilization and knowledge turn into barbarity, ignorance, and organized rebellion? Who else carries out the atrocities in Kurdistan but the members of the Hamidiye divisions, who are armed by the sultan and proud of being loyal to him. For example, there is Mustafa Pasha, the head of the Mîran tribe, within the borders of Diyarbekir [province]. He used to be a shepherd ten or fifteen years ago in his tribe, and was called 'Misto the Bald.' We do not know what he did to become a favorite of the sultan, but his talent in creating scandals appealed to the sultan, who thought that he would assist in shedding blood and hurting people. He made him a pasha and introduced him with the title of Commander of a Hamidiye division. Now imagine what such a man is capable of doing—a traitor whose own son has even become an enemy to him, and a person who has outraged his daughter-in-law. Would he not butcher the Armenians and pillage the Muslims?", (Abdurrahman Bedir Khan, "Kürdler ve Ermeniler [Kurds and Armenians]," Kurdistan, No. 26, (1 Kânûn-i Evvel, 1316 [Dec. 14, 1900]), in (Bozarslan, 1991)

was land, much of seized through landgrabs of Christian land and property, particularly the Armenian's since they could be easily denounced as secessionist traitors but also the Kurdish peasantry, triggering further land disputes and facilitating the emergence of new large-landholding groups in the region already promoted by the Land Code of 1858 while contributing to their growing dispossession or reduction to tenancy while some of them were forced to emigrate (Klein, 2012b; Reynolds, 2014; Terzibaşoğlu, 2004).

Dispossession, ethnology-religious conflicts fomented by imperial powers and increased poverty caused by wars would lead up to social turmoil and in 1894, in the mountainous areas of Sasun and Talori, on the border of the provinces of Bitlis and Diyarbakir, with a majority Armenian population, an anti-Armenian violence erupted, spreading to the surrounding rural areas but also triggering clashes in the capital, Istanbul, and all over the Anatolian provinces of the Empire between Armenians and Muslims¹²¹. Indeed, as Kaiser expresses, “depuis le Congrès de Berlin de 1878, ‘la question arménienne’ était au cœur de ‘la grande question d’Orient’ portant sur l’avenir du monde ottoman, question qui avait été formulée à l’échelle internationale à la fin du XVIIIe siècle” (2010, para. 4). In this wave of plundering, killings and pogroms, that would be named *the Hamidiye massacres* Kurdish irregular tribesmen also took part alongside government troops, officials and the police, killing thousands, pillaging markets and shops, burning down entire Armenian villages (Deringil, 2009; Dündar, 2008; Jongerden, 2012; Verheij, 2012). Besides, other smaller Christian groups such as the Assyrians would also be the targets of this collective violence (De Courtois, 2004) which would continue well through the early 20th century throughout and after the WWI with the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

On the eve of the WWI, as an immediate result of the violent contest for imperial power among all of the world empires of the period, the Young Turks, taking advantage of the commotion within the Ottoman territories, would stage a coup in 1908 forcing the reinstatement of the constitutional regime, instated in 1879 only to be disbanded by Sultan Abdülhamid II, and deposition of the Sultan. In 1915 the CUP would come to power whose policies would turn against the left over Christian populations of the old empire as well as the enfranchised Hamidian tribes. Among the first initiatives of the new governments was

¹²¹ The tension between the Kurds and Armenian populations was already palpable prior to the break up of events; “As one Kurdish poet lamented, “It is heartbreaking to see the land of Jazira and Butan [Bohtan], I mean the fatherland of the Kurds, being turned into a home for the Armenians” and “Should there be an Armenistan, no Kurd would be left.” (Reynolds, 2014, p. 36)

For a concise analysis of the Armenian-Kurdish relationships and the historical background that lead to the Kurdish involvement and the animosity created between the two groups devised and whose foundations were laid by state policies see (Kieser, 2010)

to to disband the Hamidiye, arrest and punish Kurdish brigands, and back the efforts of centrally appointed provincial governors to enforce laws, including taxation and conscription and rank Hamidies under the Tribal Light Cavalry Regiments (*Aşiret Hafif Süvari Alayları*). Yet, the arrests of Hamidiye chieftains and their eviction from Armenian villages, shrinking their power combined with the threat of losing the lands they had usurped from Armenians pushed many Kurds towards revolt (Bozarslan, 1991; Klein, 2012; Reynolds, 2014). Many Hamidiye commanders retaliated the clampdown by crossing the border with their regiments and animals to Russian and Iranian territories and aligning with Russia with the hope of forming autonomous Kurdistan or regaining their former privileges.

While the lawlessness of the irregular militias were a cause of unrest, the dissolving of Hamidiye exacerbated the conflicts, and even deteriorated the situation of the Armenian/Christian population, as Jongerden claims, in contradiction to established ideas about the role of the Hamidiye regiments, some actually were involved in the protection of the Christians (2012). With the Kurdish revolts, Syriacs and Assyrians also suffered severe assaults, (Gaunt, 2012); events that were left out of the histories of violence that took place during these years of unstoppable violence. For the Kurds, this was a period of commotion as well. Not only because the linking of territorial sovereignty to ethnicity generated a polarizing current that, in the context of the existing political volatility, made it impossible the mutual co-existence of the Kurds and Armenians in the same territories (Reynolds, 2014) but Kurds were also going through internal divisions coupled with physical partition.

While the WWI was going on, almost thirty years after the Berlin Conference, in a very similar way that parceled the Ottoman lands in Africa, the imperial powers would advance colonial interest towards Middle-East to reshape territories according to economic and political interests. While the WWI was still going on, the secret Sykes-Picot agreement signed in 1916 would stipulate the division of the Ottoman's Arab provinces – including the Kurdish regions- into areas of future British and French control. It is also interesting to see that when the distinct maps created by these two events are explored it is possible to observe that the eastern limit of the continental map created by the Berlin conference almost coincides with the regional map shaped after Sykes-Picot. Need not remind that the end of colonization in neither of these areas was complete in the sense that the influence of the imperial powers continued even after the foundation of the nation states. On the North-eastern front Georgia and Armenia¹²² were given international recognition. The European map after the WWI was

¹²² As one Kurdish poet lamented, “It is heartbreaking to see the land of Jazira and Butan [Bohtan], I mean the fatherland of the Kurds, being turned into a home for the Armenians” and “Should there be an Armenistan, no

the reflection of the dissolution of all continental empires in Europe, giving way to the emergence of nation-states. For the Ottoman Empire, eventually, right after the end of WWI, its capital Constantinople as well as some provincial cities in the southeast, south and Aegean Anatolia would be occupied by British, French, Italian and Greek forces at the end of the war. On the other hand, the Turkish Republic would have to fight between 1919-1923 to have its 'Wilsonian moment' of self-determination, and secure a national territory that would be declared upon the Anatolian remains of the dispersed Ottoman Empire.

How this period was lived by the Kurds, especially the nomads might be best told in the words of a man from Baghdad:

Like most of the states in the Middle East it was invented by two men, one French, one English, during the First World War. Georges Sykes and Sir Mark Picot, they were called. You know, they just met up in London and decided in secret between the two of them how it would all be. The defeated Ottoman Empire would be dismembered, and new countries -Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon - simply invented out of the bits for the convenience of the two colonial powers that would rule them. The British, of course, already controlled Egypt and Sudan. Iraq was made out of three leftover villainy (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire. In 1920, they said they would give the Kurds an independent state, Kurdistan; in 1923, they just forgot all about it, according to the whim of the moment. They created states that were no nations, just sets of lines drawn on the map according to their interests. There had been no borders or boundaries between us all. The whole of the Empire was open from one end to the other. There were different regions, of course, ours was Upper and Lower Mesopotamia, as it always had been. Then their boundaries, drawn in the fluid sand with their barbed wire, marked out their new 'protectorates', empty they said except for a few nameless tribesmen like my great grandfather and grandfather who did not need to be consulted about what was good for them. Nomads have no rights. They are not really there at all (Young, 2003, p. 35).

III.VI. From CUP to the Turkish Republic: Settling, Ruling and Territorializing the Ethnic Nation

Following the seize of power, the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress resumed the drive for centralization and Turkification of Anatolia. CUP that started as an oppositional union, *Ittihad-ı Anasır* (Unity of the [ethnic and religious] Elements), composed of civilian officials and professionals, journalists and intellectuals, members of empire's cosmopolitan elite from various ethnic elements of the Ottoman Empire against the absolutism of the Sultan and with the goal of safeguarding the empire) from disintegration. In its early stages numerous ethno-religious components of the empire, / was represented in the parliament as a reflection of the Ottoman nation composed of Turks, Arabs, Albanians, Armenians, Greeks,

Kurd would be left." (Aḥmad, 1994, p. 55)

Bulgarians and Jews (Hanioğlu, 2001; Kayalı, 2013; Zürcher, 2002). As opposed to its Islamist undertone of the Ottoman nation generated by the previous regime of Abdulhamid, religion was not an opposition nor a differential element for taking part in the nation.

And yet, progressively, and especially after the Balkan Wars, CUP's political orientation have shifted towards an aggressive interpretation of Ottomanism stressing the Turkish ethnicity as the dominant element of the Empire and its Islamic character, causing unrest amongst the non-Muslim populations who have been cooperating with the committee until then¹²³ (Arai, 1992; Hanioğlu, 2002; Ülker, 2005). The period that started with the CUP government almost until the passage to the multiparty period during the Turkish republic, that is until the 1950's, would be indeed an era that would set its seal on the state's mentality that is whose essence was built upon mass violence in order to create a unitary nation state. And it is important to draw attention to this strong continuity of the forms and institutions that created this of mass violence during this period, between the CUP era (1913–1918) and the Kemalist era (1919–1950), that Zürcher named Young Turk era (1992).

Ziya Gökalp, ethnologist and sociologist intellectual and a Kurdish descent from a family of eminent notables and landlords of Diyarbakır, was one of the most prominent ideologues of the CUP, first as a leading figure in the local branch and later the central committee to ascend to the National Parliament in August 1923. Gökalp laid the foundation of the ideological frames of Turkish nationalism under the principles of “Turkification-Islamization-Modernization” in his major works (Gökalp, 1959, 1968; Karpát, 2009). Gökalp opposed Ottomanism first because he believed that the Empire accommodated several nations with independent cultures and thus it was impossible to create an idea of a common homeland, and secondly he was an ardent advocate of reconciliation with the Western civilization, that he called the contemporary civilization (tr. *çagdaş uygarlık*). Besides, he highlighted the importance of the Turkish ethnicity and Islam as the moral code that made up the national character and maintained the takeover of the state by one nation, the Turkish. Further, Gökalp was a devoted positivist, a pragmatist disciple of Durkheimian theories and his ideas oscillated between social Darwinism and eugenics, justifying the state intervention and modern governmentality to create a desired society weeding out the detrimental elements that prevent its advancement. He also opposed to the liberty of civil society and defended that

¹²³ Although initially the CUP was a medley of races and creeds, political refugees and exiles abroad in the background, the state officials educated in the Western-type Ottoman schools, which had been established in the Empire during the 19th century for the training of the bureaucracy and the military and some of whose members fled to Europe under Abdülhamid's oppressive regime, unsatisfied with Tanzimat, who came together under the aim of putting and to the Sultan's autocratic rule. And yet shortly after the 1908 revolution, “Turkish nationalism rapidly replaced the idea of «Ottomanism». The triple ideological formula of the Young Turk regime now became Westernism, Islamism and Turkism.” (Ergil, 1975, p. 46).

order could only be established by martial law, glorifying the army and military discipline (Bozarslan, 2013, p. 500)¹²⁴. Indeed, in 1914, shortly before the Armenian genocide, Gökalp would write the following verses in his poem Red Apple (Kızıl Elma):

The people is like a garden,
we are supposed to be its gardeners!
First the bad shoots are to be cut
and then the scion is to be grafted (Gökalp, 1974)¹²⁵

Further, his ideas on economics were inline with corporatist nationalism proposing the development of an industrial base and fostering of a Turkish bourgeoisie as the prerequisite for national economy (Üngör, 2008a; Yadırgı, 2017). Although the Republic of Turkey under the lead of Kemalist ideals would later on diverge from some of his ideas, Gökalp's political orientations were very effective over CUP's politics (Korkusuz & Kutluk, 2016)¹²⁶. And in constructing the idea of the nation, the elimination of non-Muslims, as part of the population politics inherited from the Ottoman's would be one of the founding stones of the republic. Particularly, the increasing threat felt by the advance of Russia alongside recent wars with Iran and anxiety of being betrayed by the Armenians, served as a pretext to eliminate the non-Muslim commercial classes, the Armenian and Greek, who had long dominated the trade and financial sectors¹²⁷, and their substitution with Muslim-Turks that would create the basis of the national bourgeoisie¹²⁸. In 1908, the local Unionist committees started organizing a boycott against the non-Muslim merchants mobilizing both workers and Turkish Muslims merchants along the Aegean coast and a year later the pogroms taking place in the southern regions, like Adana, would clearly have an anti-Christian tone (Bozarslan, 2010). Even an official association was created in order to better organize the boycott (Çetinkaya, 2004). As

¹²⁴Implementation of such a nationalist program by a civil-military elite with a social Darwinist outlook that had been procured by militarist and nationalist German military doctrines^{17 17}. For the socialization of the Young Turks along with militarist and nationalist German doctrines see (Nezir, 2001).

¹²⁵ Zygmunt Baumann in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1991) elucidated that modernist ideals of calculated reason, social engineering and governmentality culminating in brutal acts of mass violence, such as the Holocaust, were indeed constitutive of the idea of modernity rather than being its consequence. Baumann came up with the metaphor of the "Gardening State" (p. 91) to define the modernist mindset that categorizes its 'others' as a cancerous growth on the otherwise healthy body of a civilized society, an impediment on its linear path of progress, and thus deserving of elimination.

¹²⁶For the political ideology of the Young Turks see (Akşin, 1987; Georgeon, 1980; M. Ş. Hanioglu, 2006; Heyd, 1950; Ş. Mardin, 2016)

¹²⁷ "What distinguished the burgeoning Ottoman bourgeoisie from the European one, however, was its multi-ethnic character. The original Ottoman bourgeoisie comprised the minorities, whose access to economic capital (due to their structural restriction to urban commercial activities within the empire) and connections with Europe enabled them to establish many joint companies, banks and industrial enterprises. Yet, unlike their Turkish Muslim counterparts who specialized in either the military or the state bureaucracy, the Ottoman minorities did not have the social and political capital that would have enabled them to sustain and reproduce their economic transformation of the empire" (Göçek, 2011, p. 19)

¹²⁸ (Şeker, 2005, 2013, p. 201; Ülker, 2005; Üngör, 2012b; Erik Jan Zürcher, 2000). Keyder (1989) also exposed that the Language Reform of 1915 and the ban on the use of foreign languages for economic transactions also served to promote the participation of Muslim-Turks in economic activities

Bozarslan propounds, the Muslims were seen as the sovereign people oppressed by an elite of ‘usurpers’, equivalent of the Third Estate in pre-revolutionary France, and were identified as the “microbes” threatening the biological existence of Muslim Turks (2010, p. 503). At the eve of the 1914-15 mass violence against the Christian subjects, especially the Armenians, Ziya Gökalp was already calling for revenge against “our former slaves” (1981, p. 156).

By 1914-15, the CUP administration started carrying out a systematic campaign of genocide against the Armenians¹²⁹ alongside other Christian populations, as part of its nationalist population and social engineering policies, encompassing physical destruction, deportation, forced assimilation and religious conversion, and memory politics, aimed at building a nation-state and ethnically homogeneous national territory, especially in the heterogeneous borderland regions including the eastern provinces of Anatolia and also Syria, and with particular attention paid to the treatment of ‘minorities’¹³⁰. In the summer of 1914, boycotts and expropriations escalated into kidnappings and assassinations of Greek businessmen and community leaders, and even wholesale deportations of villages; forcing the Greeks emigrate to Chios or Greece, abandoning their territory to the benefit of Ottoman Muslims (Mourellos, 1985; Üngör, 2008a, 2008b).

Further, during the WWI, especially in the eastern province through simultaneous acts of murder, massacre, population exchanges, religious conversion, assimilation and seizure of property, the population engineering policies of CUP underlined by political, demographic and economic concerns would uproot and exterminate most of the Christian populations - Armenians, Greeks, Syriacs, Chaldeans but also Yezidis¹³¹- of empire to create by 1923 an ethnically Turkish nation-state. During the genocides, initially the Armenian notables and artisans were arrested, put into jail tortured, their possessions confiscated, following massacres in entire villages during which all kinds of war atrocities were witnessed from rape of women, entire populations being sold to Muslims as slaves, seizures of land and properties and deportation¹³². In regions where the majority consisted of Armenian populations, these resulted in the almost total elimination of Christian populations and in places where Kurds and Armenians co-habited, the irregular Kurdish tribes and militia men, as well as local elites pursuing self interests became accomplices in these acts of crimes¹³³ – not to exempt the

¹²⁹ For detailed studies on the Armenian genocide see (Akçam, 2004; Bloxham, 2005; Dadrian, 2003; Dündar, 2008; Hovannisian, 2017; Reid, 1992; Şeker, 2007; Üngör, 2008a)

¹³⁰ See also for an overview of the foundation of a homogenized Turkish national space through population policies especially targeting the ‘minorities’ (Kieser, 2013; Şeker, 2013)

¹³¹ (Gaunt et al., 2017)

¹³² See (Schaller & Zimmerer, 2013; ngör, 2008a) and for the Armenian cases (Bloxham, 2003; Bozarslan, 2010; Gingeras, 2009; Üngör, 2012; Üngör & Polatel, 2011)

other Muslim populations such as the Turks, Arabs and Circassians from complicity-encouraged by state officials and later on rewarded with financial benefits¹³⁴. Certainly, there have been others who tried to protect the victims with whom they shared the same territories from being perished, whether Armenian, Yezidis or Assyrians, against the threat of being eliminated if caught in helping, and in some cases the non-Muslims who agreed on conversion were taken to their sheikh by the Kurdish villagers¹³³

Furthermore, just a year before the genocide, the government established in 1913 the Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants (*İskân-ı Aşâir ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyeti*, IAMM) initially for two purposes: To advance the sedentarization of the many Turcoman, Kurdish, and Arab tribes, and to provide accommodation for homeless Muslim refugees, expelled from the Balkans and Russia. And later on it would be expanded to incorporate four branches; Settlement, Intelligence, Transport, and Tribes¹³⁴. This indeed would be the sign of a larger design of demographic transformation that the Young Turks had in mind. The directorate summoned a Scientific Council headed by Ziya Gökalp and led detailed ethnographic research on the demographic and anthropological characteristics of various ethnic – Armenians, Turcoman and Kurdish Kızılbaş tribes,- and especially non-Sunni religious -Ahi, Kızılbaş, and Bektaşî- groups of Anatolia¹³⁵, that Üngör compared to the methods of Western European colonial administrative machinery through the acquisition of knowledge to manage these populations and using new technologies of population policies as well as mass violence (Üngör, 2008, 2012). These field studies later on would form the basis of the ‘Reform of the East’ plan in Turkey, in the 1920s (Bayrak, 1994). And indeed, in 3 May 1915 Talat Pasha, the minister of the interior, issued orders for the integral deportation of all Armenians, under the name of ‘resettlement’ to Deir ez-Zor, in the Syrian desert, starting with the northeastern provinces, which would be the beginning of the deportation of virtually the entire population of Ottoman Armenians in Anatolia, while open-air concentration camps were designated along the lower Euphrates river in contemporary Syria (Üngör, 2012, p. 278). According to Üngör the deportations were meant to “ensure that Armenian social life of any significance could never arise again, especially in the eastern provinces”(Üngör, 2008, p. 152)¹³⁶. In parallel, Talat Pasha urged the Fourth Army Command to court-martial any

¹³³Interview conducted with Temel family (Derik) in Bremen, 21 March 2002 in (Üngör, 2002, p. 129)(Üngör, 2002, p. 129). Interview with Nejat Cemiloğlu in (Diken, 2014, pp. 134–135). Interview with Esat Cemiloğlu in (*ibid.*, p.154)

¹³⁴ (Dündar, 2013; Jongerden, 2007; Orhonlu, 1987; Üngör, 2008a)

¹³⁵ For a brief overview of Young Turk ethnographic research see (Dündar, 2008, pp. 43–50)

¹³⁶For an interesting analysis of how the railways served in the Armenian deportations, and the German collaboration in these deportations especially on the Baghdad Railway line see (Kaiser, 1999)

Muslim who collaborated with Christians (Üngör, 2012, p. 71). By the autumn of 1915, most Armenian settlements were depopulated, community leaders eliminated and their property - farms, businesses, factories, workplaces, ateliers, and bazaars- were confiscated or allocated to Muslims loyal to CUP, contributing to the aims of Turkifying the economy (Üngör, 2008, p. 25).

On the other hand, the deportations served in another way in the Turkification of the Anatolian territories through the resettlement of Muslim refugees in evacuated places, dispersing non- Turkish Muslim ethnic groups among the Turks in a way that their population should not exceed five or ten per cent of the Turkish population (Dündar, 2013; Şeker, 2005). While the Young Turks saw no other option than using violence -extermination or forceful conversion- against the Christian nations as their cultural and economic superiority and religion were considered an impediment against Turkification; the non-Turkish Muslims such as Kurds, Persians, Arabs were to be Turkified through administrative measures and education (Üngör, 2008, p. 219). When considered the intrinsic violence of homogenizing efforts in the course of nation-state foundation on an imperial scale¹³⁷, as Üngör appoints in reference to Keiser, the Kurds and Armenians became differential victims of violence ranging from assimilation to annihilation for similar reasons¹³⁸. Ziya Gökalp had indeed long ruminated over the need to assimilate or acculturate the Kurds and indeed he made detailed investigations on the Kurdish tribes. In his view, Kurds already not much different than the Turks as they share a common religion and maintained that the Kurds who led a sedentary life in villages were hardly distinguishable from Turks, and yet the tribal loyalties and the attachment to sheikhs were a disadvantage against their incorporation in the nation and the civilized society (Gökalp, 1999; Heper, 2007; Üngör, 2012). That is why Gökalp advised bringing Kurds from the mountains and settle them in the valleys and urban centers by providing land or empty them either in construction or in the military so that they would give up their backward, ‘illegal’ ways -or said differently pastoral nomadism, tribal social structure and uncontrolled cross-border economic activities named by the state as smuggling and contraband- and civilize/modernize. Settlement and de-tribalization then became part of state’s deliberate assimilation policies of the Kurds to the superior Turkish culture and nation-building (Bruinessen, 2019, pp. 145–146).

¹³⁷Ülker wrote (2005, p. 653): “Turkification was a project of nation-building, aiming to keep the unity of the empire under the domination of a Turkish national core”.

¹³⁸ (Kieser, 2000, pp. 156–167) in Üngör, 2012 also (Reynolds, 2014)

The imagery of barbarian and uncivilized Kurds was being reproduced in the public opinion as well. A nationalist writer of the republican newspaper as understood by the name, *Cumhuriyet* (Republic), Yusuf Mashar wrote

Even though they may be more capable than the redskins in the United States, they are – history is my witness – endlessly bloodthirsty and cruel... They are completely bereft of positive feelings and civilized manners. For centuries, they have been a plague for our race... Under Russian rule they were prohibited to descend from the mountains, where they did not lead humane and civilized lives, therefore these creatures are really not inclined to profit from civilization... In my opinion, the dark spirit, crude mental state, and ruthless manners of this Kurdish rabble is impossible to break (*Cumhuriyet*, 18, 19, and 20 August 1930, p.3 quoted in Üngör, 2002, p. 303)

As a matter of fact, the Young Turks referred frequently to these images of savagery and barbarism to dehumanize the Kurds, portray them as inherently inferior and primitive men and women, quite differently than the Ottoman attitude towards the Kurds who saw them as equal members of the Muslim community (*ibid.*). These served as the means to justify the violence used against the Kurds in the years to follow. Subsequently, the destruction of the Armenians in 1915 was followed by westward deportations of, and by extensive campaigns of mass violence against Kurds. In 1916, the CUP, ordered the mass mass deportation of Kurdish communities from the eastern provinces, especially targeting the Kurdish tribesmen who had allied themselves with resistance against Young Turk rule or with Russians and the notable families, sheikhs and tribal chieftains as it was considered necessary to break up the tribal loyalties and prevent them from preserving their traditions, migratory habits and languages, by settling them separately in Turkish-populated areas so that they could be assimilated¹³⁹. The Kurdish migrant populations were broken up in groups not exceeding 300 people and dispersed in such a way that they would not make up more than 5% of the population in the areas where they were resettled. In the final analysis, it is quite inevitable not to remember Fanon's words on how colonialism works through inflaming separations within communities, turning people against each other and capitalizing on these differences for its own sake:

The violence of the colonized, we have said, unifies the people. By its very structure colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism is not merely content to note the existence of tribes, it reinforces and differentiates them. The colonial system nurtures the chieftainships and revives the old marabout confraternities. Violence in its practice is totalizing and national. As a result, it harbors in its depths the elimination of regionalism and tribalism. The nationalist parties, therefore, show no pity at all toward kaids and the traditional chiefs. The elimination of the kaids and the chiefs is a prerequisite to the unification of the people (1963, p. 51).

¹³⁹ (Dündar, 2013; Heper, 2007; Jongerden, 2007; Şeker, 2005; Üngör, 2008b)

In short, resettlement practices became primary tools of assimilation and the nation-building process during the final period of the Ottoman empire, once the non-Muslim elements were eliminated from the nation territories. The project of re-organization of the Ottoman state and the centralization that formed part of it turned out to carry a heavy ethnic-national content. And the oppression and the endeavor of controlling the frontier zones, considered as the 'peripheries' from the Ottoman state's view, was an inseparable part of the Ottoman reformation (Yeğen, 1996, p. 223). With this in view, the expulsion of both the Christian populations and the non-Turkish elements, notably the Kurds, from eastern Anatolia was a highly monitored process, commissioned to IAMM to make sure that none of the non-Turkish elements retained their kinship loyalties or culture to guarantee the integrity of the national territory through its Turkification and indigenous communities could be removed from places of cultural and historical memory. The social engineering and population policies that laid the foundations of the nation formation, coupled with relocation policies continuing well into the Turkish Republic triggered a period of violence, counter-violence and multiple victimization impacting numerous groups with differing ethnic and religious characters (Dündar, 2008; Reynolds, 2014; Üngör, 2012).

In conclusion, the Ottoman colonialism, especially with the *Tanzimat* period has been determinant in the shaping of a common identity out of the multi-confessional social fabric, and the fixed borders of a centralized state mechanism, that has been the foundation upon which the Turkish Republic would be built. In this period the unmixing of populations and sedentarization processes were to be used as the methods of transition from empire to nation state during which religion and the ethnicization of tribal identities were used as the markers of colonial difference. The resulting violence transformed the frontier lands of the empire from the Balkans, to Caucasus to the Middle-East that still bear the legacy of this imperial past and continue to be the trouble spots of the modern world. Ottoman colonialism was not just a transcendental logic based on domination, as defined by coloniality, but an extensive machinery that had a broad range of physical, moral and mental consequences shaping educational, religious, military, legal or governing institutions, and political, economic and social practices that ratified colonial relations. Although the Ottomans have been excluded from the Western-civilization, Ottoman colonialism as an epistemic project derived from the same precepts that attempted to represent the world through a monolithic world view that strove to bring under control the multiple and diverse other epistemologies according to its forms of knowing and making sense of the world. The Christian West/Muslim East opposition

assuming a pattern in connection with the global imperial conflicts starting with the 19th century marked an imperial difference that indeed mutually defined the supposedly separate civilizations. However, the colonial projects materializing during the transformation towards modern nation-states proved that, despite the presumed distinctness, colonialism on both sides involved the simultaneous homogenization and hierarchization of the populations according to the modern rationality. As such the colonial violence not simply aimed at destroying the local epistemologies and different ways of inhabiting the world in line with the ideal of the new society that was to be formed but meant the total negation of the social, political and moral references, practices and institutions of the diverse peoples who have lived in the same territories, in other words their non-existence. The colonial narrative imaginary based on binary oppositions of civilized/barbarian, developed/backwards, modern/pre-modern translating the identity particularities, ways of life, customs, beliefs and social relations of indigenous populations in terms of modern colonial references assisted the progress of colonialism by situating them on the other/opposite side of the abyssal line excluded from the superior state of modern civilization defined as a universal standard. On one hand this exclusion meant the denial of the capacity of these communities to decide for themselves, that is the ability to self-govern and the right to self-determination. This in turn prepared the grounds for artificial frontiers of the nation-states to be implemented which subjected people to territorial appropriation, dispossession, genocides, forced dislocations and cultural assimilation. On the other hand the colonial imaginary equally served to define the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of the unitary nation being fashioned through the colonial violence, playing off communities against each other such as the Kurds and Armenians alongside other multiple non-Muslim groups. The differences were turned into ethno-religious and socio-geographic conflicts unsettling the historical basis of shared sovereign power among multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities while containing them within the limits and sovereignty of the nation-states. Further, the spatial and temporal matrix of Ottoman colonialism, at the time of global imperial contest and transformation, undergirded on one hand the distinct nationalisms emerging in its far-fetched yet interconnected domains. And on the other hand it established the sociopolitical and legal configurations as the foundational violence legitimizing colonization with its administrative structures and institutions that reproduced the oppression and disciplining on a daily level affecting the lives of ordinary people.

It goes without saying that nationalisms that issued during the disintegration of the empire and following independence were manifested in distinct forms combining many different

tendencies despite the common imperial past. Yet their common denominator has been the reproduction of colonial institutions, this time in reference to the politics of independent nation-states in whose construction the colonial differences determined by religious differences and ethnicization of life ways played a role in varying intensities. Consequently in each independent state internal colonization processes took different patterns in the course of post-independence. In the specific context of Turkey colonial processes brought about the Turkish and Sunni character of the nation to be. These elements served in defining the populations whose identities represent the true character of the nation and also the ones who are entitled to govern. At the same time, regarding the populations who were considered to be more easily assimilated into the nation, for instance the Muslim Kurds, the colonial machinery operated through 'softer' means that rather than coercion sought for the collaboration. These softer strategies included the inclusion of local elites and power holders in the mechanisms of colonial administration and control through education or military recruitment or providing them with political and economic benefits. The politics of co-optation not only meant the creation of social and class differences within these communities but also served to 'separate the wheat from the chaff', discriminating certain populations and detaching their common history from each other, as history has proved in the case of Armenians and Kurdish communities who inhabited the same lands devastated by the brutality of colonialism. This is the reason why, despite the republican rupture the Turkish republic and its colonial legacy should be analyzed in view of this historical background that evinces how the colonial violence used against the non-Muslim elements of the empire were directed towards the 'internal' others, locating the Kurdish Question at the hearth of the contemporary problems. Today these problems need to be addressed in relation to the continuing colonial project that the nation-state carries on and the issue of self-determination and self-government not only in a political sense but as the right to exist according to different epistemological grounds invalidated by modern colonial modernity.

IV. Part IV The Turkish Republic and the Kurdish identity as its Constitutive ‘Other’

IV.I. Kurds as the Internal Others of the Turkish Republic

The beginning of the 20th century marked the formal occupation of the Ottoman empire with the end of the WWI, and the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence that lasted between 1919 and 1920, during which the Young Turks as the predecessors of the founding elite of the Republic tried to mobilize the whole population, against the emergency of foreign occupation or more precisely in order to erect a nation against Western colonialism. During these years of wars, a series of international agreements shaped the national territory of the Republic of Turkey, the first of which being the Paris Conference that implanted the idea of ‘self-determination’, following Wilsonian ideals. With this conference the idea of the ‘nation’¹⁴⁰ was carved on the ground, devising new boundaries following a different logic than the ethnic, religious and identitary social realities in the region while the new frontiers mirrored a new form of imperial rule in the region. As Al-Barghuti (2008, p. 4) reminds, “their Middle Eastern colonies got their formal independence and, because of the way they were structured and the elites that governed them, continued to behave as colonies”. Following, the Treaty of Sèvres was signed in 1920 dividing the Ottoman Empire’s lands into European spheres of influence -Greeks, French, British, and Italians- while recognizing an independent Armenian state and promising the Kurds a region in the Taurus Mountains- east of the Euphrates river, south of to be Armenia and north of Syria and Mesopotamia. However, Sèvres was nullified with the, Treaty of Laussane, in 1923 marking the final national borders of the new Turkish Republic and dividing the Kurdish territory into Turkey, the British mandate of Iraq, and the French mandate of Syria making them minorities in each of the newly formed states (Izady, 1992)¹⁴¹. The problem was not only the division along simplified ethnic lines but also the fact that with the final treaty, the idea of nations was irreversibly territorialized. With the post-WWI, the dominant order under nation-states

¹⁴⁰There is a dominant narrative that bases its argument on the creation of ‘artificial states’ by the imperial powers in the Middle-east after the WW-I. This view assumes that the heterogeneity of the communities in the Middle-east was seen as an impediment for the emergence of ‘nationalist’ ideals for the imperial powers that consequently depicted them as racially, ethnically and culturally diversified populations lacking the capacity for self-government and no aspirations for independence. The bearer of these ideas simplified the ethno-religious differences to ethnicity creating homogeneous states (Fontana, 2010). On the other hand Kamel (2016) suggests that this simplification should be avoided as there has been traces of awareness of territorial and national consciousness and the identifying and differentiating characters of various groups living in the middle-east was a complicated set of ethnic, sectarian, linguistic and cultural levels. He suggests both the artificial borders perspective and the search for a modern ‘national’ identity are simplifications and all contemporary national identities are imagined and constructed like any other one in history.

¹⁴¹ See also (Culcasi, 2006) for a historical analysis of how Kurdistan was geographically constructed through narratives and mappings.

superimposed political and administrative boundaries with ethnically defined homogeneous populations (Bowman, 1921). Thus the former idea of an imperial world system with contiguous permeable frontier zones came to an end yielding to well-defined national borders. Nonetheless, as Ignatieff (2003) suggested, the normative ideals of the new nation-building rarely matched up to reality and the new nation-building efforts justified by appeals to the right to self-determination looked a lot like its discredited imperial predecessor as the practical implementation of new nation-building and self-government became a new guise, an "empire lite" masking a resumed form of "imperial tutelage".

Turkey's modernization project was epitomized by a highly centralized and authoritarian model influenced by French Jacobinism, taking to heart the positivist motto of "progress and order", as Göle (1997) reveals, undertaken by intellectuals and a technical intelligentsia - engineers and technicians- who had received a secular and Western style education. This modern republican secular configuration was inculcated by the moral and pedagogical "didactic secularism" of the Kemalist ideology (Gellner, 1981, p. 68) and a social engineering process that imposed a modern way of life as a medium to reach the contemporary level of civilization and European level of development, that Ahiska would call the "Occidental fantasy" of the republican elite (2003, p. 365). The setting of a division line between modern and traditional, therefore, entailed a unity, a shared universal and historic trajectory (Latour, 1993) between the West and the emerging Turkish republic. As Hobsbawm (1990) argued, in order to achieve a national state, invention and social engineering has been essential strategies, even more so if the political unit is carved out of the remains of multicultural Empires – such as the Ottoman Empire. For the secular republic, nationalism operated as a modernizing ideology, a practice (Keyder, 1997; Yeğen, 2007) and a tool for the "uniform incorporation" of diversities which formerly existed within the Empire, through the suppression of the ethnic, linguistic and religious heterogeneity of the population (Salamone, 1989).

In fact, following the eradication of the Armenian populations, the population exchange agreement signed between Greece and the Republic of Turkey in 1923, would stipulate the exchange of over a million Greek Orthodox Turkish national descent from Anatolia with approximately four-hundred thousand Muslims arriving from Greece and the Balkans¹⁴². This was just about the last step to secure the identity of the new Turkish nation, as following the population exchanges, the Ottoman Muslim population -including Turks, Kurds, Caucasians,

¹⁴²Various scholars handled with the population exchange between the Ottoman empire and Greece; see for instance (Hirschon, 2003; McCarthy, 2002; Ş. Pamuk, 2005; Şeker, 2007; Stephen, 1932)

Bosnians, Albanians, Lazs- became the dominant group in Anatolia. The rulers believed that the Ottoman Muslims could be easily naturalized but for that they had to be civilized. And the transformation of from a religious identity towards a modern and national one was only possible by means of a secular state and society (Çolak, 2006). To this end, a ‘*mission civilisatrice*’ with a series of dramatic and authoritarian reforms and institutional changes were put in motion “...to take the whole nation across the frontier from one civilization to another” (Lewis, 1961, p. 3), which all marked the will to change the signs of ‘ignorance’, ‘religiousness’ or any kind of traditional element identified with the Ottoman empire that were seen as a hindrance to progress and civilization¹⁴³. While many have argued that the Kemalist ideology of the Turkish state had its origins in the political and cultural blueprint of a certain social order that had started taking shape in the final quarter of the Ottoman Empire – most indicatively the centralization and institutionalization of the national identity¹⁴⁴- a national identity formulated as the part and parcel of political independence called for the “...the dismantling of those pre-capitalist structures, especially ruling dynasties and religious orthodoxies, that stood in the way of needed internal [modernizing] reforms” as Jayawardena reminds, “...and by reforming and rationalizing existing structures and religious and cultural traditions. In short, [the nationalists] had to challenge and change the old order, sometimes radically, while reviving what were defined as the true and pristine traditions of a distant and independent past” (1986, pp. 3–5).

Soğuk (1993) identifies the national elites as “Orientalized Orientals”, whose idea of modernity was based on differentiating the new nation-state from its imperial past to secure its position amongst other existing and emerging European nations and who treated the people needing of guidance and education to transform into modern and developed subjects. In their conception of modernity, especially the rural and tribal structures as well as the religious character of the Ottoman society became the subjects of ‘othering’ (T. Bora, 1998). Many of the reforms and institutional changes realized by the Kemalist regime can be analyzed through this perspective; the substitution of the Arabic alphabet with the Latin one that generated a considerable number of illiterate populace overnight, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar instead of the Ottoman one, the Hat Law abolishing the traditional fez and installing a Westernized dress code, the secularized education reform among others. These were meant to

¹⁴³ See Scott (1998) for the incorporation of high modernist ideals through authoritarian power and delegitimizing the past and also Anderson (1983) on the state-led construction of unity through nationalism and disengagement with the past.

¹⁴⁴ See (Deringil, 1993; Şeker, 2007). And for a brief overview presenting Ottoman background of these principles see(Çolak, 2006; Dumont, 2019; Toprak, 1995; Zürcher, 2001)

modernize the nation but more importantly were indicative of the civilizing logic of the Republic that carried on a colonial mentality attributing backwardness, tradition and religiousness both to its imperial past and to its ‘peripheries’ (Üngör, 2012).

The erasing of the Ottoman traces also meant the invention of a new historiography as the new national mythology under the guidance of the Turkish History Society; “Ottoman history, culture and literature were rejected and replaced with a new myth of Central Asia and Anatolia to form a ‘civilized’ Turkish culture and identity. History was highly politicized; the aim was to rediscover the civilized and cultured essence, the talent of the Turks, to tie the new culture to their prehistoric past” (Çolak, 2006, p. 590). Çolak underlines that the reconstruction of history and national identity aimed at othering the Ottoman-Islamic past which belonged to another time, an archaic one, that had to disappear eventually in the face of the continuing march of progress represented by the modern regime, and henceforth pronounced illegitimate (*ibid.*; 591). Indeed, as Yeğen argues, marking the beginning of the ‘official’ Turkish history¹⁴⁵ with the Turkish War of Independence in the state historiography was a striking move that meant, the palace, Sultan and Istanbul; the caliphate, Islam, and tradition; the Circassians, Laz and Kurd; the CUP, the freedom and Entente and Vahdettin; Cemal, Talat and Enver, all belonged to some other historical realm, not to the past (2006, p. 193).

Further, the setting of a modernity as the crux of the nation, a character that the people lacked, or what the Orientalist attributions of the nationalist elite implied, in reality involved “not just to draw a line between societies, but also to draw a line within...particularly pronounced in societies that self-consciously stand on the border between the occident and the orient” (Carrier, 1995, pp. 22–23). Zeydanlıoğlu suggest that these divisions when considered their implications within nation-states that “objectify, stigmatize and essentialise a particular geography, ethnicity and culture” need to be examined with greater attention (2008, p. 156).

First targets of the Republic was the areas that had been the traditional strongholds of the institutionalized Islam of the ulema (higher religious class) in the Ottoman Empire -the state

¹⁴⁵The emphasis on the historic origins of the Turks, as a tribe who came from Asia to Anatolia has been a central piece of the official Turkish history. The critically acclaimed communist poet Nazım Hikmet also paid homage to this foundational myth in one of his poems the “Invitation”: “Gallop from far Asia/ and reaching out into the Mediterranean like a mare’s head— this country is ours” (*translation mine*). Years later, a Laz poet Abaşişi responded to his verses; “İsa nenaz mu itkven Nazimi çkimi/İsa nenaz miz mu utkun/Çkun; Xirxineri ntsxenepete var moptit/Mitiş dobadona var goptit/Mitti mitiş getasule var bzonit/Hak borthit!” “Never has a truer word been spoken, dear Nazım/ Never has a truer word been spoken /We; did not arrive here on neighing horses/We did not saunter on nobody’s land/We did not grub up nobody’s garden/ We were already here! (<https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/forum/2020/02/29/davete-icabetsizlik-biz-buradaydik/>)

bureaucracy, education and law- and followed the offensives on religious elements in social life and popular Islam (Şeker, 2007, p. 52). The abolition of the Caliphate, the religious courts and shutting down convents might be considered as the decisive stroke creating a radical rupture between the Ottoman past, its opposite ‘other’, and the newly founded republic. In reality this was a move to control the rural areas viewed as backward, parochial or the local, ignorant whose core character was shaped by this religious and traditional essence. And, in order to introduce progress and civilization in these backwards areas, the state turned to disciplinary narratives. The People’s houses founded in 1932 and Village Institutes became the pedagogical instruments to disseminate secular ideas and the state’s ideology, while fighting ignorance and consolidating the central authority’s power in the countryside.

At the same time, the Turkish Republic perpetuated the demographic engineering politics inherited from the Ottoman empire to formulate a unitary national identity through a series of assimilation and elimination mechanisms (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008) further differentiation the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of the nation. The Kurds along with other minority populations were to be the main target of these Turkification processes and subjected to the increasing militarization and authoritarianism of the state. During the War of Independence (1919-1922) the Kurdish population was represented as an important component of the soon to be born Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal underlining the Kurdish-Turkish fraternity¹⁴⁶. Although, the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 ensured the *de facto* Turkishness of the country ruling out any possibility of framing an ethnic claim on identity except the officially designated one. The treaty recognizing only non-Muslims as minorities and denying the Kurds its difference revealed the ideological perspective of the state situating the Kurds not exactly as its other but its similar other. Gradually the alliance between the Kurds and the founding elite was severed due to the disappointment of not achieving the promised Kurdish homeland during the Treaty of Sèvres that became definitive with the establishment of state frontiers dividing the Kurdish tribal groups in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria with a strict frontier control – police, military and customs- which threatened their existence as social and economic entities paralleled with the increasing repression of the tribal authority, as well as

¹⁴⁶ Another record indicating that the founders of the Republic had at one point acknowledged Kurds to be an ethnic community with group rights can be found in the minutes of the Ankara Assembly, when it articulated that a kind of autonomy was to be granted to the Kurds. ‘Building a local government in the lands inhabited by Kurds was defined as a part of the ‘Kurdistan policy’ of the Ministry of Council. This policy too had been endorsed by Mustafa Kemal. In a public interview held immediately before the proclamation of the Republic, Kemal stated: “In accordance with our constitution, a kind of local autonomy is to be granted. Hence, provinces inhabited by Kurds will rule themselves autonomously. [...] The Grand National Assembly of Turkey is composed of the deputies of both Kurds and Turks and these two peoples have unified their interests and fates” (Yeğen, 2010, p. 68)

the continuous dispersal of Kurds in the Western parts of the country, all of it to create a 'no man's land' in the Kurdish zones paralleled with state's attempts to inculcate a 'Turkish' spirit and the idea of civilization in the minds of the Kurds (Bozarslan, 1998)¹⁴⁷. The final straw would be the abolition of Caliphate in March 1924, uprooting the religious element that kept both societies, the Kurds and the Turks, together (Bozarslan, 2004, 2008; Bruinessen, 1992). The already existing unrest triggered by intensified Turkification, secularization and authoritarianism, bursting out first in Koçgiri uprising in 1921 in the Alevi Dersim area that was repressed with violence provoking fears of suffering the same fate as the Armenians (Bozarslan, 2008; Kieser, 1993) was followed by a succession of revolts until 1936, leaving deep imprints on both the history of Kurdish nationalism and that of the Turkish Republic.

In 1925 Diyarbakır became the setting of another revolt, initially organized by the *Azadi* (Liberty) Committee, whose leadership was composed of Kurdish intellectuals and officers, arrested in 1924, who shared the same background and education with the Unionist and Kemalist elites and considered the tribal chiefs and religious brotherhoods to exploiters and obstacles preventing the Kurds from accessing 'civilization'. However these intellectuals, due to the weakness of the urban middle classes, were obliged to rely almost exclusively on rural forces who opposed the state's encroachment in the traditional society (Bozarslan, 2008a, p. 340). The rebellion led by a Kurdish religious dignitary, the Naqshbandi Sheikh Said of Piran, set a pattern that would dominate almost all the Kurdish uprisings in Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East until the 1970s and marked "a confrontation between an authoritarian and 'modernist' state and a traditional society, its way of life and values (Bozarslan, 1988, p. 133, *translation mine*)¹⁴⁸. Two years later, in 1927, *Khoybun* (Kr. Being Oneself) committee, composed of military and political Kurdish figures based in Middle Eastern and Western countries, directed mainly by the Bedir Khan brothers, organized an uprising in cooperation with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, *Taşnaksutyun*. Led by political magnates, the revolt's forces, however, emanated from rural areas, among them former Hamidiyes and tribes that had collaborated with the Kemalist forces, to suppress the Sheikh Said rebellion (Bozarslan, 1998, 2008a).

These insurgencies gave the government a pretext to silence all opposition by proclaiming the Law on the Maintenance of Order, prolonging the martial law and reinstating the Independence Tribunals, one in Ankara, another in Diyarbakır. The strategies to tame the

¹⁴⁷The incorporation of the Kurds in newly found nation-states and as part of imperial politics can be best read in (McDowall, 2003, bk. II: Incorporating the Kurds)

¹⁴⁸Also see other works which addressed the modern/traditional conflict between the Republic and the Kurds and the consequent rural revolts Bozarslan, 2008a; Olson, 2013; Bruinessen, 1992.

Kurdish zones included deportations of the rebellious groups, massive military campaigns involving the occupation and destruction of many villages and their populations, villagers were routinely disarmed, stripped of their belongings and while some Kurds managed to take refuge leaving the cities towards the mountainous and hard to reach zones of the North-East, many Kurdish tribal chiefs were executed by these Tribunals (Bozarslan, 1988; Üngör, 2008b). The state interventions after the revolts followed the methods of the destruction of the Armenians a decade ago in the same region and the same unit who took part in the genocide, known among the population as the “butcher battalion” (Tr. kasap taburu), conducted the killings of the Kurds¹⁴⁹.

Starting on with the mid-1920s, coercive measures of the government and the Turkification/cultural assimilation efforts became harsher; including the bans on Kurdish newspapers and journals and on the use of Kurdish language in public space, or in fact any other language than Turkish forcing the public use of Turkish¹⁵⁰, alongside juridical and military practices, forced migrations, assassinations and exile of intellectuals and local leaders. After 1925, all Sufi orders were also formally banned in Turkey and most Kurdish Naqshbandi sheikhs, including those not involved in the Sheikh Said uprising, were sent into exile, as they were quite effective in uniting and mobilizing various tribes (Bruinessen, 2019).

During these years the state discourse represented the Kurds in multiple ways. On one hand, the Kurds as bandits, rebels, ruled by superstitions who live in the hidden and invisible ‘Orient’ of Turkey facilitating state interventions to bring civilization to these uncivilized areas (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008). On the other, by the late 1920s, state historians and social scientists started building a new ancestry for the Kurds, asserting that Kurds were descendants of Turcoman tribes, and thus “Kurds were no longer members of a ‘sibling nation’, but ‘Mountain Turks’, who had ‘forgotten’ their Turkishness or were in ‘denial’ of their Turkish origins and who needed to be told the ‘truth’” (ibid., p.7). On another account they were depicted as a feudal ethno-class whose aim was to destroy the Turks and thus this feudal Kurdishness was to be destroyed so that the ‘assimilated Turkish peasantry could regain its original Turkishness and purity (Bozarslan, 2008a, p. 341). But most remarkably, it was their backwardness, traditionalism and the tribalism and thus their pre-modernity. And

¹⁴⁹Interview with Nihat Işık conducted by Şeyhmus Diken, published in Diken, 2014, pp. 259–261 cited in Üngör, 2009

¹⁵⁰ The campaign conducted ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish’ was part of the state’s Turkification efforts which was not directed only against the Kurds but it was also underpinned with the goal to form a Turkish-Muslim commercial class by curbing the remaining power of the non-Muslims in the country’s economy (Aslan, 2007; Bali, 2000).

that is why in the 1920s and 1930s, the resistance of the Kurds to the centralization and consolidation of state power was recast as a question of the endurance of tribal relations (Yeğen, 1999, p. 563). In this manner, the state that wanted to conceal the issue: “As to the Kurdish revolts, they were accused by the mighty ideological machine of power as ‘reactionary’, ‘obscurantist’ and ‘feudal’” (Bozarslan, 1988, p. 124 *translation mine*). And as Yeğen displays, “In this sense, when the Kurdish question was reconstituted as an issue of political reaction, tribal resistance, banditry and regional backwardness, it involved a signification of the traditional forms of social life, elements/figures of Islam, and the peripheral economy, i.e., the constitutive components of the social space wherein Kurdish ethno-political identity was constituted.” (1999, pp. 566–7).

Such that, tight after the Seikh Said rebellion an ‘Eastern Reform Plan’ (*Şark Islahat Planı*) was prepared by the regime to govern the Kurdish region “in a colonial way”, disarming the local tribes, giving full authority to governors to be responsible for enforcing punishments and execution and whose offices would also become military headquarters, and proposed that the region be Turkified through forced re-settlement (Bayrak, 1994, pp. 256–257). The word Kurdistan, in these plans was consciously avoided so as to cross it out and the area was placed on the records as the ‘East’ (Yarkın, 2019). The investigations made to compose the Eastern Reform plan also were used in formulating the “Settlement Law” (*İskân Kanunu*) of 1934, which served both in the deportation of the insurgent groups and the assimilation of the Kurds in general, in an effort to create a national homeland of the Turks (Jongerden, 2007a, Chapter 5) and destroy a nation as regard to the Kurds (Beşikçi, 1990). The settlement plans, following in the footsteps of CUP’s strategies, became a panacea for both solving the problem of assimilation and settlement of the Muslim migrants coming from the former Ottoman territories of Greece, the Balkans and the Soviet Union and to eradicate the Kurdish tribalism by absorbing these non-Turkish elements through dispersing them among Turks¹⁵¹. With the settlement law the country was also physically divided into zones of Turkishness and foreign elements; while the immigrants of Turkish origins, fit for being civilized, were to be settled in areas along the international borders -Syria, Iraq, Iran and the Soviet Union- as well as certain parts of the Kurdish southeast, alongside roads, railways, and borders linking the state center with a rebellious periphery, so that the density of the culturally Turkish population could be increased and villagers of Turkish ancestry could be ‘tied to land’ in the Zone 1; some Kurds

¹⁵¹The settlement of the Kurds as part of state policies of forced assimilation and genocide is a theme addressed by many of the works regarding the Kurds in modern Turkey; see (Bayrak, 1993, 1994; Beşikçi, 1991; Bruinessen, 1994; Jongerden, 2007a; Öktem, 2004; Şeker, 2013; Üngör, 2012; Yeğen, 2007)

could be deported to Zone 2, predominantly areas in the western parts of Turkey including the areas in which it is deemed desirable to establish populations which must be assimilated into Turkish culture while all their belonging would be forfeited to the state¹⁵²; Zone 3 would be territories in which culturally Turkish immigrants would be allowed to establish themselves, freely but without assistance of the authorities; in small and scattered rural settlements in areas difficult to access that did not pose a significant security problem but also regarded as incompatible with modernity; Zone 4 would include all those territories that were to be evacuated and those which may be prohibited entry for public health, material, cultural, political, strategic or security reasons (Beşikçi, 1991; Bruinessen, 2019; Jongerden, 2001, 2007a). Further, Article 9 of the law would reveal that nomadism, especially linked with a tribal life, was still a problem for the state; as it stipulated; “nomads not culturally Turkish will be collectively dispersed and settled in towns that are culturally Turkish”, that “those of whom espionage is sensed... and nomads who are not culturally Turkish will be expelled beyond national borders” (Üngör, 2008b, p. 268). With the enforcement of political boundaries compelling nomads to change their migration routes or to settle completely, the already impaired nomadic life would be almost brought to an end with the settlement law (Bruinessen, 1992, p. 17). In parallel, the law announced that the administrative authority of the tribe, including all previously recognized rights were to be abolished, the tribal chiefdoms and sheikdoms eliminated, their property liquidated and families immediately deported to avoid new ones from sprouting up and so that they could be melted into the Turkish population, implying a direct attack on tribal life and leadership (Üngör, 2008; Yeğen, 1999). Diyarbakir province became one of the Turkification zones, as the state was concerned that the former locals, the Kurds, Syriacs, and Yezidis living now in Syria, and Armenians who were “working for the establishment of a greater Armenia and unified Kurdistan” were collaborating with their friends and family in the region to disrupt the national order and thus they or anyone related to their families by profession or by marriage should be denaturalized or deported (Üngör, 2008, p. 278). Indeed, Üngör might highlight that, one of the evaluation reports of the policies implemented, would reveal; “The spirit of the law is assimilation and *internal colonization*... to dismember the territorial unity of the Kurds” (*ibid.*, p 277, **emphasis mine**).

¹⁵²Bayrak reveals that, in a secret document entitled “The Confidential Circular on the Turkification of the Subjects of the Settlement” (İskana Tabi Tutulanların ‘Turkleştirilmesi Uygulamasına İlişkin Gizli Genelge) dating January 1930, the document ordered assessment of villages with ‘foreign’ names and ‘foreign’ inhabitants and the dispersion of these ‘foreigners’ over Turkish villages in order to make them Turks (1994, pp. 506–509)

Dersim, a loosely defined district on the Taurus Mountains in central Eastern Anatolia, hardly accessible with narrow valleys and ravines, inhabited by a large number of Zaza speaking small tribes, mainly of the heterodox Alevi/Kızıldaş sect socially different than the Sunni Kurds, and partly of Armenian descents who either converted to become Alevi Kurds or escaped from the 1915 Genocide, was another territory that became the target of state's violence and assimilation policies (Molyneux-Seel, 1914). The merging of Kurdish and Armenian cultures has left traces both in the local Zaza dialects and in popular belief (Bruinessen, 1994). A year after the settlement law, the Assembly passed a special law on Dersim, 'Law for the Creation of Tunceli', Turkifying the name of the city and making it a separate province placed under a military governor with extraordinary powers to arrest and deport individuals and families. The political authorities justified the interventions by framing the Kurdish question as an issue of backwardness, banditry and unruly tribes settling their conflicts according to their own 'primitive' tribal law with complete disregard of the state that needed civilized methods to cure this sore in these poverty and disease-laden lands (Beşikçi, 2013; M. Bruinessen, 2000; Yeğen, 1999). The modern ways of life were introduced with the construction of roads and bridges, police posts and government mansions in every large village provoking unrest that provided a reason for the pacification campaign of 1937-38 in Dersim and the carrying out of the first large-scale deportations under the 1934 law. Beşikçi suggested that the state's assaults in Dersim were indeed directed at bringing a definitive end to the Kurdish autonomy, whose first targets were tribal and religious institutions as well as the Kurdish notables (H. Bozarlan, 1988, p. 128). Once again, intellectuals such as Nuri Dersimi and rural forces led by a religious dignitary Seyyid Rıza, played a decisive role in this revolt, which was suppressed by the massive extermination of both rebels and civilians¹⁵³. In many accounts the violence experienced during the military campaign in Dersim was deemed to be analogous to the Armenian genocide¹⁵⁴. In reality, the state's intents to destroy the tribal life-world was underlied with the literal effort to build the nation, through the restructuring of the villages and rural areas, making them disciplinary environments (Nalbantoğlu, 1997), in order to turn the villagers and peasants into Turks infusing them with a nationalist conscience and a Turkish lifestyle (Bozdoğan, 2001; Jongerden, 2009).

¹⁵³ (Beşikçi, 2013; Bozarlan, 2008; Bruinessen, 2000) and Dersimi, 1952 for a personal record of the Dersim massacres.

¹⁵⁴See for example an interview with historian Zeynep Türkyılmaz who has been working on genocide and assimilation policies in Dersim used by the Republicans, where she compares Hannah Arendt's 'Banality of Evil' with the Dersim genocide (Dersim hatıratı, 2020, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2020/01/15/dersim-hatirati-kotulugun-vucut-bulmus-hali/>) and also 'Dersim in the words of Laments' (Saltık & Taş, 2016) that contain interviews with the survivors of Dersim Genocide.

Another interesting point is the particular focus on women and young girls that are seen as the first ones to be taken away from their Kurdish communities and assimilated to create exemplary ‘Turkish’ female models. Türkyılmaz (2016) demonstrates how education also have been an important part especially in the Turkification of Dersim Alevi, and how vocational boarding schools, especially the ones in the neighboring city of Elazığ, that become predominantly Turkish and Sunni Muslim after the extermination of Armenians in 1915, served as the “civilizing factory” for the girls that the Turkish soldiers took away from their families or the ones who became orphans after the massacre. The General Staff of the period Marshal Fevzi Çakmak would in fact see these boarding schools in the areas as part of the “internal colonization” of the region (Üngör, 2012). The whole area would be ruled under the martial law between 1925 to 1946, leaving no room for resistance under conditions of heavy oppression, silencing of the opposition forces, dispersed communities in a geography of massacres, until the transition to multi-party regime. Education, did serve both for the Turkification and the spread of regime’s propaganda during the Republican period and was one of the centerpieces of the “internal colonization” (dahili kolonizasyon) of the eastern provinces (Beşikçi, 1990; Üngör, 2008). While many schools in the Southeast were renamed after local Young Turk figures, such as the Ziya Gökalp high-school, and the nationalist curriculum was being taught to countless students, the People’s Houses (*Halk Evleri*), whose personnel in some cases consisted of CUP veterans, were being placed as sites of dissemination of the Kemalist revolution and the education of the people (Jongerden, 2009; Üngör, 2008).

On the other hand, the course of nation building continued both ethnically and economically through the dispossession of the remaining non-Muslim populations, through the discriminatory 1942 Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi), especially targeting Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and Levantine and forcing who were unable to a forced labor camp near Erzurum (Üngör & Polatel, 2011, p. 103). The economic destruction and dispossession continued and reached its apex in the 6-7 September 1955 pogrom in Istanbul, looting Greek shops and destroying Armenian businesses, and killing non-Muslim community members¹⁵⁵. Eventually, oppressive practices and assimilating policies reached to the extent that there has been a policy of “Turkification” in every aspect of life; from education to culture and even to the economy (Aktar, 2000).

¹⁵⁵For an Armenian account of the incidents see (Biberyan, 1998)

The constituent element of the period that comprised the nation-building period, starting with the Ottoman Empire and lasting until the multiparty period was the mass violence that wiped off the non-Muslim elements that provided the basis of creating a Turkish nation, not only ethnically or culturally but also economically; including the 1909 Adana massacre, the violent expulsion of European Muslims especially after 1912, the 1915 deportation and genocide of Armenians and Syrians, the 1921 Koçgiri and Pontus massacres, the mass violence against Kurds from the 1925 Sheikh Said conflict to the 1938 Dersim massacre, the 1934 anti-Jewish pogrom in Thrace, all the way up to and including the 1955 pogrom against Greeks and Armenians in Istanbul, among other incidents that broke out (Üngör, 2008, p. 17). Undoubtedly the annihilation of non-Muslims together with the eradication and/or assimilation of Kurds constituted the essence of the organization of inclusion and exclusion, especially in the Eastern provinces, but in general the foundations of the Turkish nation, by creating a Turkish-Sunni Muslim ethno-national territory. So, the state devices to construct the Turkish nation extended from deportation and massacres in the case of Armenians, population exchange in the case of *Rum* – the name given to Eastern Orthodox Christians/Greeks of the Ottoman empire- division in the case of Arabs and ethnic homogenization, discrimination and assimilation for the Kurds, as Yeğen (2014) expresses. No matter the strategies used by the state, the daltonism of the Turkish Republic's racist vision surfaced indiscriminately in the sense that it did not differentiate between the Kurds, Armenians and *Rums* who were placed in the same category of the nations others. Put another way, the non-Muslims and the Kurds, the former religiously alien and the later in terms of its life-ways, being the 'strangers' in Bauman's (2004) words, the ones who do not fit in the clear and unambiguous definitions of identity, and whose loyalty we can never be sure of, the internal 'enemies' or traitors although they are somehow one of 'us', represent "the other of the state, whether local, political, religious, or other communities that are imagined to be located outside, but in relation to, the state" (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001, p. 22). Thus, in the mutual relation between the state and its others, these communities whose social identities, practices and allegiance become elements that states "are formed against," (Corrigan & Sayer, 1985, p. 7). And yet, this stranger-hood, if included in some manner in the existing definitions could become tolerable.

IV.II. Post-Republican Era and The Kurds

Once the Turkish state consolidated the military and political order, it was time to strengthen the economy when on one hand the Turkish ruling classes have pursued a policy akin to that of the Ottoman state exploiting traditional hierarchies and hindered the necessary reforms for social and economic development -such as the never achieved land reform and restoring the lands usurped during the genocides and dispossession -safeguarding the interests of traditional and local power-holders. The transition to the multiparty regime and the accession of the Democrat Party (DP) to power indicated the increased weight of market oriented economic strategies paralleled by populist politics. DP made its mark not as a party of state elites but a party that addressed rural masses pushing forth traditional elements such as religion set aside by the founders of the Republic and the revival of the periphery with its repressed culture. The populism that DP pursued was in fact a cover up to get the political support of the conservative segments of the society and in reality encouraged the access of the big landowners coming from the peripheral and rural areas to become central agents both in politics and economy. This politically and economically advantageous move meant on the other hand the incorporation of the ‘underdeveloped’ areas kept out of market’s intervention into the central economy and thus the exploitation of their natural resources to meet the needs of the metropolitan areas.

And as to the Kurds, as Beşikçi set forth, once any possibility of resistance was extinguished, the state offered two options to the ‘Kurdish ruling class’, the aghas and the sheikhs who by then was constituting part of the wealthy land owners; to collaborate with the state or to be exterminated like Sheikh Said (Beşikçi, 1990, p. 4). The landed and/or religious Kurdish elites who cooperated with military and civilian government officials as well as the mainstream neoliberal political parties who came to power after the 1950s consolidated their positions by taking part in political-party-based patronage politics, while the state’s policies of co-opting Kurdish notables pursued the institutionalization of the feudal hegemonic forces¹⁵⁶ while deepening the divisions amid territorially segmented Kurdish tribes (Beşikçi, 1990, 1992; Bruinessen, 1992, 2002). As a result, asserts Yadırgı (2017), the Kurdish rulers disavowed their Kurdish origin and sided with the state apparatus not only in order to be integrated to the Turkish political system but also secure the control of Kurdish villages which became their political fiefdoms as a consequence of this political collaboration. On the other hand, in the

¹⁵⁶For an in depth analysis of the political economy of the Turkish Republic see Keyder, 1979.

1950s, to be able to integrate the Kurdish region into the Turkish market, and carry out state-led development programs, such as the mechanization of agriculture, the Kurdish question was reconstituted in terms of a socio-economic problem of underdevelopment and regional backwardness, which was consistent with the traditional discourse predicated on pre-modernity, political reaction or banditry, all of which must be eliminated, that would be referred as ‘ the Eastern Question’ from thenceforth, and at the same time served to silence the ethno-political aspect (Yeğen, 1999, p. 565). One of the most characteristic texts of the discourse of regional backwardness is found in the program of the government founded in 1969 by the Justice Party (JP), the successor of the first ruling party after the transition the Democrat Party (DP):

Another important issue we stress is that of the development of the eastern region. The development of all the regions of our country, the territorial and national integrity of which is indivisible, is a constitutional necessity.... Our aim is to bring all regions of Turkey to contemporary levels of civilization. It is for this reason... we see the necessity of introducing special measures in the regions where backwardness is massive and acute. The aim of these special measures is not to create privileged regions, but to forge integration (*ibid.*, p. 564).

Consequently, the region that never received state investments, started getting public services, and yet Beşikçi (1990, 1992) asserted that, in exchange, colonial and assimilationist policies were put into practice to curb a possible ‘national awakening’ that might have resulted with the amelioration of material conditions of the region. Beşikçi was the first intellectual to name the Turkish state policies against the Kurds as ‘internal colonialism’ while in more recent works, others also have referred to Kurdish territories of Turkey as an ‘internal colony’ in reference to the socio-economic marginalization and ensuing unequal center-periphery relations (Entessar, 2009) or the denial of Kurdish ethnic identity, forced assimilation and Turkification policies, bans on Kurdish language, changing the names of Kurdish towns, villages and settlements, destruction of Kurdish cultural heritage, forced displacement and resettlement, and forced education in Turkish (Gunes & Zeydanlioglu, 2013).

Subsequent to state-led developmental measures and a furthered emphasis on industrialization, the rural areas including the Kurdish regions underwent a profound transformation whose economic integration not only meant the exploitation of natural resources but also the workforce. Following, massive migrations took place towards big cities disrupting the existing social and economic structures. This migration wave incited *hemşerilik* (relationships based on the place of origin or village) structures in the cities providing an ongoing attachment with the countryside and keeping the unity of social structure for the Kurdish population as a form of safety net. Thus, the ‘peripheries’ started recreating itself at

the center, especially in small ‘colonies’ of urbanized poor where they settled. Meanwhile, the discourse stressing the differences of “civilization” and “development” deepened racial, legal, religious, rural, urban and class inequalities, eventually dehumanizing the rural, in which the Kurds constituted a great part. The spatial segregation and marginalization was reproduced in the squatter areas where the Kurds were mostly resettled in form of a stigmatization mechanism passing through ‘the rural’, ‘the disadvantaged Other’, ‘the undeserving Other(s)’ and ‘the culturally inferior Other(s) as and lately ‘the threatening Other’ (Erman, 2001). Moreover, the stigmatizing and labeling are translated into racial and identity segregation in a colorblind neoliberal world and crystallizes itself most clearly in cities (Balibar, 1991; Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991), becoming more and more manifest when symbolic violence coincides with an economic exploitation (Fanon, 1963)¹⁵⁷. Similarly for the Kurds, poverty was most of the time equated with crime, turning the relationship between cultural disdain and economic discrimination into ‘racialization of the Kurdish identity’ in which racial characteristics are attached to cultural formulas of inferiority and superiority (Ergin, 2014)¹⁵⁸. As Radcliffe has propounded, in this respect, internal colonization comes to mean, not only economic, political and social domination of natives by the natives but also “the systematic exploitation and Othering of ethnically or spatially distinct populations in postcolonial states” (2005, p. 295).

In the following years to come the state policies kept altering the Kurdish regions social and spatial fabric through regional development projects and interventions that actually turned out to be the means of govern ability in the area, erasing Kurdishness from public and cultural domain as well as the official historiography. As a matter of fact, the re-organization of the rural areas was of crucial importance for the consolidation of the nation space and its Turkification (Bozdogan, 2001; Jongerden, 2007a). For instance, with the law of 1959, villages and natural landmarks with non-Turkish names were changed and by the year 2000, over 12,000 villages amounting to every third village in the country had been renamed, while throughout the republican era, hills and mountains have been inscribed with the crescent and

¹⁵⁷Also (Foucault, 2003; Mbembé, 2003) on the relations between the symbolic violence, economic exploitation and dehumanization.

¹⁵⁸When compared with Zureik’s (1979) study on Palestinian’s as Israel’s internal colony that is underlay by the transformation of the indigenous Arab populations economic and social structure the context of superimposing a capitalist economy upon a traditional peasant social order, especially after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, it is possible to observe many similarities. Zureik’s observations such as an asymmetrical development between Arabs and Jews, creation of pockets of Israeli hinterland in the midst of areas with native concentration, transformation of the Palestinian villagers into wage workers with sub-proletarian status and a justificatory ideology created by the settler regime to dehumanize the native populations, along with their culture and way of life, so as to fit the hegemonic purposes and needs of the colonizer, could all be applied to the Kurdish population’s situation in Turkey

star, the symbols of the Turkish flag, and slogans such as ‘Happy, who calls himself a Turk’ (Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene!) and during the Kurdish conflict in the 1980s hundreds of such inscriptions and signs were installed all over the Southeast, especially in areas which were considered non-loyal to the state (K. Öktem, 2004). Öktem (2008) asserts that these were not only the means of the exclusion of non-Turkish people but the nationalist incorporation of their space in order to consolidate the nation-state’s hegemony, which was achieved, notably in the Southeast, through administrative measures and policies of destruction and neglect of the other’s cultural heritage as a form of extermination of the ‘other’ as a material and historical entity and to render its traces in space and time invisible; of dispossession and transfer of capital to indigenous/local elites, just like what had happened during the genocides and pogroms; of reconstruction of cultural memory through the creation and dissemination of a hegemonic historiography or toponymical strategies of renaming and the inscription of ethno-nationalist symbols on space.

What is more, particularly after the coup d’état of 1960, the military government extended previous techniques like forced resettlement and sociological/anthropological research, into the cultural and political domain, such as the ban on any other language than Turkish in election propaganda disseminated in radio, television or any media; the launch of Turkish radio stations in Kurdish regions that broadcast radio programs prepared by propaganda specialists as well as local Kurdish songs with Turkish lyrics, as an intent of deliberate extermination of a language, or “linguicide” or publications ‘scientifically’ arguing that the Kurds originated from Turanian tribes, strategies which were all elaborated in the report entitled “The Principles of the State’s Development Plan for the East and Southeast”, whose main goal was to accomplish the complete assimilation of the Kurds (Akar & Dündar, 2008; Nezan, 1993; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2012). Moreover, the number of boarding schools increased notably in South-eastern Turkey, while sons of prominent Kurdish landowning families were handpicked by state officials to be educated in universities to create model citizens among the Kurdish population (Beşikçi, 1992; Yadırgı, 2017).

Taken all together, the disciplinary tools, coercion, dehumanizing narratives, a series of assimilation and elimination mechanisms and the imposition of the hegemonic discourse of Turkishness generated through a crisscross of statism and modernist narrative, served as a means of “forgetting, postponing and canceling” of the Kurdish ethnic identity (Yeğen, 2006, p. 120). While, “[T]he constitution and exclusion of Kurdish identity was intrinsically related to the project of transforming an a-national, de-central and disintegrated political,

administrative and economic space into a national, central and integrated one” (Yeğen, 1996, p. 226). Notwithstanding, despite the state’s expectations of pacification through assimilation, and also boosted with the effects of the urbanization of Kurdish population, a strong Kurdish political movement was formed around the university *milieu* influenced by the socialist and anti-imperialist ideologies that dominated the political scene in the late 1950s, beginning of the 1960s.

IV.III.The First Organized Kurdish Oppositions in Republican Turkey

With the 1960s, a group known as the ‘Easterners’ formed by university students who would become outstanding figures in Kurdish politics in the years to follow -including for instance Musa Anter a dissident writer and journalist assassinated by JİTEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Organization) in 1992- would advance the internal colonial narrative and also point out to the clientelist networks and relations of subordination and personal interests between propertied traditional Kurdish elites, the “Kurdish comprador bourgeoisie”, and the Turkish state structure. The Easterners voiced their ideas that challenged the local Kurdish collaborators and threatened at the same time the role of the state in numerous ‘Eastern Meetings’ and protests in the Kurdish part of Turkey becoming the first platforms in Republican Turkey where the Kurdish demands could be vocalized¹⁵⁹. Ad yet, in 17 June 1959, forty-nine leading Kurdish intellectuals were arrested, with the demand of capital punishment, leaving the name 49ers as one of the historical benchmarks of Kurdish national movement in Turkey.

Between the years 1960-1980; during a political ferment that witnessed the first coup d’etat in 1960 followed by 1971 Turkish military memorandum and a second coup in 1980, the collaboration between left-wing groups -such as Dev-Yol (Revolutionary Path), *Kurtuluş* (Liberation), THKP-C (Turkish People Liberation’s Party-Front), THKO (People’s Liberation Army of Turkey), TİKKO (Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey) and nationalist socialist TİP (Turkish Workers’ Party) among others- and the Kurdish groups organizing resistance outside the tribal relationships and various political parties with a range of ideological inclinations under the umbrella of socialist politics, whether with stronger nationalist or anti-imperialist undercurrents or inclinations towards armed liberation

¹⁵⁹For more on Easterners see (Beşikçi, 1992; Gambetti & Jongerden, 2015; Gündoğan, 2015; Yadırgı, 2017)

proliferated¹⁶⁰. In this period many different political structures emerged varying from political parties, the oldest being TKDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey) Established in 1965, followed by several others such as KİP (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and KUK (National Liberationists of Kurdistan), fractions of *Kawa*, *Rizgarî* (Liberation) and its break-away *Ala Rizgarî*; TKSP (the Socialist Party of Kurdistan Turkey) and PKK, alongside some other smaller groups such as *Tekoşîn* (Struggle), *Stêrka Sor* (Red Star) and *Pêkanîn* (Realization) and Kurdish associations such as the DDKD (Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East) and DDKO (Revolutionary Cultural Hearts of the East) (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011; Tezcür, 2009). Despite the significant organic relationship between the Kurdish and Turkish left and a middle ground when it comes to anti-imperialist discourses, this relation had not been able to produce real solutions to the Kurdish question in Turkey. Akkaya (2013) affirms, there has been two different approaches to the Kurdish question at that time; the first being the “backwardness and feudality” and the second as ‘a national and colonial’ question, particularly the denial of Kurdistan as a colony by the Turkish left. In fact, as Casanova suggested “The nations’ struggles against imperialism and the class struggle inside every nation and on a global level overshadowed the ethnicities’ struggles inside nation-states” (2006, p. 413 translation mine).

On another note, the socialist Kurdish political parties grappled with to put an end to tribal loyalties, and especially the more and more openly exploitative relationship between aghas and the peasantry, to be able to mobilize them along class lines. The new loyalties such as those of nation and class were hoped to override the primordial ties and yet instead of disappearing completely these different loyalties interacted with and mutually modify each other (Bruinessen, 1992, pp. 6–7).

The colony status of Kurdistan, for these parties, was not the result only of the Turkish state’s colonial politics but its Kurdish collaborationist who usurp the people also had were personally involved and thus equally responsible. Kurdistan Socialist Party’s (Partiya Sosyalista Kurdistan, PSK) founder, Kemal Burkay, for example, in a conference in London in 1984, postulated a similar description of Kurdistan, and hypothesized that one of the reasons for socioeconomic underdevelopment in Kurdistan was its colony status: The states that have divided Kurdistan have reduced each part of it to a colony:

¹⁶⁰ For the relation between revolutionary Turkish left and the Kurdish movement see (Akkaya, 2013; Bozarslan, 2012; Güneş, 2009, 2012; Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012; Tezcür, 2009)

“When compared to Western countries, Turkey, Iraq and Iran are backward countries. Yet, within the last 40-50 years, important developments have taken place [in each of these countries]. Despite [these developments] there exist major developmental divergences between Kurdistan and the remaining parts of these countries.... The vast natural resource wealth of our country [Kurdistan] is an important factor in its division and the poverty endured by our people [Kurds]. The states that have apportioned Kurdistan and their imperialist chiefs have aggressively plundered and scrambled the natural and mineral resources, reducing our country to a colony. We are yet to see a development policy from Turkey (1995, p. 5)

IV.IV.Neoliberal Era and the Kurds

If you look at the pictures on the front pages of the newspapers at home now, all those pictures of dead people...people shot by terrorists and separatists and the army and the police, you'll find somewhere behind it all that single word; everyone's doing it to be free... You have to be firm, you have to do your duty. You have to kill whole villages if necessary – we have nothing against the people, it's the terrorists we want to get, but we have to be willing to pay a price for our unity and freedom
Ghosh,(2005,p. 241)

After the 1980 military coup, anti-Kurdish policies crystallized with the creation of a new constitution that sanctified Turkish ethnicity and the Turkish language as the core element of citizenship, while bans on the use of Kurdish language in public and private spaces were carried into effect to thwart the growing Kurdish ethno-nationalist formations (Yavuz, 2003). Together with the increasing discontent amidst the Kurds prompting the consolidation of PKK, and the escalating conflict between the group and the state forces, especially after PKK's declaration of armed struggle against the state in 1984, the anti-colonial resistance was tried to be suppressed under the guise of a national security problem. From 1987 until 2002, a state of emergency was maintained in the Kurdish southeastern region of the country, resulting in violent practices such as forced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings almost at a scale of deliberate ethnic cleansing and the enforcement of large-scale village evacuations and their destruction in an attempt to contain the Kurdish dissidents and reassert control over contested territories (Içduygu et al., 1999).

During the 1980s, on the other hand, the impacts of neoliberal economic policies and their social repercussions were being felt even greater. Moreover, a 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis'¹⁶¹ emerged as the new state discourse, set forth by the elected government that put an end to the three years of military rule. The new national identity proposed drew close to a neo-Ottomanist cultural identity, featuring the cultural pluralism of the empire presuming a tolerance towards minority identities, be it religious, ethnic or linguistic, while an economic liberalism and decentralization process was taking place in order to articulate the national

¹⁶¹Also see (Güvenç, 1991)

economy with the changing global markets, and reinvigorate the economy through private investment¹⁶². This, in exchange meant the acceleration of capitalist expansion and the simultaneous uneven geographical development¹⁶³. On the cultural level, the effects of globalization entailed, not only for Turkey but across the world, the opening of spaces for plural identities to have a voice in the public and political sphere and hence an upturn in identitary politics. In that sense, the Turkish-Islam synthesis propounded by the government was not positioned as counter-hegemonic, but as being part of globalizing Western world and perfectly aligned with the global capitalist system (Atasoy, 2003; Çolak, 2006). This new shift and opening up to the ‘global world’ implied, starting with the 1990’s especially for the Islamist groups “engage[ing] in a process of “rethinking” the West, westernization and modern/western political values” (Dağı, 2005, p. 21)¹⁶⁴.

On the other hand, the stress on Islam as a shared identity would be used in the years that followed by different right-wing governments as a tool to muffle the Kurdish nationalism (Yavuz, 2003). That being said, the elements of the Kurdish nationalism that cannot be incorporated in the discourse of religious brotherhood and multiculturalism bowdlerize from claims of equality and recognition, equated with terrorism and separatist tendencies, was to be worked out once and for all for the smooth functioning of global capitalist economic mechanisms.

Thus, over the next ten years, on one hand the bans on the use of Kurdish and celebration of *Newroz* (the Kurdish new year) was removed as a step to acknowledge the Kurdish cultural identity, though only in its sterilized form, and on the other the state’s iron rule was felt through the ‘War on Terror’ launched with the Anti-Terrorism Law of 1991 and the foundation

¹⁶²The President at the time, Turgut Özal, was the founder of a globalized neoliberal economy in Turkey taking up the example of America. In fact he is known with his unrelenting will to turn Turkey into ‘little America’ together with a group of American-educated technocrats establishing strong relationships with institutions such as IMF, World Bank, OECD, the WTO. For an analysis of the economic policies undertaken in this period see (Öniş & Senses, 2007). And for Özal’s synthesis of Islam with neoliberal policies see (Aral, 2001).

¹⁶³See also Lefebvre (1976) and for a present-day analysis Brenner (1999). It should also be noted that different than Europe where state-capitalism relation was already taking place in the 18th and 19th centuries, market-oriented arrangements were being implemented during the *Tanzimat* period of the Ottoman Empire and continued with the Turkish republic

¹⁶⁴There has been several attempts to assert Islam as a political expression though various political parties during the 1970’s and 1980’s, but they were banned under ‘reactionary’ and anti-secularist accusations during the coup d’états. Although the secular and modernized logic of the Turkish republic tried to bar the encroachment of religious elements and their public visibility, it never managed to eradicate them. Also it should be noted that there was an anti-western Islamic tendency under the “National Outlook Movement” during the 1970’s. Their critique was directed towards the westernization project undertaken by the republicans yet in order to counterbalance the ‘West’ they called for the creation of a strong economy based on the heavy industrialization that would empower an Islamic economic integration and set the country free from the western domination. In a way, they were absolutely against the western civilization yet “modernization and development” were seen as the precondition of liberation from its hegemony.

of the Regional State of Emergency Governorates during the high intensity war between the armed forces of PKK and the state, resulting in the homicides, extrajudicial killings, displacement of entire Kurdish villages to cities and devastation of the Kurdish territory incorporating the Turkish military to the everyday life in the Kurdish rural areas. Further, Gökalp's aenian policies to liquidate nomadism and mountain pastoralism to settle and civilize the Kurds are carried into effect by the president at the time Turgut Özal who believed that these were indeed the root causes of the Kurdish question, its savagery and backwardness, and strengthened the idea of autonomy defended by PKK. His final solution involved the evacuation of villages and the wholesale deportation of this mountain population to western Turkey while recruiting tribal militias (*korucu*, the 'village guards') from the local Kurdish families to conduct counter-insurgency operations against the PKK -very much alike the *Hamidiye* units during the Ottoman rule- along with economic investment in the parts of the region that were effectively controlled by the State¹⁶⁵.

As for example, the Southeast Anatolia project (GAP), was designed as the biggest regional development project in Republic's history, on the grounds of eliminating regional development disparities as it was proclaimed by the state authorities. However, the aftereffects of the project, that end up inciting irremediable topographic, demographic and socioeconomic changes, made the primary objectives susceptible and the project was reclaimed as the exploitation and colonization of natural and human resources of the Kurdish region in order to meet the increased energy consumption and the requirements of industrialized western parts of Turkey (Aytar, 1991; Beşikçi, 1990). Further, others have argued that beyond being an attempt to ensure the socioeconomic integration of the Kurds into the dominant order during escalating conflict (Nestor, 1996), there were ulterior motives. The control of water has been at the center of the relations between Turkey, Syria and Iraq as upstream and downstream states and shaped the dynamics of the Kurdish question as both a domestic and international concern (Carkoglu & Eder, 2001) - that still holds true as a current geopolitical concern in the zone- as well as the dam constructions that are not only related to the international power play between different countries that have stakes in the region, but also as complementary means of counter-insurgency, to cut off PKK's mobility, and social control mechanism to manage populations¹⁶⁶, while destroying the Kurdish culture by wiping

¹⁶⁵For literature on village evacuations see (Asan, 2019; Aytar, 1992;Belge, 2011; Bozarslan, 2000; Bruinessen, 1994, 2019; Jongerden, 2007a; Klein, 2011, 2012a; Nederland-Koerdistan, 1995)

¹⁶⁶See (Bilgen, 2014; Harris, 2002; Hatem & Dohrmann, 2013; Jongerden, 2010; Özok-Gündoğan, 2005) on how GAP and dams became tools to control rein in the Kurdish population.

out history and material culture or in fact literally flooding spaces of memory, human habitats and forcing a wave of mass resettlement (Bilgen, 2018; K. Öktem, 2004; Yadırgı, 2017).

The spatial reorganization of the Kurdish lands and with it the obliteration of the social fabric that took shape in this space surely has been at the heart of the colonial policies, both during the Ottoman and Republican rule. The state authority saw the village evacuations as an opportunity to remodel the rural settlement pattern and increase the productivity of the countryside through a rationalist structure that was specified in a so-called master plan for return of the previously displaced population in the East and Southeast Anatolia Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project Sub-Regional Development Plan in 2001 (Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi Köye Dönüş ve Rehabilitasyon Projesi Alt Bölge Gelişme Planı) that was never accomplished (Jongerden, 2009; Oyan et al., 2001).

IV.V.AKP (Justice and Development Party) Rule, Authoritarian neoliberalism and the Kurdish Issue

In 2002, the Justice and Development Party's accession to power on one hand symbolized a counter-power against the repressive secular regime silencing the Islamist population and on the other brought into view an even more accentuated discourse referring to an Ottoman past representing a bridge between the West and East as the cradle of all civilizations¹⁶⁷. The allusions of neo-Ottomanism, building on the prior Turkish-Islam synthesis, also served to capitalize even more on the symbol of justice and multicultural tolerance of Islam towards all cultures (T. Bora, 1998). Though in time it turned out being an exclusive claim of justice for the supposedly cast out conservative populations who did not have equal access to political and economic resources -although the course of events after the 80s military coup laid the way open for the incorporation of conservative segments both in political and economic spheres¹⁶⁸- and a subaltern discourse as a tool of the populist¹⁶⁹ politics of AKP.

¹⁶⁷The referral to the Ottoman past was not new for Erdoğan as since the time he was the Mayor of Istanbul he began actively organizing cultural events commemorating Ottoman past. Especially his opening speech of the Istanbul European Capital of Culture in 2010, when he accented the bridging past of the Ottoman empire and the simultaneous inauguration of the "Panorama 1453 History Museum" depicting the history of Istanbul since its conquest by the Ottoman Empire were the cherry on top.

¹⁶⁸Similar to other analyses on the political economy of Islamic insurgence in Turkey by the mid-1990s with the Welfare Party see (Onis, 1997). In this article, Onis also focuses on the economic sources in the mobilization of Islamist politics (p. 758), both the works of Yıldız Atasoy (2005) and Tuğal, (2009) argue that the discontents of neo-liberalism and the losers of the new accumulation regime supported Islamic-oriented political parties as a new alternative and solution for their problems

¹⁶⁹For the neoliberal populism of AKP see (Bozkurt, 2013)

In the Party program, such as democracy, human rights, law and justice were reproduced as the founding values of the civilized Western universalism, of which Turkey was also a member. At the same time, Turkey's renewed relationship with the EU not only required the accentuation of democracy and human rights but concurrently opened up the way for sweeping neoliberal economic reforms and structural adjustments championing unfettered markets, integration with the international business community, deregulation and privatization practices and especially shifting the economy to the construction sector and financialization of the economy (B. Öktem, 2005).

On the other hand, the restoration of Turkey's imperial legacy was one of the underlying motives of this neo-Ottoman vision while on the cultural level, during the first years of AKP rule, this manifested itself as an endeavor to reach a new consensus among the country's multiple identities, be it Muslim, secular, Western, Turkish or Kurdish even though Islam was conceived as the overarching shared identity amongst all differences. Against this backdrop, the Kurdish cultural identity was not seen as a threat against the state as long as they maintained a sense of loyalty and demands for cultural and political rights could be accommodated in the framework of multiculturalism and Muslim identity; the reason why the national/ethnic dimension or the colonial conditions of the Kurds were by no means mentioned as they were never seen as true candidates with whom the state would henceforth share the political sovereignty (Küçük & Özselçuk, 2016). In such a way that, multiculturalism became a perfect disguise to incorporate differences in the established power structures of the nation and the state, as means to reproduce social, economic and political inequalities and expand the logic of neoliberal politics resulting from these asymmetrical power structures that render cultural differences completely compatible with this market driven global economic rationale¹⁷⁰. That is to say, the oversimplification of the Kurdish question along the lines of a basic demand of cultural recognition, dissociating it from how the denial and exclusion of ethnic and cultural identity naturalizes exploitation, disguises the root causes of economic and political inequalities that stem from colonial relations (Küçük, 2015). Thus multiculturalism and the tolerance of cultural differences that it implies, consciously lapses into silence when it comes to the link between the systemic exclusion of certain identities both from the idea of nation as well as access to basic resources and services as equal citizens and how these identities are easily turned into a reserve army of cheap labor.

¹⁷⁰For critiques of this neoliberal multiculturalism and its intrinsic relation with the perpetuation of relations of exploitation see (Tubino, 2005; Walsh, 2010).

Because, in the colonial space, the symbolic violence overlaps perfectly with economic exploitation.

While Beşikçi has addressed the internal colonization of the Kurds with the Republican period, it is evident that the current state policies perpetuate the similar colonial logic under neo-colonial practices. Ünlü (2014) also asserts that Kurds are only incorporated in the idea of nation as long as they remain loyal to the ‘Turkishness Contract’; a set of written/unwritten and spoken/unspoken agreements among the Muslims of Anatolia based on ethnic position and certain ways of seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing – as well as *not* seeing, *not* hearing, *not* feeling and *not* knowing, or in other words as long as they keep silent against the ideological/cultural decimation. Such that the denial of Kurdishness in practice unfolds in various forms of institutionalized racism in Turkey, that on one hand embraces the Kurds only as the “prospective (Muslim) Turks” (Yeğen, 2014)- or by dissolving them culturally in Turkishness. In order to do so, the state mobilizes its resources to discipline, and amend them, as Küçük (2015) asserts, to become like ‘one of us’, one of those patriots who love their homeland.

On the other hand, the state violence that operates through repudiation, spatial and class segregation enables the expropriation of the resources and their transfer to the center, dispossession, the severe labor exploitation and the articulation of human capital as cheap labor in the market while preparing the grounds of ruling the colonized through a different set of rules, a state of emergency by depriving the marginalized populations, the Kurds, from their language, memory and self-worth (*ibid*; p. 63). Küçük adds that this institutional strategy to govern the geography in question under the “rule of unlawfulness” turns the Kurdish population into mere objects by excluding them from political processes, by overlooking its political will and as a consequence makes the Kurds a disposable population whose murder, extermination and deterritorialization is justifiable (*ibid*; p. 64).

In deed, the AKP’s rule in the Kurdish region during its almost two decades of administration, fit *literatim* the above cited definition of colonial rule. During AKP’s early years of governance, the state of emergency in the Kurdish zone was put to an end and several linguistic and cultural rights were granted such as the introduction of Kurdish as an elective language course in schools and establishment of the Kurdish language TV station in 2009, in practical terms very much alike the policies that Abdülhamid pursued, such as removing the ban on Kurdish in the educational field and policies of slim cultural recognition while accommodating differences with a Pan-Islamist policy in order to forge alliances with

‘Kurdish brothers’. Further that year the government announced a “Democratic Kurdish Initiative” that intended to reform politics and the terms of recognition of the Kurdish identity through negotiations. For a while it seemed as if the ultimate enemies of the Turkish state, the Islamists and the Kurds, were reshaping the politics of ‘modern’ Turkey. The democratic initiative was presented as “The National Unity and Fraternity Project”¹⁷¹ underlining the unitary structure and indivisible national community, though with a tone of plurality and fundamental rights and freedoms¹⁷².

On the other hand, the AKP government has been launching large-scale military actions against the PKK, including forays into northern Iraq—an area from which the PKK operates with relative freedom. As the 2000 ceasefire gave way to renewed hostilities in 2004, the AKP reinforced military strikes with harsh anti-terrorism legislations that has been used to restrict Kurdish-nationalist politics. The Anti-Terror Law of 2006 and the Penal Code allowed the government to punish not only Kurdish militants taking part in the armed conflict or PKK’s cadres, but anyone—whether a politician, a civil society activist, a journalist, or a peaceful protester—who expressed sympathy for the Kurdish cause or opposed the governments repressive and violent politics. The detrimental impact of this law on the rights to free expression, fair trials, and due process has been serious notably from the 2010 onward¹⁷³.

The peace process that officially took place only in 2013 and the following events showed that ‘national security’ and ‘terrorism’ was never renounced in the state’s discourse. Additionally, mass arrests took place against the members of the political wing of Kurdish movement, including the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) while the Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) was closed down. Many politicians affiliated to other Kurdish parties were detained along with Human Rights activists and journalists. Gradually escalating military operations reached its peak in 2015 resulting in on- and- off curfews in various Kurdish cities in Turkey, especially Suriçi, Diyarbakır, killing many civilians. And recent extension of the ‘war on terrorism’ among innumerable incidents has been the charges pressed against 1128 academics who signed a declaration denouncing military operations against the Kurds in southeastern Turkey. The intensification of the ‘national security against internal enemies’ discourse thus served the essentialization of the Kurdish identity under the ‘terrorist’ label along with its demonization and dehumanization while it helped forming an image of

¹⁷¹Soruları ve Cevaplarıyla Demokratik Açılım Süreci Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Projesi (Democratic Initiative Process Q&A: National Unity and Fraternity Project), 2010

¹⁷²For more on Kurdish peace process (Yeğen, 2015)

¹⁷³ See the Human Rights Watch report written by Sinclair-Webb (2010)

indivisible unity of the state and the Turkish society and consolidated the Kurds otherness within the Turkish state. On the other hand, it is not a coincidence that state's onslaught exacerbated in a period when Kurds both outside and inside Turkey- in several cities and villages- declared autonomy and self-government underlining their legitimate claims on Kurdish identity both cultural, social and political. But another thing that went unnoticed during the political turmoil was a simple declaration that explains the other side of the Islamist modernity whose flag bearer is today AKP: After the operations in Suriçi not only causing deaths and displacement of the population but also damages of historical buildings under protection as well as residential buildings, the governorship declared that the houses of the civilians will not be rehabilitated but will be rebuilt under the urban transformation projects meaning they will be upgraded and the population will be displaced¹⁷⁴. The cold-bloodedness of the declaration aside, this summarizes the stark intensity of the development policy under taken by the government¹⁷⁵. Indeed the urban transformation has already been launched by the Mass Housing Administration (TOKI) in Diyarbakır's historical district accommodating a poor population of internally displaced migrants and rural migrants since 2010 when AKP's policies were being more and more crystallized in terms of a relation between modernization and development on a global scale, and currently is being implemented unmitigated. As Escobar (1995) asserted the modern reality undeniably is colonized by the development discourse which can be seen clearly in the politics of the Turkish government. Today the strategy to construct dams to flood large rural areas in the Kurdish part in order to prevent PKK during the 1990's is being replaced by the reconstruction of cultural and historical parts of the South-Eastern Turkey that implies the reterritorialization of the Kurdish region pursuant a renewed empire-nation building ideology that not only tries to integrate the zone into market forces but dissolve it in the uniform and exclusive idea of the nation¹⁷⁵. Currently, three main projects, Diyarbakır-Suriçi¹⁷⁵, Mardin and Hasankeyf-Batman – three historical and cultural references of the Kurdish territory -are all marking the state's physical presence in the urban fabric and the ostracizing the Kurdish culture and history while altering the population structures in the poorer areas. Also the urbanization, the increasing land prices that follow and the dominant effect of real-estate led economy over production inevitably initiate social and political changes articulating these sites in the new geo-economic order of neoliberalism. The capitalist modernist policies take a

¹⁷⁴ For an analysis of the continuities in the politics of space, depopulation strategies and transformation of class distinctions to political distinctions see (Genç, 2016)

¹⁷⁵See (A. S. Yüksel, 2011) for the relation between the spatial transformation taking place in Diyarbakır, a symbolic place for the Kurds and the Kurdish movement, within the exigencies of neoliberal era.

toll not only symbolically but also alter social relationships in the Kurdish area. On the other hand, TOKI becoming one of the main and almighty institutions with almost no restrictions on plan making, implementation and decision making, transforms urban areas that have high rent-gaining potential all around the country and the historic urban centers in big cities displacing the urban poor. The global neoliberal transformation of urban spaces both increases social inequalities and through the discourse around squatter areas stigmatizes them as ‘breeding grounds’ of ‘terrorism’ and simultaneously reduces poverty to radicalism concealing the relationship between cultural identity and poverty. Certainly this stigmatization is nothing new, the squatter areas have always been exposed to othering processes since the 1950’s, as mentioned before. In addition, the destruction of the rural areas together with sites of historical value that carry an important cultural memory for the Kurds continue full blast bringing along population displacements just like the previous periods and the securitization of the Kurdish territory 176. Such that as part of the regional development project GAP, which still awaits to be completed, 402 high security military outposts – in addition to the existing ones – were constructed in the Kurdish region in 2010, in addition to 1,000,000 land mines buried in Turkey, most of them in the Kurdish region while 46,113 village guards were appointed by the Turkish state (Yarkin, 2015).

On another note, increasingly coming into prominence is the emphasis places on the neo-Ottoman ideal both in domestic and foreign policy of Turkey¹⁷⁶, having a direct influence on how the state is handling the Kurdish question. While a sense of grandeur in former Ottoman lands is becoming more tangible in the economic sphere, especially with Turkey’s growing interest and its mercantilist policies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) which cannot be neglected in the analysis of the AKP’s approach to the Arab and larger Islamic worlds (Taşpınar, 2012), it becomes increasingly apparent that the colonial mindset of the Turkish state that it inherited from its Ottoman predecessor is setting the tone of its politics. On the domestic stage, AKP has been progressively instilling a Turkish national identity with a Sunni Muslim character as the unitary and singular identity of the state and thus of the country at large -as much like its forerunner Kemalist elite, the state and the nation are inextricably linked in its ideological construction- that becomes tangible in the national historical narratives voiced in almost every public speech delivered by the president, the revivification of public heroes that symbolize the glorious Muslim/Ottoman essence and strength, the symbols being used in national celebrations and conservative values that are

¹⁷⁶See (Volfová, 2016) for an analysis of AKP’s selective use of Ottomanism, during 2002-2013, to place Turkey as an important actor in global capitalism and regain a dominant role in the region

being inculcated to the coming generations through the recent state interventions in the curriculum (Koyuncu, 2014).

In return, the same mindset resonates in foreign relations, in the form of a great aspiration to recover the Ottoman grandeur. The former prime and foreign minister Davutoğlu, assigned with the ‘restoration’ of the state according to the needs of the new era and dribbled with political Islam (Akyazıcı, 2009), for instance claimed that Turkey has finally succeeded in making its presence felt in the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East and should become central country -a much more ambitious goal set for the Turkey compared to the former ‘bridge’ allusion - in setting the political agendas in these places (Saraçoğlu & Demirkol, 2015). In a speech Davutoğlu gave in Sarajevo in 2009 he stated:

Yes, whatever happens in the Balkans, Caucasus, or Middle East is our issue. Sitting in Ankara, I drew a thousand-kilometer circle around my office. There are twenty-three countries. All of them are our relatives and they expect something from us...Our foreign policy aims to establish order in all these surrounding regions. For a Western or other diplomat from another part of the world, a Bosnian issue is a technical issue to deal with, like a technical process. For us, it is a life and death story...Like in the 16th century, when the rise of the Ottoman Balkans was the center of world politics, we will make the Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East together with Turkey the center of world politics in the future. This is the objective of Turkish foreign policy and we will achieve it (quoted in Demirtas, 2012, pp. 236–237).

In another speech, this time coming from Erdoğan who was the prime minister at the time, in the 4th Ordinary Congress of AKP in 2012, he was also hinting at the imperial identity that was being tailored and the frontiers of the new vision of the empire-nation, with Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamist orientations, by saluting all the Muslim groups “fighting for independence” from Syria to Palestine and all the Muslim countries in Africa to Middle East and claiming to represent all the territories of “the Middle-East, the Balkans, North-Africa, Caucasus, Europe, Asia and Africa”¹⁷⁷. Erdoğan would continue to fuel old hostilities between Sunni and Shiite groups in the following years, notably supporting the Sunni political groups that emerged from the ‘Arab Spring’ after the fall of authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Libya as well as the Sunni armed fractions that fight against Assad’s regime in Syria. Particularly the backing of Jihadist mercenary forces, and armed fractions fighting against the Syrian regime but also used as proxies against the People’s Protection Units (YPG/YPJ), the armed force of the The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava, to terminate the autonomous and democratic federation found in the region under the auspices of the Kurdish Democratic People’s Party (PYD) - webbed to the PKK by ideological ties and embedded,

¹⁷⁷For the full text of his speech in Turkish <https://t24.com.tr/haber/basbakan-erdoganin-konusmasinin-tam-metni.214180>

veteran PKK cadres- in the bargain proved out to be the continuation of Ottoman policies of pitting local groups against each other and backing up certain tribes and offering material enticement to alter political affiliation¹⁷⁸. Further, the names of the Turkish backed militia, such as the Al Sultan Murad Brigade named after the Ottoman Sultan and commanded by ethnic Arabs whose enmity against the Kurds are historically fomented by various states, are more than symbolic in the war waged on the Kurds. Turkey also does not hold back sending troops to Syria on the pretext of a 'safe zone' to fight terrorism and launches incursions into Syrian soil particularly aiming the Autonomous Zone and as might expected civilian killings, looting, extrajudicial executions and ethnic cleansing occur on a daily basis. In addition to displacement of the local population among which the Kurds predominate, the current Turkish government employs the Syrian refugees as a tool for its aims of population engineering in Northern Syria. Aside from being used as Erdoğan's pawn to extort European Union with the threat of steering the refugee flow into Europe, recently it is being circumstantiated that refugees are being forced back to resettle¹⁷⁹, especially in the Turkish invaded areas with the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch military operations in an effort to settle ethnically Arab population to increase their number against the Kurds, a strategy used by the Baath regime known as the Arabic Belt¹⁸⁰. Amidst the war, the president Erdoğan, have the audacity to suggest building houses of 250-300 m², in the safe zone, with gardens around where they can cultivate¹⁷⁹, naturally implying to use TOKİ as the contractor, in order to undertake an 'urban transformation' project in an area of 185 million m², whose worth would add up to 300 billion Turkish Lira¹⁸⁰. While on the other hand, the country has already opened various branches of Turkish post-offices in the Turkish invaded zones in Syria¹⁸¹, rebuilt hundreds of damaged school buildings and continue its construction activities, to be carried out in the rest of Syria, as Erdoğan has proposed¹⁸².

Construction is undoubtedly not the only profitable field in the war. On one hand, Turkey has been playing a double game between US and Russia -as a proof that the influence of the former colonial powers continues to shape the politics in the region and on the other hand as a proof that the Turkish state indeed is permeated with an Ottoman political heritage- to be able

¹⁷⁸See (Gunter, 2016) for the use of jihadists and (Al-Hilu, 2019), 2019 for forced resettlements of displaced refugees

¹⁷⁹So that "instead of ready-to-eat fish they could learn how to fish themselves", in Erdoğan's own words <https://tr.euronews.com/2019/09/05/erdogandan-guvenli-bolge-de-ev-onerisi-suriyelilere-bahceli-evler-yapsak-orada-ekip-bicse>

¹⁸⁰<https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2019/10/12/her-sey-beton-icin-mi/>

¹⁸¹<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ptt-firat-kalkani-bolgesinde-subeler-aciyor/977265>;
<https://www.sde.org.tr/ortadogu/ptt-afrinde-sube-acti-haberi-8177>

¹⁸²<https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-47284666>

to gain a seat as one of the great powers in the Middle-East, although it seems to be headed for a fall rather than gaining superiority vis-à-vis other actors. On the other hand, war is being turned into 'profitable' business for the country. The looted goods, diesel, grains, oil, cars, hardware and machinery seized by the Turkish-backed militias in northern Syria, and barrels of oil smuggled by the Islamic state (ISIS) and traded with Turkish business people, customs officials and intelligence agents seem like trinkets compared to the deals Turkey has been making with the countries involved in the Syrian war: Direct deals with the farmers in the occupied zones, around Aleppo to buy grains, the Turk Stream (Türk Akım) pipeline which will carry Russian natural gas to southern Europe through Turkey alongside recent deals on other energy sources such as coal and oil and the construction of nuclear central between the two countries; major investments in the military industry -and the development of an electromagnetic rail gun- named ŞAHİ after the weapon used by Fatih Mehmed the II to demolish the walls of Istanbul by the emperor- export of arms both from USA and Russia that amount to almost 10 billion dollars, and possible deals on the oil fields in the invaded zones that are have not come to light yet. Top it all, the determination to become a Great Power combined with the imaginings of an Ottoman revival brings Turkey on the verge of going into war with Libya, a former Ottoman territory, with stories circulating about Turkish officials efforts to buy off the mercenaries that it has been using in Syria to fight in its name in Libya¹⁸³. Obviously these plans cannot be thought independent of the presence of oil in Libyan territory nor from the contest between the current political actors with vested interests, such as Russia who sees this as an opportunity to strengthen its position in the Mediterranean as well as Northern Africa allowing it to approach Europe from the South. And nor can the foreign policies carried out on the Kurdish groups can be thought apart from the religious/sectarian interests of creating a Sunni block, a desire of both USA, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, against Iran, again a proof that neo-colonialism is not only a buzz word but a striking reality in the Middle-East, where religious differences entwines with conflict of economic interests and rivalries to secure a place amongst global powers.

Beyond that, especially 2010 onward, the situation in the Kurdish regions in Turkey turned into an open war, resulting in thousands of civilian deaths, continuous bombings and military presence, suicide bomb attacks targeting pro-peace activists and supporters of pro-Kurdish parties, paralleled by urban warfare and curfews in the many Kurdish cities -such as Sur, Cizre, Silopi, Nusaybin, Yüksekova that are historically known for resisting centralizing efforts- some of them bordering Syria and the Iraqi conflict zone and holding organic ties with

¹⁸³ <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2020/01/21/suriyeden-libyaya-trajedi-sevkiyati/>

the Kurds in these cross-border territories. Meanwhile the states determination to eradicate PKK extended to an international level when, in January 2013 three Kurdish female political activists, among whom was Sakine Cansız one of the co-founders of the PKK, were assassinated in Paris by a Turkish secret agent connected to the Turkish national intelligence service. Especially since the 2015 elections, when the pro-Kurdish party HDP (The Peoples' Democratic Party) party won 13 percent of the vote, securing seats in Parliament for the first time, the states crackdown on the Kurdish region sharply escalated. The open war waged on the whole Kurdish population without exception, the dismantled human bodies next to animal corpses left to rot in the streets, the corpse dragged behind a tank, a dead and tortured female body alongside which the soldiers take pictures in a proud manner, decapitated remains thrown into the rivers together with the debris left over from the wrecked houses, racist and threatening writings on the walls that read “Love it or Leave it” - an eerily familiar slogan of the *Ku Klux Klan* adopted by the Turkish supremacists- more than a hundred human bodies found in a basement burnt to death after the military crackdown, appearing on press as scenes that are exposed as examples to potential dissidents, since the beginning of the curfews, the impunity of Turkish soldiers who bulldoze into houses at night killing children¹⁸⁴ become the sheer proofs that, this is a colonial war, waged against a fabricated image of an ‘enemy’, the ‘racialization’ of society’s others, permitting the exercise the sovereign right of death and making possible the murderous functions of the modern states (Mbembé, 2003)¹⁸⁵. The punishment of the criminal or the human body itself becomes the place of inscription of the sovereign power while the excessive use of violence reiterated in the everyday life consolidate the state’s ‘Stateness’. In such sense, the placing of the Kurdish population in the ‘Other’ category whose existence is recognized as a threat to the life of the State and its subjects, as an absolute danger serves to justify its elimination to secure the life and the security of the people; but more than that the legitimacy and the endurance of the state itself. And further, the wholesale equation of an ethnicity with ‘terrorist’ label “is the abyssal response to what is perceived as the threatening intrusion of the colonial in the metropolitan societies.” The modern abyssal thinking is today “...bearing greater pressure from the logic of

¹⁸⁴Accordingly, as Hansen and Stepputat assert “The body of the criminal, naked and humiliated was, in other words, the necessary double of sovereign power, its necessary surface of inscription. The tortured body transformed itself into something else, an object of collective projections of the plebeian crowd whose presence was essential to these performances of sovereignty” (2005, p. 11).

¹⁸⁵“The *state of siege* is itself a military institution. It allows a modality of killing that does not distinguish between the external and the internal enemy. Entire populations are the target of the sovereign. The besieged villages and towns are sealed off and cut off from the world. Daily life is militarized. Freedom is given to local military commanders to use their discretion as to when and whom to shoot. Movement between the territorial cells requires formal permits. Local civil institutions are systematically destroyed....Invisible killing is added to outright executions.” (Mbembé, 2003, p. 30).

appropriation/violence, called upon to deal with citizens as non-citizens, and with non-citizens as dangerous colonial savages” (Santos, 2007, p. 62).

This intrusion is in fact not the presence of an ‘alien’ population, but the new political paradigm asserted by the Kurdish movement that challenges the monopoly of the state, replacing oppressive political power with horizontal and autonomous ways of organizing all aspects of life. To impede the efflorescence of the Democratic alternative proposed and carried out by the Kurdish movement in Turkey, the state is pursuing the same processes of political and administrative pacification as its colonial predecessors – which Scott (2008) refers to as the ‘last great enclosure’ - as an effort to seize the political will of the Kurdish population. Most of the municipalities in Kurdish-majority cities and towns are today administered by Ankara-appointed trustee governors, while the legally elected mayors are deposed, arrested, and jailed with charges of “terrorism” and collaboration with PKK alongside the imprisonment of Kurdish MPs, including the former co-presidents of HDP. Such that, the AKP authoritarianism has culminated in the mass arrests increasing not only the vulnerability of Kurdish institutional politicians but also threatening the democracy in the country spreading the repression to all segments of the society and depriving all the citizens from basic liberties such as liberty of expression and organize manifestations in public space to roll back workers' rights. Also it is not a surprise that women’s achievements are the first under attack, taking into consideration the intolerance of women’s presence in the public space late alone the political sphere and the increasing misogynist ideology pronounced everyday by the current regime. For instance, The head of a women’s co-operative in the Kurdish region surmised that “today sixty per cent of the women’s movement are in prison, they have been arrested. So the institutions are woefully underpopulated” (TATORT Kurdistan, 2013, p. 109). One of the first thing that the appointed governors are doing is to shut down the cities’ women’s co-operatives and reverse many of the implemented reforms in favor of gender equality (Gürsel, 2016; HDP Europe, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2017).

The result of the hegemonic struggle between the AKP and the PKK and the Kurdish movement in the context of heavy state coercion exceeds the limits of Turkey. Since the beginning of the war in Syria in 2011 and the simultaneous declaration of the Autonomy in Rojava, TOKI has started building a wall along covering 764 of the 911 kilometers Turkey-Syria border under the pretense of preventing refugees and smugglers entering the country and to drive ISIS away from the border area while in fact it is quite clear that one of the main objectives of this fortification is to stop the advance of the Kurdish militia, the People's

Protection Units (YPG) as a tool of counterinsurgency¹⁸⁶. Further, this cross-border intervention should be read in relation to the above mentioned neo-Ottoman territorial and political claims of the current government that leverages the discourse on terrorism to not only harbor nationalist sentiments against the ‘separatist’ populations that threaten the indivisible unity of the nation and thus have power over the definition over what defines Turkishness within the limits of the nation but also justify the neo-imperial claims over the former Ottoman territories expanding the idea of the nation drawing on the unity of the great Muslim world, the Ottoman idea of *Umma*, that underlies the neo-Ottoman ideology of the state apparatus. AKP as the flagman of a promise to wed Islamic tradition to Western liberalism, fulfilling the frustrated fantasies of the Turkish society to tantamount Western civilization and, as Küçük and Özselçuk assert, filling the gap of a regime crisis, carried this promise to “grandiose proportions, transubstantiating and inflating itself into an imperial imaginary built on recovering the lost unity of the Muslim community (*umma*), while assimilating within this civilizing mission the Turkish national peace process with the Kurds” (2019, p. 12). On the other hand the boosted imaginary of national, through religious confraternity, against the rest of the world that wants to cripple the ascent of the Turkish nation, creates a heavy dependence on state, one that disciplines and exploits its own citizens, while on the other hand ignites institutional and generalized societal racism that prevents a new language of democratic politics to emerge, including a new language of class politics. Küçük and Özselçuk claim that, the symbolic degradation of Kurds to the status of an internal colony is not only necessary for the ruling status quo but at the same time “it provides a useful means of disciplining and restraining the class struggle by converting the violence of racialized antagonism into the domesticated hierarchy of capitalist labor markets. In fact, this interpretation is still too embedded within the old critical framework of colonialism” (2019, p. 16).

In sum, the current state of affairs need to be addressed as an outcome of the imperial legacy of the Turkish Republic and the colonial differences that served as the bases of the national identity. Against this background, following the elimination of the non-Muslim populations, the Kurdish identity became the subject of ‘racialization’, and the key component of defining who is to be considered a legitimate member of the nation and who is not. Further, the revival of the Islamic character as constitutive of nationness should also be tackled in reference to the

¹⁸⁶ Once the construction is complete, it would be the third longest wall after the one at the USA-Mexico border and the Great Wall of China, quite similar to the Israeli built fortification around Palestinian lands of Gaza strip. See also (Antonopoulos, 2017)

secular project of modernity that marginalized religious, rural and traditional identities as backwards and as an impediment to the modernization. Yet, despite the subalternization of religious identities, Sunnism was leveraged in order to render legible and control complex and heterodox populations, inscribe, fix and rank them in the space of the homogeneous nation. This was paralleled by the standardization of local customs and autonomous modes of governance to centrally control them. Today's soaring conflicts indeed have to do with the selective construction of not only the nation predicated on colonial differences but also the nationalist history shrouding the multiple and conflicting assertions on how the nation was to be defined. Certainly, the construction of the nation did not go without the contest between different fronts with diverse ideas, that still underlie the current social struggles. As such, it is worth noting that the Turkish post-independence nationalist history fashioned through a liberation narrative, both from the foreign imperial occupation and from the old Ottoman yolk, with an assertion of secular modernization against the theocratic rule in order to take part in the universal civilization was much more complex than that given its contentious relation with the colonial historical past. In this vein, the reduction of the historical matter of contention to religion veils the inter-ethnic conflicts engendered by the colonial and imperial mindset configuring the founding rationale of the Turkish nation-state. In this sense the idea of the nation draws on a political legacy that contains various ambiguities that need to be explored and herein the importance of an alternative historical examination becomes essential to cast light on these eclipsed elements. Having said that there is no doubt that the secular modernity process served both to break up with kinship and religious loyalties that challenged the unitary national belonging and to exclude certain religious populations from the administrative and economic power structures. The resurrection of Islamic politics in the 1990s therefore could be approached as the manifestation of the above mentioned nationalisms ousted by the positivist and progressive republican ideology. And today these politics find a fertile environment to gather strength and assert influence over public opinion with a discourse challenging the monocultural and authoritarian model in favor of the subalternized populations. On the other hand, this should not only be understood in regard to the multicultural identity politics that gained prominence with neoliberal globalization. In addition to this the contest for economic power and the retrieval of the political authority by segments marginalized by republican process of modernization also need to be taken into account.

In this respect the criminalization of Kurdish identity and political organizations should also be analyzed within the context of the political and economic project of incorporating populations, lands and resources in the global capitalist system in guise of multicultural neo-Ottomanist discourse. Simultaneously, the outlawing of Kurdishness helps justifying the elimination of any alternative that radically challenges the colonial, capitalist and patriarchal foundations of the state as proposed by the movement. On one hand, it is true that the political economist perspective has proven to have its flaws first in explaining the rise of nationalism contingent upon a linear change from agrarian to industrial societies and the expansion of market economies assumed as a universal model. And second due to its neglect of gender without taking into account the different social and political positions women occupy in different geographical contexts which allowed them to articulate common and diverse interests. Nevertheless, it should not be discounted as it hints to the continuing process of colonization and its social, political and economic practices although its analyses need to be rectified by feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Moreover, it is equally noteworthy to underline that despite the oppositional discourse of political Islam in Turkey, these practices substantiate that it has never negated the Turkish ethnic character of the nation-state and indeed has been one of its fervent advocates since its inception. The crackdowns on the Kurdish political movements, alongside the increasing discrimination and suppression of ethnic and religious minority populations, women, working class, dissident sexual identities and many other groups struggling to democratize politics and exercise self-determination indisputably reveal that the project of sovereign state in Turkey is still structured upon the ideal of a monolithic nation. The exercise of sovereign power, especially through necropolitics fabricating images of a public enemy and justifying the use of violence over bodies, lives and labor of the Kurdish populations, on one hand indicate that state's 'Stateness' is inscribed in daily life through 'racializing' the society's 'others'. And on the other, this racialization, which operates not through race or color but the creation of formulas of inferiority/superiority and dehumanization, serves to mute any mobilization seen as a threat to its own existence to make clear who is entitled to exercise sovereign power. These others either are forced to denounce their identities or to consent annihilation. And in the contrary case the ongoing politics of colonial sovereign power makes sure that they are simultaneously disciplined and marginalized by declaring certain segments of the population and identities as illegitimate. In view of these, the essence of the Kurdish Question today, framed in terms of terrorism, separatist violence and at best as ethnic conflict, needs to be analyzed in relation to the counter-hegemonic political proposals advanced by the Kurdish

movement. The movement's demands on radical democracy, pluralism, autonomy, gender liberation and ecological society challenge the understanding of self-determination laid out by modern-nation states whose foundations have been laid by the empires. For the very reason, this work urges on analyzing the historical emergence of the modern colonization in relation to the building of the nation-state in the context of Turkey so to address, in the first place, some of the central preoccupations of contemporary discussions. And further, it intends to understand both the specificity of political, social and cultural relations and the historical roots of the challenges standing in the way of decolonization. Therefore, the next part will tackle the KLM as an anti-colonial response proposing alternatives against the colonial nation-state. This being said KLM should not be understood as a monolithic and univocal structure but a formation that incorporates many different tendencies and multitude of initiatives, voices and contradictions. And for that it is important to understand the genealogy of KLM, today whose primary actor is PKK, and its connections with other left-wing democratic struggles to display the sociopolitical and historical context of its inception. This understanding is also necessary to be able to mediate upon the nature of its participation as an important actor in the historical processes and its consequences that can lead us to interesting and yet difficult questions about the continuity of colonialism within today's context and resistances against it.

V. Part V From National Liberation to DM

V.I.The Revolutionary Kurdish Liberation Struggle, Anti-colonialism, Anti-Imperialism and the National Question

The modern Kurdish liberation struggle has been frequently discussed in reference to PKK, as the principle actor that has unified diverse Kurdish fractions and organizations with the claim of establishing an independent state and form a united Kurdistan. And yet, it is important to understand the genealogy of PKK having its origins in the revolutionary left of Turkey and the anti-imperialist socialist struggles both nation and world wide to be able to trace the roots of the liberation struggle as well as its changing discourses towards radical democracy within the context of global transformation of democratic struggles. PKK, as the principal actor of Kurdish liberation struggle, was formed by several Kurdish and Turkish left-wing university students who came from within diverse revolutionary structures. The revolutionary left in Turkey, especially during the '60s and '70s represented a broad spectrum of voices that converged on the anti-imperialist resistance and yet their *modus operandi* varied when it came to questions such as the ultimate objectives of the revolution, the 'national' question and self-determination, vanguardism, or pacific vs. armed resistance. This was a period in which one could observe the exacerbated divide between the state and civil society as well as the intensification of relationships of exploitation and exclusion. The consolidation of national-developmental political regimes on one hand accelerated capitalist expansion and on the other aggravated the uneven geographical development¹⁸⁷. In such circumstances PKK emerged as a Marxist-Leninist national liberation movement, defining itself as part of the workers-peasants anti-imperial struggle, aimed for an independent and socialist Kurdistan (H. Bozarslan, 2008b). Many Kurdish militant intellectuals asserted the colonial status of Kurdistan¹⁸⁸ under the Turkish administration as "a colonialist and sub-imperialist unit dependent on the imperialist world system" (Maraşlı, 2010). The colonial rule was not the only target of PKK. The party also condemned the 'feudal collaborators of the Turkish bourgeoisie', the big landowners and aghas perpetuating tribal ties and the patronage relationships as the root cause of exploitation, domination and underdevelopment of Kurdistan (Öcalan, 1978).

¹⁸⁷See also Lefebvre (1974, 1976) and for a present-day analysis Brenner (1999). It should also be noted that different than Europe where state-capitalism relation was already taking place in the 18th and 19th centuries, market-oriented arrangements were already being implemented during the *Tanzimat* period of the Ottoman Empire and continued with the Turkish republic

¹⁸⁸In many texts written by Kurdish political groups the colonial status of Kurdistan was being claimed for an analysis see (Akkaya, 2013; Beşikçi, 1990; Collective Book, 1976; Maraşlı, 2010)

Besides, the international anti-imperialist liberation struggles and socialist movements such as the ones in Palestine, Mozambique, Angola, Vietnam, China, and Cuba among others equally influenced the Kurdish movement's rhetoric of revolution and the defeat of colonial rule. The weight of these were openly expressed in the founding declaration of PKK; "Kurdistan National Liberation Struggle in the leadership of PKK is an integral part of the world socialist revolution that socialist countries, national liberation movements and the proletarian movements constitute the fundamental force" (PKK, 1978, p. 37 translation mine). It is worth noting the almost equal weight of the idea of autonomy and democracy that was vocalized by socialist liberation struggles with that of nationalist narratives in PKK's ideological construction. Socialist struggles emerging within contexts of internal colonialism surely did have an organic bond:

[L]os fenómenos de colonialismo interno, ligados a la lucha por la liberación, la democracia y el socialismo...aparecieron ligados al surgimiento de la nueva izquierda de los años sesenta y a su crítica más o menos radical de las contradicciones en que habían incurrido los estados dirigidos por los comunistas y los nacionalistas del Tercer Mundo. Aún así, puede decirse que no fue sino hasta fines del siglo XX cuando los movimientos de resistencia y por la autonomía de las etnias y los pueblos oprimidos adquirieron una importancia mundial. Muchos de los movimientos de etnias, pueblos y nacionalidades no sólo superaron la lógica de lucha tribal (de una tribu o etnia contra otra) e hicieron uniones de etnias oprimidas, sino que plantearon un proyecto simultáneo de luchas por la autonomía de las etnias, por la liberación nacional, por el socialismo y por la democracia (Casanova, 2006, p. 411).

Indeed, PKK's stress on self-determination and national sovereignty became a binding agent that aimed to unify the heterogeneous Kurdish populations and numerous movements under a nationalist ideology and the goal of establishing an independent state through armed struggle (Güneş, 2007; Yarkin, 2015)¹⁸⁹. As Yavuz argued, "In the formation of this new politicized Kurdish identity, class questions have been perceived in national (Kurdish) terms. Kurdish nationalism offered a space within which class and regional differences could be suppressed. In short, it was the PKK which ended the mutually constitutive relationship between Islam, tribe, and nationalism in favor of the latter" (2001, p. 11). On the other hand, Bozarslan (2006) presented two different facets of the Kurdish resistance; one being the rural side which was not nationalist in the beginning that was against the State by definition, as an impediment in the face of self-determination of a society that historically held the power in terms of its own politics. And the second one being the Occidentalized elite capable of producing a nationalist discourse that stood against the state because it was 'Turkish'. This second one would be determinant in the creation of a nationalist liberation struggle, as Bozarslan stated,

¹⁸⁹For the Kurdish political structures founded before PKK and the party's evolution since its inception see (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011).

until the 1990's when the Kurdish movement went through an internal ideological transformation that would lead to the rejection of a nation-state as the basis of its claims and identity foundations. At the same time, like many anti-colonial liberation struggles that replicated the practices of the colonialist in the very effort at nation building (Dirlik, 2002), PKK would follow a similar line. Such that, in his later works Bozarslan argued that the politicization of Kurdish ethnicity and the formulation of the liberation struggle in nationalist terms was an outcome of the dialectic relationship with the Turkish state and its nationalist and assimilation politics (Bozarslan, 2000). Respectively, PKK, as the secularized heir of the Kurdish resistance, partially as a consequence of "learning from the States" produced symbols such as the leader, flag and nationalism by Kurdifying them, that served equally as "...elements of internal cohesion, of group building" (ibid., p. 26). Further, the new nationalist narrative also appealed to the use of "national Kurdish myths of common ancestry and past differentiated from that of other groups in the area" (Güneş, 2009, p. 259). The invocation of a different past also acted as a means to delegitimize the feudal relationships that broke up the cohesion among different Kurdish communities and laid the way open for the enhancement of a nationalist claim that would free the Kurds from the grip of relations of patronage and exploitation. Much like what Aschcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin expressed, "Both colonial nation-states and anti-colonial movements employed the idea of a pre-colonial past, or ethnicity, "...to rally their opposition through a sense of difference, but they employed this past not to reconstruct the pre-colonial social state but to generate support for the construction of postcolonial nation-states based upon the European nationalist model" (2013, p. 170).

Although PKK aspired to establish a solidarity bloc among workers, peasants, intellectuals and youths since its formation and sought support in rural areas, much like most of the Marxist classic historiography, mobilizations around kinship/tribal or relations were not considered as qualified to lead a modern political revolution from a scientific socialist sense as they lacked the class consciousness and much less capable of seizing state power. The Party was the only agent able to act as the engine of social revolution and an organism that could perform all the functions of a state. Armed struggle was regarded as the only course of action to succeed in social revolution and deemed necessary against the state's continuing attacks. The armed struggle also provided the means to build the idea of Kurdish nationhood. In Bozarslan's words; "A military Kurdish movement acts generally as a would-be-state, trying to appropriate the principal symbols of sovereignty that defines a state" (2000, p. 29). This strategy was in equal measure part of the methods used to mobilize civilian populations

and assert the power of anti-colonial struggle and not simply a mirroring of the State. As Fanon put it; "...for the colonized people this violence, is invested with positive, formative features because it constitute their only work. This violent praxis is totalizing since each individual represents a violent link in the great chain, in the almighty body of violence rearing up in reaction to the primary violence of the colonizer...The armed struggle mobilizes the people" (1963, p. 93). Eventually, the escalation of violence paralleled with PKK's declaration of an armed struggle¹⁹⁰ in 1984 marked the begging of one of the bloodiest periods in Kurdish-Turkish relationships. The "People's War" lead by PKK is represented as a step to emancipate the Kurds from the chains of submission and assimilation, to awaken them, to break the chains of submission and assimilation and for the Kurds who have forgotten their culture and language to rediscover their true selves, as reiterated throughout PKK's history by many political figures¹⁹¹. In many of these narratives the declaration of people's war is depicted as the first bullet to wake the Kurdish people who forgot their roots from the 'Sleep of Death', against the enslavement of the Kurds or against the colonizer, the capitalist modernity, dictatorship and fascism.

While most accounts that approached the Kurdish resistance, did and keep doing so in exclusively political terms or from an oversimplified angle focusing on nationalism and separatism, these lose sight of the different components of the resistance. The argument that Kurdish nationalism took shape in reaction to the assimilationist policies of the Turkish states contains much truth. Notwithstanding, it falls short of shedding light on the ambivalence and pluralism inherent in Kurdish political identity in Turkey (Tezcür, 2009). Actually, the articulation of colonialism in the people's war narrative, cast light on the subjugation of minds as well as bodies of the colonized¹⁹². Fanon also pointed out; "...colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it, disfigures and destroys it" (1963, p. 149).

¹⁹⁰ PKK members are trained for the first time in Beqaa Valley, back then occupied by Syria, in the beginnings of the 80s, together with many other revolutionary organizations such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Al Fattah and the The Revolutionary Path (Dev-Yol) from Turkey, alongside the Italian Brigade Rosse and the German Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF). Towards 1982, the PKK moves to northern Irak with around 300 fighters, and settles in the military and ideological training base of the party that continues to function even today.

¹⁹¹ See for example an interview done with Cemil Bayık, the co-president of the KCK executive committee, done in 2018, in which the 15 August, the day PKK declared armed resistance against the Turkish state is commemorated as "The Revolution of Resurgence" ("*15 Ağustos Kürt'ün kaderini değiştirdi*", <http://yeniozgurpolitika.net/15-agustos-kurtun-kaderini-degistirdi/>).

¹⁹² This subject is discussed in detail previously in Part I

The resistance to colonialism, as a matter of consciousness, is a theme addressed by Ashis Nandy who argued that this resistance only begins when people actively embark on a moral and cognitive venture against oppression (1983, p. xiv). And he went on to suggest that freedom from colonization inevitably concerned the colonizer as well who is caught in the culture of oppression (*ibid.*:63). Quite alike, the liberation struggle for PKK was waged not only in the name of the Kurdish people but also in the interest of all the peoples of Turkey (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011). Öcalan would state this clearly in an interview with Mahir Sayın, a prominent member of various revolutionary left-wing organizations in Turkey:

This is not a war of liberation for the Kurds. The day the Kurds will be free, the Turks will be free too. [...] The national liberation struggle of the Kurds is also a liberation struggle of the Turkish people. [...] Some announce they will make a similar step as the PKK did. It is not necessary to make such a step; that step has already been made for you. Ha! But you can add something to our struggle, make a contribution (Sayın, 1997 in Jongerden & Akkaya, 2011, p. 132)

On the other hand, while since its inception the Kurdish liberation struggle advocated for the liberation of all the oppressed, marginalized and exploited peoples against the colonial state, the anti-colonial claim of the Kurdish movement before the 1990's has been predominantly built on ideas of autonomy and self-determination conceived through independence and decolonization within the framework of the territorial nation-state and recovering from material domination and exploitation carrying great resemblances with African anti-colonial movements lead by revolutionary leaders such as Nkrumah in Ghana or Nehru in India who believed that the seizure of the State apparatus would guarantee economic independence which was seen as the key to self-determination. However, the reproduction of economic models, relying on industrialization to create wealth and the nation-states ruled by emerging national bourgeoisie facilitating the development of neoliberalism in the post-colonial world and the consequent inequalities made evident that the failure to see beyond the economic realm shrouded the critique of the other factors that perpetuate relations of domination such as patriarchy, religious fundamentalism *inter alia* which maintain an order in which there are always groups that are subjugated, oppressed and excluded. On top of it all the downfalls in conceiving a truly socialist system, the discontent with Real Socialism and the fall of the Soviet Union became a litmus test for the socialist and anti-colonial movements throwing doubts on the means and methods of the social transformation that could be an alternative against the colonialist capitalist modern world system.

The critiques to Marxist political philosophy and currents of revolutionary practice have been already raised by different schools of thought for its historical and economic determinism; the

class reductionism, state centrism, universalism and Eurocentrism and its shortsightedness concerning other forms of oppression alongside class as race, gender, sexuality *inter alia*. Fiery criticism came from anarchists particularly as regards to their discordant ideas on state and power; the originary discord between the anarchist and Marxist, although it is beyond the scope of this paper to develop a taxonomy that situates precisely where the multiple variants of both schools of thought stand with respect to the state. Fundamentally, the State was denounced to be a hierarchical and oppressive structure in essence that was sustained by institutions that retained domination. It was not so much the form of the State but its essence and how political power was conceptualized in the very principle was an obstacle to social revolution¹⁹³. And so they argued, abuse of power was not intrinsic only to capitalism but Marxist states became a party to maintaining everyday matrices of power that constrain autonomy, solidarity and equality as it was evinced during the Bolshevik rule. Further, the alleged secular authority of European nation-states was set side by side with the divine rule¹⁹⁴ to show how the State rule and nationalism indeed became incontrovertible dogmas. Feminist thinkers also called into question the universalism of overall leftist analyses and pointed out the ways in which left-wing movements have repeatedly subordinated women's claims and marginalized their struggle (Hartmann, 1979; MacKinnon, 1982; Rowbotham, 1972, 1974)¹⁹⁵.

Especially, with the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideology that followed the fall of the Soviet Union, the subsequent and the amplification of uneven geographies and the detrimental impacts of neoliberal economic globalization sparked of a succession of global justice movements claiming human dignity, democratic rights and economic, social, political, and environmental justice. The social unrest that incited a wide array of locally specific political struggles from feminist, ecologist, labor, landless workers, homeless people and indigenous peoples' struggles amongst others, on one hand challenged the materialist over-determination of socio-historical processes calling attention to multiple forms of inequality that cannot be simplified in economic or class terms. On the other hand, the radical re-organization on a global scale unsettling political structures, modes of governmentality, identity categories, institutional frameworks and epistemological positions went hand in hand with growing

¹⁹³The opposition to State's centrality in organizing society is one of the fundamental principles of anarchist thought, hence it is rather pointless trying to point out featured works but for a select few from the forerunners see (Bakunin, 1953; Clastres, 1974; Guerin, 1970; P. Kropotkin, 1898) and for later on anarchist scholars on the subject (Bookchin, 1990; Graeber, 2004)

¹⁹⁴Bakunin went as far to claim; "The State is the younger brother of the Church"(1985, p. 20)

¹⁹⁵Undoubtedly the marginalization of women's issues was not only symptomatic of Marxist theories and analyses, almost in any left-wing organization this was to be the case and for instance anarchist women from different geographies, such as Mujeres Libres in Spain, plead against the underplaying attitude of male militants (Ackelsberg, 1999; Marsh, 1978; Vicente, 2014)

skepticism on the assumed centrality of the state in the management of political economy and governance while its grip on social control intensified. Within this frame of reference, Öcalan started reflecting on PKK's reservations in relation to a struggle premised on Real Socialism that eventuated in a bureaucratic state structure serving in the interests of a developmentalist nation-state and of power monopolies undermining the democratic ideal (Öcalan, 1995, 2011b; Özcan, 2006). Subsequently, PKK's search for a new ideological perspective that would respond to the changing post-Cold War context translated into an effort to build a post-national society and creating a model of sovereignty that transcends the state.¹⁹⁶

Viewed in this way, the classifications of the Kurdish movement following the 90s as post-Marxist or remarks drawing analogies with anarchist theories might have a share of truth as the movement's transforming nature come off as a passage from Marxism towards libertarian tendencies when considered from within the confines of Western political theories. Whereas, subsuming the movement under these plays down the cultural social and political aspects of diverse people and groups that make up the movement as a whole that cannot be explained comprehensively by these theories and thus fails to represent the varying worldviews bringing into effect the demands asserted in the movement's political discourse. This has to do with the parochialism of the theoretical framework emerging from within the social dynamics of modern Western societies in explaining the idiosyncrasies of each and every context. That said, it is true that over the last years the Kurdish movement carries the earmarks of libertarian principles, especially following Öcalan's patently convergence with libertarian scholar Bookchin's theorizations on 'communalism', "libertarian municipalism" and social ecology¹⁹⁷. First off, parallelisms are observed speaking of the antagonism to the state. Anarchist thinking defies all forms of centralized forms of power that create and perpetuate domination. By the same token, the state is taken to be the institutionalization of various forms of domination and subjugation, the centralization of power relations furthering the interests of the ruling class even when its gradual withering is at stake, like in the socialist examples, giving rise to a bureaucratic straitjacket as Rosa Luxemburg labeled (1961), traceable to the authoritarianism of revolutionary parties in power and the eventual coercive uniformization of the society in keeping with their principles. In return, the alternatives to state set out carried underpinnings of egalitarian societies, based on mutual-aid and self-

¹⁹⁶ For a study on the ruptures and continuities within the trajectory of the PKK's ideology regarding the global political economy and especially the Kurdish context in Turkey as well as its critique on the crisis of scientific socialism and the need to construct a non-capitalist/communist world see (Yarkin, 2015)

¹⁹⁷ Murray Bookchin has produced a long list of works over the years on the respective topics, (Bookchin, 1987, 1990, 1996, 2006). Also for a comparison between Öcalan's and Bookchin's conceptualizations see (Biehl, 2012).

organization and decentralization¹⁹⁸ while giving precedence to fueling peoples' capacities to govern themselves opposed to the vanguardist tendencies or institutions that serve as apparatus of social control. Moreover, anarchist thinkers usually took a dim view of nationalism, prevailing the Marxist understanding of internationalism that by and large fails to move beyond the notion of the nation-state as the foundational unit. This antagonism has become more apparent in recent times:

Anarchism is presented as a preferable alternative insofar as it disavows nationalism and recognizes that there is no fundamental difference between colonization and state-making other than the scale upon which these parallel projects operate, meaning that any substantively "post-colonial" positionality must also be "post-statist" or anarchic, wherein the hierarchies, order, authority, and violence upon which these parallel state projects have been built are rejected outright (Springer, 2012, p. 1607).

Instead, the belonging and loyalty to a certain group or a greater body is considered to be based on voluntary affiliation rather than ascribed features such as ethnicity. This on the other hand is anything but the smothering of differences. The diversity, plurality and heterogeneity against uniformity become more prevalent in contemporary currents of libertarian envisions of voluntary communities, in which every group is granted local autonomy and freedom to self-regulate its internal functioning. The relevance of diversity and the importance of adopting ideals of a free society to local contexts and requirements of the individual, rather than taking it as an iron-clad program to be carried out no matter what, in establishing a free and democratic society was especially foregrounded by Emma Goldman (1911). Drawing on these principles of free-will, autonomy and diversity, federalism as a system of decentralized self-administration among different autonomous bodies was proposed as the means of direct democratic policy-making, and coordination of common policies between the multitudes of forces and identities¹⁹⁹. Nevertheless, the convergence between libertarian politics and the Kurdish movement indeed came into view not only because of the conformity of these

¹⁹⁸Apart from the age-old societies that were subject to political anthropologist Pierre Clusters's (1974) studies on societies without a coercive state structure among South American indigenous groups, and the arguments and ideas of the previously mentioned forerunners, anarchist literature offers considerable numbers of propositions and concrete examples of ventures to build an egalitarian society without the state. Aside from the iconic example of local autonomy in the region known as Revolutionary Catalonia during 1936-39 Spanish Civil War, utopian communes cropped up in different geographies, such as the utopian/ecotopian communes influenced by the spatial organizations based on mutual help, solidarity and harmony between human beings and the nature proposed by anarchist geographers such as Elisée Reclus (1877, 1905). It should come as no surprise that geography has been the medium in which anarchist thinking took root rapidly as the spatial organization, control over territory and power relations became apparent. Alternatively, geography as a field also accommodates the possibility not only to envision alternatives but also experiment with concrete efforts. For recent theorizations on the alternative configurations to state see for instance (Bey, 2003; Graeber, 2004)

¹⁹⁹Although the main reference of the Kurdish movement and Öcalan in relation to federalism has been Bookchin's writings i.e. (1990b) it has been one of the central themes in terms of anarchist organization of the society in many other writings of previous scholars, see for instance (C. H. Enloe, 1977; Malatesta, 2019; Ostrom, 1997; Proudhon, 1849)

proposals in relation to the creation of a society without the state in which power is given back to multiple autonomous communities that decide on their own affairs and how to govern the society without suppressing its plurality with the traditional lifeways and historical social organization of the diverse Kurdish communities, as tackled in the first two previous parts of this work, but also due to the changing national and political conjuncture that called for an urgent need to develop alternatives that make possible the peaceful coexistence of different social groups in the face of increasing state violence, social fragmentation and the drift towards an autocratic regime. In this context, DM, DN and DC provided these much needed alternatives that this work will tackle next.

V.II.Constructing the Pluriverse, Building up Society beyond the Nation-State: Democratic Modernity, Democratic Confederalism and Democratic Nation

Let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states,
institutions and societies which draw their inspiration
from her
Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963, p. 315)

The imperative to think through a democratic resolution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey, particularly after the bloodshed suffered in the 1990s, occasioned a revision of the ideological premises of the Kurdish National Liberation movement. On one hand, various pro-Kurdish political parties were founded to give voice to Kurdish communities' needs in the parliamentary system. Since their foundation, these parties have been subjected to heavy repression, such as political bans, accusation of their delegates with treason and separatism, arrests and incarcerations that today continue through the seizure of Kurdish municipalities that were won by the People's Democratic Party (HDP) by state-appointed trustees. However, in the 1990's, the entry of Kurdish identity to the political agenda and its short-lived presence in the parliament challenged the Turkish definition of nation compelling the official recognition of cultural and political pluralism, while indicated to the proliferation of the means used by the Kurdish movement outside the armed struggle. Nevertheless, the crackdowns proved that the Turkish state's indisposition to dialogue, collaborate and mediate precluded democratic means to be prompted in order to achieve equal rights and recognition as equal citizens.

This pushed the movement to look for other alternatives and by the end of the 1990s, Öcalan (1999) has proposed democratic autonomy, which was later on elaborated in his work 'Towards a Solution for the Kurdish Problem: Democratic Autonomy' (2009b). The mainstays of this proposal are the pluralist self-government of different nations and peoples who live under the rule of the same state but restoring them the right to collective self-determination, free representation and exercise of different cultural and religious identities and an equal say in the regulation and government of the society, that is the inception of the 'Democratic Nation' as Öcalan (2016) denominates²⁰⁰. Yet, the peaceful coexistence of differences depends on the "...the recognition of the mutually transformative process between state and society" (Watts, 2009, para. 17). And as long as the Kurdish movements attempts to make part of parliamentary democracy through legal political parties and civil society institutions are stigmatized as terrorist organizations it seems implausible to establish democracy or let alone freedom under autocratic state sovereignty. Although this do not exhaust attempts to put in practice democratic experiments challenging the authoritarian rule and state-centered political thinking. For instance, Between 2005 and 2007 an umbrella organization uniting political parties in the four different parts of Kurdistan was founded under the name of Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), and in 2006 the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) was founded as a platform of Kurdish civil society associations and movements that has proclaimed democratic self-government as an interlocutor for the democratic solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey²⁰¹, yet both are being pointed out as 'the urban wing of the PKK by the State. It is quite clear that the Kurdish issue in Turkey will not be resolved as long as the nation-states heavy handed and unitary perspective changes giving way to possible models of autonomy.

Against all odds, the idea of democratic nation: on one hand, by acknowledging the multiplicity of the nations that make up the nation-state as the supposed unit that contains the society, produces an alternative idea of 'nation-ness' by dissociating the belonging to a national community from the exclusive, monist and hegemonic nationalism. This dissociation puts into display, despite the immemorial and self-evident narrative of the Nation, its immanent space internally marked by cultural difference and heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense cultural locations, display the disjunctive temporality of it providing the appropriate time-frame for representing the residual

²⁰⁰ Although it is outside the scope of this work, the experiences of plurinationalism, the recognition of indigenous autonomy and discussion on how to rethink the nation-state are quite similar to the idea of democratic autonomy and democratic nation asserted by the Kurdish movement.

²⁰¹ For a detailed organizational structure of DTK see (Gunes & Zeydanlioglu, 2013)

and emergent meaning and practices, as Bhabha put it (1990). And thus, debunks the mystification of the unitary and immutable idea of the Nation, bringing in the numerous differences and conflicts that inhabit and constantly rework it. In doing so, democratic nation and the concept of autonomy alter the nature of the political community as well. This community is no more conceived in opposition to a state representing and governing the Nation, but beyond and outside its reach. To put it another way, when it becomes possible to imagine the plurality of national identities, emanating from the realities and semantic world models of agents with diverse ethnic, class, geographic, gender and cultural traits that make up the same political community, the political imaginary is freed from the monopoly of the state and its ideological instruments becoming a pluriversal phenomenon.

Öcalan, earlier in several occasions²⁰² enunciated his standpoint on the nation-state identifying the teleological signification that the state came to hold in the secular modern society becoming a dogma, and thus replacing the divine authority, akin to earlier anarchist analysis of the State. The point is not so much on the comparability of the two lines of thought but the resurgent need to uncover and foreground alternatives, that lie in the natural society established on relations of equality and democracy while the “state-based society” that arose along with the unsettling of the natural social organization that placed power, hierarchy and exploitation as the guiding rules, in the words of Öcalan (2004). In his writings, he portrays the State as the political instrument of the mentality that spearheads capitalist modernity, grounded on male domination – a critical point that I will dwell upon later on- ideological and political monopoly, economic and social hegemony which equally instrumentalizes science, philosophy and the arts as means of legitimization and isolation of society from its communal and moral values (Öcalan, 2009a). Moreover, he underlines that capitalism and nation-state cannot ‘be imagined to exist without the other’ and thus the latter cannot be the object of any emancipatory struggle (Öcalan, 2011a). That is why for Öcalan, the struggle is between the state and society or in other words the oppressive political organization represented by the state and democracy. By the same token he argues that the Kurdish issue has to do with the absence of democracy and thus with the nation-state that poses an obstacle for the practice of real democracy dissolving people in its machinery and with its differential politics, for the peoples of the Middle East. For that he maintains that the democratic solution can only be developed by the societal forces outside the nation-state, that is, by dissociating democracy from the state (Öcalan, 2004). Accordingly the state should be taken as a constitutive

²⁰²For a concise discussion of his ideas translated to English on the religious roots of the state (Öcalan, 2007, 2015)

mediation to be transformed through a struggle over the meaning of self-government, autonomy, democracy, justice and equality. As Dinerstein asserts “The point is not, therefore, to ignore the significance of the state, money and the law for the processes of prefiguration of alternative social relations and sociabilities but to *change the focus* from the state, the law, policy or the economy to autonomy without disengaging with the former and understand the former as part of the prefigurative process” (2014, p. 22). Similarly Öcalan declared that “Neither total rejection nor complete recognition of the state is useful for the democratic efforts of the civil society. The overcoming of the state, particularly the nation-state, is a long-term process” (2011a, p. 32).

By offering a distinct interpretation of both the nation and the political community, Öcalan’s assessments on the transformation of the Kurdish movement’s ideological framework not only challenges the claim that state is the only valid form of political representation of a nation, addressed above, but also the basic premises of Western modernity which rank societies as superior/inferior by presuming that the rational form of political organization that states assume to represent is one of the requisite conditions of being civilized, countervailing it with the notion of DM (DM). As he wrote:

Our project of “DM” is meant as an alternative draft to modernity as we know it. ... DM is the roof of an ethics-based political society. As long as we make the mistake to believe that societies need to be homogeneous monolithic entities it will be difficult to understand confederalism. Modernity’s history is also a history of four centuries of cultural and physical genocide in the name of an imaginary unitary society. DC as a sociological category is the counterpart of this history and it rests on the will to fight if necessary as well as on ethnic, cultural, and political diversity (2011a, pp. 24–25).

These proposals, first, radically bring into question universal consent on issues, such as citizenship, belonging, political mechanisms of social organization, arguing whether nation imperatively has to allude to nationalist politics or the conception of the nations needs to be confined to uniformity, the country to the private property of *the* nation. On the contrary, examples that embrace varying ideological and political propositions, old and new, such as the federalism in Spain, Narodniks in Russia, to African Socialisms or Ghandism and including the Kurdish liberation struggle and Zapatistas that spell out community in terms of a shared denouncing of capitalism, taking it out of the confines of ethnicity or shared culture, or that define national sovereignty as autonomy, or indigenous peoples who establish the idea of territory through the elemental bond with the land, the natural and spiritual world and the governing of social relations as collective as opposed to an anthropocentric and individualist political construction debunk the myth of modern nation-state. In this respect, emancipating

the political panorama from a state-centric and ethno-nationalist view comes to mean, much like Ckarabarty's (2000) conviction, breathing heterogeneity into our world of imagination, allow for the possibility that the political is essentially not singular. More to that, I suggest, this also implies the demystification the universal premises of a geographically and temporally specific form of 'modernity', and thus entails an act of decolonization. When Öcalan talks about his idea of DC he remarks that by framing this idea he is indeed not discovering or inventing anything and that indeed since the inception of civilization DC existed alongside yet as the counterpart of Western capitalist modernity. Citing his own words:

DM responds to the universalist, linear, progressivist and determinist methodology (the methodological approach that is closed to probabilities and alternatives) deployed by the modern nation-state to achieve the homogenisation and herdification of society with methods that are pluralistic, probabilistic, open to alternatives and that can make the democratic society visible. It develops its alternative through its properties of being open to different political formations, multicultural, closed to monopolism, ecological and feminist, creating an economic structure that is grounded in satisfying society's fundamental needs and is at the disposal of the community. As opposed to capitalist modernity's nation-state, DC is DM's political alternative (Öcalan, 2016, p. 18).

Öcalan's formulation of DC bring into the open other forms of worldviews and set of organizing principles that are equally party of the universal history but do no harbor tyranny, exploitation and class, gender or racial oppression. These, indeed, have been already debated by many, such as Marcuse (1964) who denounced the capitalist and consumer society with its positivist way of thinking that flattened imagination, culture and politics into the field of the dominant order as well as by Ramonet (1995) disparaging the universalism and ideological domination of global capitalism. Once the singularity of Western modernity and civilization, its hegemony over truth and history, and its *pensée unique* as coined by Schopenhauer (1859) is discredited then other truths that have always existed, other possibilities come into view one by one. Their surfacing also help triumph over the fatalism and conviction that the state, capitalism, racism and male dominance are inevitable and part and parcel of the world we live in. Contrariwise, the arguments upon which the idea of DC is built, offer a new epistemology that makes envisioning a world in which these things would not exist, and we'd all be better off as a result, possible.

Further, in this new epistemology, the principal subjects are the ones who might have considered the fundamental premises of our political science morally objectionable, as Graeber (2004), questions, the ones that have been seen as uncivilized and inferior, as they lacked the ability to develop 'sophisticated' forms of social organization, such as the state, or

whose lives do not operate according to the scientifically verifiable truths or rational thinking, as against to superstitions and traditions. Clastres (1974) argued long ago that political anthropologists and social scientists still had not completely gotten over the old evolutionist perspectives set against the possibility that those groups deemed primitive or uncivilized may well be acquainted with processes of state formation or the fundamental guiding principles of Western society and have decided against such arrangements, seeking by doing so to preserve social and political relations they deem to be more desirable, just as Ibn-Khaldun had also reasoned centuries before the French anthropologist (see Ch III.II). The state-centric epistemologies and approaches confine national liberation movements in an either/or position against the state and the territorial boundary of societies delimiting the socio-historical change within these fixed boundaries rather than seeing it as a“....continual production, reconstitution, or transformation of those boundaries and the spatial practices they enclose ... faithfully reflect[ing] the power containers that dominated the social world...” (Brenner, 1999, pp. 48–49). On one hand DM challenges the old evolutionist perspective embracing the state primarily as a more sophisticated form of organization from preceding ones (Clastres, 1974; Scott, 2009; Walby, 2003) by proposing a different social and political organization.

The social structure propounded with DM and its political administrative model, confederalism, based on the autonomy and collective sovereignty of plural actors, groups and communities, as stated previously is not a new invention. Öcalan’s writings (2013) advance that during the Neolithic period social mode of organization was anchored in a communal order centered around a matriarchal system that did not allow institutionalized hierarchical social differences neither private ownership, nor accumulation of commodities. He maintains that this form of societal organization survived in the Middle East, though gradually getting corrupt, until 2000 BCE when religious and male-dominated political/military authority collaborated to gain power and establish a patriarchal, class society in which private ownership is one of the constitutive laws. In this one dimensional patriarchal and exploitative social order, nature and women are the first ones to be enslaved. The degradation of women’s status to slave, her exclusion from social, economic and political life and the usurpation of her creations leads, in Öcalan’s thinking, to an extraordinary poverty of life. In time this transition materializes in the capitalism and nation-state that represent the exploitative, tyrannical and patriarchal mindset in its most institutionalized form (*ibid.*). For Öcalan, this is a counter-revolution that is against the free society and women. And yet, the old communal values could not have been completely destroyed by the development of hierarchical society built upon the

state and are still extant in the practices and social structure of the Kurdish populations in the Middle East (Jongerden & Akkaya, 2012; Öcalan, 2007, 2009c). So, These values are “... based on the historical experience of the society and its collective heritage. It is not an arbitrary modern political system but, rather, accumulates history and experience” as Öcalan asserts (2011a, p. 23). In his thinking natural society, that is groups who function with a higher degree of freedom and communal structures never ceased to exist and resist hierarchic systems built on anti-democratic use of power and violence. For instance, in some parts of Kurdistan to this day people continue practicing processes of collective solutions and popular justice, such as the Alevi-Kurdish villages in Bakur. I contend that the transformation of the Kurdish Movements strict Marxist-Leninist ideology towards a philosophy that speaks in its vernacular language, that is to say looking for answers in its own history, values, social codes and manners, and making space for the hitherto ignored potential of the people, in this respect brings home the fact that other worlds and worlds otherwise, realms that are brought into being through principles other than those of Western-centric modernity.

This new positioning of the liberation struggle offers fresh decolonial thinking against the limitations of the nation-state and spatial and political range of ‘practical’ solutions to modern/colonial territorial disputes. If taken seriously, these other possibilities refashion a world outside the dictates of Western-centric world-system, not as the only legitimate way of being in the world but multiple options to outweigh the violence enacted by the standardizing understanding of the modern nation. Multiplicity, here, presupposes intercultural dialogues, that in turn means eliminating not the difference itself but the constructed hierarchies. Just like the epistemologies of the South affirm, the differences promote a thinking flowing from decolonization and intercultural translation that aims at a bottom-up subaltern cosmopolitanism (Santos, 2018). This kind of cosmopolitanism is not only an antidote to totalitarianism but also entail a re-imagining of the nation, sovereignty and autonomy in collective and non-territorial terms established on diversity, heterogeneity and epistemological pluralism. Once our ways of seeing are freed from the hypnosis of state-centered histories (Scott, 2009) the unquestioned ways through which institutions of colonially administered modernity lose extraterritoriality opening up the limits of what is possible and what is not. Likewise, DM and DC re-calibrate the idea based on frontiers and geopolitical maps towards one of mutually constructed and shared lifeworlds with the proposal of a co-habited territory. On the other hand, the all-inclusiveness of differences does not mean to lose one’s proper identity nor an apolitical universalism, but instead a thinking from the contact-zone of

differences that creates a territory composed of the plurality of social and political belongings. Further, the non-state social paradigm fostered by DC, seeks to liberate, diversify and democratize people as opposed to the nation-state model that oppresses, homogenizes, and distances society from democracy (Öcalan, 2011a). DC stipulates autonomy and the people's power giving way to collective forms of decision making and self-government processes outside the realm of political authority of a coercive state. This way everyone and every collective – based on ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender or any attribute defining one's belonging – participates and takes responsibility in the construction of the society without depending on rulers and through creating popular institutions to govern. The DC theorized by Öcalan, drawing on Bookchin's theories on municipalism and social ecology, proposes a stateless, democratic, ecologist, anti-capitalist society in which women's freedom and equality is a fundamental pillar and economic, social and political sovereignty of all parts of the society (Öcalan, 2009c). The basic structure of DC is very much like the sociopolitical organization set out in the theorizations of libertarian municipalism that comprise of a network of administrative and practical councils whose members are revocable and mandated by citizens' assemblies on various levels from neighborhoods, towns and cities and on a larger level in form of confederations as the uniting umbrella of these assemblies and councils (Bookchin, 1990, 1991)²⁰³. DC stipulates the foundation of the autonomous democratic self-government of the local communities “organized in the form of open councils, town councils, local parliaments, and larger congresses....It can even be continued across borders in order to create multinational democratic structures” and “where the state-related sovereign rights are only limited” (Öcalan, 2009c, pp. 32–33). This way it offers a new decision making process in which the power lies in the grass-roots participation and at the same time defines its relationship with the existing state as well as restricting its power on social structures²⁰⁴. The next step is the replacement of existing states' hierarchical and patriarchal relations of authority with the horizontal, gender-egalitarian relations of participatory self-administration of different ethno-cultural communities. Further, in contrast to the state society dualism which is the basic principle of capitalist relationships detaching the individual from the state and conceiving an intermediary civil society that in return furthers reproducing exploitation relationships (E. M. Wood, 1995), the direct rule without a division between the rulers and the

²⁰³ Also for a comparison between Öcalan's and Bookchin's theorizations see (Biehl, 2012)

²⁰⁴ The abolition of the separation of sovereign power from society and eventually the abolition of the state giving way to popular power is indeed an idea that has been ruminated on by many, particularly by the anarchist thinkers. Federalism was proposed by many philosophers, not only as a political administrative model but also as an economic arrangement and a tool to deepen people's direct rule (Bakunin, 1980; Proudhon, 1979; G. Smith, 2014; Ward, 1992). Rocha (2015a, 2015b, 2015c) has written several articles examining how DC and DM draw near in some basic aspects and Pazmiño (2017) on how DC brings about a theory to dismantle the state.

ruled opens up possibilities to human plurality and multiple bases of policies opposed to a limited superimposition of central nodes organizing the political system.

For instance, in Rojava where different peoples living in Northern Syria declared democratic autonomy in 2012, at the base of the sociopolitical structure lie the communes at the local level where people gather in to discuss and resolve the everyday issues and all the aspects of life and where politics becomes a part of everyday life. Every commune has separate committees dealing with issues such as education, women's status, youth, self-defense, economy...etc. These are managed through co-chairs, a man and a woman, and their selection is done by direct elections among the commune members²⁰⁵. Moreover, all the cultural, ethnic, gender, faith communities- such as the Assyrian-Chaldean, Arabs, Armenians, Azeris, Turcomans, Chechens and faith groups like Yezidis, Alevis, Jews, Christians, Shiites establish their proper autonomous organizations that are liable to make decisions concerning their communities. Also there are the civil society organizations²⁰⁶ functioning independently on various issues. All of this form autonomous decision-making process, allocating the decision making starting from the smallest units possible, under a federal structure in all four parts of Kurdistan that allows for each unit to practice direct democracy and enhance collective reason so that the people partake in the definition and implementation of policies from micro to macro. In Rojava the communes have superior power in terms of decision making in comparison to other levels of organization, regional and confederal, and the political parties do not have power over collective decisions while issues are resolved through ethics, that are defined as a set of values that lead to freedom of all and everyone²⁰⁷, relying on common sense and collective norms. Although there is always the risk of falling into conservatism, traditionalism, and the exercise of power that would delimit and shape the terrain of political action (Hart, 2002), the consensual nature of the new society and voluntary participation are set forth as grounds against hegemony, though they do not totally eliminate the power issues that might arise, such as 'enlightened' revolutionary elites, or certain groups that might monopolize the decision making processes. Be that as it may, any kind of revolutionary guideline should not be taken as dogmatically pure, unchangeable truth or rules to abide by *ad*

²⁰⁵ As Rojava is the only place for now where DC is put in practice the information given here on the functioning of it is limited. As for Turkey it is hard to say that the DC model has been fully implemented although the experiments to establish autonomous en democratic grass-roots structures has a much longer history. The list of recent scholarly works on Rojava is extensive, but for primary resources see (Ayboga et al., 2016; Bouquin et al., 2017; Dinc, 2020; Knapp & Jongerden, 2014; Küçük & Özselçuk, 2016; TATORT Kurdistan, 2013)

²⁰⁶ See also (Karasu, 2009)

²⁰⁷ See also Öcalan (2011a) on the ethics-based political society. And for Rojava Omrani (2015) as well as the Social Contract of Rojava (Knapp & Jongerden, 2014)

verbum but instead as proposals to experiment on so that their flaws can be changed within practice.

Alternately, DC draws near the notion of “mutual aid” (Kropotkin, 1902) which enables connections to be drawn that extend beyond the local and particular, by recognizing and respecting differences between people while at the same time recognizing similarities of experiences and struggles. As follows, the divisions such as nationality and ethnicity that break the unity of humanity parochialize society, and to foster cultural particularities are eliminated (Bookchin, 1994; Olesen, 2005; Routledge, 2009). More than that DC represents some sort of insurgent cosmopolitanism, as Santos labeled, that is “... organized through local/global linkages between social organizations and movements representing those classes and social groups victimized by hegemonic globalization and united in concrete struggles against exclusion, subordinate inclusion, destruction of livelihoods and ecological destruction, political oppression, or cultural suppression” (Santos, 2006, p. 397). For instance to create a worldwide network of solidarity and bottom-up political organization, Öcalan envisions a sort of ‘World Democratic Confederal Union’ of civil society that governs life democratically to serve the needs of the peoples to replace the United Nations led by the world superpowers that mandate for the profit of a few.

The second central guideline of libertarian municipalism is to create self-sufficient interconnected ecological communities having control over production, consumption and the management of resources and eventually the creation of the commons. In DC, ecology underlines the devastation induced by the profit based capitalist economy and its substitution with community oriented production on the basis of use value and sharing (Öcalan, 2011a). It proposes the establishment of communal cooperatives and of an alternative communal economy allowing nature’s reproduction with the scaling up of the structure to a trans-frontier realm that unites different Kurdish communities existing within the borders of four different neighboring countries as well as the rest of the populace living in these territories. In the recent years several ecological communes, the most well know being a network of 21 ecological villages in Gever -, one of the politically well-organized cities in Bakur and where existing popular councils responded to the on going heavy state repression and violence by declaring autonomy in 2015- have already been established in the Northern Kurdistan. In fact this idea mirrors the traditional social, economic and cultural structure of the rural Kurdish population that has survived the colonial administrations control and assimilation policies. This economic model presents the means to re-introduce people back in the *oikos* both in the

production, the collective ownership of the means of production and the equitable redistribution of the goods as well as in the decision process to establish a system, not profit or commodity oriented but one that meets the needs of the whole society, that is the creation of a commonwealth, focusing on and expanding our capacities for collective production and self-governement (Hardt & Negri, 2009)²⁰⁸. Further, the introduction of a social economy also means dismissing the state or the big landlords and aghas who participate in the perpetuation of relationships of exploitation and come between the direct management of resources and production as well as changing the nature of the relationship between the people and the nature. It is worth mentioning that in Kurdish the word used to define nature, *Xweza*, also means the one that gives birth to itself, pointing out the cyclical character of the nature as well its self-sufficiency. In this regard, the economic pillar of DC reintroduces humans beings as a constitutive part of a larger system alongside other beings that make up the ecological environment while reconnecting the collective experience and communal living with production that allowing nature's reproduction (Öcalan, 2011a)²⁰⁹ and condemns the violence engendered by the idea of economic 'development' and 'growth' exploiting nature and people the same way while forging unequal social and hegemonic relationships. This "pluralist commonwealth" (Alperovitz, 1972) constituting the basis of the building of a society that comes together from below in its economic processes, forming voluntary, self-organizing exchange processes dismantles state forms by replacing them with habit-formed face-to-face processes, leaving no gap for third-party management. This also opens up a possibility that transcends economic determinism and brings a "utopian socialists" dimension in line with the disciples of Fourier or Owen who argued for the foundation of model communities, isolated from the mainstream of industrial society to achieve a socialist society. Öcalan (2015) has advocated replacing industrialism and militarism, two of the fundamental traits of modern societies with and ecological society and self-defense, the latter a concept that has been further developed by the Kurdish women that this work will turn to next in the following

²⁰⁸ Commonwealth is a term most known from the works of Hardt and Negri and yet feminist currents have also been producing a lot of academic work on the subject, among many other see for example Federici (2012, Chapter 3) and Mies&Bennholdt-Thomsen (1988) Also mindful of David Harvey's critic on the lack of a Marxist perspective that undermines the expropriating capacities of the neoliberal system (the article can be accessed here: https://antonionegriinenglish.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/6422-commonwealth_an_exchange.pdf). Yet I claim that with the new organizational structure proposed by the DC and self-management in which each and everyone has a say in the decision making and that allows for a common and not privatized mode of production, it carries a potential to revert the power structures of the neoliberal system. Clearly it is to be seen how effective it is in reality. And the idea of the commons obviously needs further analysis. For another article of David Harvey on the commons see Harvey (2011).

²⁰⁹See Madra (2016) for a road map "for the democratically organized self-governed bodies (communes, councils, etc.) to conduct economic politics both against the onslaught of "capitalist modernity" and toward building a "new life." marked in a conference in Van, Turkey in 2014.

chapter. As such, DM and DC, are proposed not only as theoretical, social, economical and political alternatives to capitalist colonial Western modernity, but on one hand a system of self-defense of a society based on freedom against the institutionalized and self-fulfilling universalism of the dominant system (Öcalan, 2009a). Self-defense, beyond just being a military tool of physical protection, is defined as a set of praxis and intuitions to preserve the identity of the people, and their capability of decision-making, that is self-determination and hence a process of democratization and re-politicization of the society through collectives, communes, cooperatives and grassroots movements.

On the other hand, in order to create viable alternatives, and achieve a social unity based on voluntary association, equality in economic, social, cultural and political terms, autonomy in plurality and self-government the first step needs to be the decolonization of the mind-sets. Concepts such as Democratic Nation, DM and DC offer paths through pluralist utopias to decolonize the whole structure and bring a mental revolution that makes it possible to believe in the possibility of other kind of worlds through the systematization of the experiences and struggles of all those oppressed and exploited throughout history to create a model and way of life outside of capitalist, patriarchal, colonialist civilization. However, Öcalan in his writings considers the patriarchy, as the reason of the “dominant male” which underlies capitalism and the nation-state as the first thing to be overthrown. He argues that the institutionalization of this dominant mentality reduced women into “the historical-society’s colony nation” (Öcalan, 2011a) who has been exploited as a reservoir of cheap labor and a reproductive force and subsequently became a sexual object and a commodity devoid of humanity or reason.

Consequently, women’s liberation becomes an irrevocable element of the democratic struggle that can be achieved through women’s participation in decision making and in both material and social production on an equal footing with man. Besides, in DC, DN and DM women’s liberation is set out as an inextricable part of politics, economy, ecology and thus the life itself. What is more Öcalan argues that, “As long as we do not discuss freedom and equal treatment of women in a historical and societal context, as long as no adequate theory has been devised, there will not be an adequate practice either” (2009c, p. 33). In the third volume of the Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization (2009a), he talks about the need to theorize the “Sociology of Freedom”, that can only be done through the experiences of the excluded, exploited, the dispossessed, the colonized peoples of the world, the women and the youth. This, I argue is how Kurdish movement is going through a decolonial turn by changing the locus of understanding, thinking and theorizing about the world from the standpoint of the

society's marginalized and subalternized groups and placing at the center their experiences in order to build alternatives. Further, I propose to address the formulation of the new ideological framework of the KLM as an act of creative translation that voices traditional models of social organization be it the autonomous administration of diverse communities that cannot be simply categorized in fixed and hermeneutically sealed ethnic, religious or cultural terms; the economic structure that provide the continuity of local lifeways; the cultural plurality that provide space for these diverse communities to coexist without relations of hierarchy or subordination and a different relation with the nature that regulates this non-hierarchical relations, that is to say a different ethics that stands against the anthropocentric and androcentric reasoning that places the Human and Man above all beings in theoretical frames of reference and grammars that are legible to the Western world. This translation is quite significant as these new social and political proposals contribute to the critical Western thinking, help revive its transformative potential and introduce new horizons as well as experiences that have survived the colonial, capitalist and patriarchal Western modernity in order to create global decolonial alternatives.

In conclusion, the modern Kurdish liberation struggle came out of anti-imperial revolutionary movements in Turkey and followed the examples of Third World anti-colonial socialist national independence struggles. These struggles have been rooted in the ideals of achieving self-determination through the foundation of independent nation-states and modernizing the countries and nations to throw the shackles of Western domination and imperialism. Against this backdrop, KLM emerged with a strong discourse advocating a people's war against the colonialist Turkish state and the feudal Kurdish classes in order to found an independent Kurdish state. Yet, with the breakdown of Real Socialism and the failures of Third-World anti-colonial national liberation movements in bringing real economic, political and social independence and in building democratic states, it became clear that real emancipation could only be achieved by decolonization. This demands transcending universalist ideologies of modernity that eclipsed other ontologies, those of the oppressed and silenced peoples and their overshadow struggles that bring alternatives to reinventing social emancipation and liberation. The global expansion of the fronts of social struggles, both with the decline of socialism as an alternative and the increasing assaults of neoliberal politics, brought about a broad range of issues against multiple forms of oppression that cannot be reduced to ethnic/national or class terms. These rising social justice movements that brought together indigenous, rural, workers, women's, ecologist movements among many other, triggered a

radical transformation of the ideological and strategic principles of the former liberation struggles. The transformation of the KLM from a national liberation struggle towards a radical democratic one comprising the demands of these diverse fronts needs to be understood within the context of this global change. In this respect, the decolonizing potential of KLM is drawn forth by the above mentioned multiple fronts embodying various emancipatory projects whose explorations, questioning and argumentation have sparked a transformation in the movements paradigms on self-definition, intrinsically related to sovereignty. This transformation has matured into an understanding of decolonization as a process that allows the subaltern groups to claim their proper ways of thinking, knowing, understanding and creating. This implies the freedom to embrace historical sociocultural elements to forge a proper identity or to disengage from the supposedly universal yet deeply Western-centric criterion imposed on these communities in representing the world. Regardless, this should be understood as a path that transcends binarisms and abyssal lines that allows the pre-existing interrelations between different communities to create common grounds. Today the proposals of the Kurdish movement provides an urgently needed alternative drawing on the marginalized historical experiences, praxis and thinking against the escalating fascist and violent ideologies that are gaining support worldwide. These constantly create enemies - internal and external- making people support and consent authoritarian regimes restraining the transformative power of political dissent and social struggle, while losing sight of the root causes of oppression, discrimination, poverty and inequality such as the patriarchal, exploitative, capitalist and colonial global system in which we live in. What is at stake undoubtedly entails an interplay between coexistent yet distinct epistemological and ontological standpoints which tackled jointly can explain the continuing colonial sociopolitical relations at the heart of the contemporary world history while at the same time propose alternative forms of political theorizations. The proposals advanced by KLM, such as DM, DC and DN, drawing on an interconnected historical re-reading that allow for a cosmopolitan perspective on the world should be seen as a clear example of this.

And here lies the emancipatory proposal of KLM in regard to self-government that contains new lines and fronts of struggle and propounds acknowledging the capacity of the peoples who have been denied their existence by the colonial modern thinking as subjects. The hitherto overlooked experiences and histories of these peoples provide the bases of their capacity to decide autonomously on their lives, their present and future in connection with diverse communities who desire to build a common life. Further, the epistemological, political

and philosophical premises of the new ideological perspective of KLM proffer several avenues of dialogue, unlike the ostracizing posture of dominant understanding of Western modernity. The first one provides collective histories of different peoples' to recount alternative and interconnected histories of colonialism and anti-colonial struggles denied by nationalist history writing. And the second opens the way for relearning to recognize the colonizing 'other' as an interlocutor in possible dialogues that aims to decolonize all sides involved as one of the central challenges taken on by the emancipatory project. This polyphonic dialogue, beyond being one of the fundamental pillars of epistemic decolonization, enables other intersecting cleavages induced by abyssal colonial difference(s), such as gender as foregrounded by decolonial feminisms, to be considered in theorizing on the colonial matrix of power. Further, this dialogue also allows for learning from overshadowed counter-hegemonic and emancipatory resistances, and devising future decolonial options. Along these lines, I argue that the prime mover of the KLM's decolonial transformation indeed is the Kurdish women's struggle who have not only been the living examples of how any kind of nation-state is indeed founded on a patriarchal basis but also have managed to challenge the oppressive gender relations within the Kurdish society and the revolutionary organizations. Their active partaking in the anti-colonial liberation struggle and steadfast advocacy upholding that gender oppression is not just a "women's issue" but a matter of democracy, freedom and the fight against internalized capitalist colonial and patriarchal mindsets over the years have made women's liberation a *sine qua non* of the Kurdish liberation struggle. Women's struggle not simply sheds light on the gender component of colonial relations but reinforces the urgency to address the intersecting forms of colonial subjugation expanding the scope of both the colonial critiques and decolonial options. Further, by bringing multiple issues up for discussion, women's struggle highlights the confrontation between the old revolutionary rhetoric and history closely associated with nationalist anti-liberation. Besides the issues brought up spotlight the emerging realities of a complex plural society that have been discounted in analyses on colonialism. The inclusion of these eclipsed realities implies amplifying the history of the 'nation(s) towards the history of the peoples' and their resistances. In this context the next part of this work will address the epistemological alternatives set forth by Kurdish women and Jineoloji, the science of free women, as the impetus of the decolonial turn of the Kurdish liberation movement leading to DM, DN and DC.

VI. Part VI Kurdish Women's Liberation Struggle

VI.I.No Revolution Without Women’s Liberation, No Decolonization without Depatriarchalization

[T]rue emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in courts. It begins in woman’s soul.

History tells us that every oppressed class gained true liberation from its masters through its own efforts. It is necessary that woman learn that lesson, that she realize that her freedom will reach as far as her power to achieve her freedom reaches.

Emma Goldman in ‘Anarchism and Other Essays’ (1910)

Today, it is almost unthinkable to talk about the KLM without women’s liberation. Although when the movement²¹⁰ was founded in 1970s the women question was not central in its claims, and to the contrary being women alluded to the oppression and submission of the Kurdish people. A ‘nation turned into woman’ (T. Bora, 2016) implied being dispossessed and violated, just like the rest of nationalist thinking about women. Güneşer (2014) also affirms it would be unfair to claim that the critical analysis on women’s question was profound back then but there was a genuine argumentation against women’s enslavement that matured into advocating for women’s emancipation. Indeed, during the PKK’s congress of 1987 in which women’s rights were explicitly on the agenda and Sakine Cansız²¹¹, one of the co-founders of the party and without doubt the most prominent figure in Kurdish women’s liberation struggle proposed that the popular motto ‘liberation for all’ must include women’s liberation. And yet, the first women’s structure, the Union of Patriotic Women in Kurdistan (YJWK) founded in diaspora the same year advocated first and foremost a free Kurdistan over women’s liberation, an agenda that was embraced at a later time and supported wholeheartedly by the women themselves.

In the beginning of the 1990s, in parallel with the massive incorporation of women in the KLM, Öcalan would make an analysis of women’s subordination in his book *Woman and Family in Kurdistan* (1993), a largely Marxist reading of family, state and patriarchy. And yet,

²¹⁰Here it should be noted that although Kurdish Liberation Movement is a common term to refer to all the organizations and groups that struggle for Kurds’ emancipation, in this work I will be using it specifically to refer to PKK and the women’s organizations that are affiliated ideologically or organically with it.

²¹¹Cansız, whose statements are taken to heart by the Kurdish women, old and young, and whose stories are told from generation to generation spent 11 years of her life in Diyarbakır prison (1980–91) known as the Guantanamo of Turkey and was subjected to heavy torture and abuse. She was assassinated on 9 January 2013 with two other female Kurdish activists, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Söylemez, in Paris. Her life-story is quite impressive not only in terms of Kurdish liberation but as a personal story of a woman as part of the national resistance and women’s liberation movement. See (Cansız, 2018)

his affirmations on ‘housewifization’ and the colonization of women were hardly news. The feminist thinking had already produced substantial critiques on the invisibilization of the sexual division of labor and women’s work as the blind spot of Marxist political economy. Maria Mies in *Patriarchy and Capital Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986) dedicated a chapter on the relation between colonization and housewifization, a term *she* would coin, pointing out to how women and colonies were appropriated the same ways as “natural” resources, a topic she would revisit in ‘Women the Last Colony’ (1988) that she co-authored with Bennholdt-Thomsen and Von Werlhof. They highlighted that the historical modes of production could not be fully understood without specific attention to the sexual division of labor in the capitalist system which had a different impact on women, especially ones from the rural sites, in non-European contexts as well as the very creative forms of resistance they exhibited. Öcalan’s (1993, 2009a, 2013) formulation of women as the historical society’s first colony nation and his insistence on centering the critiques on the hierarchical and unequal systems such as the state and classed society primarily on the analysis of women’s enslavement, essentially reflects these former feminist analyses. Also, equation of women’s emancipation and national liberation was a common thread that most of the anti-colonial movements have been recurring to from Africa to Latin America and even Europe which also opened up different spaces for the participation of women in the (national) liberation struggle²¹².

Zimbabwe African National Union’s (ZANU) leader Mugabe’s (1979) words in a seminar that advocated women’s liberation as part of the broader goal of building socialism and the liberation of the nation could have been delivered by any other anti-colonial leader of the time, although this did not go undisputed²¹³. The subsuming of women’s emancipation into the larger struggle against capital or imperialism has already become the target of feminist criticism, portrayed as the unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism (Hartmann, 1979). Yet, even when women’s emancipation was brought up as a genuine matter to be tackled, it was the nationalism or the nationalist men – whether socialist or not- conferring upon women the honor of a new social responsibility, that is female emancipation equated with the

²¹²See for instance (Ray & Korteweg, 1999; Tétreault, 1994) for a general overview of how women’s liberation is approached in revolutionary contexts; (Cunha, 2012; Meneses, 2008a) for how the women’s liberation was conceived through the nationalist discourse as well as women’s own voices on the matter; (Chung, 2006) for Zimbabwe national liberation and women as well as a booklet from ZANU who fought against white minority rule and the ZANU Women’s League that can be found in freedom archives, http://freedomarchiveU+0073.org/Documents/Finder/DOC52_scans/52.Liberationthroughparticipation.zanu.pdf; (E. Kuttub, 1994) for palestine, for ETA and gender politics (Hamilton, 2013) and (Abdo, 1991) for the Algerian women and national liberation struggle.

²¹³See (Nkenkana, 2015) for a women’s liberation was tackled by African anti-colonial movements in general

sovereign nationhood and the emancipation of the whole society²¹⁴. Further, even in armed anti-colonial/national liberation struggles, women who played active roles such as combatants tend to experience repudiation of the male comrades, not to mention forced to withdraw back home once the fight is over²¹⁵. And yet, it is also true that the partaking of women in actions and certain spaces previously thought manly changed the long-established gender norms. This presence created new opportunities for women to engage in social and political life and women *did* claim their place on the battlefield and in politics at once (Lyons, 2004; O’Keefe, 2013). But maybe more than that these women were indeed struggling for emancipation in different ways before the national liberation movements although their dealings, tactics and spheres of action went undervalued as they did not fit in neither revolutionary nor nationalist frameworks.

During the first waves of anti-colonial struggle many women joined and allied themselves with modernizing, post-colonial national projects not just because they believed in the revolutionary principles but also participation meant they could articulate their own political and social agendas into the programs of various revolutionary groups in the multiple spaces of the struggle and carry out their own idea of the nation to be (Ranchod-Nilsson, 2000). Moreover, by taking part in spheres that were hitherto restricted to women in which the traditional gender roles are challenged with revolutionary discourses, women had a chance to unburden themselves from social and family pressures or the constraints of the primordial loyalties of lineage, tribe or kin which might be equally restraining as the demands of the nation (Kandiyoti, 1988, 1991). This in fact was especially true for rural women who saw opportunities of emancipation by the breakdown of rural political authority with national liberation (Kriger, 1988; Kriger, 1991). The multiple forms of oppression women were subjected to, such as gender, ethnic identity, class, language, and religion, in return shaped the heterogeneity of their demands and strategies. As regards to the Kurdish National Liberation Movement, women ‘s participation was also part of the global transformation of the political scenery. In the 2000s they leveraged their growing presence in every level of the social organization and in the movement to strengthen their claims of women's equal participation as well as their autonomous organization²¹⁶. This also meant a demand of recognition of their

²¹⁴See for instance Chatterjee’s *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993b) and Spivak’s *Woman in Difference* (1989) for an unreserved critique of nationalist discourses on gender, women and emancipation as well as Yuval-Davis’s *Gender and Nation* (1993).

²¹⁵(Alison, 2003; Hale, 2001; Hasso, 1998; Meintjes et al., 2002; Omar, 2004; Salhi, 2010)

²¹⁶For a very similar story but from a different geopolitical context see Sylvia Marcos’s book *Cruzando Fronteras: Mujeres Indígenas Y Feminismos Abajo Ya La Izquierda* (2010) on Zapatista women.

role and existence in the struggle and social change as agents instead of objects of liberation (Abu Lughod, 1998).

Further, I assert that their collective action as active participants does not remain limited to introducing gender specific demands in the mapping of the new society. This active participation also open up spaces for other possible practices of self-determination and autonomy against the thoroughly masculine and absolutist politics of the nation while seeking to displace the colonial model (Mojab, 2001c; Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996). Women's cross-cutting identities succeed in subverting this fixed national imagination and further smooth the way for expanding solidarity and cooperation with other women from around the world. Hence, the Kurdish women's political project is not limited to challenging and transforming their own context but overreaches these limits to building a transborder feminism that expand the vision of universal justice, anticapitalist struggle and solidarity through global alliances (N. S. Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009; Mohanty, 2003a). The border crossings of women's movement also extend the scope of democracy and advances an alternate formulation of women-centered imagined communities and political selfhood that is founded on the idea defending life rather than destruction and exclusion while placing women back as agents in the course of global economic and political processes. In the light of these, like other indigenous women's movements including the Kurdish women's struggle for emancipation, stimulate a reassessment of women's experiences with nationalism in anti-colonial contexts much like the nation-state itself and expand the horizons of our imagining of structures beyond these based on the multiplicity of worldviews as well as paving the path for future decolonial possibilities.

On the other hand, this does not overrule the impacts of the colonialism nor the male-defined and patriarchal basis of nationalisms, whether state-led or conceived by anti-colonial struggles, on women's lives. Of course, in the case of women who are part of ethnically or racially marginalized and oppressed communities, the state-led nationalism's conception of women affect the lives of these women in different ways than the way it defines roles for women who are part of the dominant social strata whose ethnic, religious or class belonging lies at the core of the national identity. While trying to analyze the KWLS as a separate phenomenon from the national liberation would mean disregarding an important part of Kurdish women's experience and reality, it is equally important to analyze how gender played a role in modernization process, the civilizing mission and nation-building that conceived women as objects of political projects and the way these have shaped the conditions within which the Kurdish women's mobilizations and struggles against colonialism took shape.

VI.II. Kurdish Women as Objects of Modernization to Subjects of National Liberation

The omission of women, and especially of ‘minority’ women from the official historical accounts become much more clear when one searches for literature that address Kurdish women and the imperial history²¹⁷. It is also striking that even when Kurdish women are addressed their history is subsumed in the overall Kurdish resistances and the historical conditions of Kurdish communities during the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire. While sketching a comprehensive outline of gender relations in a historical context is way beyond the scope of this work, and my knowledge, nor it is my contention here to bring new material to sight in order to contribute to gender studies in Turkey, it is important to remark that just like any modernization process fixing the boundaries of women’s roles was an issue of concern equally for the Ottoman reformers and the Kurdish elites of the time, and later on was pursued by the republican founders²¹⁸. The Kurdish nationalist and modernist thinking portrayed Kurdish women as the locus of nation’s reproducers, the symbol of its purity, honor and cultural and traditional distinctness, while at the same time indicators of its modernity and level of education, civilization and enlightenment (Klein, 2001; Mojab, 2001b, 2001c, 2001a). These ideas were being disseminated through patriotic organizations to motivate women join the ‘national awakening and modernization’, such as the Society for the Advancement of the Kurdish Women found in 1919 by male nationalist elites as a branch of the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan, while the same Kurdish elite was writing articles in nationalist magazines such as *Roju Kurd*, (Kurdish Sun) and *Jîn* (woman), mostly for the women of Kurdish urban class (Madenli, 1913; Selimbeg, 1919).

Together with the foundation of a secular Turkish republic, the modernizing reforms targeting women become more and more zealously undertaken. For the modernist project, equating national progress with women’s emancipation was the backbone of state feminism (Göle, 1997). For example, the first prime minister of the republic İsmet İnönü claimed that "the

²¹⁷ One of the very few resources I had access to is Mehmet Bayrak’s book *Jinên Kurd Di Serdema Osmanîde* (Kurdish Women of the Ottoman Empire) (2007), composed of photographs, etchings and post cards with images of Kurdish women from the Ottoman period.

²¹⁸The debate around women already started in the late 19th century in the Ottoman Empire, and continued with the Young Turks, especially after the revolution of 1908, generally founded by upper and middle-class women that demanded various rights, mainly on education, labor force and reforms in personal status and in the family, see (Aksit, 2004; Ararat, 1997; Berktaş, 2001, 2003; Coşar, 2007; Durakbasa & Ilyasoglu, 2001; Kandiyoti, 1991, 1997, 2009)

Turkish nation prospered and pervaded the whole world with its power and civilization only when its women had occupied their just and prestigious place along with men and worked together with men in the complicated and difficult tasks of their country" (cited in Arat, 2000, pp. 110–111). The new regime replaced the Islamic civil code with a secular one adapted from the Swiss one, that instead of facilitating the conditions for women's emancipation substituted former gender inequalities with secular ones. This state-led feminism masked the preservation of salient patriarchal culture hidden under the guise of a so-called progressive Western veneer, while preserving the prevalent patriarchal structure in the private sphere, thus emancipating women but not liberating them in various aspects (Badran, 1999; Berkday, 2001; Kandiyoti, 1987). On one hand, the removal of the veil, compulsory education for girls and boys, suffrage alongside women's increased visibility in their public roles such as athletes, pilots, professionals, socializing in European style cafes, dancing at balls *etc.* became models to further the secularization project of the Republic making women's new lives symbols of the state-imposed Westernized modernity (Göle, 1997; Sunata, 2014, p. 201). The ability of male elites to characterize women's public presence as Western has been a matter of local struggle, in some cases including Turkey in which "...'Western' has been conflated with that of 'modern'" (Walby, 1992, p. 96). On the other hand, a traditional image of women carrying the pre-Islamic and "authentic" Turkish values was also being promoted by Turkish nationalists such as Ziya Gökalp (Z. F. Arat, 2000; Göle, 1997). But in this understanding of the traditional the imperial past was put into brackets; "The bureaucrats, missionaries and male reformers of the local bourgeoisie were convinced that women had to be emancipated from the social abuses of a 'savage' past, from practices that were defined as repugnant by the prevailing norms of European society" (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 9). So in state's rhetoric, women were components of the nation building project, on one hand as advocates transmitting "modern" national on the other the ones charged with the preservation of authentic "traditional values" and in both cases portrayed as the privileged custodians of national values (Graham-Brown, 2001; Kandiyoti, 2000).

Education was an elemental tool to create role models from women as the "enlightened mother of the nation" that would raise enlightened children and an enlightened nation (Kandiyoti, 1987; Tekeli, 1985). This image was paralleled with women's teachers who would just like the mothers cultivate the future generations. These women were sanctified as the "daughters of the Republic", the "privileged woman" (Sunata, 2014, p. 9). But paradoxically, a strong feminine image combined with modernity created the Turkish woman

as the symbol of both enlightenment/progress and ignorance/backwardness (A. Bora, 2004)²¹⁹. Yet, what was certain, women's behaviors, bodies, their morals and social roles as well as the feminisms they would draft developed to a large extent in a state-centered fashion under the patriarchal rule perpetuated by the republic²²⁰. On the other hand reforms and modernizing steps aiming women's emancipation mostly was meant for the urban middle and upper class or dominant race, and hardly reached the rural areas, neither did they resolve women's suffering from polygyny, honor crimes, forced marriages (Ilkkaracan, 2002).

In such a context the civilizing mission and modernization processes, consolidated with the foundation of the Turkish Republic, have influenced Kurdish women on the basis of the regimen of national belonging and citizenship formulated through processes of inclusion and exclusion drawing on ethnic and gender differences. As Yüksel reflects, "...Kurdish women became doubly marginalized primarily because on the one hand their ethnic identity was severely crushed and on the other hand they became relatively disadvantaged and underprivileged compared to their Turkish counterparts who were potentially able to benefit from the secularizing and modernizing Republican reforms" (2006, p. 777). At the same time, the disintegration of the traditional social fabric and economic and political structure of the Kurdish communities, with sedentarization, persecution of local leaders and heterodox groups and forced migrations, took a toll on Kurdish women's lives and status in their own community. Here, it should be reminded that, long before the Republic, with the adherence to Islam, the women's social status in the family and in the community at large would have definitely worsened, although this did not/could not erase the influence of millennial religions such as Zoroastrianism, Yazidism or pantheist and animist beliefs that still remain as influential components of the social mindset, even in practices such as Alevism, or myths of goddesses and gods. On the other hand I could not find any specific work done on Kurdish women and Islam or monotheist religions, except Öcalan's analysis of the rise of state-based civilizations, religious power and capitalism in his volumes *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization*. Yet, it is not far-fetched to assume that with monotheist religions, women

²¹⁹For example Sabiha Gökçen, the adopted daughter of Atatürk, was an example of the ruthless women ready to fight for her country. She earned herself the honorary title of world's first female combat pilot by taking part in the aerial bombings of the Kurdish zone of Dersim, during the operations to chastise, discipline, and eradicate the mountainous Kurdish zones. In response Zarife, a local heroine, was pictured wearing two full bandolier slings across her chest while holding a Mauser rifle and standing next to her husband Alişer ready to fight the attacks on the side of the resistance to the state. That is to say, competing representations of women were used in order to create myths of patriotic female figures and one representing the backward compared to the former as the embodying progress from state's point of view. See (Altınay, 2004; Turkyilmaz, 2016)

²²⁰(Göçek & Shiva, 1995; Tekeli, 1982, p. 198, 1986). And see (Z. F. Arat, 2000; Göle, 1996) for discussions of the impact of republican reforms on women.

became objects of domination, just like in any other indigenous community with heterodox believes.

Further, with the republic and modern divisions, the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women was occluded under the question of regional backwardness. This in time turned into cultural backwardness, as with the forced migrations, the accelerating devastation of the rural areas, as well as village destructions, many Kurdish women became part of the urban poor, far worse than the men most of the time as many of these women had less formal education and hence little if any knowledge of Turkish, becoming barriers in many aspects of daily life. Toppled with ethnic discrimination, Kurdish women become subjected to multiple forms of oppression²²¹. The disdain and denigration of traditional community structures as backwardness was also reproduced by the middle-class Turkish feminist women by treating the Kurdish women's issues under the label of 'eastern' and/or 'rural' disregarding their experiences (Yüksel, 2006). As one of the Kurdish women involved in the feminist movement in Turkey expressed, "Turkish feminists behaved like 'big sisters... Moreover, they became like the spokesperson of Kurdish women" (*ibid.*: 780-1). This was true even for the more radical and autonomous Turkish feminist organizations, and Islamic feminists that criticized the patriarchal and authoritarian character of Kemalism although it was the Kurdish feminists who pointed to its ethnocentric 'Turkishness' (Çaha, 2011; Diner & Toktaş, 2010). On the other hand there has been a certain collaboration among Kurdish and Turkish feminists, on certain major issues, such as violence against women (Arat, 2008).

This violence was not limited to domestic sphere. As the escalating state violence targeted the Kurds more and more in the 1990s, women started getting organized in other more public realms, primarily and for obvious reasons, within the national liberation movements. Women were already taking part in great numbers in the *serhildanlar*; mass uprisings that mostly took place in the villages spreading to major Kurdish cities in Turkey following the army's attack that killed 13 PKK guerrillas and as a response to the already present unease caused by village evacuations, internal displacements and clashes with state's armed forces in rural areas²²². The subsequent episodes of prison whether for visits to incarcerated husbands, sons and family members or because women themselves were put in prison and tortured, constant political mobilization in the streets and maintaining families alone not only made Kurdish women's resistance visible but also politicized the traditional roles of Kurdish women such as mothers,

²²¹ (Arakon, 2015, p. 201; Çağlayan, 2006; D. E. King, 2003; Pope, 2013, p. 201; Wedel, 2001; M. Yüksel, 2006)

²²²For a very similar experience from Palestine see Kuttab's *Palestinian Women In The "INTIFADA": Fighting On Two Fronts* (1993).

wives and sisters (Arakon, 2015; Çağlayan, 2007). These were especially apparent in the protests of “Saturday Mothers” (*Cumartesi Anneleri*) who started organizing silent weekly sit-ins at a central square in Istanbul since 1995, holding pictures of the “disappeared” and asking their relatives’ whereabouts or at least confirmation of their deaths, or the “Peace Mothers” (*Barış Anneleri*) formed in 1996 demanding to put an end to the war between the state and the Kurds (Çağlayan, 2007; Göksel, 2018; Karaman, 2016, 2018).

Despite the criticism on nationalist movements and how they define or represent Kurdish women as ethnic symbols, cultural transmitters, mothers/biological reproducers of the community, or at best as the new modern women and participants in the national liberation as guerrillas or politicians, which held true to a large extent, by taking part in the national liberation movement women did indeed get out of the confines of domestic sphere and find their place in public life (Açık, 2002; Bozgan, 2016; Yalçın-Heckman & Van Gelder, 2000). On the one hand, the stereotypical representations of Kurdish women as authentic cultural transmitters, patriot mothers, war victims and in some instances as goddesses became common statements, also reproduced in modern Kurdish women’s magazines, closely tied to the national liberation ideology, such as *Roza*, *Azadi*, *Yaşamda Özgür Kadın*, *Jujîn*, *Jîn u Jîyan*, delimited the spaces of women’s emancipation and left little space for their own expression (Açık, 2002). Further, in the daily practices within the liberation movement, the ‘awakening’ of the Kurdish women, as many called it, was being beleaguered by the patriarchy of feudal society as much as the nation-state and the rhetoric of women’s emancipation was only paid lip-service at first (Filiz, 2010; Rojda, 2019). With the sidelining of gender equality, women’s emancipation was dissolved in national liberation.

On the other, women’s active participation meant not only conducting practical gender interests but radically transforming the definition of being women as well as the Kurdish political project itself, though this meant fighting a double struggle against the patriarchal colonial nation-state and the male-domination nature of their own community²²³. What is more, the increasing gender awareness developed through militant action that has given rise to a strong women’s liberation movement, in turn started shaping the wider Kurdish political movement, including a shift away from an emphasis on nationalism (Al-Ali & Taş, 2018).

²²³For personal account of the Kurdish women politicians and how they had to confront patriarchal attitudes of the Kurdish society and the political structure see *Kürt Siyasetinin Mor Rengi* (The Purple Color of the Kurdish Politics) (Kışanak, 2018)

VI.III. Women's Emancipation as the Proving Ground of the Kurdish Liberation Struggle

Women have always been in the “yeast” of our freedom struggle, even before Fis, the village where the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was founded in a mud house. From the very beginning since the group that later formed the PKK came together, women were among those attracted to and curious about revolution. However, it is possible to say that national liberation and class struggle were their primary motivations at the time. Not freedom, but equality were the priorities. Of course, this notion of equality is one that was determined by patriarchal structures and mentalities. For this reason, women's existence and successes in the revolution were determined by the standards and measures of men. Lifting heavy items like men, fighting like men, walking like men. What I am trying to say is that we experienced the same obstacles and shortcomings of all other Marxist-theory inspired struggles. But this did not last [sic] as long in our case (Diyar, 2018)

In the 1990's many women joined massively the ranks of PKK. Akin to many women's struggles, the Kurdish women's organized battle for democratic rights, equality and anti-colonial struggle emerged “...in the context of the resistance to imperialism and various forms of foreign domination on the one hand, and to feudal monarchies, exploitative local rulers and traditional patriarchal and religious structures on the other” (Jayawardena, 1986, p. 8). So these women joined the resistance not *only* because of their commitment to national liberation, but also for personal reasons, that involved, social and family restrictions, patriarchal kinship relations and (domestic) violence, forced marriage practices and the lack of educational and employment opportunities for women in rural areas. Simultaneously, Öcalan, started writing about the patriarchal and oppressive gender relations ingrained in the family and social structures, the treatment of women as slaves, objects or personal possessions to be bought and sold, similar to occupied lands, and about a mentality that links family's or man's honor to female virtue, sexuality and chastity first in his analyses in *Women and the Family Question* (1992). In his view, “[S]ociety treats woman not merely as a biologically separate sex but almost as a separate race, nation or class – the most oppressed race, nation or class: no race, class or nation is subjected to such systematic slavery as housewifisation” (Öcalan, 2013). He also alleged that the forging of patriarchal structures are part of the Kurdish feudal classes' methods to control the society and prevent them from becoming independent modern individuals. These analyses certainly did have a conducive effect on women to join the Kurdish struggle, discover distinct domains to put in practice their own agenda of gender liberation and a strong basis to change societies patriarchal mindset.

As PKK was an armed revolutionary organization, the first area in which women started partaking has been the military. Also, taking part in the armed struggle signified on one hand a

challenge to the gender dichotomy that nationalism created by defining the state and the army as male institutions being protectors and women as protected (Elshtain, 1985; Enloe, 1993). So, women's "armyfication" (Esen, 2002, p. 13) became one of the means to claim gender equality starting with the army and to be treated on an equal footing with men. And on the other, participation in the anti-colonial struggle offered women a way to challenge, similarly, the colonial order's definition of women as oppressed (Lazreg, 1990). Consequently, in 1993, the first women-only troops were formed and successively in 1995 Kurdistan Free Women's Union (YAJK) and in 1999 the Kurdistan Working Women's Party (PJKK) were founded as a sign of not only equality with men but the indicator of how women can organize themselves, make decisions and execute them without depending on men (Mazî, 2019). Followed, the Kurdistan Women's Liberation Party (PAJK) in 2004 and the military wing Free Women's Units (YJA Star) both affiliated with the umbrella organization functioning in line with the recent confederalist model, the High Women's Council (KJB), that unites all political, self-defense and civilian women's organizations in four different parts of Kurdistan in Syria, Iran, Iraq and Turkey, as well as Europe. Notwithstanding, the autonomous organization of women was the outcome of an intense conflict with the male comrades initially in the military and also the political structures and institutions. Because of the prevalent patriarchal mindset that kept defining particular spheres of life such as politics and governing as masculine, banned the presence of women in these spaces based on the argument that women were more emotional and thus not really capable of reasoning, as if the two spheres of emotions and reason were also gendered. So women's political autonomous formations emerged also as a reaction to the instrumentalization of women in the male dominated Kurdish nationalist parties and organizations (Açık, 2002).

On the flip side, the hegemonic constructions of masculinity and femininity were also ingrained in women's perceptions of manhood and womanhood. For instance, many interviews and women's own testimonies speak about the pressure to act 'manly' was widespread in the beginning for many women who worked side to side with man. Women had first tried to prove themselves by showing their physical strength and endurance to demonstrate that they could be equally good guerrillas like men and survive the hard conditions of war even if this meant injuries, some with lifelong consequences, humiliation, feeling incompetent and even feeling ashamed of natural parts of women's health such as menstruation. Also, many women wore short-hair, as a reflection of idealized masculine women, or as a form of 'disobedience' against traditional women's image (Düzel, 2018; B.

Şimşek, 2018). The masculinization of women, or the positive construction of hegemonic masculinity, to take part on an equal basis with men or not acknowledging women's abilities pushed many women to question and condemn patriarchy within the movement (Çağlayan, 2007; Düzel, 2018; Kışanak, 2018). In one of the interviews, a Kurdish militant frames this as; "I mean we seriously started to get to know ourselves, to search ourselves. Because in the past, in fact, while in politics or in real life, when we looked in the mirror, we used to look at ourselves with the eyes of the male. I mean this is not true only for the Kurdish woman" (quoted in Yüksel, 2006). But for all that, certain Kurdish women have marked the women's struggle against state, nationalism and patriarchy, pointing out equally the multiple levels of subjugation. Many Kurdish militant women mention, for example Beritan (Gülnaz Karataş) who threw herself off of a cliff when she was besieged in 1992 or Zilan (Zeynep Kınacı) who immolated herself killing numerous Turkish soldiers along and whose accounts and writings stressed fighting against enslavement, whether national or gender-specific, until the society was freed, among two of the most marking figures. Alongside many others, these women characters are elevated to a sacred status in the movement and with them the image of women in need of protection and liberation gradually turns into women who will liberate the whole society and construct a new one (Çağlayan, 2012; Şimşek, 2018). Besides, these also signify turning points in the movement that starts portraying women as a primary revolutionary agent that will contribute to emancipation of all. On a parallel account PKK becomes one of the few socialist movements that openly bring women side by side working class as actors of revolution and social transformation²²⁴. This can also be seen as a reflection of the desire to transform the first colony to liberators, the former drawing a parallel between gender and racial oppression, and yet a problematic one as Mohanty stresses; "The major problem with such a definition of power is that it locks all revolutionary struggles into binary structures—possessing power versus being powerless" (1984, p. 350), or dominating or being dominated. Further, Öcalan depicts mythical portrayals of figures such as Zilan, a narrative that would be keenly adopted by the Kurdish women themselves using terms such as becoming a goddess or becoming Zilan (*Zilanlaşmak*) when referring to liberation²²⁵.

²²⁴ See for example women guerrillas proper narrative about liberation struggle, military structures, war and revolution <http://www.signalfire.org/2015/08/15/interview-with-the-worlds-first-army-of-women-yja-star/>

²²⁵ Esin Düzel (2018) problematizes the 'Goddess' discourse of the Kurdish movement through a feminist reading of the guerillas' diaries. Düzel's analysis lets the guerillas' narratives speak for themselves without being haunted by a hegemonic discourse of the Kurdish women's movement's development. Handa Çağlayan's works, *Mothers, Comrades, Goddesses* and *From Kawa the Blacksmith to Istar the Goddess* (2007, 2012) are also already known critical examples of movement's discourse.

The criticism the nationalist movements drew as regards to how they speak in the name of women, assigning them a place, an objectified value that makes them symbols of what ideologies want to impose on the people and render women as without a will and consciousness is long known²²⁶. In fact, it is impossible not to cite Chatterjee (1993b), who exposed how postcolonial nationalisms inverted the ideological form of the relation of power between the sexes through the adulation of woman as goddess or as mother. But here I suggest to interpret this construction not merely as a nationalist rhetoric to control women but also as an intent to redefine positively the qualities of women, despite the risk of essentialism it entails. And more, in heavily patriarchal settings, the image of woman as goddess or mother serves to erase her sexuality in the world outside the home making it possible for her to go into the world under conditions that would not threaten her femininity (*ibid.*).

The same could be said for the Kurdish movement, arguing that the rhetoric on women's liberation and emancipation keeps coming from a male figure, and especially one with substantial influence as the leader of the people. On the other hand, Kurdish women already had their own agendas and the more they engaged with political organizations and parties and made their presence felt in the public space the more they challenged the patriarchal structure of Kurdish society and the status and treatment of women within this structure (Diner & Toktaş, 2010; B. Şimşek, 2018). So the Kurdish women have never fit in the definitions of biological and symbolic reproducers of the nation but they have been political consciousness. The critical perspectives they had over their situation allowed them to "...interpret, act and react against oppression, as well as negotiating with various forms of patriarchies. Although these women may be oppressed by diverse patriarchal systems, they are not simply victims as portrayed by various Turkish feminist scholars — but subjects with choices" (Ahmetbeyzade, 2000). Indeed, many Kurdish peasant women have access to power and resources within their communities – as most of the men have been killed during the armed struggle against the Turkish state or migrated for work leaving women as the heads of the households- and are able to negotiate their own positions by resisting familial, tribal and even state patriarchies. Of course this does not directly translate into total eradication of the sexual division of labor and power. "This can change only when men as well as women are defined in a dualistic manner as reproducers as well as producers of the nation" as suggested Yuval-Davis (1993).

²²⁶ See especially Chatterjee's 'Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonized Women: The Contest in India' (1989).

VI.IV. Theorizing on Anti-patriarchy, Autonomy and Sovereignty From Kurdish Women's Perspective

Women as women are largely excluded from, alien to,
the self-declared male norms of this society,
where human beings are called Man,
the only respectable god is male, the only direction is up.
So that's their country; let's explore our own.
I'm not talking about sex; that's a whole other universe,
where every man and woman is on their own.
I'm talking about society, the so-called man's world of
institutionalized competition, aggression, violence, authority, and power.
If we want to live as women, some separatism is forced upon us
Le Guin (1989, p. 116)

The autonomous organization of women starting with the military and expanding to the political institutions and parties was markedly a strategy to create spaces of emancipation for Kurdish women until the clear gap between genders was overridden and gender oppression ceased to exist in society. The implementation of co-presidency which suggested equal gendered participation in leadership positions and 40% women quota in all administrative units and that would in time extend to all institutions was one of the policies that was an indicator and result of women's involvement in politics as subjects of transformation and was a clear sign of women's determination to secure their empowerment (Çağlayan, 2013; Tasdemir, 2013). So it is more than equal representation and more about autonomous power, that is being able to transmit women's will in the ranks of organized structures (*Interview with the World's First Army of Women*, 2015). Although the measures of equal representation were not enough to get to the heart of the matter, which was located at the patriarchal social structure and mindset. With the amplifying debates and critiques within the movement over women's liberation, Öcalan in the mid-90's started formulating the gender revolution and women's liberation as men's liberation and the one of life by and large²²⁷. Öcalan's theoretical framings served to legitimize women's autonomous practices in the eyes of the society and to endorse their critiques, and hence the significance of this figure for many.

Women underscored the urgency of a radical change of mindset, a kind of a decolonization of the Kurdish society at large as well as the liberation movement to create a free society abolishing oppression, including traditional and oppressive gender roles, alongside the continuous efforts this change involved. The theory of 'Transforming the Man', unfolding into other theoretical and political propositions like, Total Divorce' (*Sonsuz Boşanma*),

²²⁷It is hard to cite all his work in which he tackles the women's liberation in this sense, as most of his speeches, writings or trainings were published along the years producing a bulky literature. But a concise compilation of his works on women's emancipation could be found in 'Liberating Life' (Öcalan, 2013)

‘Killing the Dominant Male’ (*Erkeği Öldürmek*), the ‘Theory of De-linking’ (*Kopuş Teorisi*) and “*Hevjiyana Azad*” (*Özgür Eş yaşam*, or in en. *Free Cohabitation*, though a very rough translation) are being introduced, especially mid-90’s onwards and evolving according to the new ideals of a stateless, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal and ecological society with the forthcoming years to follow Öcalan’s capture. These concepts all hint at this aforementioned transformation of the patriarchal mindset. To “kill the dominant male” for instance refers to killing the power and “the one-sided domination, the inequality and despotism” (Öcalan, 2013, p. 51), the annihilation of toxic masculinity and the patriarchal mindset within one’s personality, be it man or woman, and society in general. This was paralleled with the idea of the “total divorce” implying on one hand women’s mental, material and emotional detachment from the colonialist, capitalist and patriarchal state system; a true call for decolonization. And on the other hand, it encouraged women to search for the true essence of their identity, reach “*Xwebûn*”, to be able to construct it in freewill, thinking beyond the male-defined notions of femininity or definitions of womanhood.

The delinking is intended as the first step, to take the decision of not accepting the options that are available, to create categories of thought that are not derived from within the framework of colonial philosophical, social and political theories, nor within the borders of patriarchal systems. So it is an option to decolonize and de-patriarchalize. This is the way to women’s liberation, explained by the Free Women’s Union (YAJK) (1998) starting with breaking loose from reactionary and feudal ties, liberation from traditional women’s roles defined in terms of a ‘lack’ or an apolitical stance, not assuming masculinity nor men as the measuring unit. Diyar (2018) asserts, the Theory of De-linking, Total Divorce and women’s liberation ideology refer to women’s efforts to overcome accustomed aspects of the mental configurations in order to propose alternative and autonomous systems, that builds connections with the universe. These are not only proposed for women, the idea is to liberate life, liberate men and every element that makes up the community. Only then it is possible to build a *hevjiyana azad*;

“to re-create relationships between women and men rid off notions of ownership and property. Re-defining notions of reproduction and love so as to not understand reproduction as procreation, but in the sense of adding meaning to life in a variety of ways, so as to understand love as the focusing of one’s energy in one place for a purpose. For this to happen, we must define standards for liberated women and men.” (*ibid.*)

These redefinitions then lead to a communal life grounded on the ideas of ethics of freedom and care for life, or nurturing that is carried out equally by all members of the society²²⁸. In other words, *hevjiyana azad*. Is to counteract the effects of isolation, and broken relations in the name of individuality, so to restore the social affinity and responsibility for each other again, as reminds Qeredaxî (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Further, the notion of free cohabitation is the philosophic dimension behind the confederal system and the foundation of the democratic nation, represented by the co-presidency principle for instance, that women implement in all spheres of the system, to create new ways of relating to each other (Diyar, 2018a). This new relation also re-imagines the loyalty to the nation, and reinterprets patriotism – a word that is most often used by Kurds to differentiate their idea of the devotion to Kurdistan as the national community from exclusive and discriminatory connotations. When *hevjiyana azad*. is expanded to the whole community then the land on which different people live together, the link and devotion to this land, the labor to work it, to cultivate the diverse material, spiritual and cultural values associated with the land becomes the redefinition of patriotism against nationalism (Jineoloji, 2020). This redefinition also detaches the territory and the nation from the male-centered definitions, hegemony, war, and defense of property.

Women's liberation, issuing from these theorizations on the transformation of dominant masculinity and the uncovering of alternatives, is considered to be the 'third sexual rupture', this time against the patriarchal system. The first two sexual ruptures in Öcalan's analysis - specially volume III *Sociology of Freedom* (2019) and volume V *Democratic Nation* (2012) of his series *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization* and *Liberating Life* (2013), a compilation of his writings on women's liberation -are defined as the remarkable turning points in the history of the relationship between the sexes or the counter-revolution against the communal natural social order organized around the Mother-Goddess and matriarchal authority. The first is with the appearance of first social and class hierarchies in the Neolithic Mesopotamia, the hunter men and the male shaman representing the social regulatory power, the emergence of city-states and then the second rupture with the transition towards the empire-states in which the power is the monarch and the priest. His reading points out how the male figures and a patriarchal order, its codification in the state and religious institutions and the family, in time dispossess women from their social status and substitute the matriarchal natural order with a hierarchical, inequitable and exploitative one. This juncture, announces not only the enslavement of women but also the beginning of the loss of freedom for all. The

²²⁸Jineoloji, the quarterly magazine in which women tackle issues from a feminist perspective has a special issue, vol 8, on *hevjiyana azad*.

broadened critique of history, society, state, capitalism, and patriarchy, in which gender continues to be located at the center leads Öcalan to propose a new societal model, DM against capitalist modernity. “Capitalism and the nation-state,” he argues, are Machiavellian and corrupt because they “represent the dominant male in its most institutionalized form...It is a continuous warfare against society and women” (2013, p. 43). So, the orientation of the movement and the direction of the struggle towards the fight against “Men-State” sovereignty – not by itself a novel critique as feminist thinkers pointed it out over and over – that is ‘killing the dominant male’, and reshaping hegemonic masculinities and femininities, which happen to be the basis of any nationalist idea, becomes the central pillar of the social transformation towards freedom, equality and democracy.

Likewise, Öcalan maintains that if the history of the loss of freedom is the history of how women lost their position and vanished from history, and her enslavement equals the exploitation and servitude of many oppressed groups, then the unveiling of women’s story would be the only way to analyze the capitalist, colonial modern civilization. Yet this cannot be achieved through the positivist, androcentric and anthropocentric modes of inquiry. Therefore, new modalities are needed to counterweight the mental and material colonization caused by the form of scientific knowledge serving better the interests of the power holders, the capital and the nation-states than the real needs of the people, to create an integral perspective against the fragmented disciplines that isolate social phenomenon concealing their interrelation or place them in dichotomous and hierarchical relations. In *Sociology of Freedom* (Öcalan, 2019), alongside the oppressed classes and peoples, women’s experiences, ways of knowing and producing knowledge are located at the epicenter of this new scientific method, called *Jineoloji*, women’s science.

VI.V. Jineoloji The Science of Free Women

we are, i am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who find our way
back to this scene
carrying a knife, a camera
a book of myths
in which
our names do not appear
Adrienne Rich, “Diving Into the Wreck” (1973)

Women's struggle and their theories are shaped in contexts in which pre-capitalist relations are mixed with the imposition of modern nationalist movements, social and political structures, religion and continuing colonialism, that the Kurdish women refer as the Capitalist Modernity; a context often discarded in many Western-centric feminist accounts. The criticism of the tunnel vision of Western thinking including feminist philosophies is nothing new. This parochialism prevents Western-centric frameworks of knowledge to see beyond their epistemological privileges and continue to judge and try to interpret knowledge coming from diverse life-worlds through the standards of these theoretical constructions. Aside from being a reminder of the colonial thinking that keeps haunting the 'modern', this pretended universalism, on one hand distort the reality of other women and approach them partially, while on the other creates complications in forming a dialogue between different life-worlds.

Jineoloji -a neologism derived from the Kurdish word for woman, *jin-* is a proposal to systematize the lives and struggles of women who are marginalized and excluded from multiple domains of life, and oppressed and exploited throughout history, sharing the same moral and philosophical basis with the *Sociology of Freedom*. But beyond that, *jineoloji*, maintains that the world is not only going through an economic, political and social crisis but an epistemological one, as a consequence of the life imposed by the capitalist, colonialist and patriarchal modernity and propose an alternative way of thinking and acting, a different model of life outside its structures. It underscores patriarchy as the constitutive element of the dominant world order, one that even in the most critical studies tends not to receive its due attention. Moreover, *jineoloji* shares with Western feminist analysis, the need to undue the 'normalization' of the scientific perspectives and knowledge as a construct of male subjectivity and further methods of inquiry that are informed by women's perspective, experience and standpoint, in which they are the knowing subjects, the ones who speak. *Jineoloji*, already is the outcome of Kurdish women's earlier experiences in the differing fields of organized struggle, be it political, military or social. And it aspires to both produce critical thinking of the past present and the future and catalyze a fusion and interrelation between theory and praxis.

Further, it sets off with the presupposition that possessing the knowledge of oneself, the possibility to define oneself and the world around, is a key element in becoming a free person. For *jineoloji*²²⁹, the need to recover the women's suppressed thought, or her knowledge left

²²⁹For a detailed definition of *Jineoloji*, its background, aims and the fields of study see the *Jineoloji* booklet (2017) prepared by the Jineology Committee Europe

our from the methods of science, politics, discourse and practice in a world that denies women wholeness, asking the first question “Who am I?”, pointing out the desire to establish one’s identity which is always imbricated with power, is the common denominator of all women, the universality of their oppression. So knowledge becomes an imperative in regaining one’s will searching through women’s knowledges lingering in the silences, the empty spaces and the shades created by hegemonic knowledges. “Women will further the methodological deciphering of power-seeking male-dominant structures undermining the history of women’s philosophy, science, religion, mythology and morality, as well as analyzing herself via methods based on her own mind, intelligence and emotions. The knowledge that those who cannot think for themselves cannot govern themselves, hence cannot be free, is the point of departure of Jineoloji’s search for truth”, expresses The Free Women’s Congress (DÖKH, 2013).

Jineoloji, like the feminist critical thinking in general, condemns the positivist sciences of abetting the monopolization of power in the hands of men and the (nation-)state and becoming complicit in providing arguments in favor of racism, colonialism, sexism, industrialism, and environmental destruction, aside from justifying feminicides, wars, and poverty (F. Aras, 2016) . Further, it subscribes to the critiques that reveal how science played a role in denying of the truth about women or distorting it. Alternatively, this critique is not only geared toward the sciences but patriarchy as a whole, understood as a system of domination, a relationship of power between men and women in which the later is kept subordinate through institutions, traditions, social customs, attitudes and laws. So, the struggle against patriarchy is not about individual man but a systemic problem that affects all. Hence it is not imagined as oriented towards individual rights but the liberation of all. Nor is it viewed separate from or superior to other struggles. Unlike the liberal feminist understanding, jineoloji argues that women’s struggle is primarily social and part of a broader fight against all forms of domination.

A women’s science, located counter-hegemonically against the knowledge structures that define, discipline and govern women in order to re-construct identifications as free subjects and agents, aims equally to displace these structures that subdue them (Femenías, 2006). Necibe Qeredaxî, a founding member of a research center for jineology expresses;

With the help of jineology we seek to enter into the depths of history and search for the point where women were made to disappear, in order to do things differently. Many people ask why the symbol of jineology is a spindle. The spindle is an instrument that mothers created more than 10,000 years

ago and that has survived to this day. We follow the spindle's thread throughout history, in order to research how women's resistance has evolved around this symbolic thread (in Neven & Schäfers, 2017)

The oblivion that Qeredaxî frames point out to the marginalization of women in the creation of knowledge, although this does not induce a total subjugation, immobility or powerlessness. It is more like what Adrienne Rich warned us about in the commencement address she gave at the Smith College in 1979, entitled "What does a women need to know?" stating that "no woman is really an insider in the institutions fathered by masculine consciousness" (1979) and the only way to win is not playing their game but making critical use of the outsider's eye of women. Rich advocated that women need to have a knowledge of their own history, in order to become a self-conscious, self-defining human being, of her much-politicized female body, of the creative genius of women of the past; the skills and crafts and techniques and visions possessed by women in other times and cultures, and become aware of how they have been rendered anonymous, censored, interrupted, devalued. To discover these stories one needs to learn paying attention to what is left out, for the unspoken, the excluded parts of women from the established science and scholarship, to find the firewood of the outsiders' eye in the parts of ourselves as women. The vital toughness and visionary strength of the angry grandmothers, women who fought for their unmet needs and those of their children and their tribes and their peoples, ones who refused to accept the prescriptions of a patriarchal church and state, who took risks and resisted, women who organized against oppression as mothers, workers, peasants, housewives; the healers and midwives tortured and burned as witches; the thinkers discredited as strident, crazy or deviant whose courage to be dissident, to speak their truths, adds Rich, are the memory of women's resistance. These convey experiences and knowledges that resists in the cracks, hidden from view or intentionally untold and yet is being brought into light by many women, especially in the last decades, so that women can learn from other histories of resistance, and get to know each other.

For jineoloji, the rewriting women's history has to do also with breaking up with the old, unlearning oppressive mindscapes and asking different questions so that the dimmed stories can come to light;

Although we pursue the goal of rewriting woman's history, we will neither do it by appending women to the existent historicity nor will we approach it by only putting a woman's stamp on history. Principally, as Jineoloji, we will assume the reconstruction of the society and the life by questioning the existent historical framework, by taking all of the experiences of women, which existed until today, as a base. (Su, 2017).

This is to re-write history from the blind spot of universal history, from the unseen perspective of women. In this, “remembering becomes a process of achieving closer proximity to wholeness, of erasing forgetting... Thus, the positioning of memory as a process through which origins are retrieved means positing forgetting as an act of misrecognition” (Sturken, 1999, p. 243).

Su explains (2017) jineoloji’s approach to history;

We want to stream into the future by giving meaning to the flow of life in the moment as well as embarking on an excavation at the source of time. In the cults of Ana Fatma, in fairy tales, in the love of Mem u Zin, in the songs of dengbêj, in the New Year rituals and in many other phenomena we are intending to find our lost truth, to restore our bond with the universe. We believe wholeheartedly that starting such an excavation all together with Jineoloji is an important step that we will take into the free life (2017, para. 1)

The excavation to expose accounts that lead to freedom, set its sights on examining the methods through which patriarchy subjugated women and her ways of resisting in response to this violence, “including tracing and digging up the remnants of matricentric cultures that could not be erased despite these colonizing efforts. In other words, “to reach the root cells to heal the ill organism, to define the dynamics of the women’s revolution” (Diyar, 2018, para. 27).

Jineoloji’s utopian perspective is one that proposes to unearth the have yet to materialize alternatives, that have been ruled out, and from there on a new epistemology that sets up the configuration of a struggle for a just and free life. Looking into the lifeways that do not fit into the capitalist, patriarchal and colonialist modernity, the ones that are considered backwards and archaic, as says, Bese Ana (Van Jineoloji Atölyesi, 2018). They are considered as the lodestars of creating alternatives to the methods that are used to enslave the society, women, nature and everyone else, replacing the structures of hegemony and state with democracy, ecology and women’s emancipation. Seeking the roots of a ‘just’ society can be interpreted as the foundational myth of a differently imagined community, not in its exclusionary sense based on nation or ethnicity but one that imagines community as the free alliance of peoples, organizing life without institutions of control such as the state and replacing it with ones based on equity and the coexistence of differences and, respecting the diversity of lifeforms, just like the one present in nature, that share the same territory, starting from the Middle-East to expand globally.

And in reality, women have been practicing these kind of systems of social organization all along in their dealings and interplay with the natural world, in their habitual ways of doing

things. Bese Ana calls this the ethical relationship between the women and nature, although a handful now, who understand the language of the earth, who talk with the animals, read and write poems for flowers, lament the death of a tree, and who still create life (Van Jineoloji Atölyesi, 2018). The myths of Mother-Goddesses that Öcalan referred to in many occasions in his writings, the Neolithic society, refer to a period in which in Mesopotamia a communal structure was created around women and their deep-rooted link with nature that existed for thousands of years without recurring to forceful means to restore and reproduce a social order. This period of egalitarian, communal forms of organizing the society around ethical values to preserve the unity of the community, despite suffering the organized attacks of patriarchy, religion, authority and capitalist civilization, is still alive in humanity's collective social consciousness. And this is the ideal society that the Kurdish movement and the women aim to rebuild. It is true that many political projects construct a "certain understanding of women as more equal with men 'before', or of women's difference as emblematic of 'culture' defined against the colonising power" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 22). But for women of the Middle-East, for whom the images and cults of these Mother-Goddesses, Tiamat, Inanna, Ishtar and many others are still very much alive and part of the tales told from generation to generation, the values they represent are ingrained in the culture of the peoples' of these lands and not just strategies to organize resistance. Furthermore, they symbolize the Nature, and her forces, equally dominated by the patriarchal mindset, the first ones to be attacked. Just as the Nature becomes an object created only for the service of the Man, Woman was created to be his servant. That is why the motto, *Jin, jîyan, azadî* (Women, Life, Freedom) is not accidental but derives from the intimate relation between women and life, cogent words in Kurdish, not really alluding to procreative capacities of women but rather the relation at the root of this creation; the life itself, the aptitude and ethical understanding to value the existence of all things in life equal to one's own, to concede the parity of a bird, a tree, a river, a star, the same as a human being (F. Aras, 2016).

Thus, the accounts that narrate the instances of women observing and learning from the Nature, constructing a life in harmony with it, is one of the prime focus of Jineoloji's work. Or in the words of Emek (2019), Jineoloji aims to give precedence to moments in which nature has been the first school, the nursery of human beings. It is after bringing into discussion as an imaginable alternative a culture that bears traces of the vital, philosophical, scientific, ethical and semiotic elements of a communal life in which feeding, sheltering, agriculture, organizing the time and space of the society, that is all the activities that we can

consider nurturing, and today are belittled as womanly, were tasks that were done without creating hierarchies or domination but were done as to reproduce life. Despite being depreciated, this is what an ecological society means in women's lexicon. And through these stories, jineoloji hopes to prove that it is possible to regain our lost relationship with nature - seemingly the only way out from the global crisis that we are going through- in which women play a central role in carrying out the much needed transformation in the way we think, that is a decolonization of our minds (Aras, 2016). Further, the restoration of the relation with nature signals to the recovery of self-defining and self-sufficient beings, hence the relation between the words *Xweza*, translated as nature but literally meaning the one that gives birth to oneself, and *Xwebûn*, finding one's essence, the natural self. It is literally going back to the roots.

Collecting these narratives is also part of a stand against the book(s) of myths written by men. For many Kurdish women, written communication – not to speak of 'academic' work- is still not the basic form of expression and orality occupies a fundamental place in transmission of social values and culture. So, jineoloji specifies; “[W]e are conscious of the fact that the living history, the oral history carry on with us, and thus this kind of knowledge is very important. We should not forget that we are the successors of people whose souls and bodies mingled with soil and nurture the roots of our family tree and that the collective history persists with us. As that is the only way we can give real meaning to the moment” (Su, 2017, para. 9).. Indeed Kurdish women need to look no further, as not only the memories of women acting together with men in production, war, religious rituals are still alive but, although fewer by the day, there are places where this communal life is maintained at a safe distance from the intrusion of a capitalist lifestyle. Alevi women, the *pîrs* who are religious leaders of orders guiding their communities, *dengbêj* women who sing *klams*, recite epics, talk about historic moments, the storytellers, the bards, the ones who conduct funeral rites keep transmitting collective histories, and common experiences forming the social memory.

Meryem Ana's account confirms that the destruction of the rural life and communitarian ways of organizing society, downgrade women's role in their own communities. In the past, planting, ploughing, harvesting, building houses were tasks done altogether and men and women spent the nights celebrating the days work (what they call *moral*), eating, reciting stories, dancing, singing *mamîk* (ditties) or telling *tiştonek* (riddles)(Van Jineolojî Atölyesi, 2018). She expresses that the presence of men and women in the same spaces was not condemned and on the contrary those were moments that a common culture was created,

literary and imaginative aspects of people were developed. This is not to romanticize the ‘old-times’ neither to create a myth of the ‘golden-age’. The fabricated discourse of absolute equality between genders or any member of the community would be an inaccurate version of reality that is unlikely to convince anyone. But it is true that the sedentarization and homogenization of the Kurds, whether with the adoption of Islam that tried to suppress heterodox beliefs, or nationalism targeting ethnic diversity affected negatively the women²³⁰. So not only exposing the history of women’s colonization but recounting a different history through the resistances of women in everyday life, translates into pointing out the patriarchal elements equally in the traditional social structure against which women offer a different account. Besides, through these women are set loose from the subaltern and victimized definitions of ‘womanhood’ coined by patriarchy and define themselves in a positive light.

It is important to highlight the collective element in this definition, one of the essential elements that stand out in the way jineoloji identifies itself as a science. In contrast to an internalized perception of the individual subject, a viewpoint that is considered normal in many Western feminist currents, jineoloji re-crafts the subject collectively. The collective self-determination, the agency, is anchored in the practices of the collective. Viewed in this way, women construct their standpoint, “an account of the world constituted by (and constitutive of) a collective subject, a group... derived from life activities and achieved in struggle...[and] subversive of the hegemonic account” as Cockborn framed (2011, p. 20). And yet, the orientalist narratives stagger in granting political agency and recognition to non-Western women’s actions that do not fit in liberal Western values or conceptions of liberty, democracy, equality, nationalism *inter alia*. Moreover, Neven and Schaefer convey that “the struggle that Kurdish women are waging is deeply rooted in radical political thought and practice, and as such does not lend itself as easily to a Western liberal worldview as it might

²³⁰This does not mean women were totally powerless or subalternized. There are several works done by anthropologists, sociologists, narratives of missionaries, travelers, diplomats, philologists, and army officers that talk about Kurdish women and how they hold a much more egalitarian status compared to other ethnic women, in the Ottoman empire, or even compared to (rural) European women. For instance, the famous Ottoman traveler, Evliya Çelebi, in his *Seyahatname*, his memories and notes he took during his voyages from one and to the other in imperial domains, mentions Kurdish women usually as fierce warriors and brave women who take part in hunts and wars with men, in clothes that do not hide their bodies, a rather unusual fact when considering the pressure and control on women’s bodies, although sometimes he mentions of very submissive peasant Kurdish women whose faces are hardly seen voices hardly heard. For another work on Kurdish women in the Ottoman empire see Bayrak (2007). For a work on Kurdish female figures from tribal leaders to modern political figures see Bruinessen (2001). Works of Hür (2014) writes about ruling Kurdish women during two world wars fighting against occupying forces, not only the Ottoman but also the French and the British, and organizing rebellions. For works on women figures from the nationalist elite classes see Mojab (2001b), Klein (2001), and Grabolle-Çeliker (2018)

appear at first sight” (2017, para. 2) The components that make up jineoloji’s fields of study are the antipodes of the liberal, pluralist yet individual understanding of life under capitalism. Sheila Rowbotham (1974) duly warned once that an individual woman who appears as an exemplar of freedom is an isolated creature, easily crushed or contained as entertainment. Indeed the media images and exposure of Kurdish guerrilla women, comparing them to film stars or clothing brands using guerrilla women’s images as a marketing tool, the articles portraying them as Amazons, fearless warriors who fight against ISIS create an exotic image of these women and most of the time turn them into sexualized objects, even when they are aimed to draw a picture of free and liberated role models (Tank, 2017). This a clear example of how the mainstream Western analyses categorize women who construct their worldviews with references that come from their own culture, read here non-Western, and thus do not fit into the Western terms of legibility by exoticizing them and decontextualizing their struggle even if this means distorting diverse realities. Further, the exotic thus the object of entertainment make it irrelevant the need to understand the real reasons behind Kurdish women’s struggle by depoliticizing it. This way the freedom struggle is neutralized, de-radicalized so that it can be consumed by the general public without provoking serious thoughts about women’s emancipation and liberation. Quite the contrary, Kurdish women’s liberation struggle aims to craft a highly political identity for women, sustained by the idea of freedom of all women. In this sense, the question ‘Who I am?’ that jineoloji wants to answer, involving the subversion of hegemonic definitions is not only an identity-based claim in the political sense but also an incitement to reconfigure the everyday modalities and meanings of identity. Wong (2013) suggests that in much the same way ‘who I am’ informs ‘what I want for us’, a collective claim of liberty that is both the basics of a women’s identity conceived in plural terms and a goal to transform the society.

Jineoloji’s explorations of equality, freedom, democracy, ecology and a communal life formed during the Neolithic era, around a matrilinear culture reflects a drive for finding out other ways to collectivize the power, shared by agents in control of their own lives contrary to being victims of dependents of governing structures. In this alternative democratic practice, the meaning of power “returns to the root —*posse, potere, pouvoir*: to be able, to have the potential, to possess and use one’s energy of creation—*transforming power*... that is shared in the form of knowledge, expertise, decision making, access to tools, as well as in the basic forms of food and shelter and health care and literacy” (Rich, 1979). The examples of societies that have been organizing themselves poles apart from the patriarchal, hierarchical,

and exploitative social organization that we know of today are the source of inspiration and motivation for jineoloji's studies. Further, the matriarchal societies that bear most of these traits, as they tend to create different notions of property and descendency that are not based on possession²³¹, are significant to showcase that a distinctive social contract existed between genders²³².

The idea of power, interpreted from the decontextualized and depoliticized viewpoint, turns into domination, war or the armed opposition, as in the portrayals of Kurdish guerrillas. This view dissociates the above mentioned understanding of collective and transformative power from the idea of self-defense, as laid out by the Kurdish women. Dirik (2017) argues that self-defense means political autonomy. Aside from meaning the liberty to decide on its own affairs as a community, political autonomy also means the liberty to confront collectively capitalist modernity and choose a life outside the constraints of it, outside the nation-state, capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism and a destructive model of development. Üstündağ (2016), for instance, argues that self-defense as a tool to unmake the state, in Rojava becomes part of a revolutionary practice that aims a radical change in life. Seen from this perspective, self-defense, on one hand is the creation of the institutions of DM on every level, from economic, politic, social to educative and philosophical that makes the construction of another world possible. On the other hand, self-defense on an intellectual level, refers to define the starting point of the political as the commitment to collectively produce, safeguard and amplify the conditions for the material *and* symbolic reproduction of life. This way of reimagining the political is hardly conceivable with the canonical understandings of predominantly masculine politics associated with the idea of capital accumulation and private property that excludes and separates instead of feminist politics that projects an inclusive notion of differences (Aguilar, 2017). For the Kurdish women, this connotes in part, arming themselves as a protection against male domination, that can only be secured by organizing autonomous women's institutions in every field; fact that existed in the military field or in the autonomous organization of a women's party for a considerable time now but today needs to go beyond intellectual, elite and vanguard organization to disseminate to the civilian life in order to impact society and inspire a thorough change in the mentality maintains Qeredaxî (Neven & Schäfers, 2017).

Nevertheless, the creation of the common is not just a romantic or a nostalgic idea and neither is an essentializing or caricatural portrayal of the communal experiments beyond the state. With all its adversities and disputable points, the creation of the common as society's and

women's self-defense refers to a transformation in doing, to a praxis. On the other hand this does not mean to translate the forces of various communities that make up the society in all their multiplicity into categories of analysis. Instead, Jineoloji tries to propose a perspective that strengthens these communities, their practices and the possible alliances, both internally and externally, that can be formed outside the Kurdish territory on a global scale. Then life itself, the experience and the practice becomes the source of knowledge and the most important 'scholarly' activity. Indeed this is one of jineoloji's claims, to break the monopoly of knowledge production confined to academy, and systematize knowledge already being created in the daily acts of the people themselves (Jineology Committee Europe, 2017) (Jineology Committee Europe, 2017). It also aims to be an intellectual tool to secure women's freedom, almost like a guideline that both unites women's knowledges, and offers future trails for radical interventions in patriarchal mentality that cannot be contained in simple reforms (Diyar, 2018; Neven & Schäfers, 2017).

That is why it would be inadequate to think of Jineoloji without the women's assemblies and council's formed in numerous spheres of culture, faith, diplomacy, economy, ecology, health, demography, defense, demography among others that exist parallel to the people's councils, women's academies, training and research centers, media organs, cooperatives or the co-presidency system. Neither can the social contract that brings sanctions to gender violence or honor killings, like dismissing men who use violence against women from the administration or cooperatives, and transferring their salary to their wives, bans on forced marriages, polygamy or bride price or the integration of gender equality in education and military training be conceived in isolation from Jineoloji²³¹. The approach to justice and peace that Jineoloji intends to develop, for instance, is already being carried through with the peace-keeping committees or in the *Malajin*, the women's houses, where all issues concerning gender violence be it domestic or communal are being resolved by women recurring to restorative and transformative justice. This proves once more that neither women's liberation nor women's science is thought only in terms of women's needs but incorporates the whole society including men. The alternative epistemology, and the transformation of the social mindset includes changing men. That is, on a broader view aims to transfigure ideas about masculinity and femininity on which particular notions of family, sexuality or citizenship are based on.

²³¹ To have a better understanding of how women's autonomous structures work see (Ayboga et al., 2016; A. Demir, 2015; Dirik, 2015)

And yet, change is a constant process and in the meantime women, for whatever reason in life need a women only space, be it personal traumas, violence, war, losing their family, have been building the women's village *Jinwar* as a place to experiment with all the ideas that constitute the basis of both the women's liberation ideology and jineoloji, such as detaching themselves from the patriarchal and capitalist order to try out fashioning a free coexistence among women coming from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, improve not just their capacities but self-esteem without needing a men's help, building trust and sorority, self-sufficiency, autonomy and create a space for diversity to flourish. *Jinwar*, also has a jineoloji academy so that women's wisdom and craft can nurture a women's science, making this experiment and women's village a place where theory and practice become consolidated.

From mythology to economy to politics to justice, jineoloji works towards conceiving a holistic perspective in all the issues that relate to life, contrary to fragmented approaches that impair the integrity of Kurdish women's existence (Jineology Committee Europe, 2017). This indeed a critique that women raise against certain Western feminist positions, that approach Kurdish women's liberation struggle piece by piece. Quite the opposite, the anti-statist, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal and ecological principles cannot be understood leaving aside their conception of democratic nation, the relation with land and nature, sovereignty, and self-determination. Further, Kurdish women also criticize the western feminist appraisal of Kurdish women's struggle for freedom and emancipation but the shunning of national liberation treating Kurdish women as victims of chauvinist ideologies, when they bring up the issue in their discourses. Diyar (*Personal Interview with Zilan Diyar*, 2019)²³², recalls that for a long time Kurdish women's relation with Western feminism was a subordinate one and they had to prove their worth all the time at the risk of dissolving in feminist theories that did not represent nor made sense for them. She adds that no women should be using man's principal tool, which is to set definitions for the 'Other' and every women's movement should be free to define themselves without trying to fit any struggle for the free existence of women into feminism, neither trying to incorporate each other.

Nevertheless, this does not mean every movement, group or perspective should follow their separate paths. The fragmentation not only of scientific or analytical perspectives but also of militant practices create oppositions and disguises intersections and common points obstructing a stronger and unified organization among women to fight together. If anything, as

²³² Her statements are taken from the uncut version of an interview done for a free press article in which I helped translating. The edited version can be read here; <https://guilhotina.info/en/2019/06/20/kurdistan-zilan-diyar-revolutionary-practices-social-science/#feminism>

an antidote jineoloji seeks to connect diverse movements, create dialogues between knowledges and fashion a collective wisdom to uproot patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and oppression. Alternately, linking geographically and culturally diverse struggles certainly does not mean an exclusive universalism or an ‘international’ collapsed into the culture and values of capitalism. Contrarily, it signals a will to create dialogue in order to expand the idea of (women’s) non-territorial autonomy, what the Kurdish women like to call Women’s Confederalism, and the commons to levels beyond the local, principally to form transborder alliances to restrain the new assaults of neo-colonization, expropriation and dispossession both on a practical and theoretical plane. Further, this dialogue, takes shape at the crossroads of women’s struggles, aiming to create contact zones. The numerous conferences and encounters that jineoloji has been organizing in the last years indicates clearly to the desire to bring side by side fragmented feminist struggles and diverse experiences of women. This dialogue then would also create favorable conditions to devise an ecology of knowledges for a collective (feminist) construction of transformative practices that aim for the creation of a society radically distinct from the capitalist, colonial and patriarchal one. These occasions of coming together, learning, and listening from each other, can help understand the sameness of the patriarchal system that oppresses women but its multifaceted and intricate ways. Moreover, dialogue can also serve as a reminder to Western theories that colonization is still an ongoing reality both material and mental and analyzing the conditions that create oppression and modern forms of slavery, exploitation, dehumanization needs to be paralleled by questioning the Western-centric definitions of gender, equality, emancipation, nation, democracy and state among other things to destabilize their epistemic privilege. International women’s conferences and workshops organized by various committees of jineoloji and global network of relations that is being weaved, create the settings to display that the knowledge forms and epistemologies that spring from the local conditions and experiences of women who inhabit the rest of the world outside the Western world have equal weight. As Dirik explains:

While struggling in a specific situation as a stateless, oppressed ethnic group within several authoritarian states, as workers and peasants against capitalist, industrialist economic injustices, and as women in a patriarchal community, the Kurdish women’s movement adopts methods, ideas, and legacies from women’s struggles around the world and throughout history and tries to find its own ways for organizing a self-determined and free life and society (2017, p. 74)

The discussions aiming for an organized social change should be nourished from this diversity of identities, conditions and methods. Jineoloji seems to be building strong connections to

create a common culture from the manifold untold histories of the women to connect each of them to another in a different part of the world, and to create a different one with values of freedom, equality, justice and autonomy from there on.

In conclusion, KWLS that has been addressed in the context of anti-colonial national liberation struggle in reality embodies an idea of emancipation and liberation that transcends the ethnic community of belonging and takes a stand against multi-layered and cross-cutting forms of oppression that affect women's lives. An engaged examination of KWLS discloses how colonialism operates differently, especially for the one's whose identity has been marginalized, oppressed and criminalized. Kurdish women historically mobilize against the material and symbolic violence carried out both by the state and the patriarchal social structures both in the private and public sphere confronting patriarchy that subjugates women's bodies and minds and silencing their identity and resistance. That is why simplifying Kurdish women's struggle in the framework of resistance against ethnic denial and oppression misses out women's greater demands of radically transforming the patriarchal mindset that underlies all social, economic and political structures. Viewed in this way, retelling the history of Kurdish anti-colonial resistance through the experiences of women complicates the history of nationalism and conventional political history favoring empires, states, nations, elites and politicians as the main actors who have influenced the course of world events. The nationalist historical narratives draw on wars, political alliances, treaties, partition of territories in which deaths, genocides and suffering of the people are reduced to numbers, casualties or matters of negotiation. In exchange, historical rereading intends bringing in local and private histories that have equally affected the world history and whose actors have been the peoples', the subaltern, the women, and all those communities whose experiences have been cast aside in 'History' writing. Further, spotlighting women's voices also complicate the tension between the global and local agendas of states' and anti-colonial resistance movements' nationalist history, their rhetoric of modernization as well as the heroic resistance of patriotic men defending the nation. These voices introduce those 'disloyal' questions considered irrelevant and thus not political, such as gender, in order to multiply the historical actors and unveil diverse accounts on imperialism, colonial subjugation, exploitation, uprooting, dispossession and also liberation and other forms of resistance. In the face of historical narratives of geopolitics and political economy, Kurdish women's and KWLS's portrayals hint to distinct facets of colonialism and colonization while exposing how their practices brought into play compound, and multilayered structures of oppression. These narratives set into motion cross-

cutting factors such as ethnicity, class, gender, culture, religion that marginalize time and again subaltern groups and especially women. So, colonialism does not only mean the violent practices that institutionalize subjugation traversing the lives of communities subjected to non-existence, including men and women, but also its economic, social, political and cultural aftermath that takes a heavier toll for women. Further, colonialism equally means the absence of subaltern groups' and women's knowledge stemming from their experiences in the colonial libraries while at the same time their seizing by the patriarchal system. In response, Kurdish women's resistance engages in invalidating the negation of any possibility of plural rationalities and histories, as sustained by colonial modernity that enforces a singular narrative (re)produced not only by the metropolitan culture but also by the male-dominant world view.

In this regard, the free women's science Jineoloji embarks on uncovering the marginalized and silenced knowledges and practices of women in struggle on one hand to countervail the dominant Western-centric concepts and linear perspectives that model most of the time the knowledge production in academies of the colonial and metropolitan territories. In the face of hegemonic knowledge that tries to fit other realities in its molds, Jineoloji intends to build decolonial epistemological alternatives to the patriarchal, capitalist and colonial modernity. In this effort, the theories, methodologies and pedagogies of subalternized women based on references that come from their historical experiences and social structures in which they are embedded in become anchor points. On the other hand, Jineoloji, by centering on the capacity of colonized and subalternized communities to define themselves aims to strengthen the foundation of a new social structure beyond the limits of any institution that sustains oppression, such as the state. Moreover, it aims to extend the restricted definitions of self-determination and autonomy established by former anti-colonial national liberation struggles towards possibilities of total emancipation from all kinds of repressive mindsets and subjugation, be it exclusionary and hierarchized implications of ethnicity, nation, cultural identity or gender. In this effort, today KWLS and Jineoloji build transborder connections with other women all around the world embracing the plurality and diversity of women's struggles to erect a unified and organized front in the name of global social justice and emancipation. At the same time, it goes without saying that 'Woman' is not a homogeneous group and it goes beyond the notion of gender. Today, women's longstanding struggle not only materialize in women's autonomous structures in all fields of life, their equal participation in political, social and economic levels but also in building a society that challenges hegemonic constructions of masculinity and femininity. As Kurdish women define

it, women represent a role with a potential to radically change society. But within this definition every woman occupies and moves in multiple spaces, assuming multiple roles and setting in motion multiple strategies to contest intersecting forms of subjugation. That is why the rest of this work will aim to expose how women sharing common elements of identity but coming from distinct courses of life voice their experiences through a personal narrative of their life histories. In addition, talking to women who live in diaspora away from where they consider their homeland, although with strong emotional and material ties with the places where they have been making their lives disclose unimagined dimensions of emancipation, self-determination, autonomy, belonging, justice, equality and oppression. Highlighting these connections and intersections is one of the main ventures this work embarks on so that historical narratives can be amplified and interrelated to each other both on local and global levels and from the contact zones challenging the legacies of colonial representations.

VII. Part VII Herstories, Kurdish Women Weaving the Past-Present and Future

Women have been for the most part the first ones to suffer the aftermaths of global (neo)colonialist and (neo)liberal politics, their development practices, and their crises bringing poverty and marginalization, destruction of nature, local communities and lifeways, forced displacements, economic recessions, the rise of unemployment, and worsening of inequalities, precarious work, various kinds of trafficking, forced labor, and increased violence, criminalization and isolation. In the case of many ethnicized and racialized women who have been pushed to a limbo between regulation, or domination, and oblivion of the nation-states, especially for women of non-state nations like the Kurdish women this also means a stubborn otherness of those least integrated in the nation and nationhood. This sets in motion, as Spivak (2009) put it, an ability to transform the imposed, fixed, written and immutable thinking with borders through the orally transmitted primeval culture of the ones who think without a nation. Despite their exclusion from official historical accounts, the life histories of women as the stubborn others piece together narratives of a motley of identities, cultures, religious backgrounds and profiles, generational, tribal, ethnic as well as linguistic differences, multitudinous imagined identities. In contexts of diaspora and migration these narratives mix with crosscutting everyday experiences of social, economic and cultural marginalization that impact numerous communities from different geographies, the global southerners. The diasporic stories of the Southerners, by reciting memories, remembering past events and reconstructing them in the present, by recreating homes through histories of displacement build bridges between traditions, languages and social values and forge contact zones. On the other hand, the homeland struggles that diasporic communities translate for Northern audiences, beyond unsettling Northern political spheres by carrying the stories of colonialism, imperialism and subjugation, shape different kind of contact zones between the metaphorical divisions of the North and South.

This part of the work, on another note, will introduce women's accounts, stories that they thought were relevant and important to tell about identity, being women in the struggle and liberty, amidst many other things that relate to life at large. I do not mean to radically change the official histories with women's accounts, or claim to bring to light groundbreaking historical facts nor do I claim to give voice to women. My intention is simply get a glimpse of different facets of reality as lived and told by Kurdish diaspora women, being fully aware of the fact that they are not always transgressive, and neither do they have to, and do not tell universal truths but particular histories. Also it seeks to call into question what it means 'women's history', not necessarily positioned as against to a history of men but as narratives

excluded from not only the institutional or official versions but from the ones of political movements. For all that, women's words mean resisting erasure, forgetting and assimilation. As one listens to women's accounts, alongside armed conflicts, heroic resistance stories to protect the people against the colonizers, genocides, exiles, bloodshed and anger, women's collective memory also expose violations, burning of villages, arrests of family members, friends, neighbors, torture but also solidarity, confrontation or how women organize to keep alive the survivors, the ones who lost their families and houses, the refugees or how they put up campaigns against dowry, bride price, blood feuds, forced and child marriages, for equal representation. These stories portray human beings in all its dimensions, including fear, anguish, heartbreak, sorrow and joy, content, strength, confidence. The *lawij* (laments), tell stories of women being captured, sold or enslaved, tortured because of their religion and *stran* (folk songs) portray others getting organized and fighting to help their sisters, to fight against the enemy. What is more, they out dare the shrouded plurality in the native lands where their ancestors lived together and shared cultures, languages, songs, mythologies and traditions with other ethnicities and religions, exposing the interconnected and collective histories of different folks.

The stories expose to view the kaleidoscopic nature of the identities, creating different combinations with each turn, fitting together the pieces into different patterns that take a different meaning according to the conditions, context, affiliations. Moreover, in these narratives we perceive how much the identity is as complex as nationality in lands religion, ethnicity, customs, language or geography alone is not enough to define a person. We hear Yezidis who also speak Armenian because they have been living in the same villages for time immemorial, Armenians who write down the sounds of Arabic in Armenian script to quote Koran, families half Muslim half Christian, others who learn 'who they really are' after living lives believing all their ancestors are only Turks, Kurds or Armenians until one day a grandmother whispers how she was adopted by military officers or were given to Kurdish *aghas* as brides to survive the massacres. As the Armenian journalist and writer Avedis Hadjian writing about the disguised stories of Armenians in Turkey, the genocide, families who are Armenian by ethnicity, Assyrian Orthodox Christians or Sunni Muslims by religion, Zazaki speakers by their mother tongue, Turkish by citizenship in his book 'Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey', "peeling it to the end leaves you with nothing, for it is the aggregate of layers that makes the whole" (2018, p. 108). Fethiye Çetin, an advocate of minority rights, who found out years later the her grandmother was a survivor of the

Armenian genocide, uprooted from her lands and brought up as a Turkish Muslim girl, in her books *My Grandmother* (2004) and *The Grandchildren* (2013) tells us the stories of assimilated Armenians, converted to Islam, sometimes through her grandma's life sometimes through the words of the grandchildren, some of them who grew up as radical nationalists or islamists without knowing their family histories. The message comes loud and clear, without unraveling the lies, and riding ourselves from the fear of truth to face our common past, there is no peaceful future. Another compelling example that interweaves the suffering of diverse peoples' as well as their shared past and present is Bilgin's book 'Bulut Yağmuru: Kobanê Siperlerinde Direniş Hikayeleri' (Cloud Showers: Stories Of Resistance From The Trenches Of Kobanê) (2018), that chronicles the 134 days of siege in Kobanê, in northern Syria and the resistance against the attacks of ISIS with stories for each day is a compilation of true stories that everyone in the region knows in which the leading roles are from different backgrounds but from the same lands, who name the same mountains, rivers and valleys with different names but share the same skies. In her narratives, the Armenians who escaped the genocides and took refuge in these lands in 1915, the Yezidis, the Arabs and the Kurds who were born there all take shelter under the same pomegranate trees.

The dialogues in this chapter obviously are not literary texts or novels. Women that I talked with were simply asked to talk about their lives, what it means for them to be women and how they imagine liberty. Along the way, their words defy the grandiose rhetoric on diversity and bring us back to earth. Each women craft their story around a different feature be it labor, economic difficulties, exploitation or marginalization, discrimination, racism, sexism to individual experiences of being a women in the world, the different difficulties that living in a village or a city implies, what it means being have to carry the burden of siblings, family, fathers and brothers when you are not allowed to go to school or have an education, or how it makes women feel to be 'sold' to another man to resolve disputes or just because you are seen as commodity, what does it take to stand up to patriarchal and feudal family and kinship structures, what does it mean to live in places where your identity is inferiorized and criminalized among many others as their reasons to stand up against oppression and joining the struggle, disclosing multiple sights of identity and womanhood. The common threads in these stories demonstrate that colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy impend over our lives and liberties unless we learn from history. They do not intend to be gospels, and far from being praises for the lost homelands, these narrations are rather intended for the ones who are willing to unlearn what is imposed as the only truth in official histories, in the narratives of

the nations and the states, and learn from what has been silenced so future alternatives can be built by learning from each other's stories.

LH²³³ 1 From the villages of Gili Dax to Iran to Thrace: Stories at the crossroads of Kurdish, Armenian and Greek

I always thought of myself as an authentic Kurd, but after growing up a little bit I learned that my grandma was from other folks. She was different indeed not only her attitudes but physically as well. My father was also blond and green eyed, all her children were blond and were different than the rest of the family. I had 3 grandmothers on both sides. I would say it was a feudal community and I think this made me think different as well. They called her *Rum*²³⁴, that is she became a Muslim later on, she was an apostate but was forced to be. Because I knew from her talks when she said 'However they forced me to change, in the presence of *Allah* I am who I am'. Back then I did not know what this meant but when I joined the movement... in the movement you start making investigations and you see many different folks. I always thought myself a Kurd, I had not been mixed but when I saw a had one part different I personally started investigating more and this created a different perspective, I was very affected by this. My ideas on Jews changed. I never would say I had one part Jew but in one discussion a friend said I could not be Jewish and I said I am proud of it. Not that it matters for me whether you are a Jew, a Turk or a Kurd but it was just against his reaction, to shut him up. Or when someone talks to me and says Heaven forfend or perish the thought you might be *fille*²³⁵, I ask why should not I be?! Are not these people like you

²³³ Life History (LH)

²³⁴ *Rum* is used to denote the Greek Orthodox minority population of Ottoman empire in Anatolia and its surroundings. Etymologically, it derives from the term 'Roman', the people of the Eastern Roman Empire. Here it seems that the people use it generically to mean Christian while the narrator curiously refers to her Armenian grandma as a Jew though Armenians were Christians. It is a quite clear indicator of how identities, religious or ethnic, were very entangled. And yet this interchangeable use makes one think about the Muslims' prejudices tarring them with the same brush. And moreover, this hints that it was not the ethnicity for the Kurds that created the alterity and otherness but religion. Of course this only applies to Kurds who are not forcefully or out of fear converted to Islam from other religions and thus should be taken with a pinch of salt. I had to consult to articles and talk to people to clear up the disorientation that these labels, their flexibility and interchangeability cause for me in which religion and ethnicity weigh differently in defining one's identity depending on the context. To have a better glimpse of how the different identities are inextricably intertwined see the next footnote

²³⁵ *Fille* is the way Kurds refer to Armenians, although at some instances it is said to refer to all *gavur*, the infidels that is the Christians. I did not look for an 'official' definition of what it means, and yet on the internet, especially on Armenian community's forums there were several interpretations. Among those one that mentions Bogos Tovmasyan's work for his book including an anecdote with his father is especially telling. He writes that the word has its origins in the word ܦܠܠܗܐ (pallāhā, "worker; peasant") in Aramaic – and equally ڤلّاح (fallāḥ) in

and me? And besides you are the one to give them the name *fille*. They might have a different religion so what. So this created a deep impact on me. I did not understand this when I was little but with the help of the party [PKK] I understood it.

I grew up in a really feudal society. Of course today it is not like before. I had 6 grandmas, 3 from both sides. All of them *aghas* of their separate lands. Both my dad and my mom were kids of *aghas*. But my mom was the only child of the family although my grandpa had several spouses. That is why I called my mom's cousins aunts and uncles. It was environment with a lot of women around. Both sides of the family. We are from the region *Zilan* but from different clans. Many different clans make up the tribe. *Zil* means sprout and *-an* is the life space. So when you count the villages and all in total there are 300-400 cousins. There are the *Zilans* and the *Milans* who always had fights or made pacts and treaties. Then there are the confederacies. But *Zilans* stayed in their own territory, just a small part of it went to Khorasan, Iran or Armenia. And some of it to Batman.

My grandpa had servants that were called *hulam*²³⁶. Of course it is not like what you see on TV but he had armed men. All his family were part of organizations like *Xoybûn*²³⁷. My dad's

Arabic – and notes that it does not only mean one that toils the land and grows grains but also plants and prunes trees, based on his father's stories. And yet, especially with the alterity created through religion especially during the last decades of the Ottoman empire, the word takes a pejorative meaning and being used by Kurds as "File-gulam", *xûlam* in Kurdish meaning the slave; as his father used to repeat over and over, "Ma çima ez tu Filleye te me?", Am I your slave?. The page where the story is posted is not accessible anymore but can be reached through webcaptures on <https://web.archive.org/web/20130520110735/http://www.aykiridogrular.com/koseyazisi-180-Biliyor-musunuz-ben-de-bir-Fille-kiziyim.html>

When weaved together the histories from the end of the Empire, the deportations, the dispossession, the violence and communities turned against one and other by the creation of dividing lines and alterities from life ways, languages, cultures and identities that were until then interwoven together, the word *fille* makes one also think of the former (uneven) relations of ownership, production, division of labor and the balances between sedentary and nomadic lifestyles. There are accounts that talk about how many Armenians worked as poor peasants on the lands of Kurdish aghas, almost like slaves, or about the ones given shelter by Kurdish families, mostly through matrimony or adoption, during the deportations and massacres that uprooted peoples from their territories in Anatolia who were not particularly treated as natural born family members, somewhat like a servant and many times not even as equals even after they convert to Islam. Being treated like a servant in fact is a cross-cutting reality for women indifferent of their ethnic origin, like in this particular narrative and hence the ease of forging sorority bonds or a sense of common destiny, though not always. Without further rumination, it is clear that there is quite a lot of work to be done to unearth these stories and make visible the research done and books written on the issue as few as they might be. An interesting one on the story of proselytized Armenians is *Araftaki Ermenilerin hikayesi: ne Hz.İsa'ya Ne de Hz. Muhammed'e yaranabildik* (The Story of the Armenians in a Limbo: We Could not Get in Good With Neither Jesus Not Mohammad) (Ziflioğlu, 2015)

²³⁶ *Gulam* in arabic means servant, assistant, a young boy. It has also been used to refer to slave-soldiers in Ottoman period.

²³⁷*Xoybûn* (also cited as Hoybun or Khoybun) is the precursor of the Kurdish national liberation movement founded by the Kurdish intellectuals and prominent figures in exile in relation with the *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Society for the Rise of Kurdistan) which itself was founded right after the WWI and the same year with the Turkish War of Independence on 1919. Its foundation certainly received popular support due to the arrests of the tribal leaders and forced deportations of Kurdish communities and to cities in Western Anatolia. There are different opinions on where it was founded or to what extent it was involved with French, British or other imperial powers or whether it was a successful organization in terms of leading a struggle of Kurdish national independence but the more interesting fact about the organization was the organic relations it had with the

family was also really patriotic, they took part in *Ağrı Rebellion*²³⁸. But in 1930 it ends in a betrayal. Then Atatürk orders them to be executed. My grandpa survives under the corpses. In his birth certificate his birth year is 1912, 3 years before the Armenian genocide. And a bit before the *Zilan* Genocide²³⁹. But my grandpa told me that he was 17. They start fighting again. They had to eat raw dog meat to survive. Then someone snitches on them. One of her sisters goes to Mahabad in Iran, lives and dies there. When the family found out where she was they go visit her but they could not communicate because they spoke different Kurdish languages. Another brother was found in Armenia. They make an announcement one day in Radio Erivan, telling the story and asking about the whereabouts of the family. Everyone used to listen to that radio. When they go there, they see a Yezidi family, living quite ok. My mom's dad was 5 or 7 during *Zilan* massacre. 3 siblings. They hid them in the *tandoori*. These furnaces are underground with a vent hole. They gave each a piece of bread and told them to come out after a couple of days if it was all quite. Of course when they came out there was no mom left nor dad. One relative also survived but someone snitched his hideaway. My mom's grandma and grandpa were taken captive during the Russian-Turkish war. Then they let them go. They used to speak a little bit or Russian. Their villages' names were *Tondros, Pay, Ni* who knows whether it was Russian or Armenian. I am quite sure my mom's side had Armenians. They had all blue eyes. Not that Kurds do not have but when you look at them you imagine the Balkans.

During the rebellions they deport people with huge black trains that used to transport animals. They do not know where they go. They end up in Adana, then put to jail and tortured. One of my grandpas is sent to Trace with her sister. They stay there a long time like prisoners. Then they grant two amnesties. With the first one they are allowed to get married but cannot marry with another Kurd it has to be from other folks. My grandma is from Thessaloniki but they are

Armenian revolutionary nationalist movements founded in diaspora. It is also stated in some resources that members of these Armenian organizations, who started looking for different strategies to achieve independence especially after the fiasco of the Treaty of Lausanne that did not make any mention of an independent Armenia including part of the lands in Eastern Anatolia, were involved in the foundation of *Xoybûn* to join forces with the Kurds against the Turkish state. While it is beyond dispute that *Xoybûn* was founded to serve in the Kurdish independence, also playing part in Ağrı riots that took place between the years 1926-1930, it is also relevant for the counter-historical accounts as it ties Kurds and Armenians, including their resistances, over the borders in places such as Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon as well as European cities as Paris where the opposition forces, whether Kurdish or Armenian, had to exile also setting light to the historical roots of current relations, especially in Syria. See for instance *Hoybûn örgütü ve Ağrı ayaklanması* (Hoybûn Organization and Ağrı Rebellion) (Alakom, 1998)

²³⁸Ağrı or Ararat rebellion that took place between 1926-1930 around Mount Ararat in the areas including Iranian territory where the Kurdish men escaped to save their lives. The rebellion was heavily suppressed by Turkish army bombardments.

²³⁹Zilan massacre took place during the Ararat rebellion in July 1930 killing thousands of Kurdish residents in the Zilan Valley of Turkey and became an important part of the Kurds historical memory of state violence.

forced to convert to Islam but since they continued their rites they were deported again. At those times the borders in Thrace were not that clear. They were deported to Anatolia. Then my grandma falls in love with my grandpa. They get married and have two children. I mean it is not like a normal marriage, no wedding of sorts, my grandpa takes her hand and brings her home. Then with the second amnesty they can have lands and go back to their villages. My grandpa buys a lot of lands. First he says to my grandma to wait when he is gone to see the lands and all but she refuses to stay alone with 2 children and the 3 on the way. Thinking that he might go and never come back. Then they also take back their original surname and change it from a Turkish one that they were given. My grandma learns Persian and Arabic in Edirne palace. She was a really cultured woman. Then they rebuild the village. Only a few of our family stays in Balıkesir [in Marmara region] or Amasya [Black sea region the north] where they were sent. Then my grandpa marries with two other women. Or he is forced to do so. You know these silly things. With two women from prominent families who lost their husbands in the massacres. My grandpa protests but...And once you are married you have to have relations with these women. So they have my other uncles and aunts. Of course my grandma resents. And never talks Kurdish again with my grandpa because she knows his weak point. But sometimes they used to speak in Greek with each other, switching to 'channel 2'. Of course, my grandpa stayed in Thrace for years. All those who were there know Romanian a little bit of Albanian or Bosnian. We speak Turkish this well because my grandma thought us. She also spoke Hebrew. And she also thought Turkish to my other grandmas in the village. And she died very late, around 120 or so. All his sons died before her either in tortures during September 12 [*coup d'état* of 1980] or in accidents.

I mean was it all good, no. There were also difficulties. In my dad's father's home, women could not eat in the same table with men. Or all the grandchildren had to get in line, in religious holidays or so, and kiss grandpa's hand. I never did though, I used to give him a kiss on the cheek. He was a dictator, unfair to his wives and treated them unequal. But he was not remorseless. He said he did these because he had to act according to the society. He was always superior to his wives, he was an elite and everyone had to serve him. But he was also insecure because he lost his family, his mom in 1930 massacre.

There used to be Armenians in our village as well. There might even be Assyrians, I am not sure. We used to be all Yezidi. You know *Serhat*²⁴⁰ region is Muslim since the last 120 years at best. All my uncles in Armenia are all Yezidis. My uncle used to tell me they drink vodka

²⁴⁰Serhat Region includes cities of Iğdır, Kars, Ardahan and Ağrı, in Eastern Turkey and is of importance as it is situated at a strategic place of passage to Iran, Nakhchivan, Georgia and Armenia.

every so often because it is cold there. And they used to say words in Russian. You know we are at the border so we have all the languages. I mean my grandma who was a Muslim used to swear an oath by the head of the sun, *ve rojahan*. Or the mountains, ‘Ser eve gilî dagî’, my mount Gilî be my witness. Gilî is mount Ağrı. Gilî means to bemoaning in Kurdish. So all the one’s whose wishes will not come true, the star-crossed, the forlorn, the one’s who won’t have kids go to that mountain. There is one small *Ağrı* and a big one and they are two sisters. Whatever happened to them, one day they ask God to turn them into stone. There is a tree at the mouth of a cave and every one tears a piece of their cloth and tie it there. They call it *Daracin giroke*. What I mean is nature’s language is still very present in the culture. Or for instance natural medicine. My aunt was a healer and passed it on to my mom. She did all sorts of things with plants and animals, like prepared potions with snake horns and stuff. Or they gave animal liver to kids who wet themselves or women who had uterine problems. Then I learned that it had to do with strengthening the spinal chord. I mean there is a scientific explanation to it but they did not need them to know they worked. Or the tattoos, for example, are against the evil eye, because people stare more at your tattoos or the specific places on your body that are believed to be focal points of energy. Or there is a tree called *Kizvan*, the turpentine tree and they used its resin to cure bruises or blows so they won’t get infected. They learn this when they are beaten by their husbands. See these are forms of women’s self defense.

But on the other hand these women were also respected. For example there was a special room in the house and my grandma, my big aunt, the elder women of the family sat there and people came to kiss their hands. My aunt for example, in my tribe women cannot smoke in the presence of man, she did. Dare anyone say something! She used to sniff something we called *tiryak*, a sort of snuff that came from Syria or Iran. What I mean, they all made people accept them as women somehow. They also knew how to ride horses, play *cirit*²⁴¹, or use guns. That game is also some sort of gambling, who ever wins can take women from the other family. That is how one of my grandmas came to the family. I also learned to ride horses very well when I was back home.

On the other hand there were blood feuds, bride exchanges to end these or very young people dying. Or there is no divorcing in our tribe. Neither can you run away. They will kill you. For

²⁴¹*Cirit* is a traditional equestrian team sport played outdoors on horseback in which the objective is to score points by throwing a blunt wooden javelin at opposing team's horsemen. In Turkish myths of origin it is also an important symbol alluding to the Central Asian origins of the Turkic tribes although it is known to be a traditional game in Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan for instance. It was wholeheartedly adopted by the Ottoman cavalry in the 15th and 16th centuries and used to perfect their attacking and defensive skills.

example when I decided to run away and join the movement it was chaos. One of my uncle's still won't talk to me. My grandpa back then had offered to exchange me for a grandson so I would come back home and not stain the family honor. But more girls followed after me and joined. But it was really hard in our region to join the movement because it is also a really fascist region. A lot of MHP²⁴² Idealist Hearts, the Grey Wolves²⁴³ were founded there because there is a lot of Seljuk shrines. And you know they think they are the ancestors of the Turks. But they are not the natives of these lands. The Kurds, Armenians, Azeris are the locals.

Because of that during the September 12 period there was a lot of fights between the left and right-wing at school. There were the *Ala rizgari* and *Kawacilar*²⁴⁴. In our home for example we had a portrait of Atatürk with his uniform and all and on the other side a portrait of my dad. When the police came we switched to Atatürk. Because of the fear they had, the genocides and all. I grew up in an environment like this. But I also started asking questions. If God created us all why do we speak different languages or why do I speak a language at school and another one at home or why do they kill us because we are Kurdish. On the other hand, imagine when I want to go to the market they tailed me my younger brother because a girl cannot go outside alone. Or once visitors came and my grandma was alone at home. She wanted to cut a chicken for them. So he brought my little brother almost a baby and placed his hand on top of hers because if a women cuts meat it is *haram*. Or there was a girl in my class, we used to sit side by side. His father was gendarmerie but they were not Turkish either. You could tell from their outlook. Anyways, once she came to our house and heard us speak another language and told her parents. Then I went to their house and incidentally I said I was Kurdish. She told me to get the hell out of their house. Although his dad got angry and apologized. We never spoke again.

My grandma used to have tapes of *dengbêj*, like *Koma Berxwedan*. She used to cry listening to them and hide them underground. She talked about Kemal [Pir] who resisted in prison and starved himself to death, Mazlum who was student and the state tortured him so he burnt himself. My uncle also told me about the philosophers and my grandpa had to hide his books at that time. He told me not to talk my uncle because he was a communist. That is how I got astray (laughs). Then the history repeated itself in our village. There were a few Azeri in the

²⁴²The Nationalist Movement Party is a far-right ultra-nationalist party in Turkey

²⁴³ Officially known as Idealist Hearths (*Ülkü Ocakları, tr*) is a far-right and neo-fascist organization and movement affiliated with MHP characterized as its paramilitary or militant wing.

²⁴⁴Ala Rizgari (1979) and Kawa (1978) are two of the Kurdish left-wing groups that appeared right before the 1980's coup d'état and did not grow beyond collectives publishing pamphlets and magazines.

village and during *Evren's*²⁴⁵ period they placed Kyrgyz Turcomans in the village but the villagers did not let their children go to our schools. That is also ignorance. You imagine. Women started gossiping about the Kyrgyz women. That is also Othering. But in the end it is the women who suffer. State opened special schools for them later on and gave them citizenship. Some of them became village guards. The state's policy is always the same...

LH 2 Do not you cry woman. Before you also came exiles but they all went back home

We saw nothing but suffering. My husband loved me but used to beat me as well. I also resisted when I was young of course...We had a really large family. I had 4 single brothers-in-law. I had to take care of them. Some got divorced some lost their wives and some never married. They used to treat me bad and my husband never said a thing. He said they were the elders of the house so they could do anything. There were no machines to do the housework then. We had to go to the river and wash the clothes for hours. Then the animals, the cattle, you had to clean and sweep the sheepfolds, feed them chaff. Eh! The donkey's tail neither got short nor got longer²⁴⁶. Do you get what I mean?

I learned Turkish in exile. In Kütahya [A city in the Aegean region]. It was really nice there. We lived there for 9 years. People treated us very well like humans. We used to spud the earth, mow the harvest do all sorts of things. But never forgot our language. In our own village people used to breed animals, and work the soil. When it snowed they went up the roofs to shovel off the snow if not the roofs collapsed. We did not have *Newroz*, but *heftmal*²⁴⁷. In March. The young people would go to ice cold water. Do not remind me those days now. People sacrificed animals, cooked them, made fires. One day in one of those they all shot them dead...We were really little when we were deported. My poor mom had to take care of us and my father. Before they had sheep and lambs and pastures. She did not know Turkish. One day we were boiling *bulgur*²⁴⁸ and drying the harvest. Then came an aunty passing by

²⁴⁵Kenan Evren was the general who led the 1980 military coup and became the seventh President of Turkey from 1980 to 1989. Although in 2014 he was convicted of crimes against the state, obstructing democracy, abolishing the parliament, and the constitution while he was not charged of unleashing a wave of arrests, torture and extrajudicial killings. He died at 97 before serving the sentence.

²⁴⁶A saying that means a situation or things never changed.

²⁴⁷ Heftmal is a celebration of the arrival of spring, similar to Newroz, around the time of the March equinox. The rituals might differ from place to place but generally certain types of food, usually 7, like grains, nuts, dried herbs and dried fruits are placed on plates, some are germinated, and released in the river, representing rebirth, fertility, the rise of the light against darkness, and old age with its characterizing patience, long life and the wisdom. And prayers are said for the forces of nature. Heftmal is very much similar to Newroz celebrated in many different geographies in the Middle East and yet somehow much less politicized and known.

²⁴⁸Cereal grain made from parboiled, cracked wheat

and said ‘Do not you cry woman. Before you also came exiles but they all went back home’. And so did we. But I was still single then. On the way [deportation] they cut all our hair so we would not get lice. My mom had cried. An old man asked my mom why she was crying and she said because they cut our hair. The he said ‘Look at my hair, my mustache and beard. I have nothing left. They are still young theirs will grow!. In exile they never treated us bad because we are Alevis. My youngest sister was born there. They were not like the Turks here [Europe] who can eat you alive like dogs. My mom and dad had to run away in 38 [Dersim Genocide]. My mom just had my sister a few days ago then. My dad tells him to leave the baby in the river so we could all together run and hide in the mountains. But my mom refuses. So my dad takes us and hides in the mountains. My mom told us all kinds of stories. She said the soldiers came in and saw her with the baby in her arms. She covered her face with a clean cloth. The soldiers lift the cloth, see that it is still a baby, then leave without saying anything. They had sacks of butter and *çökelek*²⁴⁹ covered up. The soldiers think they are people hiding so point their rifles to the sacks. My mom tells my grandma not to be scared. But what does she know..how can you not be. Then my mom opens up the sacks and shows them what is inside.

Another time come the soldiers to our village. Their sergeant major or whoever, the dog, tells my dad ‘come cut us a sheep or what have you and cook it for us. So we can eat it under this tree’. My dad runs to my uncles house, tells his daughter in law to give him bread. Then she also understands that the soldiers are there. Anyways, they cut a goat and soldiers eat it. Then my dad drains the leftover fat and pours it in a glass. One of my brothers, he drinks it in one go. The sergeant's eyes pop out. My dad says ‘don’t worry they are used to it’. So the sergeant tells my dad to send his young sons to the mountains, so they can run away and hide. My dad sends them to another village but in that village they chase them away saying that the soldiers would follow them and kill them all. Then my dad asks for a girl from another village for his son. But comes the ‘38. So the girl’s dad does not let my dad bring her to our village. My dad says she has to come because they paid her dowry, but they will not let. So my dad leaves his son there.

My uncle’s family also suffered a lot. Once her wife and another women from the village quarrel. This turns into a fight, my uncle beating that woman. That woman’s family my aunt. In the end the other women kills herself and they accuse my uncle and his wife. They end up in jail and they send my uncle to forced work in a mine. One day he goes out to smoke and

²⁴⁹A sort of cottage cheese.

sees the mine is going to collapse. He goes in and saves all but two of them. So they let him free. But in the meantime they leave their children to another women in the village. They all died. When we went to find out where they were one of them had a belly so big because he ate dirt and soil. There was hunger.

When I was young many civil servants and school teachers asked my hand for marriage but my mom did not accept because they were not Alevis. Other Kurds asked my mom for me, told her they would give their daughters to her sons in exchange, give her gold necklaces. Many wanted me because I spoke Turkish. But my mom did not except. I also had a *beşik kertmesi*²⁵⁰.

Then came the leftwing-rightwing stuff to the village. The kids were in high school. One finished and went [to Europe], his younger was still at school but they were fighting, there were gun fights. Then his older brother took him along. The rest of the people in the village also left one by one. The Uncle [his husband] also came here but he regretted a lot leaving it all and coming here. We had everything our own in the village, the butter the cheese, the wheat, the *bulgur*, do you think it is easy to buy them with money here[Europe]. We had fruit trees. The houses were from cut stone, they made a whole in the middle of the lower ones and fit in the upper ones. Not like the ones here. Those houses do not exits any more. They called it water stones (*su taşı*, stone carving) and were made by bricklayer masters. Our village did not stay empty. People went back and made houses again.

Thank God my sons came here [Europe]. They studied and sent their kids to school. My grand kids will have a good life because they came to the big cities, studied and married to people the love. And they will not let anyone beat them. My sons take me to travel and see places here. We went to Germany. I saw Switzerland, France. I have family there. Thank heavens for these days. I leave these candles for the dead every week on Thursday night for Friday. We also leave food for them. Or you eat something and pray for them.

LH 3 When I had to change my hideout every night, my identity, I realized I could live anywhere and I could do anything. the place does not matter, all I need is this ideology

Because of my childhood I was an obstinate child. But I would call it a family character. In my family women are dominant. Although everything was consulted to my dad, the last

²⁵⁰Literally means betrothed in the cradle. This was when families used promise their babies in marriage the moment they were born.

decision came from my mom. She was the hidden authority and if she did not consent nothing could be done. My sisters were kind of passive but I did what I wanted. For instance if my mom told me I could not go out I had to. It started a bit like this but actually I think it has to do with our family's situation, to be a Kurdish family. So this tradition of resistance comes from this. In the Turkish metropolises you suffer othering. Or as a child your friend circle is kind of restricted. Either they have to be from your own people, or race or they are the other kids who suffer othering just like you. Maybe because of this I used to beat a lot of my friends when we played in the streets. I used to play with marbles...you know there was also this idea of being a girl. What kind of a girl is that? I did not like to play with dolls, maybe because my sisters did so and that is why I refused. I used to play football with my brothers when they had games. But when you do these you are also marginalized. This is also a kind of violence. A girl cannot do this, cannot wear that. I hated wearing skirts for example. When my mom bought me skirts I wore them once only for special days and I would definitely do something bad to it later. Then there is the political identity of the family. When the family got scattered all around. Because of my brother. The police used to raid our house all the time. There you also meet the state's real thing...you see it in your childhood. For example when you are 12 or 10 you wake up and see men inside your house with huge boots and guns in their hands standing over you. My teachers were also bad to me. For example my primary school teacher who used to beat the kids. Or better say the Kurdish kids or the kids who could not speak fluent Turkish. I went to school in Istanbul. I think I was assimilated very well by her, a Kurdish woman from Bingöl assimilated me. Armenians and Rums lived in our neighborhood, and us the Kurds. My friends were either my cousins or them. That is why I did not learn Kurdish that well. Also it was forbidden in our house to speak Turkish because of what my mom went through. Then I also left school. All the state institutions represented violence for me, even today. Then in the 90s when my brother fell martyr the whole family fell apart. My father had already left, then followed my mom. And when my sister's husband was killed she went to Germany. My other sister was wanted by the police so she left as well. And I was all alone at 13. So I inherited the police interrogations from my family. The first time I was detained they took me to Gayrettepe. Then the Vatan street had not been opened yet. They used to say that was a professional torture chamber, that no one survived. Ahmet Kaya and all that are also things I carry along from those days. Every time I listen to him it takes me somewhere else. To my childhood, to those times that I did not sleep when my mom told me to do.

My rejections started there. As they told me Kurds did not exist then I thought I also did not have to acknowledge him, so the Turks did not exist either. In terms of woman-man relations, I startle when a man I don't like touches me, it creates some kind of repulsion. This has to do with my contact with the state. I always keep saying that we are a generation that hate man before getting to know man and the reason is all these detentions, the man you get to know there, what they do to you. You see even someone screaming at you can create these rejections in your life. For example I had a boyfriend before, and after the detentions I left him. I mean there is also a kind of violence there. The love you live is what the system teaches you. You can only have a tea, a coffee with him when he wants, you go through emotional violence and so on. So women is never the subject of the affair. But women also use violence in some aspects and that is much more dangerous. Women can be much more cruel to other women. Even in the arts scene for instance, like stealing your role, trying to oust you.

Or when you think the different classes in Turkey, the Turks are superior, live more comfortably and the Kurds are more the other, they cannot express themselves and even for these reasons other women can assert pressure on you and you pull yourself back. I mean it is easier to stand up to man but to woman you cannot do so much. But now we are trying to create a different identity for women. New models. But you should also look back to some stuff from the past. For example our moms' *leçek*²⁵¹, you cannot even find it anymore because now there is Emine Erdoğan...the way women tie their hair and put their veil is the same. But instead why not go back to the natural, the *sürme*²⁵², the tattoos like my grandma used to have. She had a star right here on her face next to her eye. Or how women used to dress up in Botan region in the old times. You see the low-cut they had but it was so natural and the *heft renk* (seven colors) they used to tie to their head like the rainbow. There was this TV series, 3-4 year ago, they took our traditional dresses, mixed them up with the dresses of women in the Ottoman *harem* and now everyone has those dresses with large sleeves...This is also another way of erasing your identity. They take your culture, turn it into a freak of nature and give it back to you. And make you accept this as part of your identity. Or now you dress up like an armor to protect yourself from the social violence. Frowning faces, always tense, hair tied up so tight or you go out in pants. Here there is also the cold (laughs). Then you start contradicting yourself. You ask yourself why you are using the same violence against yourself that is already out there. Sometimes here I feel stuck in two cultures...what I mean is going

²⁵¹Traditional white scarves of elder women.

²⁵²Natural eye liner

back to your own nature, helps you realize who you really are and gives you back your self-confidence. Then you are able to stand against the violence.

Violence exist even in our environments and assemblies here that is supposed to be much more democratic. But at some point you say these people are the most honest ones in this system. Even here women's suggestions or social perspectives, the political analyses they make can become a subject of dispute but when men say something no questions are asked. Or they stigmatize you as 'feminist'. Then you see their reactions outside this space, you see they treat you different, even the tone of his greeting changes. Or they undervalue your co-president. Who are you to tell me what to do where to go when I have a female representative there? This a strategy to pacify you or disqualify you or try to pretend as if you are doing nothing there. If you are not conscious of your representative power then what is the difference between ours and the European democracy. Then its only sanctimonious. The point is that women need to put their minds to it and act decisively. If you decide you can build a women's village, like Jinwar in Rojava, right here, you can even build a city, a country of women.

Here I used to go to school and one that the professors asked everyone to bring their *drapeux* [fr.] and talk about their country. I took all our flags, you see, the YPJ Star, PYD, KJK....what have you. It is a confederal system of course there was a lot of flags. And I told them that our system is not like theirs. That our women have everything and an army. Of course the professor was shocked. I mean of course here as well there were women in the French Revolution but not like an army. She was so interested that she even proposed to give me private lessons. She told me that she could not believe her ears, and asked me how women could fight against the tanks and cannon balls and survive in the mountains. I told her women can do it if they want because they have such a power. Imagine, if they can give birth. As far as I am told the labor pain is unbearable. If Kurdish women can give birth to 5, to 10 kids...I mean you only need to convince yourself. Then you can create liberated areas even here. In fact there are some. For example there is this self-managed, self-sufficient ecological village here. I stayed there for a while and I was even thinking to move there....So it means we can do anything from economy to gardens or whatever. We need to get over our own limits. I mean for me it does not matter where. When I had to change my hideout every night, my identity, I realized I could live anywhere and I could do anything. The place does not matter, all I need is this ideology.

This does not mean that man is all a 'wasteland'. But once you are born this system creates a difference even in colors or the toys you play with. Do you think our mothers in the villages cared if their kids had pink, blue or red cloths. They dressed them up with whatever they could find. In fact in our village you don't cut a baby's hair until 1 year old, girl or boy. And they both wear loose robes. But once with the migrations to metropolis in the 90s things change. In our tradition for example boys wear an earring on their left ears, it is a tribal symbol. We are Yezidis. They come from Shengal and build a house at the foothills of a mountain. Of course they were running away from genocide. After the 90s this earring disappeared. When we went to the village my grandma never put up a fire with water. Or she never performed prayers 5 times a day but prayed to the sun. I used to think my grandma did not do so like my mom because she could not sit down and stand up that easily...Later on I found out. But in the village we did not have a mosque but all the houses had temples underneath the houses. They were all connected to each other. Of course the state found out and burned down the village. Before, first they built a mosque. I thought it was such a cursed mosque and that is why all this happened to our village. I mean man also get corrupted with urbanization or with the state. Because in the collective life he is not like that. But once he realizes his power then he gets corrupted. He becomes even worse than a marshland.

So, what does revolution mean in these conditions. It means being able to drink up water that is not contaminated for example. Or free women who can sing in their own language. I want to build up a coliseum at the foothills of our village only for women. Then I want to repair my dad's watermill. Everything will be ecological. It is possible because our village has been evacuated 20 years ago and no one lived there since. The revolution will be for the women. They will find themselves. And maybe they will not even want to remember what they go through today. I mean I really feel sorry for our women here. Men say we brought you from your villages, bought you houses, cars and so on but this is another kind of slavery. For example the women in the villages were free women, 10 of them next to the village fountain, taking a bath, washing the cloths. These were done collectively. They sang there, danced there. They cook in cauldrons but all together. I told my brother's wife that hers was no life even though she came from her village to Paris. As if she lives, tastes anything of Paris. She lives in a three-story house but takes her three times more to clean it. Has to take care of 3, 5 kids of my brother, take them to school. My brother says he bought her a car. As if he bought it not to get rid of his tasks. Now he can tell her to go get the kids, do the shopping. She has to work until 11-12 at night. He comes, the food is ready, leaves his socks behind the door not

even in the laundry basket or the machine. So when you look at women they miss the village life. If women withdraw from this struggle there is no revolution. Or if she stays in man's shadow, there will not be any change. If our women cannot have their own voice the ideology of this organization will fall short.

I came here more than 10 years ago but my dreams are still about where I came from. Here I am never satisfied with what I do, with my work with women. Or I feel like I have to show more effort, do more, especially for women. Now if I did not have to work I would do so much more. I would dream together with women, I would give them new hopes, I would try to show them how nonsensical is shopping. I would ask them what they are looking for in the market. It is really weird, the time here is never enough. I work 4 hours a day, then I take care of my mom, let's say I spend 6 hours a day with chores but the rest is never enough for all I want to do. There is also the fear of women regaining their power in these systems. There are also feminist organizations here but the state tells them their limits, only lets them act within those. I call these women 'spring fighters'. There were manifestations for the new labor law. The majority was women but they were so resistless that they left in a month to go to summer holidays. Why do not you stay sister, so that you can protect your rights? Of course the law was passed when there was no one around. I mean you already see that you don't receive the same salary, you do not receive the same subsidies. The parental leave is not the same for man and women. It came to such a point that now the bosses can fire anyone anytime. This law in fact meant a direct intervention in women's lives...Then you question whether these women really ask for something. And they get surprise when they see us. She tells me, you do it and I will support you. Do not support me, let's do it together. I want to triumph with women. Scream the victory, yell together with women. I can share things with men but I will live and experience with women. They do not understand this. For example they asked us why we have the posters of Öcalan in an 8th of March. I told them that the philosophical books they read, the ones about democracy, women's liberation are written by him. It is not a common man that is shaped by a state mentality. Or why do not you question your own boyfriend then. Does he resist with you? Is he in the struggle? My issue is not to be able to hold his hand freely in the streets, or have a glass of wine. My partner has to fight next to me. Sometimes I ask myself how these women see us. Then they tell us that they will support us. I mean this is where the state finds its support as well. Creating women who will only help others. As a matter of courtesy. But will not give up privileges. Who cares if you have a state if you do not have soil to step on, all is black like mud from pesticides, if you do not have clean air, if

everything you eat is full of plastic, if what you eat tastes like medicine, if there is no clean water. A state, a man, a dead earth.

LH 4 Revolution is not only liberating places, it is about freedom. Like once you taste a delicious meal. You will not leave it

My life, I mean I have always been a person who worked since childhood selling *çekirdek*²⁵³, sweets in Diyarbakır. My understanding of labor, the struggle to make a living...You begin life like this. Both as a little girl or a women if we want to talk about how to keep your head above water with all its contradictions we need to go back to childhood. Of course back then you do not have the gender consciousness or you do not go around saying I am a revolutionary fighting for gender equality but these are things that life brings you. I have never forgotten what I have been through in my childhood, I have always done something, produced. I was a restless child. Our economic situation was not that good either, I mean not that it was so bad either. All the kids sell hankies or other stuff for obligation. When I was selling *çekirdek* I used to put half of it in the fridge to eat it at night when we were watching movies (laughs). I sold sweets, Turkish delights, ice. Back then you would not keep the money, you would hand it all to your mother, and she would give you a penny as pocket money. My mom used to say that she was losing money because I was eating it all (laughs). Of course you are a kid you want to eat. I only rode the carousel once or twice in my life. Only after 18 I rode a swing carousel. We did not have those dolls and toys. But I am glad we didn't because the we could create things. For example you would find a plastic doll without arms and you would but two sticks to it, maybe you also did it. Or we used to collect the crown of eggplants, bell peppers, line them up and play greengrocer's. Or made money folding the wraps of cigarette packs. And when someone asked for eggplants we would give them those. Back then we did not need it but you dream about having dolls and teddy bears. Now I have a house full of teddy bears maybe it has to do with this. But it also helps your brain to develop, you try creating things. I used to play grocery's with my sisters every night. Or name-city²⁵⁴. And these make you think. Even when we were in bed one would hum a melody and we tried to guess the song. In those times it was not like today, every child in his/her own room with their *handy*. Another thing that marked my life was that our family thought us being honest. I mean you could not lie in my house. My mom used to beat us. We

²⁵³Sunflower, pumpkin or in Kurdish are more commonly watermelon seeds enjoyed by almost everyone especially hanging around with friends and family.

²⁵⁴The name for the children's game Name-Place-Animal-Thing is called in Turkey

did not see our father that much because he worked away from home, as a truck driver. My mom did not know Turkish back then. When my sister was born they moved from the village to the city center. When I started primary school once there was a PTA meeting or I do not remember exactly maybe my mom just came to school one day to ask for me. Anyhow, my teacher was talking and I was translating to my mom. She said, “She is naughty, she does not stay put, runs around all the times, does not concentrate on the class”. My mom asked, ‘*Muallim çi di beji?*’, what is the teacher saying? I said, ‘She says I am lazy’. Of course my mom cuffed me one. I realized year later that I could have lied and tricked my mom saying that my teacher was telling her how clever I was but I did not. But when I think of it I live the way I acted. Then my mom learned Turkish. Then in the junior and senior high I had certain...I was a wannabe or misunderstood certain things. Being ashamed of my family, I lived all that. My mom did not know Turkish. We [the Kurds] keep saying this a lot but when I was a teen I was ashamed of my mom. Now she knows broken Turkish but can talk to people. Her clothes...I don’t know what you have in mind is something modern. Or what you were offered was this. I don't know, being a *gundi*²⁵⁵, being from the country folk, you are ashamed of it. You think, my family my social setting...the high society...you lived what modernism and capitalism created. I also did. Then I realized and started relating to my mom in a more positive way, tried to be friends with her. And I did like her. I would take her arm when we went to shopping and started telling her personal stuff. And sometime I would especially take her with me when I wanted to buy clothes so she would haggle. But before I was ashamed when she did that, I would tell her that she was making a fool of us. These contradictions, the estrangement I felt for my own kind. But I would always think of why we were treated like this, the women. But it was not an ideological consciousness. But I always asked so what if we are girls? But we always talked about being a tomboy. It was some sort of pride. For example you felt proud when your dad said his daughter is like a boy. Because womanhood is seen as something diminutive, weak but when you are like a man you are fearless, brave and you can do anything, you can create, you are free and independent. Like, because they think freedom is something economic and that is why I was inclined to work more. I was working and going to a painting class at the same time. I was going to be an art teacher. I was also going to folklore classes and senior high and I also had to go to cram school as I had the university exam coming. And I was paying for that because of our economic situation. I worked until the day I left home. The morning after my last day of work I called my boss and told him that I was not going anymore and I was going to Istanbul. Until

²⁵⁵A word that means countryman in Kurdish but used often derogatory to say a hillbilly

the last moment...I had to come home really late some days. I did not see my mom for a week in the same house, she told me she was going to kill me and said it was enough. But I really did not have time, sometimes even when I had time I had to go to cram school because you have to enter university. But I worked for my own needs then, of course I helped my family as well but it was more for the cram school and the art material was really expensive as well. I did not do all this to fill in time but more because I had to. Sometimes I mocked saying that I did not even have time to prepare my dowry. Neither my mom had time. Luckily I did not, I mean when you think in the classical sense. They always told me that I was like a man, that I was always out there in the streets. But if a man can do something, so can I, why not? But once you are away you realize that your old ways of thinking about being free or labor or power are not really true. There were times I felt about the way I used to think but now I am glad that it was that way because now I understand certain things. I never said 'if only' in my life even when I lost my sight after this accident. Because when you say if only you are not coming up with a solution.

I did not go to university, the results came after I had left home. When I first joined I was really surprised because there was this mentality that the system created, the people who went to university are knowledgeable, the rest is ignorant. You go there with this mentality and you feel yourself ignorant when you look around. You realize you can not put together two words. But there were people who could discuss so many things and they never went to school. It was one of the things that surprised me a lot. So the School of Hard Knocks is a really different thing. That is, imagine a shepherd, if we want to say it in the system's vocabulary, can speak in a really profound way compared to all the professors and what not. So the revolution is not only liberating places. Before we used to say 'after the revolution', now this has also changed. The revolution never ends, you learn that revolution is a way of life. What you change in your own personality is revolution. I mean if you look at life everyday is different than the other. We keep saying the capitalist system, like a riddle, but what it wants to create is individualism. And what we are against, all the wars we are waging has to do with this. The democratic modernity we want to create is to change people, to show them they are human beings, that there is an alternative life. I don't know, once you taste freedom...you see once you taste a delicious meal you will not leave it. It becomes one of your favorites. You tasted it once, you realized it. What this system creates is to turn people into robots so they cannot taste or realize. As I was telling you before when we were chatting, they are like robots with clothes on here [Europe]. They can turn a deaf ear to other people with a remote control.

So freedom is a bit like this, realizing the moment. There is no fixed definition, a formula but it is to be able to decide at the right moment. Like, you need to do something, either you do it at that moment or not. Like an action. Creating a society for everyone to be themselves, to be able to express themselves. All this struggle is for that. Otherwise, when you see things from the system's point of view, I am an individual, I can go out anytime I want, I come back whenever I like, I am free in whatever I want to do. But the point is not that. If my community still cannot use their own language, if I cannot express myself without second thoughts, if a people cannot live on their own soil...Freedom is the moment we have all this. But one needs to criticize her/himself first. To accuse someone of being cold-hearted I need to check myself first. The revolution starts in you. That is what we the Kurdish women are doing. Our best gain is that we do not ask for it but take it. This is our right. They do not give it to you when you ask for it anyways. This is what makes us Kurdish women strong. You tell yourself that the best vengeance from this system is to be free. When you realize the gender difference is not natural but created by this system you starts struggling. I used to say ' I wish I was born as a boy' but once I was in the movement I realized this was not god-given. And once you realize you tell yourself that you need to struggle more. And sometimes you even say 'I would be better off if I had not realized it' (laughs). My mom also changed when I joined the movement. They take their strength from you now. They know you are against any kind of injustice. Even my grandma who used to be beaten a lot now can say jokingly to my grandpa that she will tell it to me if he does anything wrong. Waiting someone else to change things for you instead of being a forerunner makes you stay the same. But when someone can open up the way, encourage you then you see there is many more to follow.

LH 5 Reading was to be able to understand life, for the future and I think it was something that the male-dominance marked in my mind

If I want to tell you about my old life I can tell you I had a really lonely childhood. I did not have toys neither did I go to school. But I went to the university of life. A school of life for a Kurdish women in a Kurdish society. Because my family was not that much...I grew up in a village. I learned a lot growing up there. The union with land, the crops the production, these teach you a lot. But I never had friends because I did not go out that much. I used to go to school and come back. I wanted to read a lot, books. In life I liked the most three things. First, reading. Second, medicine, giving shots, and third shooting with guns. My mom was really

sick she always had to get shots and I thought I could learn it and do it for my mom. Reading was to be able to understand life, for the future and I think it was something that the male-dominance marked in my mind. I used to go to school with my older brother, then he said he would not go to school if I did. Then I left school although I wanted to improve it. That is, my brother did not let me. As for medicine, there was a nurse she wanted to teach me a lot but then my mom did not let me, she told me I could kill someone accidentally. And the last one, in my brother's wedding they were shooting in the air, the nurse also wanted to teach me that. I also wanted to learn but my mom again said I could kill someone and did not let me. I was the only girl among the five classes at school [when primary education was 5 years in Turkey]. There was another girl, she was very poor. I always told her that my dad could buy her everything so she could come to school and keep me company so I would not be alone. But she would not come saying that she did not have a bag, a pencil, a notebook. I told her my dad could, this is when I was in a 1st or 2nd grader. Then I left school. We had a nice garden. I used to take my radio... I loved listening to the radio, I liked to listen the series on BBC radio. I used to put it on my ear and listen to it until it was out of battery. I used to to handwork at the garden, it was really nice. We planted eggplants, tomatoes, we had fruit trees. I stayed there for hours with my radio. Then started the family stuff...you reached the age to get married and so on. I did not want it even though it was my uncle's son. I used to say, 'What am I going to do getting married, this life is better. I am plating things, I have my mother, my father, my siblings, my radio, that's enough. I do not need to get married'. I objected but my family said no. Then I got married. He grew up in the city. My uncle's wife had died and I went to offer condolences. And I never came back home. So there was no wedding or nothing. There were four kids left, one four years- old, the other in 1st grade, the other in 3rd and so on. And I was 17 or 18, the same age as the oldest one. I had to take care of them. Then we became parents. Let me tell you, I was never asked for my wedding as a Kurdish woman. Then my daughter was born. So five kids in total. You are also a kid yourself, you are not aware of anything. But you have to do these things. You grew up in a village, you are not that conscious, how can you be? When my daughter was six months old, our friend [his husband] was at university anyways...He was in the movement, actively. The comrades used to come to our house. And I wanted to learn as well. But there were no radios nor TV, so you try to listen to them. I can say that I took my first schooling from him. Even tough there were five kids, I did not want to stay the same, I was looking for another life, a different one. I wanted to learn things. But I did not have time neither to read nor to rest. One day he brought a TV and said you listen to this until I come back home and then you tell me all you heard so we can discuss.

I started my schooling like this. So when my daughter was six, he went into prison. Then I started going to the visits but only one year later because I needed to take care of the kids. You feel a lot of sorrow and you do not understand much. So you struggle but you need to stand strong. So you can also learn from these sorrows, you can create other kind of relations with other people. But on the other side there are the family pressures, the feudal pride...they cast another role to women. This made me resist. I learned a lot coming and going to prison. I owe my affiliation with this movement to those days of prison and marriage. In a way, I did not want to get married but I learned a lot through it. The first people I met there were Paramaz, Kemal, Hayri²⁵⁶. When they paid the price with their lives in prison... it became a place of education. Every time we went there the whole day we talked about how to form different relationships, we discussed a lot. Not only for me but for the Kurdish people. The families who went there told their kids to give in so they could come back home because they were not really aware of what was going on. They raise their kids day and night with a lot of hardship then these kids are tortured with electricity, beaten with clubs. Because, they [the families] were not aware of why Kurdish people had to go through all this slavery and hardship. This is 1979-80. So it was the beginning of the struggle, people did not know that much. This is the reality. The kids in prison said they would never give in, not in death nor under torture. So they showed the people what it means to resist. This resistance was knit knot by knot and that is how people were brought up, how they improved. It was not easy. Some came back home and were shot at the door of their homes. The education in prisons changed women a lot. We grew up in this, thinking how we could help those people, the prisoners. I spent ten years like this. I inherited this from them. We were not that conscious. The visits were five minutes but you were exhausted until you got in. Let alone being able to speak in Kurdish you could not ask anything else than 'How Are You?'. The soldiers are by your side anyways. Once I went there with my father and uncle. A feudal Kurdish women cannot take off her headscarf. But it started sliding off my head and I tried to put it back three times. The soldier asked me if I was trying to pass on a message. Our grandma was seventy years old, she did not know any

²⁵⁶Kemal Pir and Hayri Durmuş were members of the founding committee of PKK who died during a hunger strike in 1982 to protest the tortures and inhumane conditions at the notorious Diyarbakir prison that became a Martial Law Military Prison after the coup d'état of 1980. Kemal Pir was a Marxist Leninist revolutionary of Turkish origin from the North of Turkey and was known as 'Laz Kemal' and is a symbol of internationalist revolutionary spirit cited as a proof that ethnicity does not divide the people with shared ideals. Curiously, the narrator also cites Paramaz (Madteos Sarkisyan), an Armenian Marxist revolutionary, referred as the theoretician of the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party, hang in 1915 at Beyazıt Square in İstanbul. So there is no chance that the narrator met him personally. Though the reference to his name means that revolutionaries from different backgrounds do take part in the historical memory of the Kurdish revolution. I find it interesting to note here that Paramaz was also an important internationalist figure who lived in Iran for a long time and carried out activities in Van, at the Iranian border, a symbolic place for Armenians who once used to share the same geography with the Kurds.

Turkish so they did not let her talk to him. All these things we lived through you cannot fit it in books...For the first time they made an open visit on 23rd of April²⁵⁷ for the kids. And this was after many hunger strikes after many had died. So I took my daughter but she was only one and a half **or two** years old. So I asked the soldier at the entrance if he could help, because she did not know his father, she had never seen him before. The soldier was also moved so he took her and left her in the visit hall. All the kids run to their parents but ours stand there in the middle crying because she cannot find her father. Then she starts asking his father, crying his name and only then his father finds her. He also said later on he did not recognize his daughter but only heard his name. Our kids grow up like this. Now they stand in front of tanks and cannons but they grew up like this. Imagine what kind of psychology these kids will have in the future. Generations of them. This kind of life turns you into steel. That is how we women learned about the resistance, in hunger strikes, marching to Ankara. Back then no one knew how to do these, we learned along the way. If the people did not react all these people would die in hunger strikes. So you are forced to do something. But if the kids were not this determined, moms would not improve themselves this much either. Of course they would do something but they would have never gained this consciousness. The most important thing is to gain conscious as a women yourself. In the old days it was only men but now women outdid them. We changed with resistance as women. The second time they caught him they tortured him so much that I could not recognize him. He was delirious, he did not know what he was saying. His chin was punctured, all his teeth were broken. His cell mates thought he was dead. He came out a year later and fell martyr. Then you become stronger, you want to take revenge. What kind of revenge, that is by gaining consciousness, I am not talking about an armed, hand-to-hand fight. And by spreading this consciousness to the others, in your relationships. He was just one of many. In hunger strikes, in resistances, in tortures...or the state made them disappear and for years you heard nothing. After that I gave myself three years to think. My daughter also finished school. And I decided to actively take part or I would go mad or kill myself. Just like many unconscious Kurdish women. You try [suicide] and you fail. Like many women who come to a dead end, who cannot find the

²⁵⁷23 April 1920 was the foundation of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and quite symbolically dedicated to the children, not only of the nation but of the world, by Atatürk. Today it is an official holiday celebrated as the National Sovereignty and Children's Day in Turkey during which all the kids participate in events, performances and parades. As one can imagine, on that day the streets and public spaces adorned with national flags and marches are played all day long alongside the anthem. So it is not hard to imagine that for Kurdish kids it is not an event that they would like to take part voluntarily. During the last few years it became somewhat a controversial date become the subject of discussion on the Republic and the 'threats against it', not only referring to the enemies within such as the Kurds but also pointing the finger at the current government, more specifically the president Erdoğan, and the religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism seen as the biggest threat to the secular democracy.

strength, you think if I cannot fight with the others I can only have control over myself. Many Kurdish women go through this... Then I told my daughter and she was so happy. But my family, they were conservative, so they think you are a young daughter in law, how can you leave alone to another country, you do not speak any other language. They ask you if they cannot take care of you and all. But I said if I stay I was going to fade away. Even when I was not able to decide on my own wedding, joining this movement was my only decision. So I resisted the family and joined together with my daughter. Being born from my mom was the first one, and in this movement I was born again. Because before that I never really existed. When I joined I had 30 years old but my hair was white all over. You would not believe but after a while it started growing black again. You need to start over. To build up a building from zero. And as a woman when you look back in history you see that men always cut one of your arms. The state, the family, the brother, even the brother, and your own son cuts that arm. Even though some men do not accept, a woman is much more than an arm. Now women are not trying to cut of men's arms but trying to bring out the best in him. I mean you share a life. Women do not bring the kids from their families' homes obviously. So you realize the women's question is not only a problem of women but of everyone.

LH 6 Now I feel like I am on an open highway, there is nothing to stop me and I am running towards freedom, running and running

We came here at the end of the 80s. My then-husband was from Dev-Yol²⁵⁸. His workplace was raided everyday by the police. Not because he was in the front line in manifestations and things but just because he was a sympathizer. Economically we were also devastated. He left first, then I followed. Until then he was from Dev-Yol but his patriotic awareness outweighed, he sympathized with the movement. Also, there was almost no Dev-Yol left. We came here then brought the kids. Our villages in Dersim were all evacuated. So we asked asylum here. Once the paperwork was resolved we started taking part in the social and political work here.

²⁵⁸Dev-Yol (Devrimci Yol, the Revolutionary Path) was part of the Turkish Marxist-Leninist revolutionary political movement of the 1970s, founded on 1977. The organization evolved from a small group of veteran revolutionaries and radical students into a mass movement over just a couple of years. By the end of the decade, Dev-Yol had recruited thousands of committed activists across Turkey, and also garnered substantial support among workers, peasants, teachers, petty civil servants, and the urban poor as well as trade unions and other professional institutions. With the military coup of the 1980, Dev-Yol was heavily attacked, members arrested and some had to flee the country. The organization could not pull itself together after that and PKK claimed to take over its legacy just like other revolutionary socialist organizations that preceded.

There are a lot of families who tell you that the *heval*²⁵⁹ used to come to their house. We learned it ourselves, investigated. We became PKK sympathizers when we came to Europe. No one came to my house to explain me things. I mean there was an armed struggle going on. Once Dev-Yol was over, the Turkish left-wing movements were all dispersed, my partner said ‘We are all Kurdish we all have to join the struggle but I cannot’, because he was always kind of moderate, he said you go first I will follow (laughs). Here I said immediately I would like to get involved in social and political work to the comrades and they told me that I needed to go through a brief training. So I did, we were trained in Kurdish history and I combined it with my own history of my tribe. My two sons also joined and the youngest supported on an intellectual level. The last one was my partner. We dragged him along. We said, you keep saying that you are a revolutionary, you keep telling us how to be one, but you do not do anything so either you come or we kick you out. He used to say that it was really hard to be a PKK sympathizer because it is a ‘party of martyrs’, it is emotionally hard and he could not bear it. Being a revolutionary is not easy, no matter the group you belong to. Dev-Yol when they started was the first one, the vanguards who mobilized the masses. But then the pioneers fell martyr, the rest was chewed up. The state destroyed them. Then the leader [Abdullah Öcalan] said he represented all, took over all the revolutionary fights. Apo was the only one surviving to look after. He says it himself, that they were his tutors, *Denizler; Mahirler*²⁶⁰. Likewise, I said I will take my place in this struggle in my own way, I will defend my own history. Did you hear for example how the ‘Girl with the Red Scarf’²⁶¹ tells how she met and join the movement, how she ended up in prison...she tells in such a way. We talk about the global revolution. The Turkish left said they could not rescue the Kurds because they had to rescue the whole world. Instead of rescuing the world, they would better have rescued their own history! Then they call us nationalists. Look at us now all our institutions are international now, the Women’s Foundation is all Turks, Germans, Dutch, French. There is a lot of women [international] who take refuge in our movement. And the other thing is to join

²⁵⁹Heval literally means friend in Kurdish but also used interchangeably as to mean comrade. The militants of PKK are referred as heval but it is also used commonly for almost anyone as a friendly appellation.

²⁶⁰Referring to Deniz Gezmiş one of the founding members of THKO (The People's Liberation Army of Turkey) hang executed by hanging on the 6 May 1972 along with Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan and Mahir Çayan the leader of THKP-C (People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey), killed by soldiers the same year. It is a general way to refer to the prominent revolutionary figures, mostly coming from student movements and took up a fight against imperialism, who became the constituents of the socialist political history and heritage in Turkey

²⁶¹Ayşe Deniz Karacagil, a revolutionary militant from MKLP (Marxist-Leninist Communist Party) who came to be known as the ‘Kırmızı Fularlı Kız’ (Girl with the Red Scarf) during the Gezi park protests, initially started to contest the urban development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park in 2013 but rapidly turning into almost 3 months of protests on a wide range of political issues and concerns ranging from the obstruction of overall freedom and democratic mechanisms to ecological concerns. Following the events Karacagil was charged with 98 years of prison. She went to Rojava to join the revolution and lost her life in 2017 fighting against the IS.

this movement consciously. I work with the mothers of the martyrs because I chose to do so. Some of them join just for the sake of it. Being a mother is not pulling our hair out at a corner, lamenting. Then why did your child joined this movement? Of course you suffer. With every martyr I feel like when my child died, they are all the same for me, I feel their pain in my heart and I embrace them all. Then maybe the suffering gets bigger but so does your heart. It is the only way to endure it. I made this room for them because on one hand I like my culture a lot, I like the rural culture. When my kids fell martyr I served time in prison. When I got out I could not live like a 'normal' mother, and I did not want it either. Anyways I first rejected the matrimonial life, the wife-husband relation, 20 years ago. I eliminated personal life. When your kids suffer, when you feel sorrow because of that, you do not see anything else. You do not care even if you have been in love for years. But you keep struggling in the same way they did. Then my family also fell apart, my youngest son and my husband were physically and emotionally wrecked. My friends said they need you, you can help them. And I said I could not live without the comrades and if they visited me everyday I would do so. They said OK your house will be the women's second headquarters. Once we moved to this house I made this room. I started hanging pictures of all the comrades. I wanted to commemorate all their memories. Then I started hanging up cultural items, handcrafts etc etc. I fell like I am with them when I enter that room, as if we are all together and they keep doing their meetings. I sit with them and we do meetings all together. When I sleep there I feel peaceful. When women comrades come visit they sleep there. I also put a wish-tree there. When I leave for a couple of days I trust the house to their care. Or when I go through heavy things I go to that room and cry out there. I laugh with them, tell them my stories. For me they are still alive. I learned my two sons died at the same time, but I continued working. Then someone told me '*Cejna we piroz be*' or in Turkish '*Gazan Mübarek olsun*'²⁶². This is what you would say in a Newroz or an important date but if they would tell me simply 'My Condolences', I would cry. I mean for us this does not come to an end with death, you have to pay tribute to what they have done, to their lives.

The first years we were here [Europe], comrades invited us all to 8 of March. I did not know anything about it. No one knew. Maybe some people from the Generation '68 but they also did not do anything on that day. This time it was all Kurdish women, may be 20-30 of them. But when they invited me I was not sure if our friend here [her husband] would let me go. Because in the old days when revolutionaries came to our house he would tell me to go in the

²⁶²"May your struggle be blessed!", a saying initially used to refer to the holy war but today can be used to refer to any kind of struggle or effort.

back room, he was jealous. I could not even give a kiss to my own brother when he came to visit. I asked him over and over and when he said yes I could not sleep that night. It was a small celebration, they cited poems, sang songs. Then there was a congress and they voted to chose the new board. I saw everyone raise hand and so did I. The friend who took me there asked me what I was doing. Then told me that I was new there and I could vote later on. I mean I used to see women in the Turkish left wing movements talk. Even though not that much, they said stuff. And I always wished to have a revolutionary life, to be able to talk like them. I never left the four walls that surrounded me. So I wanted their life. Everyone else wanted golden bracelets and stuff, I never wanted that. Back then revolution for me was women standing on their own two feet, knowing what they are doing, being respected in society. Women no more stayed at home 24 hours, like a pushover. My revolt was for that, you stay at home, in the kitchen all the time, and you have to respond to everyone else's needs as if you do not serve for nothing else. In the revolutionary movements they talked about the ideologically conscious women, who know how to sit with others, talk and discuss confidently. It called my attention. As I said there were no examples in my life but I felt the revolt in me. After I go married I started hearing more about the revolutionary women, I started reading certain books and hearing some of them talk. Then I would see my mom, my aunt, my uncle's wife and see how they are oppressed, set aside. You want a free life but you do not know exactly how to achieve it. And in my own house there was this so called revolutionary life. But it was not so I decided that I should do something. My father was a candidate from the Turkish Communist Workers' Party. Even before the Generation '68. When they started they did not say nothing about women. Maybe you have heard of Behice Boran, there were a few women but it seemed as if women knew nothing. Then when I got married we saw the *Deniz Gezmişler* on TV, we saw how they hang them. And we were very much touched. Then you start taking some steps. Now I feel like I am on an open highway, there is nothing to stop me and I am running towards freedom, running and running. I am living my childhood, my youth, write these all down as I tell you, I am living all my unfulfilled desires. I feel love. And it is not like this supposed love between two people. That is insignificant. I got married, see, in three months I was being beaten. I was an oppressed women, always afraid. When he would go to the other room I would keep thinking 'Is he going to come back and find an excuse to beat me up again?'. I was afraid to say a word to him. People tell me I was tongue-tied. Now no one can silence me. I am so sure of myself. I will never let anyone bring me under their yoke again. I believe in a bigger love. The marriages in our society, the 'home', is like the birds nests on top of poplar and willow trees.

Some shake with the wind, some bend and twist and others are left with nothing. Most of them fall down. These are small nests. The real nest, is when you have a home as a nation, a free country, that is the big family, the big home for us. So first people need to be free then they can free their country, their land. Women's freedom is tied to the country's to the land's freedom. It means being able to think freely first of all. For instance here in Europe we are surrounded, encircled by certain rules, we are not free at all. Or they work in a firm to make a living but they loose their life in reality. A free country means a land where people work collectively, live equally and share equally. It does not have to be where you were born, you can do it anywhere. Anywhere together with all the different people of that place, with all their colors.

LH 7 What they teach you or talk about is that the whole society is Sunnite, male dominant and you live like this until comes that moment like a drop

I could tell you a bit about my background. My family is not a family that was aware of Kurdish reality, nor did they recognized the existence of a Kurdistan. We are not Kurdish either. I am from inner Aegean region. We lived in a town where the most left wing people were *Karaoğlançı*²⁶³, imagine yourself. The Ankara-İzmir motorway divided the town in two. Ours was called the İslam neighborhood and the other side was the leftists'. Most people in our town were supporters of Adnan Menderes²⁶⁴, there used to be his posters in most of the houses, so they came from the Democratic Party tradition. So did my father. He was a fervent supporter of Demirel. He was in the municipal board, from DYP (True Path Party) and

²⁶³The designation used for the supporters of Bülent Ecevit, a journalist, poet and politician, who served as the secretary of CHP (The People's Republican Party) until he became the president in the 1970's. While in his first decades of political life he was known with his secular and 'center-left' stance, he indeed formed coalitions with islamist (MSP, National Salvation Party) and neoliberal (ANAP, Motherland Party) parties along his career. With the 1980's military coup he was incarcerated and suspended from active politics and once the ban was lifted he became the chairman of DSP (Democratic Left Party) and served as the deputy prime minister and later on as the prime minister in the 1990s. During his coalition with MSP, his coalition government undertook the so-called 'Cyprus Peace Operation', the military invasion of the island, ending in the partition of Cyprus along the UN-monitored Green Line, which still divides Cyprus, and the formation of a *de facto* autonomous Turkish Cypriot administration in the north. In the last years of his career he was more openly advocating a market economy and politically preferred to stay away from the 'dangerous' populations such as the Alevi, the Kurds or the far-left.

²⁶⁴ Adnan Menderes, was one of the founders of the DP (Democrat Party) in 1946, the biggest legal opposition to the founding party of the republic CHP. During his term as a prime minister Turkey was admitted to NATO, receiving Marshall Plan aids to mechanize agriculture and articulate Turkey's economy in the global capitalist market. He is believed to have orchestrated the Istanbul Pogrom of 1955, targeting Istanbul's Greek ethnic population and the last straw before its final elimination. His governments populist policies also led to the massive migration towards big cities, especially Istanbul and the boom of *gecekondu* (favelas), which would be a serious problem for the following years both urbanistically, politically and socially. Menderes was tried and hanged under the military junta after the 1960 coup d'état.

sometimes went to Ankara to meet the prime minister and so on. In my family, man ruled. My mother was an innocuous women. So if you ask me how I joined...Where I am from it is like this, I call it the 3K, *Kürt*, *Kızılbaş*, *Komunist* (Kurdish, Qizilbash Alevis, Communists) that people were allergic to. So you could not talk about these three things, these were taboos. I, for example, knew nothing about Alevis but our village had a name that meant dervish in the old times. I started investigation a little bit after joining the Kurdish struggle to find out if we had any other family roots that I did not know. Especially if you go back in history the Aegean region is *Rum* territory. But what they teach you or talk about is that the whole society is Sunnite, male dominant and you live like this. Our village is not *yörük*²⁶⁵ but my uncle in law's is, they are actually Alevis. But you go to their village, they have *oba*²⁶⁶ and on top of these you see flags of MHP. It is such a level of degeneration. Until a certain age I grew up with my grandfather and grandmother. When my mother and father came to join us I never took a liking to my father. And my search started like this. When you do not like the father you start looking for political views different than his. In junior high I thought wearing a veil, I was interested in religion for a really short while. Then I thought myself if I get veiled I cannot continue my studies, so I gave up. My father during the *coup d'état* of '80 sent his kids to Germany who were in the last year of senior high, so they would not get involved in the political turmoil of the time. In those years, there was a picture hanging on the wall in our house and I was told it was my aunt's son but they never told me why he died. One day women from the village came to visit and they were talking to each other. Then I heard his story, that he was a leftist. Before, they called the city where our village was part of 'little Russia'. So there was a propitious political base for the leftist movements. Back then my aunt's son was studying in another city, during the 80s and joined a left-wing organization. I don't know exactly which one but those women also did not know, but as the story goes this guy decides one day to leave the organization for family matters but then he was kidnapped and killed by his own fellows tortured in a mountain. And this is why my family was a bit against the leftists. Then I started wondering what kind of left-wing organization would

²⁶⁵ Yörük are nomadic Turcoman populations inhabiting Anatolia and partially the Balkans. Traditionally they are shepherds migrating seasonally between the mountains and the coast and living in tents. There are contradictory opinions about their origin, some sources asserting that they were among the Turkic tribes that moved to Anatolia from Iran during the XI century, their original homeland being Central Asia. Some historians regard the Yörük as closely related to the Turcoman tribes who came in large numbers after the battle of Malazgirt in 1071, but it is also likely that indigenous nomadic pastoral populations along the coast became Turkified and acquired Yörük identity. The nomadic lifestyle of various ethnic groups cause these populations to be categorized indifferently although in other research the *yörük* are considered to be different than the Turcoman or other nomadic ethnic groups. Today nomadic population is very diminished due to sedentarization or the destruction of the conditions that have been sustaining their lifestyle like the urbanization of grazing grounds and the enclosure of formerly common pasture lands.

²⁶⁶ Oba, large nomad tenets

torture and kill one of theirs just because he wanted to leave. So my interest for leftist history started like this but I had no one around to tell me a bit more, or guide me to search and learn. In high-school I started going to cram school, and there were some Kemalist-leftists who told me a little bit. Obviously equality and freedom are things that attract one's attention. Then I started reading a bit. But what I realized was that my aunt's son could not be killed by his fellows. And later on, I came to the conclusion that the state did it but I had nothing to prove it to my family. These are the years 1991-1992. In 1993 Sivas Genocide took place²⁶⁷. I started getting more and more interested and identified myself as left-wing but my family had no idea. Though they understood some things because I started rearing up or respond to their comments but they could not have tolerated it if they were sure of my affiliation. I thought to myself I would become a leftist in university. In fact it started against the male-domination in our house, my mother's situation, my sisters' marriages. My mother asked me why I was not like my sisters and had to stand up to my father. My father never laid a hand on my mother in my presence but I have heard stories. Just once he attempted and I held his hand and told him he would not dare. It was a shock for my father, I mean how can a daughter stand up to a father. The conflicts started a bit like this. Then I entered university and came with the idea that I was going to study and help the women of my family get separated from those man. If the problem was economic, I was there to solve it because I was studying. I thought my sisters could get divorced, my mother could come along and we would live together. The first day of school I met with one of my future comrades with whom I would join the movement. We were in the same faculty, the same class. We were quite different, she was always wearing black cloths, a lot of make up, fervent and a bit populist and I was quite. Then we became four, with other girls who stayed in the same residence. Our political views were similar. In those years there were a lot of different organizations, especially in the university environment, so they all tried to coax the juniors to join their movement. Then me and my friends decided we would listen to them all but would not join any of them until we are totally convinced. We bought all of their journals. I remember, in 1994, the journal *Özgür Gündem*²⁶⁸, was bombarded. Then the university cafeterias were divided in left-wing vs. right-

²⁶⁷Sivas Massacre (or the Madımak Massacre) took place targeting mostly Alevi intellectuals, writers and artists who were gathered at Madımak Hotel in Sivas for a commemoration of the 16th Century Ottoman folk poet, Pir Sultan Abdal, in 1993 killing 35 people. The day of the massacre a large crowd almost certainly supported by local government officials, surrounded the hotel, shouting Islamist and nationalist slogans, accusing the conference participants of being "unbelievers" and calling people to Jihad. The crowd destroyed the vehicles parked in front of the hotel, ransacked the interior of the building and set the hotel on fire. The only perpetrator imprisoned for taking part in the massacre was recently released with President Tayyip Erdoğan's authority in January 2020.

²⁶⁸Özgür Gündem (Free Agenda) is a daily newspaper being published both in Turkish and Kurdish and particularly know for its extensive coverage of the Kurdish issue. Because of this, it is regularly accused of

wing. And we used to sit with the leftists. And one day those [the Kurds] invited us to a demonstration and that is how we met them. First we only bought their journals. And what drew my attention the most was the Leader's [Öcalan] analyses on women. But of course I had a totally different idea of PKK and Öcalan back then. Then we went to a Newroz, which was pirate. It was in a small field all fenced around. The first time I went I did not have much of an idea, I went because the leftists were there. Later on, one those who were there came and talked to us in the cafeteria and told me that I was chanting *Biji Serok Apo!* (Long Live Leader Apo!) and I told him I would *never* chant for Apo. And told him that I would never go to their demonstrations if he ever told me that again. He said he was just joking and told us that they organized cultural events, folklore dances, organize dinners and so on. Two of us from the group were also Kurdish by the way. So we started frequenting their houses, seeing the books they were reading. I mean for me Kurdistan was something I did not know that much. For example the first time they told me about village burnings I cried and told them they were lying, that the state was evil but this was too much. I could not believe it. Then the more stories I heard from the people who lived there and read I started understanding some stuff. Then, thinking about my own life I also thought that there were a lot of things that my parents hid from me and I would not know any of these if I did not read. That is to say, the writings of the Leader really drew my attention. In his analyses I saw myself, I realized the way I was brought up and my insecurities. Women go pretty much through the same stuff..Then I continued reading things about women. As I said we bought all the journals but in the other ones it was more theoretical discussions, telling about socialism and Marxism but I saw how these found their own meaning in the lives of the patriots [Kurds]. They were also really warm and they always supported each other. And all in all if our starting point is the human being, the Woman...I mean in the other ones there was no mention of women. We used to discuss with the other ones as well. I used to tell them that they put everyone in the same equation but they insisted that the only salvation was socialism. That is why it was not that attractive for me. Of course among them there were a lot of honest people and there still is. But when you looked at the theory there was a huge difference. And likewise the two circles were very different. Me and my friends we were really curious and wanted to learn everything but we stood out among the other ones, because we were either from big cities or, I mean,

making PKK, and thus terrorist propaganda. The newspaper and the journalists have been constantly targeted and its offices have been attacked several times including bombings. Its editors and staff have frequently been arrested and prosecuted, resulting in multiple publication bans over the years. A short time after the 2016 military coup attempt in Turkey, the newspaper was shut down following a court order, and some journalists and editors were taken into custody, facing charges of membership of a terrorist organization" and undermining national unity.

from different cultures. So in the beginning some people suspected us, asking if we were planted by the state or if we were there looking for men. After a year we were part of the patriot circle but not that organized. Then some of us took more responsibility and we did change, you could see it clearly, physically as well. No more heavy make-ups, nail polish. What I mean we became modest. But it was not easy of course and you have a different reality in your own family. It was not an atmosphere that you could easily share your own thoughts. Of course I hid it as much as I could. But there were times that I revealed myself. Once there were hunger strikes in the prisons and we were going to the city in a public bus. Everyone is talking in the bus, you know the Turkish society whatever the state says it has to be true, it is such a submissive society, but no one really thinks for themselves, about what is going on or why people are protesting what they really want. And the people in the bus are saying “Let them die” or those kind of comments. Then I said ‘What do you think you are talking about?’. Of course everyone turned around and started accusing me of supporting the terrorist...Why do you learn stuff? To apply them in your own life. Especially after the death of *Heval Zilan*²⁶⁹...They published her picture at the back of a *Özgür Halk* and back then I had a boyfriend who was Kurdish and part of the movement. One day we were at home, all snuggled up, and there was the journal on the table. I felt like a double-dealer. I told myself, if I knew certain stuff and if I was not going to do them then why did I learn them. In the summers when I went back home I also felt it was totally different, the conversations were really different and when I would come back to the university it was another world. So I realized I could not live with two conflicting identities or in this system for all that matters. I also realized that my relation did not satisfy me emotionally. I saw we became more and more like what we were criticizing everyday, like those relationships in the analyses. You cannot rid yourself that much of those male-female identities. That friend [her boyfriend] was not that dominant but you know those moments like a drop. Maybe those were things that I struggled for a long time. Then a girl friend of mine left without saying anything. And the rest of us

²⁶⁹Zeynep Kınacı, *nom de guerre* Zilan, is one of the legendary women figures of PKK, known for her action against the Turkish soldiers, self-immolating herself in the middle of a military ceremony in 1996. In a letter she wrote to Öcalan, Kınacı explained the reasons behind her act as an expression of her rage in the face of the policies of imperialism which enslaves women so she can inspire Kurdish women to partake in the resistance. Indeed she is frequently cited as one of the female heroes that inspire Kurdish Women’s Liberation Struggle. Indeed this was a moment that followed the worst military attacks on PKK and the escalating state violence in the 1990s as well as the internal schisms within the party. Moreover, Zilan is especially an important figure for women as these internal conflicts impacted women the most as the power struggles also took place over the women’s autonomous structures and decision-making and claims within the organization forcing a patriarchal understanding of women’s roles upon the female militants. So Zilan’s action is also seen as an uprising against the male-dominance inside PKK which is an impediment against to absolute liberation and a sign of corruption for the women, and also for certain men.

questioned ourselves a lot why she did not say anything. Maybe she thought we could not detach ourselves from the system. So we lived these internal conflicts.

Back then, the idea of women's liberty was quite utopian of course. You read about the ideal, how it was supposed to be and now we are fighting for it. Then we thought about it as something external to us, and I think this was a necessary step but we did not know how hard it was to actively lead a struggle for it. Now it is neither a concept that will become real in the future nor a fight you can win easily. You realize that if you do not work for it everyday you can never achieve it. And also you realize that if you start changing things first in yourself it is not that easy. I mean it is not the same to read about something and live it. You clash with reality and especially with yourself, how you were molded and raised up. It is the same for a woman to gain her self-confidence. Everyone says that the armed struggle in the mountain is not as hard as gaining your own will in life. For example living in Europe and preserving your stance, fighting everyday for that identity [free women] is a really hard tryout. The dominant social formation does not only influence men, as a women you also stumble and react in a really 'classic' way, in a really 'feminine' way, or you sweat the small stuff. You have a really big ideal of liberty and you question yourself for if your identity corresponds to that ideal. Or the outsider eyes question you, 'Look at what you say and how your society [Kurdish] is'. You go to a Kurdish association and see a retrograde attitude. Of course, the social transformation is not that easy. The leader says that he had to struggle with the society as much as he did with the enemy. It is the same for us, you have to struggle with your own backwardness as much as you do against the enemy. Today the struggle has another meaning: To preserve your existence, to win your liberty! These are intermingled. It means organizing every moment of your life. On one hand you go through a really high intensity war... and on the other hand people have thought of the revolution in terms of identity and never lived a personal transformation. Now we are struggling for that transformation.

LH 8 Back then it was more of a theoretical thing for me and had to do little with life. Now I believe the revolution is whether you can change a life

Our family migrated from Dersim in the '60s because of economic difficulties. Well maybe the genocide also has to do with it but the real reason was economic. I was born in the village, my mother knew that I was going to be a person attached to her territory so she went there to give birth (laughs). But I have never seen Dersim in my life, just once in a holiday. I grew up in Ankara, and with the influence of the 80s our neighborhood was the domain of the

revolutionaries and the leftists. Our house was at the border of two neighborhoods, and stairs separated where our house was from the fascist territory. They shelled my uncle's house once. Revolutionaries used to come to our house. We never asked if my father belonged to a party but 'revolutionary sisters and brothers' used to stay in our house. I grew up in such an atmosphere, against the dominant system but we were not conscious of our Kurdishness. We never rejected we were Kurdish, we spoke another language, we were Alevis. We did not live the hardships of different identities. Being an Alevi Kurd was not something that I hid, I did not suffer the pressures of these but only understood what they meant when I realized what people were going through in Kurdistan. Only once, we were kind of like the 'poor father and his upright daughters' in the typical Turkish movies, pointed out as a good example, and one day something happened and I warned a woman saying that she should control her kids and she said 'God-damn Alevi'. Then I realized there was this oppressed part in people. Our economic situation was not that good. My fathers only preoccupation was to send his kids to school so they could have a decent life. Somehow we were raised with proper values. When I was in 3rd grade my dad brought me the book 'Les Misérables'. I read it but I do not remember a thing now. All my uncles, aunts, cousins were all from Turkish left-wing organizations and some of them even had internal clashes. Of course no one told us these. When I was in senior high I started learning a bit. I mean I always had the idea that I would become a revolutionary one day but I thought I could only become one once I was in university. So I wanted to go to university not to study but to become a revolutionary. My older sister got involved before I did. Once she was detained in a May Day demonstration. We were seven siblings, six girls and a boy. I never was oppressed in the family. I was brought up as brothers and sisters with my cousins and due to that revolutionary environment we kind of all shared the same values. I remember my sister introducing me to her friends. They were from *TİKKO*²⁷⁰ and they came to convince me to join them. So as I was going to meet the revolutionaries...I mean back then it was more of a theoretical thing for me and had to do little with life, so not knowing the theory was a shame for me. So I remember reading 'The ABC of Socialism' before going to meet them to get prepared. In senior high we had a group of friends. We thought of ourselves as revolutionaries but we all marched to a different tune, one

²⁷⁰TİKKO (the Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey) was the armed wing of TKP/ML (The Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist) a Maoist revolutionary organization headed by İbrahim Kaypakkaya.

was from DHKP-C²⁷¹, the other one from another group. We came together to play the *saz*²⁷² and sing folk songs and we thought this was what revolutionaries did. First I was interested in DHKP-C but it was more of an emotional thing as people died in clashes, in unidentified murders or extrajudicial killings. I was aware of what was going on but could not differentiate the organizations. And one day we went to visit my sister in Istanbul. And when I was chatting with the sister of a friend of my sister she showed me pictures of *Halepçe*²⁷³, so this is 1991-92, years after it happened. And I had never heard of it before so I was shocked. I thought this had happened when I was alive and I did not know it. So I felt horrible. I did not think as if it was a personal attack but just could not believe how a human being could do such a thing. This brought me a bit closer to Kurdishness. And another thing I clearly remember, my aunt was from TIKKO, and one day watching TV you know those programs like 'Views from Anatolia' where they showed guerrilla corpses and I said 'It serves them right' and my aunt gave me a hard slap saying that I should not talk through my hat. On one hand I was a model student trying to hold on to the system, always with good grades and on the other hand I was devoted to 'our' values but had nothing to do with Kurdishness in reality. As my family was politically dissident we always bought *Özgür Gündem*. And I was getting ready for the university exam. I started getting more interested in Kurdishness. I read Martin Van Bruinessen's book 'The Kurds'. I bought it myself. Or İsmail Beşikçi. No one told me to do so. 'Thoughts on PKK', 'An International Colony Kurdistan'. Then I asked my parents to teach me our language. So they realized I had a different interest. But I did not have the connections to join any organization. At university, as I was in the same place with my sister, the Kurds did not show any interest in me as my sister was from the Turkish left. And I had a boyfriend whose milieu was from the *Rizgariciler*²⁷⁴ who had a brother who was a street vendor. We heard stories of him, joining the guerrilla but then ran away. My sister told me especially to stay away from 'those', that they are this and that. I was trying to figure out who

²⁷¹DHKP-C (The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front) a Marxist Leninist party, considered illegal in Turkey, founded in 1994, with a parallel political party and army structure. In 1996 a protocol for cooperation was signed between the PKK and DHKP-C but only lasted for 2 years due to accusations of reformist politics from both sides.

²⁷²Saz is a common name used to refer to the stringed instrument 'Bağlama', an essential element in traditional folk music. The instrument is identified with the left-wing imagery, for its popular character and wide use in socialist culture.

²⁷³Halabja massacre took place on 16 March 1988 and continued for three days when the Saddam Hussein administration attacked the town with chemical weapons killing thousands of people and leaving even more gravely injured. And as can be imagined the attacks forced many to leave the country, after which many Iraqi Kurds ended up in Turkey in refugee camps. The Kurds keep accusing the Ba'ath regime to plan the attack in order to carry out an ethnic cleansing and terminating their existence in Iraq.

²⁷⁴Rizgarî was a movement founded in 1976, defining itself as the heir of the DDKO (Revolutionary Cultural Hearts of the East) tradition and it was a pro-Soviet organization. It was founded around a monthly publication with the same name.

is who. They looked like a clan to me. And no one asked me who I was. So I did not get involved with the revolutionary surroundings in university. I would just go to classes and then hung out with my own friends. The next year I went to their table in the cafeteria and asked if I could sit. They were really surprised because I was not the type they would imagine. A pseudo-intellectual and sister of someone from the Turkish left, I guess they thought I was good for nothing. And I knew a lot things already, so they were even more wary. There was also another group that we used to call *tışıkçı*, that was meant for those types who never wanted to get out of this system but they supported the movement. My first friends were from that circle and then I met a more organized group. I was always reading *Özgür Halk* and other books. But I did not know that someone could join the guerrilla or did not have a clear idea about what you could do for this struggle. And now I look around and see that many people just stay as supporters or sympathizers because they do not know these. But during the conversations I realized I could do much more. I mean no one had to tell me anything. But the ‘radical group’ of friends were still wary. I went everywhere they asked me to go, did whatever they asked me to do but they kept treating me differently. Just when I decided to talk to them they asked me to prepare a seminar on Kurdish history. Back then the internal organization functioned like this. I was so happy. So I piled up the books and started preparing it. Since then this never changed (laughs). Then it was not that easy to join the organized struggle. You had to prove yourself. I remember for example how happy I was the first time they called me *heval*. A friend gave me ‘The Path of the Kurdistan Revolution – Manifesto’. And of course all through summer I was beavering away and my friend was testing me. The subjective conditions of the revolutions, the objective conditions, and all that. What does it mean the irreconcilable contradiction, what does it mean this and that...First we went to a Newroz with that friend of mine. Back then we used to go in couples, a man and a woman. You know it was my first time that I saw the people. Now it is normal to see all the mothers and everyone else. I was so moved that I started crying but just as I did the police started charging on us. Then I went through formations and all that. I was very convinced but I also joined very well prepared. When I left home I left a letter to my parents that they still joke about. I wrote that I just wanted people to be happy that they would not suffer. I thought I could put an end to some things. For example I told my family that being a revolutionary was not a hobby but a way of life and that my aim in this revolution was not to found a Kurdistan. I never used those big words, or had big claims like this. I left to be happy myself. When things happened I wanted to be in the right place at the right time instead of being a bystander. Some say colonialism and all. I never felt the direct pressure of colonialism. I realize this

more and more in the last years, the more you become Kurdish the more you feel that pain. In the beginning you are a supporter at best. I mean you are part of it but those feelings of being oppressed, the rage of being persecuted, I never felt or lived those things. But when you feel like the recipient of these attacks and oppression things change. You feel more responsibility, a bigger burden. What I expect from the revolution is to live the life I want. All the hardships aside, I promised myself this when I started. At those moments that I felt alienated from myself, I always told myself that I should end the same way I started. So revolution is a way of life for me, the assignments, the jobs you are given are details. I realized that my family was not that revolutionary. I mean in the family we always had this *arabesk* view that we suffered a lot that we payed the price etc etc. They sometimes think that I am underestimating their experiences. The tortures that my uncles went through seemed like really big things before, until I learned about what people went through in Kurdistan. When I told them that being a revolutionary was a way of life that laughed at me. I mean I also realized that I used to explain certain stuff like empty propaganda. Now I do not care what they think, I am happy. And I do not need to say the revolution is this and that.

I was very distant to the women's movement in the beginning. They gave me *Jina Serbilind* to read once in university and I thought what is the need for that to organize separately. In fact I also liked to act like a tomboy. I thought I could do anything a man could do. In the beginning I was not interested in women's struggle. I was not someone who could accept a man's authority, I did not grow up in a house like this. Just once I remember my dad telling me something about my clothes and I felt so offended. So I founded offensive the pressure that the male comrades exerted in the beginning but it did not bring me ideologically closer to the women. As I said I found it redundant. But then in the movement the more I started living the contradictions of gender difference the more things started to change. When I witnessed certain things I started getting closer. Women's backward characters in life or their manly styles were not attractive for me. But there was this female comrade that felt so excited every time she challenged men in the organization and she was a model for me because her ideas and the way she acted was consistent. Then when the whole movement was going through hard times, especially after the Leader's imprisonment I witnessed how opportunist and tyrannical men could be. I saw how those men that I used to appraise could treat women. But back then also the women's understanding of liberty was to create 'idols'. I grew up in the metropolis so I knew that those were not real values of liberty. The way those idolized women talked, acted, the way they dressed, their elitism, and favoritism, the way they belittled the

rural women who did not know that well how to express themselves. I remember sulking for days because a woman in an administrative position shouted at another one who worked as her junior. What you learn understandably comes from your reactions. I also saw people who had nothing to do with the women's movement becoming the spokespersons. I was a bit afraid back then because I was new but I knew that no one had the right to use women's struggle for personal interests. The way some people hid their conservatism using a revolutionary language, collaborating with the men who tyrannized to gain ground and get promotions. Or people sympathized more for instance with certain friends who had good looks and new how to express themselves fluently. And when I came to Europe I witnessed certain attitudes that judged people within the women's movement so I said I would not get affiliated. Here [in Europe] the backwardness is much more apparent. You have to measure your words. The people here, in the name of preserving their culture are much more backward than the people in Kurdistan. Their disguises are artificial. That is to say, they do not internalize in reality what they say. Here they have a mobile in their hands but they never call a friend in need to ask how they are or when they are sick. But of course you need to show more effort to change this place. One should not just brush off Europe as ugly. You can give meaning to the life here. For example in a demo a friend of mine laughed because I was chanting a slogan, like what good would that do here. I believe we can live those ideals here as well. I think the problem is that the women's identity in many different geographies of Kurdistan is like a dress. Like one you wear outside but when you go home you go back to serving your husband. It is not internalized. Here it is an attempt to live women's freedom without a deep questioning. Of course every place has a different political atmosphere that influences a lot. It is important to change human relationships. Try to make sure that these relationships do not turn into relationships of possession. First you have to convince yourself and prove it to yourself. Freedom is like that, I mean you learn it on the way. But just like the Leader tells, ours is a quest for a strategy. You need to find a method for transformation. I also realized how hard it is to have an identity. A Kurdish women's identity. I thought I had a Kurdish identity until I joined the movement. Or being a woman...You formulate these when you are faced with problems or good things in life. I mean it is lifelong. I also learned never to say never. I think I did everything I said I would never do in my life before. On the other hand there are certain things you do not want to let go. And unless you do it is hard to change. You think about what others will say about you. I guess the revolution is whether you can change a life. A women deciding to unveil herself, me doing things I said I would never do. And it is each and every day. You also need pioneers who can take the first step against the

mechanisms and rules that prevent you from feeling free. The ones who do not give up in the face of the existent. Before we used to talk about creating a defense line against men and today we talk about transforming man as the women's movement. Sometimes it seems as if it is simply taking up a position against man and this suits the men, they say OK we will not interfere with anything women do, it is their autonomy but then the things you create do not penetrate their lives. A free society for example, is not acting like a genderless being but being seen as a person who does not have to defend herself all the time. Think that you are not judged. But it can only be possible once it spreads to the society at large. To be able to live without being limited to the mental and ideological categories of the others.

LH 9 And when different lives meet, when you construct a common living then their problems become yours. You start questioning the system, its aspects that make those people suffer and become poor

My family is [Turkish] Alevi and they came from a village after they got married. They lived through the *Çorum Events*²⁷⁵ of 1978, then the 1980s so they had a lot of fears. So they did not tell us a lot. I was born and grew up in Istanbul. My dad was a civil servant and my mom a housewife. In my dad's family there were some leftist people and during the September 12 [*coup d'état* of 1980] they had stayed in our house. My mom was very influenced by them. I was very little then I know about these from what my mom told me. She said she used to talk a lot with them and she was curious to learn. So our interest has to do with my mom. When we were in senior high there were MHP militants in my school. They used to say they would

²⁷⁵Çorum events is a series of clashes and that took place with political and religious motives, between Sunni and right-wing vs. left-wing and minority groups such as the Alevis flared up with the already existing political polarity setting the right-wing and left-wing against each other and the social turmoil sporadically turning into violence right before the 1980s military coup. Just days before leading to Çorum events With the killing of the vice president of MHP (the Nationalist Movement Party), the right-wing groups take to the streets and in Çorum clashes start here and there, the shops and houses of leftist and Alevi people are damaged. To this adds the announcements from the mosque loudspeakers alleging that 'The Communists are assailing Islam' and making calls to jihad provoking even more unrest. Left-wing and revolutionary groups also start organizing, barricades are being erected in the streets, no one can walk alone in the streets or in the 'other's' neighborhoods for the fear of being tortured or killed. The police also gets involved in the clashes on the right-wing groups side. Following the events the Minister of Interior declares that in Çorum the rightwing that supports the state is confronting the leftists who want to overthrow the state, targeting certain sectors of the population. In a couple of days the events get out of hand, groups start chanting in the streets 'Death to Kızılbaş', another way of referring to Shii Alevis. So on one hand the state reveals its true colors during Çorum events, clearly stating that the political ideology of the Turkish state is fascism and its religion Sunni Islam using sectarian differences to exterminate populations that do not fit into its self-definition. During the events people are being tortured in the streets and even in the hospitals where they are taken, get killed by firing squads, others who try to reach the city coming from the surrounding villages are executed, houses pillaged and burnt. 65 people die when the Çorum events turn into a massacre and the city is irremediably divided into two opposite camps segregating neighborhoods into left-wing, Alevis and Sunni, right-wing communities.

drink the blood of Alevis and all that. Those left-right stuff. And I started asking my mom if we were left-wing or right-wring. And she used to give me the classic reply, that we were students and should not occupy oneself with these kind of stuff. I mean I did not really know whether we were leftists or rightist back then, almost until 17 years old. In our building there was a family from *Kars* and the wife was from *Tunceli*. We met then and they used to frequent the *HADEP*²⁷⁶ of the time. It was them who introduced us with these things. I started going with them and how to tell you the warmth of the people there, how they treated you, even the way they shook your hand...It was not like today, touching you with the tip of the fingers. I did not have any prejudice then but I was an ardent believer of Atatürk. You know in the education system they tell you each and every year over and over again starting from Atatürk was born in 1881, so it might be because of that. And on the other hand there were the songs that my mom used to listen a lot. I will talk a lot about my mom now but it was her...We do not have that much age difference either, like 16 or 17 years. That is why she influenced me a lot in many aspects and we were really close. She used to listen to *Mahzuni* or *Selda Bağcan*²⁷⁷ and so on. “*My blue-eyed, blond haired*”...you listen to these lyrics, and the state is always talking about him as the one who saved the country. I guess you cannot not like Atatürk if you are a social-democrat either. So in such a period I started frequenting the party. And in ‘996 there was a big congress in Ankara and they asked me if I wanted to go. I was not in such a position to decide so I asked my mom and she said I could go with one of our neighbors. Now I come to think of it, my mom was quite nerved. I am talking about that congress when the [Turkish] flag was hauled down. I guess my mom did not think it could have been a prejudicial thing [to go]. I remember hesitating during the chanting. But I have to say that I was very impressed with the crowd. If I am not wrong there was around 100 thousand people. Murat Bozlak was the candidate for presidency back then. But because of the pressures...It was extremely crowded, we could not find a place to sit and were crammed up on top of the barriers and stuff. And everyone was chanting. I only joined when they are saying “ Long live the Brotherhood of the People” and then keep quite in other ones. That congress became a moment that I will never forget. So, that is to say that it was my mom who

²⁷⁶HADEP (The People's Democracy Party) was an overtly pro-Kurdish party, found in 1994 after several other former attempts of the Kurdish movement to take part in parliamentary democracy. Like its predecessors it was shut down by a constitutional court decision on the grounds that it allegedly supported the PKK. HADEP emerged as a critical player in the Turkish electoral scene as it was the only party for a while capable of restraining the growth of the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP) primarily in Kurdish south-eastern provinces

²⁷⁷Aşık Mahzuni Şerif, a Kurdish fol poet and minstrel, and Selda Bağcan are musicians known for their socialist and Kemalist (the secular, modernist, positivist founding ideology of the Republic of Turkey implemented by Atatürk) ideologies. Mahzuni even had a song in which he alludes to Atatürk and praises him that is recited by the narrator.

encouraged us. Usually it is the kids who try to change the parents but in our case my mom had the vanguard spirit. I used to think to myself all the time, I mean there is all this Atatürk thing and the anti-propaganda that says Öcalan is a baby killer and you do not know that much. It was not easy to get rid of all that. I did not frequent the party to join actively back then either, it was just curiosity for new things. You would go and then sit in a tea garden at the seashore discussing things. Then I started reading books. I have always liked reading. But the content slightly changed. The friends there gave me novels or memories of the guerrillas. Now I cannot read sad things. But anyhow, the idea they passed you with those books were justice, dreams, utopias. For instance I remember reading Chernyshevsky's 'What is to be Done?'. I was so impressed. It was not the comrades who gave this book, I also read stuff for myself. Like the 'The Spartans' or Bartol's 'Alamut'. I mean some of these make you question religion, other make you think about how to create an egalitarian life. So their content was strong. Or imagine, they talked about women's cooperative, or ideal relationships, that we even keep talking about. So they create an intellectual background. I had friends from other circles as well, I did not like only talking to one kind of people. There were also Alevis who were Kurds that I met. I can tell you that everyone I met back then thought me something. But the HADEP environment was the place that influenced me the most in terms of women's liberation ideology. I used to discuss these with my mom as well and she insisted that this was the right place to be. My mom was convinced much easier. For I while I was not totally convinced but I went anyways. Or I was reading the Leader's books. Now I wonder if I would read such radical stuff. But I also remember questioning a lot of things, I mean you are like what 19? For example religion. But I was a believer anyways. I was just looking for an omen to prove myself right. The book Alamut was that omen for me. You are thinking that God does not exists and it makes things clear for you so you get even more excited. But on the other hand I was also reading Emine Şenliklioğlu. I was reading to arm myself as well. In a discussion you need to convince the others so you need to know. Knowledge is an important weapon after all. But I could not accept the idea of national struggle for a long time, even after reading so much about it. Even in those periods that I went to demonstrations and all I still asked why they needed a different state. I always wondered why we could not live together. Back then the idea of Democratic Modernity did not exist either. I guess the idea of living together was more attractive for me or maybe it was because I am Turkish I do not know. Then I got convinced somehow but then the idea of a Kurdish state also ceased to exist. But I continued going to wherever they invited me. The first, and the last time I was beaten by the police was one of those demos. Then another time we went to a

demo after the *Gülbaha Gündüz* event, you know that one woman they raped in prison. But I have always been a person who is afraid of violence. Those were the days that the first women's army was founded and there were pamphlets written about women. They were not really like books but 2-3 pages, edited speeches of Öcalan. They impressed me a lot. Then I started going to brief formations on women's liberation. Sometimes organized with other unions and all. The book 'The social Life and Revolution' for example, it became a reference book for me. You can just open a random page and study a subject. It chastised man a lot in a way, the family institutions and all. We also came from a poor rural family. So even though I was born in Istanbul I was brought up with my family's culture and I never could identify myself as a metropolitan from Istanbul. I feel more like someone from Anatolia. And it was also a time that my parents fought a lot and I used to step in. And I was also very committed to my mom. Then you could see the marginalization, oppression of women clearly. And I realized the family pressure on my mom, as a women. When they got divorced for example, they told her all the time that she was going to get her kids in trouble, that she could not do alone. I also carried all these fears along. But one day they asked me to actively take part in women's work and even asked me to join the party but I could not dare it. It could have been all very different but then you think of you mom. I could not leave her or imagine that they will accuse her for your decisions in such a feudal society. There was not anyone who supported her decisions. I mean I also accused her a lot for my limitations in life...Anyhow, I continued taking part in women's branches. Then we received the women's social contract. We did other formations and meetings all the time. I remember coming back from those meetings, they lasted for hours and hours but they were so instructive back then. It was not all these lengthy analyses, memorized words or cliches like now. And the women's meetings were very much different. Also there were not many women who could make those kind of political speeches. Ours were much more from the heart, from experiences. I also learned a lot more from the families and especially the mothers, when I was doing fieldwork with the families. When I visited the neighborhoods listening to their life histories was a different thing. I guess the stories of burnt villages and likes were a bit too intangible for me. But how those families treated me...I guess they also showed me special attention because I was Turkish as well. The ties of affection made their stories of leaving their villages, seeing them being destroyed and burnt down and all affected me much more. They made me believe in what I was doing even more. I mean yes there are things written in books but they are not enough. I mean listening to what people went through in prisons, those who suffered tell you these stories right next to you. I mean this is recent history you know. When you think of

babies and kids who had to hear warplanes... I am trying to see it from a psychological point of view, how this could have affected them in the future. I mean these are people who hardly went to state schools if they ever did but had such a way to rationalize. And also I have never seen any psychopaths among them compared to the rest of the society. Of course you would hear stories of youth caught up in drugs and all that but these people survived and found their way somehow. And when different lives meet, when you construct a common living then their problems become yours. You start questioning the system, its aspects that make those people suffer and become poor.

I mean we also did not know that much or did not have tested strategies. We learned by trying out things. And also the people forced us advance. Think of it, in every house you go to people would ask you about the news they saw on TV the other day, the political developments and all. Asked your opinion and wanted answers from you. So before house visits we would ask each other about the news if we did not have time to read it ourselves and all. People wanted solutions to their daily problems. Or imagine the idea of women's liberation, of a free women. I do not think we had a clear idea of what it was. That image was in the writings and all but a bit too ideal. We discovered what it was in action, doing stuff. For instance, back then I was working for a company and I had female co-workers. All of them who had finished universities, supposed to be well-informed and all. I would hear them say 'May man needs to be a bit jealous, a bit macho'. These kind of stuff. Then you think to yourself, you get what you ask for honey! Then in our surroundings it was totally different. I always said I would never get married. Of course I was thinking about a more egalitarian partnership but I do not know....Today I feel like these definitions are more concrete or closer to real life. Or the writings today also talk about, I do not know, sexuality, birth control, motherhood or what not. I mean the taboos are being broken. I mean maybe they have always been in those writings back then as well but we did not have the capacity to understand or interpret them. I wish I had those manuscripts to go back and check. But see what I am trying to say. Take the 40% quota for instance. It was new back then. We were struggling to apply it. Also because there were not that many experienced women or women who had the time to develop themselves theoretically or intellectually. The men did it somehow. They would memorize stuff, repeat it before masses and people were impressed. But women lacked that self-confidence. Many lacked the ability to express themselves clearly. Or were ashamed to talk in men's presence. But we were forced to fill up the quota. Or the co-presidency the same way. After these experiences I am sure that there are no women who cannot do politics. It is

only about practice. Once you put a women in active politics, or as co-presidents they have to talk more, they have to act and that is how you improve. But now it is a model accepted by all. These experiences became the basis of certain political traditions in Turkey. Now you see the other parties also apply it. This is how you also change the mentalities as well.

LH 10 When you are carrying out a women's liberation struggle if you are not feeling the same level of pain for the problems of women in living any part of Kurdistan and another one in South America or Africa, then it means you have not understood well what is women's liberation

Well, how I found myself in this business is kind of the state placed me with its own hands. Do not misunderstand it (laughters). As I grew up in Antalya we had a certain affiliation with the left-wing ideologies but had nothing to do with Kurdishness. Sometimes when we went to Kurdistan we heard some stuff but our friends were Turks. We knew that Turgut Özal and some others were Kurdish for example. I also was not at an age to perceive certain things. One day we went to a concert. Shortly after I learned it was a Newroz celebration. Our neighborhood was a Kurdish one and they had rented buses to go there. First I felt a bit like 'Where are we going like this?'. Then at the entrance of the neighborhood the riot squads stopped the buses and started asking identification. Of course at that age I have never thought of carrying my ID with me. Because I did not have one, I never forget this, they held us at the police station from the 17th until the 21th. The station was full, people younger than I was, older than I was. The summer before I went to visit my uncle's and they were talking about the party but I never paid that was attention. I am talking about the beginnings of the 1990s. Then during those days I had a lot of time to think and connect the dots. Then I said to myself, there certainly is something if they are holding me here at this age. They tortured young people who came from the surrounding cities in front of our eyes. Then when I got out I started mixing with the leftist youth, or the Kurdish youth in senior high. Then there was no HADEP, it was still the process of forming the HEP²⁷⁸. Then HEP was founded and MPs were detained. That is when I started joining the political word although I was young. Then I went to university and I was very active within the student movement. Since I was a student I could

²⁷⁸People's Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi, HEP) was a pro-Kurdihs party founded by members of the National Assembly expelled from the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) in 1990. HEP was involved in peace negotiations with the PKK in 1993 and yet due to the overt promotion of Kurdish cultural and political rights the party was banned by the Constitutional Court in July 1993. HEP could be considered the first attempt to re-make the state's official ideology and policies by working from within to make room for hitherto marginalized social element, such as the Kurds, in democratic processes.

not be formally part of the party administration but in the city where I was we functioned almost like a party branch. I worked there for a while. When HADEP was founded they put a butterfly as its logo thinking that they will close this one as soon as it is opened anyway, like it is life will be as short as a butterfly's. But it has been the most long lasting party. As if they [the state] were teasing with us. Then in 1998 DEHAP was founded and we started gaining the first municipalities in 1999. It was also the time that the Leadership was incarcerated. So you feel more responsibility, thinking you should work harder. I finished the university, I studied economics but I never had the idea to work in a company or anything like that. I could have done it for my family relations but I preferred not to. And I told our friends that I could continue political work in any village, town or city of Kurdistan, where there was a need for people, although they insisted I should stay in a more central place. And as I always spoke Kurdish in my family I thought I would not have any difficulties either. And it was a time that a mayor in a Kurdish city was detained so there were problems. So friends sent me there, or better say they sent me to exile (laughs). I mean yes I had told them I could go anywhere but obviously I was imagining a place like Amed. Or some place more central. When I heard where they wanted to send me I was a bit shocked...but I went anyways. Long story short along the years I worked in so many different places. Then 16 years ago I came to Europe. And since then I am trying to do my best here but I feel like I could have done more. I mean I am not saying this to seem modest but if I had done more maybe the Leader would not be in prison now or we would not be going through what is happening today.

Well, when I first started I joined the movement because of national views and the attacks and pressures on Kurdish identity. After all many Kurdish women also joined the same way. Because of the pressures on the Kurds as a nation. The gender identity became an issue especially with the 2000 in the movement. Before that there were congresses and the foundation of women's party. But with the actions of certain female figures, such as *Heval Berivan*²⁷⁹ and *Heval Zilan* people realized the importance of the gender difference and starting claiming it. I mean yes there is the nationalist side but gender is also part of your identity. And we always experienced serious conflicts with the male comrades. For many men women still need to be obedient. The women who are not, are the kind of women they would run away from. This is a constant war for us. I also see my personal development in parallel

²⁷⁹Binevş Agal, *nom de guerre* Berivan, was a Ezidi woman who joined PKK and worked very much with the people of Cizre. On 1989 her hide-out was discovered and she died in the gunfight. Her death provokes the Serhildan of Cizre during Newroz, mass uprisings lead by the with whom she worked with. Due to the encouragement she have the women of Cizre to get organized, Berivan continues to be named as one of the most influential female figures of the Kurdish women's resistance.

with the movement's. I see an enormous difference between how it was in the beginning and today. And not only us but other people as well. I think in the 2000s we as women in the movement were not totally convinced [about women's liberation]. We realized our own strength much later. There have been proposals of mental detachments, and physical ones, the Leadership's proposals but we as women have not been able to prepare the right conditions for that...it takes time to see these things clearly. But I can say that it has been the women's efforts that carried the movement to the point it stands today. Even though the Leadership also put a lot of effort in this, it has been the Kurdish women who succeeded. Women's labor has to do a lot with why Rojava is called the Women's Revolution today. How to explain this, at a moment that women were *nothing*, having women warriors create a different perspective, when a Kurdish women who cannot read nor right starts struggling for her rights or going after her kids creates a strength. In societies there is this understanding that women cannot do politics nor can they talk. The Kurdish women went beyond the ordinary. And they made it by saying their opinion about life and carrying out the struggle for their rights. And this spread to all four corners of the society. Such that now an academic is at the same place with a women who never got out of four walls in big cities, the movement eliminated this difference. This is an important achievement. Maybe I went to university thanks to my family's situation but you see also women who have finished university and are beaten at home. So the conscious we have comes from this movement. As an individual I am nourished from the women's struggle. If Kurdish women today can provide alternatives to European woman today this gives me hope. But formerly, in HADEP, we tried to become more manly than to make them accept us as women. For example when you walked they had to hear you pounding so they would say look at this woman working like a man. There was no way we could work among man then. In Europe [Kurdish] women are tamed to obey men but there is a huge effort to break up with that and bring out their will. And especially the women's assemblies or women's autonomous undertakings are intended for achieving these objectives. And we see that women are gaining their self-confidence, they are leading the mixed assemblies, organize demos. They interpret very well what is happening in Rojava.

I also would like to share one of my personal reflections. It was a few months before *Osman Öcalan*²⁸⁰ left the movement and they put him on television. It was right after the rape of

²⁸⁰Osman Öcalan is the brother of Abdullah Öcalan, who had been one of the leaders of PKK's military wing. He is treated somehow as a traitor as during his command, especially after Abdullah Öcalan was on the run just before his sequestration and imprisonment, he tried to shift the running of the party, centralizing decision-making powers, almost like a one-man rule and implement chain and command relations. He particularly tried to subordinate the women's movement to the presidential council of the PKK. In 2004, Osman Öcalan who disagreed with the paradigmatic change of the party, joined by some other PKK cadres, announced the

Gülbahar Gündüz under custody and on TV he said he was inviting the Kurdish youth to retaliate. Then I went through the roof in a meeting saying that I would never accept such a statement. Yes you might be waging a national struggle because it is part of you but if you are talking about women's liberation you have to do it on an international level even though you might be working just with Kurdish women in the field. But when you are carrying out a women's liberation struggle if you are not feeling the same level of pain for the problems of women in living any part of Kurdistan and another one in South America or Africa, then it means you have not understood well what is women's liberation. Or when women are oppressed in one part of the world, if they are being killed and you do not feel anything... And I do feel guilty and ask myself if I put more effort those women could escape from genocides. If everyone who are in the women's liberation struggle felt this we would be invincible. Yes there is a need to unite more with European women. You go to these kind of common platforms with your social reality but sometimes here European women act unthinkingly with those cliches like a women who comes outside Europe are victims in need of help. If there is no openness to differences and diversity it is hard to collaborate. We do not come here as victims or to tell them how we are oppressed. We are undertaking a revolution that the whole world watches and we are capable of bringing in new perspective. And since I have heard of Jineoloji I keep saying, hah that's it! We realized it very late that this concept was already mentioned in the book 'The Sociology of Freedom'. If we want to change the course of history Jineoloji is very important. And it is also very symbolical that another reality comes into view from Middle-East. If we acknowledge that the first hierarchical civilizations were born there, now another one to oppose them is becoming real.

LH 11 Now you are at a crossroads, one leads to liberty the other one to slavery. If you chose slavery you will think everything that happens to you is your faith and surrender. The other road is full of rocks and potholes, it is hard but it is a really beautiful road. It is your choice

What makes us human is our past. We should not be ashamed of it. If I am here today I owe ti to the women of this organization. I grew up in a patriotic but an extremely radical Islamist family at the same time. My father was an *imam*. And thus a civil servant but was relegated to a post in another place, thus exiled 3 times. From Diyarbakır to Bilecik, from there to Hilvan.

foundation of another party the Patriotic Democratic Party (*Partiya Welatparez Demokratik*, PWD) splitting from PKK.

We were not born then. These are the 1980s and short after I was born in a town notorious with its tribes. And it is the reason they sent my father there thinking a well known tribe there would waste him. My father knew very well the politics and the Kurdish liberation movement, the Kurdish history. He veiled me when I was seven and by ten, when I had my first period I used to wait in excitement to see what kind of scarf he would bring me this time. That is, he did not order me to put veil but I liked it somehow. And later on he did not send us to school so we would not have to open our heads. When all my friends went to school I was always home with my sisters. We wanted a lot to go but we couldn't. When I turned 13 I blossomed out very fast. Wherever we went people asked me for marriage or came to our house to ask my father for my hand. To avoid it they told me to wear a burka. I remember very well once when I was 14 I was so sick and had to go to the doctors and refused to put on the burka, so I couldn't go to the doctors. I didn't like the black burka. But then they made me do it saying that they couldn't cope with the people anymore, this and that, and the religion says so. And they raised us up the same religious way. I used to go out with my friends in a black burka, or when we went to house visits. I deeply resented that. I thought if my friends didn't have to wear it why did I have to, what was our difference. One day my mom told me that they married me off to someone. I was 14 or so. I said I was still a kid and resisted. My mom turned and told me that we weren't in our own hometown and if something would happen to me she couldn't take responsibility for that and I had no chance to object. Fathers always said the last word. My parents loved each other. They were cousins. There was no violence but my mom was really submissive. They took me to someone that I haven't even seen in my dreams, that I didn't know. And sent me to another town in another city that I have never seen in my life. Usually they buy furniture to young brides, or gold or put a wedding gown, in my case they did nothing. It was a sin. Came a taxi to take me. I cried for days but my mom said it was my destiny. Maybe the thing I resented the most...I mean...I did not have a home. I did not have keys. They took me to the house of my mother-in-law. I was a child and they expected me to clean, cook, things I did not know how to do. These were things that men expected from their spouses, my responsibilities. And when I couldn't do these I was constantly subjected to violence. I told my mom how many times that he was beating me and insulting me. She said these were normal and slowly everything will get on track. That I should learn how to cook and wash the laundry. One day, I was pregnant, and he beat me so bad. So bad that I had to go to the hospital where one of the doctors was a friend of my dad's. And he knew I was his daughter by chance from my surname. So he calls my dad and scolds him asking if he gave me for blood to that family (*kan yerine vermek*; blood feud). Then my

father called my husband over and then I learned about the real story. He said that he never asked him for money or whatever when he entrusted his daughter to him and he didn't take good care of me. And said he was taking me away without asking him his opinion the same way he didn't ask mine when he gave me to him. He didn't ask me either at that time and I don't know how I would react. Many people tried to mediate but he didn't give me back. We divorced that way. Then I had my son. I took care of him myself until he was four, five years old. Then they turned up one day, and my dad had retired and we had moved back to another city, and came the provincial chairmen of the Party, the administrators to mediate. They said we had divorced but it was still his child as well and he should get to know him, so he should take him for a couple of days as a guest. And then they would bring my son back to me. I said OK. I didn't have a say anyway. Well, before that, when I got divorced, it seems that a son of an *agha* have asked to marry me and my dad didn't accept. So they offered him lots of money but he insisted not to because the family was too immodest and they drink so they were not right for our family. Then one of their men tells my dad to send me away or marry me otherwise they were planning to kidnap me. So my dad starts worrying that they will tarnish his reputation. So he marries me off to one of his friends pupil who is not rich but straight as a die. My father says the money is not important and he just wants me to stay away from the other family. So this way...Whatever, so it had passed two days since the family took my son so I called a number they gave me to call whenever I wanted to talk to my son. But they didn't let him talk to me and told me that my son wasn't there and told me never to call them again. Then I couldn't reach that number ever again. So I told this to my brother and we went to the chairman of the Party with him. I told them that I entrusted my son to the Party because it is sacred for our family. When someone comes with the Party's reference it is indisputable. They said they couldn't do anything. So I insulted the chairmen, I told him 'I wish you live the same grief of losing a child'. My brother took me back home. I thought my son would never come back, never play in the garden again, never ride his bike. I was also a child myself and I had grown up with him. So I was really attached you know. So I committed suicide that night. And I lost my conscious so they took me to the hospital. Then I started having psychological treatment but I managed to continue life somehow. People looked at me with so much pity... *Malamine!* (kurd., O woe is me!)... They tell me to forget about it that I was young and I could have many more kids and get married again, trying to console me. But once you are a widower of course your place is different. So the ones who asked me for marriage were the ones who lost a wife, or old men, or ones that couldn't have kids from their first wives. Of course I didn't like it. I told my family that I would kill myself again if they married me off.

For example my uncle's wife had an uncle, he was 55 and I was 21. I reacted so much than and said he was very old for me. Then my uncle's wife turned and asked me who I thought I was, that no single man would ever come and ask for me and I should realize it at once. And I told her, Yes I am a widower and I can marry an old guy but never your uncle and that I preferred taking a stray dog as a husband. My mom was crying all the time telling me that I should find someone because they would get old and die one day and people would kick me out in the streets. Then a guy who didn't have any kids asked to marry me and my dad said OK. I wore myself out, cried and shouted in vain. Then I also realized I had no choice because my uncle's wife made my life a living hell. And she told me that I would understand her one day, that she was doing all this for me. She was nasty. Then I married this last guy. But how to call it a marriage... They took me to another house only with the clothes I was wearing that day. I mean at that time I thought I was being carried form one house to another like an object. They took me to a village. It was the first time in my life I saw a village. I had such a hard time because I wasn't used to that kind of a life. And I didn't know the guy. I mean my family, OK they were feudal or Islamist, or veiled but they respected each other. No one shouted to one another, there was love and attachment. This family was nothing like that. They shouted each other all the time. Horrible. I wasn't that passive any more either. So if they cursed me I would reply. If they shouted at me I shouted back. But of course I was beaten right after. Then I became pregnant and gave the name 'Hope' to my kid. But I mean it wasn't put on his ID, a woman cannot name his kids. My situation was really bad. I didn't like him but I had to be with him. Living within 4 walls with a man that you cannot support his shadow. Your life becomes hell. You feel like at the bottom of a well. You cannot do anything. Then there was the...he went into prison for fraud and came out. To run away from his debts we moved to another city and I became neighbors with my mom again. The guy didn't work but gave me counterfeit money. I burnt those all and told him that I didn't want him to do dirty business. Because I was still a devout person. I performed my prayers, I fasted, I was really religious, I read the Koran. I told him he was better selling lemons in the street. The next time I burnt that money I was beaten. Then he brought drugs and I poured it all in the toilet. And I was beaten. I was of course telling these things to my mom and she kept telling me 'Don't even think of divorcing. You have to bear it. Even if you die you have to live there'. And of course I was desperate. I kept praying and asking God to show me the path. Back then I had nothing to do with the Party. I knew they organized events and demonstrations and such. My dad made it clear for us, politics is man's business, women take care of kids, do housework. It was crystal clear. One day, it was like a way out from hell for me, I was beaten the night before, with a

black eye and someone started knocking on the door hurriedly. I opened the door and saw two women. Without asking me permission they barged in and closed the door. I asked what was happening and they told me that they were working for the Party. There was a demonstration that day there and the police attacked them so they took cover in our house. We waited for the street to settle down and I made them tea in the mean time. I thought to myself that I did well to open the door. The younger one of the two turned to me and asked ‘ If you don’t mind me asking what happened to your eye?’ and then before letting me answer said, ‘Let me guess, you hit it to a door or a wall right?’ and I laughed and said, ‘Yes that’s what happened’. We started chatting. They asked me if I frequented the Party and I said my dad was a patriot and so was my brother but I couldn’t go anywhere because it would be improper. They didn’t say anything then and left. The next day one of them came back and told me she wanted to talk. First she started to chitchat, ‘What do you do? What’s the problem with your husband?’ and all. I told her that I had no other choice but I didn’t consider this a marriage. She had also brought me a couple of books, I will never forget, because those were the first books I had read. I mean I had read the history of the prophets and all but as I didn’t go to school...How to explain...I was so interested in reading although no one told me I could put together the letters. I used to ask my brothers when they came back from school to teach me. So I read very slowly. Imagine it took me 3 months to finish only one of those books. One was ‘Vatandaş Abuzer’ and the other ‘Dörtlerin Gecesi’. She started visiting me but we had regular, daily conversations and she rarely talked about the Party. I used to tell her my life, what I had gone through. At that moment I discovered I was pregnant. Oh Dear God! I thought I couldn’t have a second child from that man, I mean OK I had the first one but a second one?! No that couldn’t happen! I had a couple of bracelets, I gave them to the doctor and said please just give me an abortion. He said he couldn’t because I was very weak and I wouldn’t survive the operation. Back then I was thin as my pinkie finger. And also I had discovered that I was pregnant a bit late. I thought I was late because of stress. But it wasn’t. I was crying day and night thinking that if I gave birth to a second child from that man I would never ever *ever* get divorced from him. One day I was crying so much and that woman friend came again. I told her that I couldn’t get an abortion. And she asked me if I really had to live that way, for the first time. I said I had to because it was my destiny. Then she told me that there was no such thing as destiny. That I could decide my own life and take my own decisions and for the good and the bad choose my own path. I thought my god what is she talking about, telling me that destiny doesn’t exist. I refused to believe her. Then she started telling me about the women’s movement. But I told her that they were different, that they had

studied and we couldn't be equal. I told her that our life was different and to begin with our religion was different. She didn't even believe in God. I think I was also a bit prejudiced. She realized this and told me, 'Let me tell you this clearly, I need to believe that someone has light in them before touching their life. And I am coming here because I see that light in you. To talk to you and sound you out. You have that light and don't forget if a woman wants to do something there is nothing to stop her. Yes you will have a hard time but you can create a magnificent person out of yourself. You don't have to live in this hellhole and sleep in this tomb'. I told her she didn't know anything about my family that my dad would never let me. I was also afraid that they would take away my kids again. Then she told me that there was a literacy course for free and she could help me get inscribed. I told her OK but I have to ask my husband's permission. I told him about the course and that it was only for women. He ridiculed me, told me if I was thinking to finish university as well or become a doctor or an engineer. And I shouldn't be messing around with stupid stuff. And he said he was aware that I was changing since 'that woman' started coming and going around, that she was spoiling me. The I thought to myself, he leaves early in the morning and comes back only at night. So he wouldn't realize if I went during the day. So I got inscribed. He didn't even realize. We were 20 students and I was the most successful. Imagine at the end of it came the district governor to give us our certificates and I read there a letter I wrote for the classes. I was also in the press as the most successful student of the course. The guy didn't even see that, he had nothing to do with news or anything. He was only interested in counterfeiting money or whatever. In that time, my belly was getting bigger but we kept quarreling every day. A torture, you see. That women became my hope, my savior. She kept telling me that I could become a different person, that I didn't have to live that life. After the course, I got inscribed in distance education. I bought books and started studying at home. But the guy decided.. like, if you don't obey me I will discipline you with hunger. He stopped paying the rent, buying the house needs. We were constantly fighting. At last one day he gave me money but it was when they changed the currency, from millions to YTL and I didn't know about it. I went to shopping to our usual grocer bought lots of stuff and gave him the money. He asked me where I got the money and he would normally call the police if he didn't know me. I apologized and made up an excuse. I came back and fought so bad with him. I told him that he was a scum and he was dragging me along in his misery. Of course he started beating me. Then I said that's it, enough! And exactly that day I was planning to do something...I wasn't to go back to my father's house again or anything like that...You know I had gotten divorced once and I couldn't dare to do it again...Then that friend came to visit that day and told me why I was

torturing myself and that I could work. I thought, that's impossible my family will never let me work. Once I told my mom to tease that I wanted to work and she raised hell. In the meantime I gave birth to the second one. And my friend stopped coming for a while because she had work to do. Two months after I gave birth we fought again really bad. I decided then to work. I told myself if he refuses to work I will do it myself. I was doing everything, when the kids got sick I took them to hospital in the middle of the night, what have you...I couldn't take it anymore, I was thinking to suicide again. Then my friend found a job for me at the university, in a lab. I didn't say anything to my family and started working. But then the friends of my husband who studied at the university told on me. A dust up! The whole family ganged up against me. I told them whether you accept it or not that's what it is. In the meantime I also took off the veil and started wearing a long cloak. My dad stopped talking to me, my mom kept telling me that I am crazy that no one had ever seen such a thing in our family. I told her that I was hungry and I couldn't beg her for food day after day or ask her to take care of the kids or buy them diapers. That I was in good health and I could work. She told me I went astray. My dad was especially furious because I took off the burka and was working in a place like university in front of all the men. Then that guy also stormed the university saying that his wife couldn't work. But thank god my boss was a guy that served time in prison [for political reasons] and told him that he didn't ask him when he hired me and I would leave my job whenever I wanted. In the mornings I left my kids with my mom, went to work, after work picked the kids to take them home, do cleaning and cooking and I even ironed his clothes *and* gave him money to shut him up. Then I thought I didn't have to carry his weight on my shoulders and decided to get separated. Oh my God! Of course in the mean time my friend kept encouraging me, 'The Kurdish woman is resistant, she can struggle all alone, do everything!' and all that. I said I wanted to get a divorce. It was as if someone put a bomb in the middle of the house. My mom said, 'Never!' and told me she wouldn't take me back to her house. Even my mom's brother told me I had to live like that even if he tortured me. I told them that my eyes had opened and I realized nothing was fate and if one wanted so much she could do everything. Of course standing up to them like this needed courage. I was shaking but I did it anyways. Then I decided to go to a women's shelter with my kids because the guy refused to leave. But I had a brother, a really good person, who knew what I was going through but he was hand tied in front of my father. But he was the elder one so had force in the family. I told my brother I was going to a friend's house and in the meantime he should egg my dad on, tell him that I was the family's honor and it was a shame I was looking into the state's hands for help. My dad says, bloody hell, let her come back. So I go back but he

tells me that he only accepts me and he is not going to look after somebody else's kids. For the first time in my life I stood up to my dad and told him he tore my heart out once and gave my first son away and I would never let him do it again. So I left again. In a couple of days he was convinced. I went back to the family home. Then the guy kidnapped my sons, held them in the village during 15 days and blackmailed me to go back if I wanted to see them again. I told the people from the Party and they told me not to fall into his trap and that they threatened him to give back the kids. So I continued working that way and after work I started frequenting the Party but I never told anything to my family. If they knew they would have never allowed me. One day when I was at the Party my uncle came in and saw me there but didn't tell me anything. But he went and told my dad that I was at the Party, shaking hands with the men there. When I came back home, my dad snapped at me and said I was a disgrace. So I told him if he was a patriot himself he should get angry at himself and not at me. I told him that we used to wake up at five in the morning looking at the boots of the soldiers when we were kids and that was his fault not ours. I told him he put these ideas in our minds. He told me not to try to do a man's job. He said he saw how women had a hard time in the Party, that he already lost two sons to this war. But I entered the neighborhood commission of the Party at that time anyhow. Then my friend told me her work there was done and she was leaving. I cried so much, I told her she couldn't do that to me, leave me alone there. She said, 'You have everything to survive alone. You have to trust yourself. I gave you everything I could. Now you are at a crossroads, one leads to liberty the other one to slavery. If you chose slavery you will think everything that happens to you is your faith and surrender. The other road is full of rocks and potholes, it is hard but it is a really beautiful road. Now it is your choice'. I didn't go to work for 3 days, crying at home. But I had promised her to help other women to get out of the hell just like she helped me as long as I was alive. I am still looking for her (laughs). I continued working with the Party. And slowly I was also taking off the cloak. I was wearing skirts and all. I was in the organization of demonstrations, I went to meetings trying to do social and political work. But I still had two kids. My mom was furious asking me what I was doing outside until midnight. But I have a sister, in the mountains now, and she told me not to worry and took care of the kids. Then one day our friends told me that there was a job offer for two years in Iraq and if I wanted to go. I didn't think twice. I didn't think about my kids. I was going back and forth during those years. And my family also accepted the situation. Usually people talk bad about widows or slander. But none of these happened to me. I was also still a devoted person afraid of sinning. By the way, I really loved my father even though he was so...because they thought us that whatever

happened was our fate so I could not blame anyone. But the more I got to know the women's movement the more I was getting closer to my mom. And I saw how jealous my dad was getting. And after a while I almost cut all my ties to him. Especially after realizing what I had gone through was no fate and it was a man's doing. So I was getting angry. I never forgave him for not sending me school. I could have been in a really different place. I am happy about where I am now but it could have been really different. On the other hand I always say that I wouldn't be me if I hadn't gone through all this. I would never meet that women who changed my life, I would live like an ignorant women. You see the women politicians today in the government and see how ignorant they are that's another issue. In the meantime the situation came to such a level that the young party staff was staying in our house, it almost became a base. Everyone was shocked when they heard my dad was an *imam*, they couldn't believe such a man could open his house so easily and how I could be so relaxed. Imagine how hard I worked to bring him to that level. I kept telling my friends that I had to knead him like a dough. We are 10 siblings, I have two older brothers. If my dad say something is black even if it is white, they would say yes father it is black. I tell him that it is white and I could tell him what color it is if he is not able to see it. My dad reacts but at the same time I know he is proud. Now when my younger siblings ask him his opinion before doing something, he tells them to come ask me. If there is a case of abduction [of a girl for marriage] he gives me the first word. I mean this is a place I earned by fighting. I am telling you calm and quite right now but he slapped me when I decided to take off the burka for example. And I didn't burn and destroy his beliefs when I was doing all this. Imagine, at his age he would just die if he knew the heaven and hell didn't exist. Remember I told you I was a devout person as well. But I started feeling the need to get a training. I proposed the friends to sen me to an ideological training. There, during almost two months, I felt like they knocked me into a cocked hat, especially in the classes about the history of religion or social history. I couldn't believe how the religions nullified women. I was the one who drove my *marmoset* (teacher) to the corner all the time because I couldn't or didn't want to believe what they were saying, so I was asking questions all the time to be convinced. In the feedback session (*platform*), there were people who finished university among them, the *mamoste* said I gave them such a hard time. I mean you have a world and suddenly it comes crashing down. You have gone through such suffering and you realize that all that was in vain. You suffered because of a man, because of what he thought was right, or what he believed in. And actually you didn't have to go through all this. When you realize there is no such thing as fate you break down. It is not easy. They asked me what I learned during the classes and I told them I had three things to

say: That I understood the Judaism dug the Woman's grave, Christianity put her inside and Islam poured cement on top of her. I continued my work actively after that. I took my senior high diploma. And my dream was to go to university if I didn't have to escape here. Who knows I still have that dream.

LH 12 Here there is no one to control and oppress you, no husband, no kids, no mother for example but there is the system that resists to keep you confined. To be free everyone needs to revolt

I am here in Europe since 14 years, first in France now in Germany. First came my husband, then I followed. Actually I thought of staying in Turkey. But the difficulties of life and trying to stand on your own feet...I could only do it alone three years. I have always been involved in women's branches and I was also involved with Peace Mothers (*Barış Anneleri*). I had a really good work environment. I felt freer and more comfortable. But then the life conditions made it difficult. I had two sons. The first one joined the movement at the end of the 1990s and the younger one a year later. My youngest one fell martyr. Until 1992 I was in Amed. I am from there. Well, we left there for other kind of difficulties, *Hizbullahkontra*²⁸¹. It was another exile, another escape. We had to go exile to the metropolis and the kids were really young. Since then I am living the life of an exile women with all its difficulties. Once you leave the place where you are born and grown up, the place you know as your country, your city you are not anymore yourself. You lose your connection with your territory with your culture. Until then I have left my city maybe once or twice to go travel. I left junior high in the middle but I have always wanted to be independent. Once you are uprooted it is really difficult to take shelter in another place. We lived the difficulties of coming to Istanbul. The pressures there. You run away from one place, then maybe you are not free but at least you

²⁸¹ Hizbullah, "The Party of God", or Hizbul-Kontra as known among the Kurds of Turkey found in 1979 in the Kurdish city of Diyarbakır as an underground organization, although in years its connections with people in the state's institutions proved that it was not so out of sight after all. Another proof that makes the case is that Hizbullah is represented by a legion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Turkey and its affiliated political party Hûda-Par. Hizbullah emerges with the objective of overthrowing the regime to establish Sharia-based Islamic state in its place. Yet not even once it had targeted the state and on the contrary even positioned as a paramilitary force in the first half of the 1990s when the fighting between the PKK Turkish state was at its most intense aiding the state to spread fear and terror in the Kurdish zone. Hizbul-kontra was responsible of many murders of Kurdish revolutionaries, and anyone involved in the Kurdish movement somehow, notorious with homicides with 'one bullet in the back of the neck' in broad daylight -the organizations signature- tortures and extremely violent methods of killing. As can be imagined, these were exceptionally hard and alarming times for women, who are seen as innately sinful in the misogynist mindset of the organization. This meant women were subjected to constant harassment and attacks if they are thought to be 'dressed incorrectly', seen talking with men or 'acted like prostitutes' in Hizbullah member's eyes. In these cases throwing acid on women or strangling them were common occurrences so it is understandable that women did not even want to go out in the streets for the fear of their lives.

live a healthier life, there are no death threats or you do not walk around feeling the fear of a bullet on your back. Those times were when at least two or three school teachers for assassinated out in the streets in plain daylight. During 1992-1994, they killed teachers at the center of the cities with one bullet in the neck. We came out from these conditions. On the other hand I had a son who was in the faculty of chemical engineering. But he could not submit to all the pressure and joined the movement. As a Peace Mother you also carry the heaviest burden. Mothers suffer the most because they loose their children. It does not matter who they are mothers hurt the same. Because you give up a piece of your own flesh. I mean ours was more like a relationship between two friends. When my son told me he wanted to join I told him to wait a little until he finished university. You see, if you are alive today it is because you learn how to see all of them like your own son. Then after the Leadership's captivity the younger one joined at the age of 16. I mean you do not know where to start the struggle. You have no other choice. You payed the hardest price of all what else will you do and not be free. I also was not that kind of a women who could consent to slavery. I have never seen myself that way and I never wanted to live through it. Especially if you are mother, then you deserve all kinds of freedom. Here liberty is, how do I explain myself, is not only the security of your life. Maybe here you live in better conditions, you do not feel the gun muzzles at the back of your neck or you don't have to worry if someone would come behind you to attack or rape you. But you can only be free if you are together with your own people You cannot really feel that here. I keep taking part in the associations and all. Struggle the same way I did in the past. But you do not find the same warmth. Even in a metropolis of Turkey you cannot feel the same freedom you felt in Amed. Whatever happens, back there it is your own territory, your own culture, people speak the same language with you, feel the same pain and happiness. When we came here we had no family. Liberty is not walking around in the streets. You live it in your soul, in your mind. I can walk around until midnight, who cares. You are only free if your territory is free, if your people is free, if your language is free. If they are bombarding your people today in Afrin, yesterday in Cizre, in Silop in Sur, your liberty ends. You can only be free when those territories are free. Women's liberty is also tied up to that. I grew up in Sur, now it is all gone. The streets that I grew up in are gone, now you tell me how am I supposed to be free. Here there is no one to control and oppress you, no husband, no kids, no mother for example but there is the system that resists to keep you confined. As a women, then you struggle with others against the idea of family, marriage or the so-called society. I mean in my standards I am a free women but I come to this Europe where I do not know its language, I do not know its roads, its cultures. You come here after a

certain age.... Then you look at *Jinwar* for example and see women who manage to be reborn after the war, together with the nature. But to be free, everyone needs to revolt. Or else, you cannot just be free by liberating a neighborhood. You have to see liberty in its integrity, including the nature, the women, the class. All of it.

LH 13 Here we forgot who we are, lost our humanity and we became robots

I never accepted the life here. And I do not want to do so, really. Our setting back there, the warmth, the people, everything was so good. We left all that and came here. Before we prepared all our foodstuff with things from our garden. Never bought stuff. We had our own cows, goats, we made our own milk, our cream. You know what, here we forgot who we are lost our humanity and we became robots. We do not visit even our friends anymore. There is no humanity. Nothing here. I do not want this place at all. In time we also became frigid like them. My first years I could not accept it, in time you get used to it but never accept it. If they tell me to go back today I would do it. I do not know... I do not want this life. This is no place for Kurds, really. All our life, our culture, it was so social. No one meddled in others business. It was a collective life. We cried together, we laughed together. We shared everything. If my husband would not have come here I also would not. After prison he had to. Or they would kill him. Many were killed like that. Then we came. Before that we had such a good life. My daughter was 20 days old when he came here. I had a really hard time when he was in prison, all alone in a big family. Two of their kids were also up in the mountains. It was a conservative family. They did not let women go our alone. When he was in prison I joined women's organizations. Then the family elders called me and told me that I could not go alone as their daughter-in-law. There were mother's of martyrs in the family. I said I would continue at all costs, if my husband have followed the same path. I mean when I was a girl my own family also believed in democracy. I told them I would not to come back even if they killed me. 'Your kids are young', 'Police will kill you somewhere' etc etc. I said I would continue. My daughter had grandmothers who took care of here. I continued going to congresses and all. So the elders saw that there was no way to stop me but tried anyways. So I wrote a letter to my husband in prison. And he wrote back to his family saying that they should think of me as his representative at home, that I could do anything he could do. So he cut them in. Then all the mothers in the family also started coming to demos with me and told me that I opened up the way for them or else they would still be at home. The men in my

husband's family, they were real obstacles. Women cannot do this, they cannot go there, even though there kids were fighting in the mountains. But I never gave up and told them never try to stop me. And they did not in the end. I never lacked them respect but I made it clear that in this respect I would not listen to them. When they came to our house to take my husband the special task forces were newly founded. They sent them first to South-East. The first time I saw them, you would not believe, they were ruthless giants. They handcuffed my husband. I told them not to beat him in front of my kids, who were really young then. They tortured him so much. Three times they sent me notices saying that he was dead. So that he would give in names. He did not. And that is when I respected him so much. I said I will also take the bull by the horns even if there is death in the end. I also had a brother who was a teacher, in those years when bombs exploded and they assassinated teachers. These were the 1990s. And the left wing- right wing fights continued. In my family no one got in the way of the women. I had a really comfortable life when I was a kid. In my family there was no difference between the boys and the girls. Then I got married. 'Women do not talk, they do what daughter-in-laws have to do'. I did it for seven years. My mouth shut. You come from such a family and end up in this one. My mother regretted so much letting me marry. My dad gave me to them because he loved my father-in-law. They engaged us before we met each other. My brother called my father to account. He said he was going to take her sister away. He said to my father they had to call in the guy and see if he is a leftists and if not he would never let this happen. And left my ring in my dad's hands. My father did not say a word. My brother called my future-husband, they talked. Then he told me that the guy is a leftists. And a good guy. I never wanted a husband of course. Not even a relative. In his family they did not like women, they humiliated them. I only saw this in my mother-in-law's family. My mom for example, the people in my father's family asked her for advice, they did business with her. I came to this family, the opposite. Then I started struggling with that. I also see the same thing here in Europe. The [Kurdish] women have been slaves both to men and the system. And it has not changed here. Some of the people here do not come from wealthy families, some of them carry that feudal culture. The [Kurdish] men were slaves too but they took it out on women at home. They got mad at the state, beat the women. Here in Europe you see these very conservative Kurds. They do not let their daughters go out nor do they send them to school. Really few of them do so. They take them to weddings but never to an association. Because they know that if they go to the associations they will open their eyes. And so the men will fall from grace. They also marry those girls at a very young age then when you ask they tell you that the kids were in love. How would they know what love is at that age. Some of them

run away because of that. Or they still ask for dowry. Still the same old dirty business. Or they take them from villages here to marry them. We try to stop these as women of course. I mean no democrat person would willingly come to Europe anyways. They know how Europe damps you down. I mean marriage also is a lot of responsibility. When you get married you become dependent on someone. I never wanted to get married, I would have been better off alone. This is what I mean when I think of liberty, not to be an encumbrance to anyone and not to have any yourself. When you are alone you can be both a mother and a father. Marriage brings you but slavery. The only thing men do here is to lay down on the couch when they come back form work and make you take off their dirty socks, feed them. Disgusting. You are better of serving the people somehow. Marriages are also changing but it is still the same.

LH 14 Liberty is the water. water flows as it likes, finds its own way, of course if they do not cut its way. But even then it will fill up and brim over

I came from Izmir. My siblings were here and they couldn't come back to Turkey. And I missed them so much. I always wanted to come visit but they told me if I came I couldn't go back. Also the police didn't leave us alone because of my sister's activities. They were listening to our phones, tailing us. During that time my husband fell ill, he had cancer and he died within three months. I was left alone and had to work for the kids. I started working at an attorney's office. When O got the news that my nephew fell martyr...The police was also informed about his funeral so they interrogated us, 'Where did the corpse come from? Why did he die?'. I mean we brought it back to our hometown how does it concern you? Then they cordoned off the cemetery so no one could go on. Our folks also did not want the youth to clash with the police for such a thing you know it is not a massive demo or nothing like that. The police could not cordon off the whole cemetery anyways but only a circle like 2km² . Then later on came the military to check the tomb because there was a picture of the Leader. As if you could put something else on a tomb. You sure do know, all these tombs they opened and broke to take out the bones. To top it off we call this a Muslim country. I mean you call the other one an infidel. Even those ones would not do that or cut the ears of corpses. Everything is fake here. As far as I know the God is your conscious. Then I can do anything and say the devil made me do it, do I lack reason? For instance, the guy kills a woman, 'But she did not cook!'. A man can do whatever he wants no matter where... Whatever, I digress. So, we came here with the kids. Of course with a lot of hardship. I never went to live with my relatives. My brother also told me to go to his house but everyone has their own life. Yes my

brother is a good guy but his wife could get bored. I wouldn't have felt comfortable there so we stayed at a *heim*. Then our papers were processed fast and we rented a house. My son never accepted, he said he wanted to go back over and over. You know what it is not easy to take care of male kids at all. Of course the kids have their own problems and you deal with them but thinking whether they could be addicted to drugs or do something wrong...Mine was a handful, headstrong. I didn't know what to do. Besides you have to work, you cannot just be with him all the time. You have to think about the future. Here, we had difficult moments but I suffered from my boy. The paper work is something you don't know that much in the beginning but I speak Arabic, Turkish, Zaza and Turkish so there was always someone who could translate at least to one of these languages. Then I learned how to do the bureaucratic stuff myself. I lived in Libya for eight years. It was such a good place, marvelous but now they are like beggars. My son was born there. They used to kill Kurdish businessman then, I don't remember how old I was exactly but my dad came back to our village. He left our hometown when he got married, around 15,16 or at most 17 years old. I was the only one born in the village the rest was all born in a different place. But I never had my share of the village, never lived there. My dad used to work in an American firm that provided electricity. My mom couldn't bear living away from home. So we came back. My dad was a chief electrician. He used to make all the installments in big or small buildings, the state house, the prison, all of them. Then he opened his own shop for water and electric installments. We went to live with him and after two years as we were about to go back to the village he comes across this land for sale with its hills and fields and whatnot. We had everything packed and he went to bring the car when he came back and told my mom to unpack that he bought a land. Then he made a house there and we lived four years in that house. The fifth year we moved to Istanbul. Because back then the doctor or the governor in the village told my dad that his name was on a death list of 130 people and told him to go away right away. My dad first did not give heed to it that much. But then he changed my age on my ID to make me seem older. Because he had applied to migrate to Australia or Hong Kong and they only accepted no more than four kids. So I needed to be older than 18 to not to be considered a kid. But before our papers were approved my father received a notice. At that time he was to go to *Dersim*, he was a member of the Workers' Party and they performed activities in villages. Then two really good friends of him came from Istanbul to visit him, so he decided not to go to the village that day. His friends who went, two of them died and one was wounded, you know from the bombs they used to place at the bridges those days. My dad never told us any of these things, we heard them later on from what his friends told us. Then we realized why

we had to leave. Then he got inscribed at a company and left to Libya at a moment's notice. Then he took me with him first. He used to take me with him wherever he went anyways for the fear he had of me getting involved in political stuff. They did not send me to school either. I even tried to suicide for that. When he left, he first gave me power of attorney and left me all his unfinished business. He had credits from banks, agricultural and commercial. I had to give orders for all the materials he sold and as you couldn't sell them at once you had to get credits. Anyways in a year or so I put everything in order, paid back the credits and went to join him. There you do not see anyone but the Arabs. I had a notebook with me all times. I used to, for example showed them the water, the glass they told me the words in Arabic. So there I learned Arabic very well, almost in six-seven months. There I also got married. I mean after 25-30 years I can only speak but I cannot read anymore. I even told my husband to talk to each other in Arabic so the kids could learn but he was indifferent to it. It would not have done any harm but anyways. I used to translate for him in his business but you know what men are really ungrateful. He spoke broken German but for example the clients told him how many m² would be the total construction and all and I wrote it all down on a paper and have it to him. He used to tell me not to look at the faces of the men. What was I supposed to do when they were talking to us? Turn my back to them? Maybe we should have placed cables on both sides of my head, they could talk on both sides, and then a loudspeaker on my head, perfect! That he would divorce me and leave me, my eye! In fact they do all these because they are powerless and try to cover it up with this shows of possession. For example if I died my kids would be miserable. They finished their schools, found a job and started families for me. There is this saying, 'I didn't eat myself to feed them'. I never went to a hairdresser to be able to put some money aside for them. You also need entertain yourself once in a while, go to a theater or whatever. Of course we never stopped doing things in the [Kurdish] association but you could not have go on holidays as you would like to. In Turkey we did not know what holidays was anyways. My husband in the beginning was jealous and he did not want me to work. But when we came back from Libya my Arabic was really good and many Libyans used to come buy furniture and transport it with freighters or bought gold. Many Arabs did their shopping in Turkey. And sometimes I was helping the shop-owners to communicate and I was offered many times jobs there. But my husband first said not in a million years. Well if you don't let me work, you have to meet all the expenses of this family! And there were the kids...

I started getting to know the Party really late. I was in Libya first then I came back to Istanbul, then moved to *İzmir* and lastly we came here. All the houses we lived in were in Kurdish

neighborhoods. I met the Party when my husband died. I used to go to demos and marches but not that much. My husband was also a partisan but not active in politics. We used to quarrel from time to time with him as well on this matter. He used to ask me where I was going leaving the kids alone at home. I mean in all the families where the man is not interested in politics or thinks differently this happens. They try to tie down women all they can. We would fight if I was not at home when he came back. And we did not live in a small place so the distances were not that short to go visit the associations even for a short while. When my husband died the MHP supporters hounded my son a lot. He was only 11, and they used to take him to their Party's congress in Ankara. And then when he came back home he started with all these questions, whether we were PKK members or not, or if we were Kurds. I had to tell him that we were just Alevi. I mean a small kid like that who knows what they could have done to him. If I was not working at the attorney's office worse things could have happened. Sometime the chief inspector of the police came to have tea. The attorney used to tell me 'Put some tea, *abla*, the head of the bloodhounds is coming'. Sometimes when my son was late to come back home I would find him at the grave of my husband. For me, eight o'clock was the limit, he could not come home any later. I told him I would leave him out in the street if he did so. We used to make the lists of the *pro bono* lawyers. Sometimes I saw cases of young kids who robbed grocery's at night. It also frightens you. You are working on one hand but imagine he could have wanted to have some adventure, like let's break that shop window. So I always had that fear. He says he will never forget how I told him to be back home at eight o'clock like a kid until he was 17. I prefer it this way rather than having to look for him in the courts. When we came here, I mean I do not know what liberty is, I had to work all the time, think about the kids' future. Sometimes I went to one of our women's associations, in the middle of the mountains where there is a river just to take a short break. I helped them when they had workshops for groups and women. I pulled through depressions. But pills do not work either. Neither laughing nor crying works. As they say, 'Either you leave this land or you herd this camel'²⁸². As you cannot leave this land you have to herd the camel, but gosh that camel is huge. Sometimes I prefer Turkey. When I go back I stay long. Here I had all the papers needed but they declined me nationality. I was working, I never asked for subsidies, I met all the conditions but there was this adjustment law, that you had to answer 30 questions out of 300. Imagine they put me off for eight years then they told me I was working for PKK and refused to confer me citizenship. I mean you ask me about liberty, how free can you be in these conditions. You wake up at four in the morning to go to work come back at

²⁸²Phrase commonly repeated by the Turkish fascists that means 'take it or leave it'.

three in the afternoon. I used to go to another city to work. Then you have to cook, do the laundries, the housework then you have to leave for work at four o'clock in the morning again. Liberty has many different meanings. Your mind, your words, your heart need to be free, you cannot just have only one of them. If for one word that comes out of your mouth you are accused then you are not free. If you cannot speak your language you are not free. If men can talk and when you do it is a crime you are not free. When you are bringing up your kids, your husband or whoever interferes all the time and tells you what to do with your son because he is a male and your daughter because she is a female, you are not free either. I mean freedom is not to put a bag on your shoulder and go shopping. I wish it was that simple. I have a young nephew once they organized an activity for the kids and they were asking them what liberty was. And he said liberty is the water. I liked it so much. Water flows as it likes, finds its own way, of course if they do not cut its way. But even then it will fill up and brim over. You cannot hold the water or the air. I do understand the men's psychology really. Maybe we didn't suffer that much but all these years we heard stories, read things, watched stuff on TV. So many women are being assassinated just because they went out alone or did not cook the man's favorite dish. And sometimes even women justify these killings. We are also signing women's death warrants ourselves. We do not ask ourselves why that woman acts the way she does. I mean then I will also pull out my gun and kill the men when I do not like what they tell me. When I say these things some women look at me in a weird way. But you hear how men get time off for good behavior just because they put a tie on when they go to the court case and say they lost control for a moment and they did not mean to do it. Men who have finished those universities also do the same. Believe me if I was a bit younger I would found a women only society just to punish men who killed women. I would do such things you could not even imagine! We have to put a stop to this. You hear stories everyday. It seems impossible to erase this patriarchal mentality. My other dream is also to live in a house with a garden now but no humidity! I suffered so much from it. I also want chicken in the garden. After the kids got married I thought to myself that I always lived for other people. My mom was sick so I did not go to school. I did everything for my dad. When my older sister got married at a young age I had to take care of my siblings, wash them, iron their clothes. Then it was my husband, then the kids. When I look back I cannot find anything I did it for myself. The life just passed away and I did not realize. Now I want to do something for myself. I was always paying attention to everyone else but where was I hidden all this time? Last year I went back to Turkey. A bit of sun did me so good, I came back as good as new. I will cherish myself from now on.

LH 15 Memory is also the imagination. You don't have to see a place, you can just feel it inside

We came here when I was in the 5th grade of primary school. For 6 months we were in the *heim*. Our papers were approved fast. I mean the *heim*²⁸³ was no place to stay either. Or maybe it would be the same for us if we stayed at homes. I mean you don't know the language, you have no friends. I was 12 then and a child in my opinion. But now you see the kids that age they are already adolescents and know more than they should. They don't play with dolls anymore, when I came here I did. You go to school but you don't understand anything. People talk around you and you just look. They also placed me in a special class for the foreigners who did not speak fluent German yet. All of them were from Yugoslavia, Albania and the gypsies. It was bad. And to my bad luck it was 45 min-1hour walking from the *heim* to school. Maybe there was a bus or something but we didn't know where to find it. My mom took me there for the first couple of weeks. It was also the middle of winter. You wake up at six in the morning and it is still dark and you have to go to school in that dark. Luckily we left the *heim* fast and rented a house. Then I started learning German and making friends. I only saw my aunt a year later. I have never met her before. Thank god we had lots of relatives who came visit us. At least you could say you had a family. Or you could go visit them. Back then we only visited my mom's cousins, or my aunt, until we had our own circle. Then we moved to another place, to a bigger house. When we came to Europe we discovered where the other Kurds hung out, where the associations were and started going there. We also went to the Alevi association. Sometimes to one, other times to the other. My mom worked in the kitchen of the association and took care of it. I took folklore classes in the Alevi association and gave classes in the Kurdish. As we were going to all the demos we were really active. A couple of years later we moved again. I was around 14-15, adolescence. Almost all my friends were Kurdish. Because I was free now. You know where you come from, you can speak your own language. You don't have to hold yourself back in your friend circle. Where we lived in Turkey for example I had no choice but be friends whoever was in my neighborhood. I could not say I did not want to hang out with X and go with Z, or I will not talk to this one because s/he is making fun of me. They were all from North of Turkey, from the same place. If you went against one you went against all. And you really were dependent on those friends because they are the only ones to play with in the neighborhood, at school.

²⁸³Heims in certain parts of Germany are collective accommodation centers for asylum seekers.

And at that age you could not go to other neighborhoods. We lived far away from downtown. No family would send their kids that far just to play. My mom did not let us go out in the street that much either, she did not trust. Here it is not like that, if one doesn't like to play with you, you can say all right then I will find other ones or make another circle of friends. So we started making friends with the people from the associations. We went to folklore classes, to theater classes. Then they open different courses and ask you to go. In the end you find yourself totally inside it. You get fed up with the culture you were once afraid of. My dad was from the Northeast of Turkey but all our family says we are from my mom's village. I had lots of friends from my dad's village but I never felt like hiding I was Kurdish here. Or when they came to our house they would see the Leaders portrait. Or two close friends, we would put on clothes like twins and write stuff on our shirts like '*Biji Kurdistan*' (Long live Kurdistan). If I did those in Turkey I guess they would lynch me. Right off. I had many Turkish friends as well but here it is easier for people to accept each other. I don't know why. I used to go to their house and see a Grey Wolf symbol and for a moment I would feel hurt but I would say to myself if they accept me like this I will accept them as they are as well. Because if that person does not mind eating my food and drinking my water in my house looking at the Leader's picture then I can do the same. I should not have such a problem. And as I said I had friends who had Grey Wolves, Three Crescents or whatever in their houses. We played the three wise monkeys, see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. Without doubt my mom would get mad at me if she knew there were those things hanging from the walls. Not because she did not trust me but more thinking if they would have done something bad to me. Or if my friends would have told their mothers they would have immediately shun us. We are anyways a cursed community by everyone. And on top of it there is being an Alevi. People talk non sense. I spent most of my time with those people but during holidays we were at the associations all the time. The activities, field trips, this and that, we grew up.

I pulled myself back when I got married because I was very involved before that. But there is something people do not understand, I was involved too much maybe, up to my nose before. Then you could manage it all because you did not have any responsibilities. I You know where you come from, you can speak your own language. You don't have to hold yourself back in your friend circle had to do only some stuff for school or worked every now and then but they were small things. I didn't have to tidy up the house or cook. Everything was ready when I was home. My brother was a difficult person. He still is. I joined everything as much as he let me go. But my brother was like, 'At 8 pm. you get back home!'. I remember once we

had a performance in a theater and my brother called me to tell me I had an hour to get back home. The place we were was minimum one and a half hours away with the train. And we hadn't even performed yet. I mean go figure! Or dare come late home! Then I called my aunt and she talked some sense into him. Anyways, I mean you pull yourself back once you get married because you have more responsibility. When I got married I was also working three shifts. I didn't have a kid but after working so much, cooking, cleaning, then comes the weekend visits... And I have my mom's side and my husband's side. You have to please everyone. Then people in the association started giving me attitudes. And you know what else, you can maybe make sometime for these things but in this community when you are single you don't stand out that much as once you get married. We talk about women's struggle and all but there are many backwards people in our environment. 99% of men are like that. Unfortunately. If I go to folklore classes or lead the demonstrations they will say look at the daughter-in-law of so-and-so. In my family there is no such thing. No one gives you a different treatment because you are someone's daughter or daughter-in-law. We value people for who they are. But once I got married I got into that mold. The Kurds who live in this city are very reactionary. Maybe because Alevis from my region are much more open-minded. But here they are all coming from those very religious communities. So when things are like that, even if you want to you can't go and sit with the youth in an association anymore. You have to join the women. Where I grew up we used to go in both groups we didn't differentiate if they were older or younger or called each other hollering from one corner to the other. Where I am now, dare call a woman loudly. My husband's mother is also active but no one says anything to them because they reached a certain age. Otherwise you have to watch out how you behave. I never thought what people would think of the way I dressed but when I came here I had to because they talk. When I think of it I am so glad to have grown up in a different surrounding, more relaxed. I mean I don't have to have a low-neck or anything like that I am free to put on whatever I like in my own house as well. My husband doesn't have those obsessions either. He tells me to dress up however I feel comfortable. For example, the other day we went to a house to offer condolences. In my family we don't do condolences in the mosque but when it is someone from my mother-in-law's family I put a scarf on my head just to show respect. I am not bothered by this because in those cases I might be the one serving the food, and I need to feel comfortable. So I wouldn't like to stand out like a sunflower in the middle. But when it is people outside the family circle I don't have to or feel like covering up. People started staring at me and it made me so uncomfortable. I am here to offer my

condolences not to pray or anything. Or they bought a building here, the upper floor is *kome*²⁸⁴, the association and the entrance is a mosque. It seems as if you put the two together. For Alevis this is not something you would prefer. What I mean, here there is an extremely religious group. We Alevis are not like them. Yes we have rites, like the *cem*²⁸⁵, but no one is forced to join. Or they make up commissions here and tell us to send someone to that commission so we can be informed about what different groups are doing and coordinate it. But if you send someone who doesn't wear a veil they react. This is a simple commission, a place to talk and take decisions. And sometimes to solve bureaucratic issues and you need people who speak German. And not every one who wears a veil can speak German. So if we talk about liberty, all these things I just told you mean I am not free because I have to live thinking what others think of me. Liberty is when you can think and act without feeling the pressure of the others, including your mom, your dad, your brother. Or know that if you are to wear a veil it is because *you* decide to do so.

Now I am more worried about my daughter's liberty. I want her to feel free. I want to leave her a peaceful world. I don't want them to be obliged to cry out for liberty, to go to demos all the time. I want them to live without thinking about being banned entry to Turkey or think it over what they share in social media. I want them to go to the associations just to dance and sing. I don't want them to have endless meetings over the ongoing war. I mean we are simply begging for peace right now. I want my kids to know about where their families came from, know about their villages. I don't know much about my dad's side because they didn't take care of us that much after my dad died. But I grew up with my grandpa and grandma from my mother's side. If you don't start the history from the grandparent then it loses its meaning. Sometimes I wished they were still alive so my daughter could also get to know them. At least I want them to remember who their mothers and fathers were. And not become Germans only with a foreign surname. I mean memory is also the imagination. You don't have to see a place, you can just feel it inside.

²⁸⁴Komel means association in Kurdish. Komels are the Kurdish associations where Kurds, especially the ones related to the Kurdish movement but not necessarily, meet to organize events, classes or simply get together.

²⁸⁵Alevis do not go to the mosque unlike the Sunni Muslims and their communal worship service is called a cem usually held in the evening. Women, men and children partake in the service together as there is no discrimination between sexes as it usually is for other Muslim branches. Cem ceremony consists of music, singing, ritual dances and sharing of food. This rituals had to be performed for a long time secretly as they were considered unorthodox and were subject of defamation, not so surprisingly through comments over sexuality and debauchery as women were involved.

LH 16 You realize that there is nothing you loose in the women’s struggle. To the contrary, you get a chance to make up for what you have lost in the past

I came here when I was 15, when I was a kid, an adolescent. Of course here it was really different for me, because I grew up in a village. I went to school until the 5th grade in Turkey. I had no ‘infrastructure’ as to say. Of course I suffered hardships. Because my mother stayed in Turkey and we came here. I have never seen my father until then. I started getting to know the revolution after my thirties. My husband has always been involved but I was the one who objected...You are Kurdish but a passive one. You are not a patriot. My brother’s involvement also had an impact on me. I was attracted by the Kurdish women’s movement because you see yourself but you are passive, you just watch what is happening. But you also ask yourself, what am I missing? How do they struggle? It was hard to change after 30 years old because you know in a feudal family structure, in a conservative family...It wasn’t that much but you know supposedly there is a culture, traditions in which the daughter equals to family honor. And the girls are married off to other families. I grew up like this. I had zero self-esteem. Also you come here after so many years, get to know your father. There was a distance between us. Sometimes it is hard to put in words what is in your heart...I got married when I was 23 and right after I became a mother. I was wearing a veil. After you get to know the movement you also start building up a conscious, ask yourself why you are wearing this. Or why Islam, one of the three biggest religions, downgraded women? By wearing this we are also backing up this male-dominant mentality. In a way we are playing into their hands. As I am a Muslim I get caught up in the religious part of course. Or try to develop my ideas around it. There is nothing about women in it. You destroy a person. Just to bring into being your male-dominant system you destroy a human beings body. I am really glad I met this movement. That I realized my own existence. I don’t think it is late. But I want to progress fast, to make up for the things I lost in the future. Jineoloji for example, makes us realize we exist as women, even in this male-dominant system.

Well, my mom was a typical Kurdish woman. She didn’t take an interest in her kids. As she lived in a village she was passive, she couldn’t have done much even if she wanted to. People see a woman who is a little bit vigorous, who knows what she wants with a different eye. So she cannot bring that side out even when she wants to. Or they are not even aware of their potential as they also have grown up in this male-dominant system. I am clashing with that now for example. My mother came here after a certain age, so it was late for her. The Leader’s phrase for example, ‘If you reach 30 and you are still the same, you lived your life in

vain'. What do I mean by change, getting rid of the feudal mentality, those habits. It took me two years. It hasn't been easy. Because you don't only think for yourself but think about what your kids, your father, your husband, your family will say about it. It is hard to break the routines. But once you start the rest follows. Before it was hard to be in the same space with men, sit on the same table, drink or eat with them. Or say something over their ideas wasn't that easy. But we learned that with a bit of self-confidence you can manage. I learned to take initiative. For a woman, revolution is being able to act outside the family, to wage a struggle. You already run a household so it is the struggle outside, its confines that is a revolution for women. In our last meeting we were talking about our problems with women who identify ourselves as conservatives. And I told them that the real problem is that we are not aware of what liberty is or don't want to think about it. I guess we retreat or we can't confess it to ourselves. You are not honest to yourself. Well, because if you do so you know you will detach yourself. For example my relations also changed a lot. You realize that blood ties don't mean much. Someone willing to walk with you and take part in organized struggle is much more important. Because if you don't share anything in common...this organization also wants us to have strong family ties but if you don't think the same way you break away. I don't see life as something material, as they say, first realize that you are human, live your life that way and the rest is easy. Well, you also realize that there is nothing you loose in the women's struggle. To the contrary, you get a chance to make up for what you have lost in the past. I don't want to think of being a revolutionary in simple terms of woman-man relations. If a woman can resist against injustice or a mentality then that alone is revolution. I mean back in the country, it is hard to be a woman. You cannot even go to the doctors alone, they tag along a boy even though he is much younger. I mean, some kind of honor thing. I used to say before that I would move back to a village in Kurdistan but the more you see how women are oppressed and lack a conscious you say I am better off here. Here it is not that good either but you have more chance to act freely. It is true, once you look around you see that the women have all gone nuts with shopping. You see the lines when the sales start. They don't realize how consumerist they are. When you think of liberty it is seen as having a car, a salary, or the ones who don't work receive money from their husbands. You have put a limit to your idea of liberty, and you cannot go out of it. Women don't have a voice in family matters. You give life to your kids, but don't have no say on them. Even among us there are male comrades who haven't accepted women's liberty. We gave Jineoloji workshops and there were only four, five men. Because they are afraid. They treat well the women in the streets but at home the feudal, male-dominant mentality prevails. Then you ask yourself how that friend can still take part in

an assembly. I call those families and homes F-type²⁸⁶. The man set up a system, he has the money and tells the women she cannot do anything but what he says, she cannot go out the door without him. And in reality the woman is not trying to overthrow this. Men, husbands they need to work and bring home money, this is the norm. My family thinks I went astray. Especially my father, he was totally against it. He said what it was to me to save the women. And imagine I am only part of an assembly, I am not doing that much. And even that I cannot do it as I want to because of the kids and all. When I took off my veil he called me an infidel. I took this decision with my husband's support. I also read a lot of religious history books to understand what a headscarf meant in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The Jews found it and we keep using it, and these two are supposedly enemies! Or in Arab countries you understand the function of it, that it protects you from the sand but why do we wear it here? It is just to keep women under control. You also see the first thing ISIS did was to force women to wear burkas. The day my brother died I took off my veil. Otherwise I wouldn't dare it in life. I mean we all play the roles that other people shape for us. I for example learned from my mother that a girl cannot laugh, shout, she has to be well-behaved and keep silent, and with my father I learned that what you think is wrong even when it is not. I started becoming a person my father wanted me to be. It is easy to find yourself if you want to. I think my daughters will also follow my path but I would like to see the change in my son. We need different men in this male-dominant mentality ruling the world. His father doesn't have that feudal mentality either. Our village had reconciled with this system long ago, there have been almost no wars. It is a relatively richer area. I mean we don't even have our own culture anymore [in Turkey] we are all 'European'. The people who are engaged in agriculture are considered backwards. I long for it here. They don't want chickens saying they soil the garden or cows because they are too lazy. When I was 10 we used to do do all our milk and cheese, now nothing left. Before you only needed money to buy clothes. Women used to prepare the wheat, the lentils. Before we used to plant one year lentils and the next year left it fallow. Lentils don't tire the soil. But now they harvest three times a year and all that with chemicals! Now they don't even make bread, and the village has 100 houses most, imagine! The transportation is easier now and they all think life will also be easier. But they don't realize that it takes away all of their identity. They think once they have money everything is OK. They think I am backwards because I live in Europe but I am not pretentious like them. This is the state's policy to assimilate the people. Not only them, you also see the Arabs and Turks that have been brought

²⁸⁶High security closed Institutions for the execution of sentences in Turkey. They are notorious for ill-treatment and torture as well as isolation of the convicts.

there years ago. They are also assimilated like us. If you hear the way they speak Turkish for example it is really different. They speak a Turkish-Kurdish and we speak a Kurdish-Turkish. I mean the history is erased as well, now it is all under water. Just like what ISIS did in Palmyra. So, even that far away my brother from the village calls and lectures me because I took off my veil. Including the women of the village, they do the same! I mean we have difficulties in understanding each other. I think that's the worst. They are women having male-dominant mentalities. The struggle is to be able to recreate women. Jineoloji for example, we are thinking of building academies but how should that be? I guess with sharing the never-before-seen sides of women, and tell the things you have never told anyone before. Here in Europe you can act freely up to a certain point, like an open prison. I mean this is what understanding the revolution is. I mean, here I change all the furniture, there I refurbish my home all over...because the system provides you all these. You can also go to Turkey and buy some gold and all that. But when you understand the revolution, you feel like you are a tied animal you think you take a step forward but the rope pulls you back. I mean you want to do lots of things but this system doesn't let you. I mean these are the things that attach us to this system and we are not aware of this. The ones who realize this will leave it for good. I follow the news about *Jinwar*, your heart grows bigger! It is like those places you should see before you die. I would like to visit it one summer. I mean it seems a bit hard to do it hear, to build that unity and atmosphere. Imagine what they have created out of the debris of the cities, the collective life and the system built in Rojava, that all the states are against now. Here... I read a book called 'Ma Ülkesi' (The Land of Ma), a bit like the stories of the witches. There is a place with a male-dominant system, it is a kingdom. The women dig up tunnels that lead to a heavenly place, where they educate young girls and train them to be warriors. Because in this country the king knows before a baby is born if it is going to be a girl or a boy and if it is a girl they kill it. A mother learns she will have a daughter and secretly takes her to this place. Then she becomes a warrior and all that. A friend of ours in prison wrote this book. In reality it is about the women's struggle. A community of women creating a heaven-like place in the face of the male-dominant mentality. They win in the end. But here we don't totally believe in ourselves, that we can do this.

LH 17 Back then doing things myself, and for myself was my understanding of freedom. Now i think it is when a woman can say out loud her own opinion, form that opinion in free-will

I have always seen myself as a rebellious character. Even when you grow up here as you come from a Kurdish family you always position yourself against the men's world when you are growing up. Imagine even compared to your brother you are inferior. My dad comes to the Netherlands at the beginning of the 1970s. We are from *Diyarbakır* originally but my grandfather emigrated to another Kurdish city later on. Our tribe is quite big, with 7 clans. I grew up in the city. That place in the beginning wasn't considered to be a city at all in the old times. It is a place with a lot of oil. My grandfather was a merchant. He worked together with gold stores. Then buys a hotel, becomes partner to other stores. He was a hardworking guy but my dad wasn't like him. When he dies they lose all of this. My father was a manager in a marketplace, he didn't have to do much. A perfect job for him. With the enthusiasm of being young he applies for migration to Australia when my grandfather was still alive. Back then there was a possibility like this. But my grandfather refuses. My dad tells him in such a way that he gets afraid, that it takes one month to get there by boat. Then he gets accepted to the Netherlands. I am not sure if he also had some problems back there. Stories like blood feuds and stuff, the Kurdish reality, the male-dominant mentality and life...They are from the same village with my mom. They have an arranged marriage but I think it is different in villages. It is not like the big cities. In the village I am sure they have seen each other before and the families also agree. My mom was an oppressed woman like any other Kurdish woman. When my mom was born my grandfather dies. They always say that my granny was a really beautiful woman. So when he dies, the son of the *agha* of the village wants to marry her. My granny doesn't want it because she had married her husband for love. There are my two aunts, my mom and her [the granny] youngest son. But they force her to. Her uncle tells her that she cannot live alone as a woman. The same old story. She gets pregnant but dies in labor of a broken heart. So this last one becomes an orphan. My aunt tries to adopt the baby but she has also lost her mother. I mean how much can you do in village conditions. So the baby dies. Then my aunt gets married for 10-15 years. But the guy she gets married to is not a 'man'. I mean he is transgender. And when he dies they force her to get married again but she says nay, she was frightened once. She has never told it to anyone. She is a rebellious woman. But they force her to get married. And they discover she has been a virgin all this time when this second guy fires the gun up in the air at their first night. The woman is always steered according to what the society the family thinks. What she wants, what she thinks is never taken into account. Listening all your life to these stories create a certain resistance in you. I think my husband suffers a lot with me because of that. Because he also came from quite

tribal and conservative town. I grew up here so it was clear for me that I could be a woman but I could think as well. He is not from such a conservative family but of course here it was different for him when he came with me like 25 years ago. When we first got married he told me to wear a veil, I said no. I told him I would even go to the beach in a swimming suit. He did not get married to me for economic motives. There were guys like that who thought 'I will make my way to the Netherlands if I get married!' with dollar signs in their eyes. My husband was a really good friend of my father, my father was also like a father, uncle to him. We are not relatives but his mother is from our tribe. I have always said I would get married only to someone who is not from tribe, neither a relative...I learned this after we got married. We didn't get to know each other well either. Once I went back for holidays, I saw him and we got engaged. You are here, he is there. Kind of like an arranged marriage. If my granny hadn't passed away at that moment we could have got to know each other a bit more. I would ask him to meet and talk outside home but in a house in mourning it would be improper. When we got married it was those years that *Hizbullah* got 40 thousand if they shot a Kurd from the waist down, 60 thousand from the waist up, and 80 if it was a head shot. There was a polytechnic school and they murdered so many people in its patio. In my wedding I only wanted Kurdish songs but whenever the military police approached we switched back to Turkish music. You would hear stories of people being killed one during breakfast, another one at lunch time another one at night. We couldn't go out. But I would bring together all the houses in the building to have a 'picnic' on the rooftop, to have a chat. One day the other women started saying 'Duck down! Duck down!' and I didn't understand. You see with my 'Dutch' mentality I felt so free there and didn't put on a scarf. But for *Hizbullah* a woman without a scarf is a target. Or once we were on the balcony and told my sister-in-law to look at a woman in burka in the street. I thought she had a baby in her arms and told my sister-in-law she was going to suffocate the baby in those heavy clothes. She said 'Stop pointing! That's not a woman, that's a hit man with a Kalashnikov wearing a burka!'. Or there used to be clashes from ten at night until one-two in the morning. All of us in one house hiding. I was newly wed so I used to cry all the time feeling sorry for myself. The ones who lived there got used to it. They would continue talking. The kids would hide in wardrobes between the sheets and the quilts. What I felt there was that my people were being killed like cats and dogs in the streets. You would hear the drunk soldiers singing in the streets. Like a psychological war. Or warplanes at five in the morning flying really low on top of the city. The first time I heard one I jumped out of the bed. Then I got used to it as well. I mean someone who has never lived through these things goes there to live... Or another time we were out on the rooftop and I

pointed out the lights thinking they were fireworks I said how beautiful. And the people told me these were the lights of the clashes. I felt so stupid.

There weren't many Kurds at that time where we lived [in the Netherlands], and with the ones there were our ideas weren't compatible. My dad was bickering anyways all the time, a guy who told me not to talk to Turkish guys. With that mentality imagine what he thought of the Dutch. He was a really feudal man. He was a sweet man but when it came to women he restricted everything. Of course he couldn't say that much to me because I conquered my territory by resistance but he subjected my mom. I mean you cannot also act the same way you would act back in Turkey as a man...Here there weren't the conditions of that. In our village women lived a highly controlled life. When they saw a man they had to close their faces with their scarf but when they were at home with their fathers they could smoke. You ask yourself how is that even possible? My sister, my granny wouldn't eat with my father. I mean I couldn't survive in those conditions. Here you go to school, see a bit of the world and understand a bit more. My dad has decided to go back in the 1980s. He took us with him and left us with the youngest brother of my mom. Then he went back again to work for another year so he could buy a house and pay his debts. I guess after that one year he couldn't do it. Then he took along my mother and younger brother but left me there. Because I was a girl, I had to get married so what was to point of taking me back! You see why I am combative. When we were in the village my mom got ill and had to go to the capital because where we were the hospital didn't have enough materials and the hygiene conditions were bad. Me and my brother who haven't seen the family before were left alone there. It was hard. I was living with my older brother but I hadn't seen him for 15 years either. There were no phones. We used to send tapes. Like the voice messages of Whatsapp now. My dad used to record so many to send with people who went back to Turkey. He sang *klam*, he had a strong voice. My family was a patriotic one. In the 1980s my brother was arrested. The worsts years. We couldn't find out where he was for months. If my dad wouldn't be working here and helped us I don't know how we would survive. The first day my brother was back home his face was so pale. He was a sportive guy. After that he couldn't do anything. As I grew up here I didn't know any Turkish when I went there. For a year I went to school but I didn't like it. I could have studied but I didn't want it. I was 12 or so. Then they wanted to marry me but I resisted and didn't. I was a pain in the neck. I told them I would commit suicide. And I know I would. I told them either they send me back to the Netherlands or else! I could understand even then that a 12-13 years old girl cannot marry although the adults told me that I reach the age of

marriage. I grew up here, I mean. At last I came back. I knew that some of my reactions weren't right but I had no other way. If I had accepted that life I would have 12 kids now. When I came back here my dad sent me to an all-girls school. I said whatever at least he sends me to school. I mean it was obligatory anyhow. When I was there [in Turkey] my older brother had my back all the time. At a certain point you also needed that. I never contradicted him. He was my life guard. He is the most enlightened person among us. And he would never try to restrict someone because of their gender. But the conditions in which he lived was different and he couldn't go beyond those that easily. I mean I had realized that. He told us that we would be different if we lived in Ankara, you are different here and in the Netherlands it would be another thing. He acted in the nature of things. And even the I was different in the family, I didn't cover up my head, never. I mean it is as if I had put a circle around and no one could come further. But I was obliged to do some things. My brother told me not to wear trousers because people found it strange. I mean you have this super make up on but you cannot wear trousers. Which one is more eye-catching? The day we were to come back to the Netherlands, first we went to Antalya. And the minute we reached there I took off the long skirts and put on my dress. I told to myself, 'Girl you did it!'. I was different among the Kurdish girls here. Those girls, for example would put on trousers underneath their skirt and I didn't. When I came back here I knew that once I reached 18 my father wouldn't be able to control me that much. I mean what I wanted was to be able to stand up to my father's feudal mentality and not because I was thinking about staying up all night in discotheques or I would move out to my own house. But you think you can change certain things. At 18 I took my driver's license. I am the first one among the Kurdish girls of my region in the Netherlands. My father said he would never get in my car but I did it anyways. Or the first time I had my Dutch passport my father went mad. He said, 'Now you are a Dutch or what?!'. I told him I still spoke Kurdish and I wasn't Dutch. I mean I am happy to integrate. Wherever you go you learn the culture, the language but you don't have to turn into that. It is just to act in a way that is respectful when you are in their environment. I don't think of it as assimilation. Then I went to a teacher-training college. I was already married and with a kid then. I insisted to go to school. But then I didn't work as a teacher because my husband was working long distance and he wasn't at home for five days. And I had a small kid. I was a model for other girls and that's what I wanted to be. To encourage them to change their lives. I helped them a lot like translating job contracts for them. I was the parent of all the new-comers at school. Many families had like seven, eight kids but most didn't want to send girls to school so they wouldn't go astray. I helped those girls to study. Then I got my translator's certificate, that one

when I was married as well. Back then doing things myself, and for myself was my understanding of freedom. Now I think it is when a woman can say out loud her own opinion, form that opinion in free-will. I mean they are being steered by the man or the father as if they are little kids. What is real freedom? It is to act freely in your workplace, in the society at home. But now we can see the change. Now for instance a male friend from our community calls me when he needs something. And my husband doesn't open his mouth. You see a progress. Obviously this didn't change only with my efforts. Before women also didn't trust themselves. You wouldn't shake anyone's hand or look them in the eye before. Now women and men work together. I mean I always thought of Turkey as a backwards place. But now I think the women there are much more conscious. I wouldn't maybe say this in the 1990s but now you see their awareness. They might wear headscarves but they go to school, they read a lot, they know how to express their thoughts and discuss. I feel like they are much more advanced than I am now. Well, here for example you see how the Kurdish men are as well. The guy is divorced but still has the nerves to barge into the woman's house unauthorized just to prove his 'manliness'. We keep saying that these people need to be exposed and isolated from the assemblies, the community. That is why it is very important for us for the women to have their autonomous institutions, do you know what I mean? So that women can have a world where they don't have to constantly prove themselves against the men. So she learns she can do anything alone once she is able to get divorced. Or get out of those houses where they are confined so they would never see how the real world is, where they have to take care of the kids, clean cook. There you have to prove yourself to your in-laws. But once a woman breaks loose this turns the men crazy!

LH 18 At eight I had to go to hospital for broken ribs because my dad beat me. I had a son from a guy who tried to stab me. I worked in 'man's jobs' to raise my son who today stands by my decisions. The problem is not only the violence but also feudal stuff. I think *you* are the one to break up the constraints no matter where and how you grew up as a woman

I live in the Netherlands since I am four years old. We are four girls, two boys in the family. And then there is my psycho father and my mother. My grandmother used to live with us as

well. She was a figure who wore three *fistan*²⁸⁷ on top of each other and golden chains on her headgear. Our family migrated from *Dersim* to *Erzincan* but no one talks about our family history at home. Because I believe my poor grandmother was an Armenian woman. I never met my mom's parents. We were never brought up with Kurdish identity. Only my parents spoke Kurdish with each other. Other people thought bad of the Kurds. But I was curious so I did some research. I started in order to prepare an archive for my sister's kids because she told them we were Turkish. My dad served in the Korean war when he was young. And of course he has traumas because of that, what we call post-traumatic stress. Very unfortunate. But his traumas affected us as kids. My father used to beat me since I was a child. At eight I had to go to hospital for broken ribs. I told the family doctor he beat me, and asked them to send either him or me to a psychologist. In the end they did. Before the Europeans used to say that, I mean this was the end of the 1970s, it was our culture, that our families beat their kids as part of the traditions. An example; I was seeing a psychologist every week but continued being beaten by my father. He used to beat me with a belt and put me in his room. He would lock me in and go to the coffee house. He externalized his traumas this way. But one day he told me something without realizing how this changed my thinking and opened my eyes. He told me that if you have your own money you will never look into the hands of a man to survive. And he was right. I started working when I was 13 and never left school. I mean my dad has Alzheimer now. He could have constructed a much better relationship with me but I am not the one to judge him. What he thought me was to treat my own kid in a different way. I used to ask my mom how she could still hold his hand after he beat her. I found him disgusting. I keep telling my mom that she made a mistake by continuing with that man. She could have chosen us over him. But I don't judge her. She was also an isolated woman who have grown up in a different environment. Of course understanding doesn't mean I agree with her decisions. Because I have also been in bad circles but I made my decisions with my conscious, with my moral values. My mom could have done the same thing but she chose my dad's love. Or maybe it was the money or the idea of having to take care of six kids alone...something made her choose. When I was in the same situation I only thought of my kid. Both of them worked. My dad, when his head hurt he would take it out on us. Once I started earning my own money I started living outside. My circle was also different. But if I bought something for myself I would definitely buy another one for my mother. I was young, for example I bought a stereo and bought another one for my mom. I did the shopping for her. I was suddenly rich. I used to work in the marketplace. Then I found out there was a nursery

²⁸⁷A traditional pleated and printed long cotton skirt or dress very common in Anatolia and in the Balkans.

course and in three months I started working in a hospital, washing the bodies of deceased people. It paid very well. In my family there was no difference between man and woman. We are Alevis. On the other hand my father was a radical, for example in my house people drank, and once he gave me a shot of *rakı*. In weddings or festivities he called me to give me a glass, he liked it. But he didn't like seeing me in a dress because it revealed my body. My older sisters suffered much more for sure. It wasn't only the violence but also feudal stuff. I broke that circle, I was quite hyperactive. I didn't come home. My sisters couldn't have done it. I wouldn't come for two days. I would tell him he had no right to control me anymore because I was old enough. I told him I would come home whenever I wanted, I was earning my money as well. I rented a garage like place and turned it into a house. I mean I am also a mother and I think *you* are the one to break up the constraints no matter where and how you grew up as a woman. I am also aware that this is an insurrection for our women. Some people don't like me for saying there but I also say it when men are around. Our family was kind of...they supported *Kemalism*. I mean not that they knew much but it was around the time they left Turkey and they didn't want to see how the country changed. They tried living with the same mentality they came with here looking at life through blinders. Because they left in the '60s. I repeat, you need to be the first one to stand up if you want to change your own environment. When I look at my family, my uncles live in Turkey but all their kids are in the US. They usually work in trading textile. My uncle's daughter for a while was a member of a party. I guess it was HADEP, I am not sure. We were born the same year. When we were around 19 she worked as an accountant. I went to visit and that's how I got to know the movement. Now she is married and with kids and she has nothing to do with the movement anymore. I tell her I don't like the way she changed. She is better off in the struggle. In reality, I had never seen Turkey before that. I started traveling when I was 17, and I was kind of radical. I first went to Nepal. There was a project at school then to help the kids with special needs there. Living there changed my life. I mean when you come back seeing water coming out of a tap instead of running naturally seems weird to you. I mean this a really simple example. It is like going to Istanbul after you see Diyarbakır. And one day I thought Istanbul would be a nice place to see. Once I went there I thought I was in a different world, manifestations everywhere, people in the streets. I was surprised with all that, looking at the political posters and all. And thinking the rights they are asking here already exists there [the Netherlands]. It was the beginnings of the Kurdish movement. I became really good friends with my uncle's daughter. When I came back I started reading some books but it is not the same to be there and live it yourself, to be gassed, to see the women throwing their headscarves to the youngsters in the

streets so they can cover their faces or young girls handing people lemons to clean their eyes. First of all, everyone was in the streets claiming their rights and what they were asking was very simple. Hundreds of Alevis were also being laid off. I have never been brought up like a religious person but it seemed absurd to me that they were dismissed for their difference. So when I was younger and active I had posters of Che Guevara on my wall but I also wore yellow, red, green all the time. My father called terrorist to *Apocular*. And I told him I wouldn't go to his house as long as he has the portrait of Atatürk there. So once I made a poster of my grandfather's picture and sent it home. So he would put that one on the wall and I would stop wearing yellow, red and green when I went to his house. I have also been arrested many times here and now I cannot go back. But I cannot upset myself for that. I see no reason. And I feel like compared to all the mothers who sent their kids to fight I have no right to be upset. Also I am very aware that here life is very different than there. I mean look around the world. When there is a football match the women are raped, when there is a war, a religious celebration, whatever happens women are raped. There was once a football match in South Africa and they were discussing to out a device in women's vaginas that locked down on the men's penis if they tried to rape them. That time I objected saying that why they had to operate women but didn't do anything to men? But of course if you don't change the mentality it is all the same. But unless people can take their own decisions and have their own institutions this is also very hard. Look at the EU Parliament and tell me how many women are there. I mean that is why they want to do away with Rojava because of what women are achieving there and the life being built is not compatible with capitalism. It really is not! I really like it when people are interested and talking about it here as well. For example this *jineoloji* is discussed in so many places I wouldn't think of, in universities and well-known writers write about it. And they all say the same thing, Europe is afraid of the revolution in Rojava because it is against capitalism and more than that it offers a philosophy of life. I mean every thing that is against capitalism is being destroyed anyways. Mandela for example. What did Mandela do? He asked for the blacks and whites to live equally and served 27 years in prison. Or see how they did a revolution in Cuba? And for four years they were educating every one there. I mean, yes, there were people who were hang...but anyways. Or how there was a revolution in South Africa. How there had been one in France once. And imagine the Netherlands, it was in 1918 when they hang a women, for the last time...

Anyways, I was very active when I was in Turkey. In the meantime I met someone and in three months I got pregnant. But I thought a bit and it was impossible to be with him. Because

in such a short time, he looked like a good person, but I realized I was isolated. He spoke ill of the people I knew trying to make me spend all my time with him. Or he told me he didn't want me to work. I called over his father and brothers and told them that this guy is good during the day, then he starts swearing and using violence, and that I couldn't be with this man. I told them to take him away and do whatever they wanted with him. Yes I had a baby in my belly but I was sure I could take care of it. I mean I had no choice. He was asking me what I did in Europe before meeting him, with whom I was in Nepal. Questioning my previous life. I thought my dad was a psycho and this one is too. I told his family. His family said it was normal in their family to love someone but also beat them. My dad said the same thing. I also told him if he ever came close I would defend myself. That I would never let him see my kid. Well only when you go to therapy, learn how to treat a woman, how to deal with aggressiveness, go to training. If you don't then I am sorry. I also went to a state's attorney. Because I brought him to the Netherlands. And right after I took him to court. I told the attorney that his decision would also not stop me. See, he wore a suit in front of the judges, next to his translator pretending he has no idea what is going on, acting like an ideal husband. I told them I would bring up my kid and when he is 13 then his father could see him and the state could do a follow up to check if I was a good mother or not. But he had to go to training. I was in that four walls alone with him, no one else. And the sociologist there wrote in the report, 'The man thinks that the woman is very radical because of his culture'. Imagine what the guy who tried to stab me although we slept together, would do to my kid. I am glad I have seen what I have seen in my own house before. I told my family as well that if they wanted to be grandparents they could but once in a while. When my kid was 13, there was another trial. I asked if he went to a formation. No. He got married to a Dutch woman, and supposedly had changed. I never told my son anything. I just told him that his dad wasn't the right person for me. I put a lot of effort to raise my son. I was working in two jobs at the same time. And they were 'men's jobs'. I worked in a lot of things anyhow. Being a firefighter for example. I did that job to help my own community. When there is an accident if someone tells you '*Eri, eri*' (kurd. 'Yes, Yes') or something in Turkish, in your own language it calms you down. I thought I could help people in their own language. My son also knows how active I am in the women's movement. He stands by my decisions. I told him he should bring her girlfriends home instead of sitting secretly in a bus stop or wherever. But also told him that if he brought a friend home he couldn't bring another one in three months. If he would, I would ask myself what I did wrong. I raised him differently. He has nothing like the 'manliness' of his grandfather or father. If I had stayed with that guy my kid would have seen him beat me and I

would have gotten in the same bed with him anyways. So the kid would think, aha then I can also love a girl but beat her. Of course I didn't limit how many girlfriends he could have but having a relationship needs an effort.

I mean I am not suggesting that all women are good either. The Kurdish men also went through really bad things in the villages, that maybe we don't even bear to hear about today. There are stories like that. So what I mean is that it is not only the men who do harm but women as well. It doesn't matter if it is in the middle of Europe or in a village in Turkey. I don't differentiate between men and women as human beings. But it is true that people who say they follow Apo's philosophy also discriminate women. That is why we sometimes have difficulties to progress. Because these people exist among us. I mean after I took training on gender the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. When we studied women's history. Our women fighters are one of a kind for example. I mean of course there were the *Tigers*, their women guerrillas as well but our women have a distinct philosophy. But I also see how women in my family think. I have a sister for example. She is more active in the Alevi association here. I tell them Alevism is a philosophy, you take the hood of it but you need more. For example she tells me, 'Well the woman in Africa should not give birth to so many kids then'. I tell her that those women are raped and they don't have kids just because they want. Then she says they should operate their uterus. I mean that is not a solution. You need to change the patriarchal mentality. We need to advance so much more. But you cannot force people to think either, then they become depressed. They have a hard time accepting the realities in this world. I mean it might be a cliché but my first 'revolution' was with the book 'Sophie's World' and the second one was when I got to know the movement. I mean I don't mean with this, the movement, that all we want is a Kurdistan there. For me being Kurdish is to have your own will, to have moral values, to be conscious and do good for your community.

LH 19 My mom was the person who brought together the whole neighborhood, no matter their ethnic or religious identity. It was such a neighborhood that in houses there were posters of Atatürk and portraits of Hz. Ali in one room, in another Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, and the other had Mazlum Doğan, Abdullah Öcalan, Kemal Pir

Our neighborhood was where all the leftist groups nestled. I am talking about families in which each person was from a different one, you see. There was people from *Karadeniz* (Northern Turkey) or *Ege* (the Aegean Coast), every one learned something from each other.

We are the first ones to come up with popular assemblies, I am telling you the truth. My mom was the person who brought together the whole neighborhood, no matter their ethnic or religious identity. But she was a woman who couldn't go to school and left in the village. She was also *beşik kertmesi*²⁸⁸. You know all these feelings of being mistreated all the time. She learned how to read and write later on and put her diploma on the wall. She was totally crazy, really. In our culture you cannot tell the visitors to leave for example. But she did. Her brother and his spouse would come and my mom would ask them, 'Why did you come now? I need to go out'. And they would say they weren't there to see her anyways but her husband. And my mom would say 'OK then' and leave. Or she shut the door to their face, like 'You were here just yesterday, why are you here again?!'. I think she was mad at her brother as well because she couldn't go to school because of him. Anyhow, she used to tell us that in her village they would understand right away when the militants came to which group they belonged to from the way they acted. For instance, the *partizanlar* or *devyolcular* or see who wanted to go up in the mountains to fight or not. 'If one came and started milking the animals or rolled up the sleeves to work, because it was hard work the village life, we knew they were *partizan* because they know the way we live in these lands', she said. 'But when a *devyolcu* came, they were usually city kids but they had a few in them who wanted to come and learn and help us. Or if they looked upon as we would say aha these are from the Turkish left. They scorned at the villagers. When PKK came, we said these are religious fundamentalists, if they rule they will cut us into pieces, kill us and we were afraid. But when you hear some speak *Zaza* then you said OK they are from us'. Those types, the Turkish Left who scorned people also are here. Once they asked me to go to a reception. And there is this big shot who founded an association here. Many people respect him and all that. He worked as a teacher or something in Dersim for years and his wife is also from there. So he started saying 'The people from Dersim are the most honest people I have ever seen in my life. But the only bad thing is that they still keep worshiping the stones and the mountains'. I started yelling at him, 'You are the ones who did all the genocides there in the name of development and educating the people! You did it! If my mom, my dad worships *Düzgün Baba*, it is because there is a story behind it. We don't eat the fish that comes out of *Munzır* river, we don't hunt it because we carry on the old beliefs. You people from *TIKKO* came and started religion this, superstition that, you savage idolaters. You killed them all with your ideas!'. Some Kurds from Dersim even today will not accept PKK for instance. And it is because of religion. They said, they [PKK] would chop their heads off because in the genocide of 1938 many of the soldiers were Kurdish. Or

²⁸⁸ Promised as a bride the day the babies are born.

they tell you when Sheikh Rıza came to ask Sheikh Said his help, he didn't eat the meat they cut for them because they were infidels. I mean they played people off against each other. My dad use to tell us stories, or my aunts, because they lived those things. My aunt used to tell me all the time, 'My girl don't ever forget that we are an oppressed people'. She was a fanatic from CHP. My mom told us how ashamed she was when that aunt of mine was shouting from the window '*En Büyük CHP! En büyük CHP!*' (CHP is the best!) when a HDP convoy was passing from their street. That aunt said to my mom ' They [The Kurds and Turks] at least have a common religion. If both are in power they will say *Selâmün aleyküm* to each other. And we will be up the creek without a paddle'. And my mom replied her that she was in love with her hangman. But my aunt insisted that she would hold sides with anyone who was against the fundamentalists. She always said that people from Dersim would be caught in the cross-fire. Obviously not all the Kurds agree with PKK. There are many fractions in this movement.

Sometimes I ask myself why I joined the revolutionaries. No one pressured me at home. My dad always told us to feel comfortable and behave as who we are. But he hit my mom, that is another thing. My dad always said, 'My daughter will be like a boy. I trust her.' But there is much more behind that phrase. Then you try to prove yourself to him, like see father I will never fall in love, I will never get married. I was beaten a lot at home as well because I was stubborn. My mom always told me 'Go learn how to do some lacework. You are 17 now. Look what the daughters of the others are doing already. Learn a bit of housework, wash the laundry, wash the dishes, do something!'. And I told her that they learned those because they are looking for a husband and I wasn't. I always played football. I would come back from school, even before taking out my uniform I would shout 'Ali, Ahmet! Come, we will go play in the schools yard!'. The neighbors always said what the hell is this girl doing at this age, she is old now for these things. But they also liked it because I was taking care of their kids. Sometimes they even told me to take their kids and play. So I keep thinking what were the reasons that made me want to be free. I mean, I think you want to get away from the 'society'. You see another alternative. I told you before as well, one of our neighbors, they were from PKK. Our houses were one and the same, we never closed our doors. Or with the other neighbors as well, maybe they weren't all revolutionaries but you had a comradeship, they were like your relative and every one talked about how important was being neighbors. When two neighbors quarreled some one would come out and say 'Why are you fighting, you are neighbors!'. Even that sentence said a lot. Of course the revolutionary youth always came and

go. They visited our house a lot. They always drank dark brewed tea for hours and hours. I was fed up with serving them tea. When they came to visit our neighbor from PKK we would understand from their appearance. Or when the MLKP²⁸⁹ people came we called them *meleketler*, like the angels²⁹⁰, just to make fun. Or ‘*Tikabe* (TKP) is our dearest party’. When ÖDP²⁹¹ came we said ‘Don’t make war, make love!’ because it was their slogan then. Just to irritate them. PKK militants called us *çatapatlar*. Because *Dev Sol*²⁹² had a crazy youth group. ‘Hit, blow up, kill!’, they had this very radical side. So the kids of the neighbors were always told not to hang around with us, ‘They will make you get killed in a corner. Don’t waste your youth’, they told them. The dad of that neighbors, from PKK, he would turn on the TV and listen to the Leader’s speeches for hours. Of course we were young and we didn’t understand anything. Maybe if they spoke in a way we would understand....His son was a football fanatic. He would come and try to change the channel or told his father showing us, ‘Look at their faces dad! Enough! Look at how they are bored to death, don’t you see!’. There were two special operations team, TIM-1, TIM-2, that came to our neighborhood. TIM-1 was specialized on our guys, and TIM-2 came for PKK. So when we saw them at the entrance of the neighborhood we would shout to each other to inform. Theirs was such a family that in one daughter’s room there was Atatürk’s and Hz. Ali’s portrait, the other daughter had Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, the other one had posters of Mazlum Doğan, Abdullah Öcalan, Kemal Pir. Once the police raided their house and went through all the rooms. Then the guy started shouting ‘What the hell are you people?! You are confusing me!’. And the youngest guy said, ‘We have democracy in our house, officer’.

In those years I was going to MKM (Mesopotamian Cultural Center) but I left it when they didn’t pay me that much attention. I loved Kurdish songs a lot. Koma Amed²⁹³ was everything for me. I loved Kurdish with him. I mean you are not aware then that you have already been assimilated. You are also a young girl and the family is kind of trying to control you, don’t do this, don’t do that. For example, we used to organize football tournaments in the neighborhood. And the *Dev Solcular* came and watched us. There was the youngest daughter of the neighbors. She adored me and was like my shadow. When I was playing football she would shout from the side of the field ‘Don’t ru-u-u-n, don’t ru-u-n! These guys are looking at

²⁸⁹MLKP (Marxist-Leninist Communist Party) was founded through the unification of TKP/ML (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist) and TKIH (Communist Workers Movement of Turkey)

²⁹⁰ *Melek* in Turkish means angel

²⁹¹ÖDP, Freedom and Solidarity Party, was founded successors of *Devrimci Yol* (Revolutionary Path) and *Kurtuluş* (Liberation), endorsing people’s democratic revolution

²⁹² Dev Sol (Revolutionary Left) is a splinter faction of the Turkish People's Liberation Party/Front

²⁹³Koma Amed was a music group singing in Kurdish founded by medical faculty students in the 1980 when the Kurdish language and culture was severely repressed.

your ass!'. She would get mad. My mom always sat with the *Dev Solcular* in the coffeehouse. Back then they thought we didn't know a thing. But we read. Of course, these things kindle your interest. I also asked stuff to the history teacher at school. He was probably a leftists as well because he never got angry to my questions. Just laughed. There was this one guy, I never got bored of his talks. Everyone tried to convince me, like, 'Today we have a formation, we will read this and that book, come along'. They had working groups. I went once and said never again. There were the followers of Hikmet Kıvılcım²⁹⁴. At one point they allied with PKK. They formed this TKP-DK²⁹⁵ or DDK-A, I don't remember that one well. They also came to our house. One was a really good friend of mine. We were really happy when he came to our house, because he read us books. He used to tell me I would be a really good writer. I wrote poetry and read it to him. But you know I was a child, I wrote stuff about the trees and the flowers and the birds. He gave me books of Nazım Hikmet, '*Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları*'. I didn't understand much. When the *Dev Solcular* came they would say, 'Now we will read, the ABC of Socialism'. But in the middle of it they would start fighting. I used to say that I didn't want them to come. My dad always told me not to say so. They sometimes stayed a long time with us. My father was from all the parties. Sometimes our neighbor from PKK also brought people who stayed for two-three months in our house. There was solidarity, a unity. A young girl from the *Hikmet Kıvılcım*'s party for instance stayed a lot of time with us. She took me for walks, and took care of me. One time she bought me a bubble skirt. Imagine me in the middle of a shanty town like that. She also bought me cotton candy. You know it is like heaven. Then we realized she was using me as a cover to get to now an area where they were planning to organize an action. But to be fair she loved kids a lot. I read some of Mine Urgan's books and I read about things that I lived in my childhood.

I also remember, they started this reading and writing campaign. So the women of the neighborhoods, my mom and every one else went to learn and get a diploma. My dad made fun of them when they got the diplomas. He went to school in his time and learned somethings, enough to become a civil servant. His older ones are teachers. My dad also said he could have been one. Before it was enough to study four years to get your teaching credential. My mom framed her diploma and hang it on the wall when she got it. Then she said she wanted to learn English. And I had recently started junior high. We had English

²⁹⁴Hikmet Kıvılcımlı was a communist leader and theoretician who translated and published many of Marx's works in Turkish. Because of his political activities in the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), he served more than 20 years in prison. He also founded a legal party, *Vatan Partisi* (The Homeland Party), in 1954.

²⁹⁵Communist Party of Turkey-Revolutionary Wing (Türkiye Komünist Partisi-Devrimci Kanat) was a short-lived splinter-group of the Communist Party of Turkey appearing in 1980.

classes so she asked me to teach her. So I thought her simple stuff like, 'This is a table. This is a pencil. Milk. Thank you very much. Cow'. One day I saw her shouting from the window to the neighbors putting on airs, 'You know how this is called in English neighbor? Milk! Milk!', and hitting the table, 'And this is table. Table!'. She started reading the newspaper. Then there was the magazine *Kurtuluş*, the organization's bulletin. She knew pretty much what they talked about most of the time. I would ask her to read the titles. Imagine it says 'Our Struggle', she would start reading 'O-u-r...honorable struggle!'. I would ask her 'But mom where does it say honorable there? You didn't even read it but just making it up. Then she said to me, 'Don't be an idiot. What else are they going to put there?!'. Then she became addicted to reading. She read the papers everyday. She used to put a chair in the garden, and put on her glasses. Then we had another neighbor. I have never seen such a passionate woman in my life. You know my mom would read but she said she just wanted to be able to read the bus numbers or not get lost when she is walking around the city. But our neighbor would read books non-stop. And she told us what the books said. I remember once they went to Taksim when the leftist put a black wreath in *Taksim* Square in memory of the people they killed in a May Day. And they were beaten really bad that day. Our neighbor came back before my mom. They got separated somehow. And she was worried the police took my mom. I mean their whole life was a struggle. Their kids were in prison.

Then I had to run away. I came through the Balkans and all that. Just like the refugees today, trying to cross the borders, the police attacking us with dogs. You run away and go back the next day. I remember sleeping on top of a tree once because they were patrolling with dogs. Whatever, I somehow ended up here. And they asked me why I came here. And you know I am so rebellious, so I tell them 'You sent me an invitation and here I am'. And they are like, 'What is she talking about?'. And I tell them, 'You are the ones selling guns, and they are trying to kill us with those guns. So I came here'. As if I was high or something...One day my mom came to visit. My brother was already living here. And I was still in one of those refugee reception facilities but I could go out visit my brother. It was my second year or so. My mother was trying to explain something to someone half way dangling form the window. With her hands and arms making gestures and sound and all like 'Bvvvfvvvv', and sometimes words in Turkish like '*Yarın* (Tomorrow)! *Yarın* (Tomorrow)! *Bugün uyuyacağım* (Today I will sleep)! *Yarın uçacağım* (Tomorrow, I have a flight!)'. Explaining the neighbor lady that she is leaving tomorrow. I asked her, 'But mom do you think the Dutch lady will understand you like that?!'. She told me 'I am not like you hon! She understands me alright. If I were you

I had already learned Dutch. Is there no school here? Why don't you go there and learn something?'. She even gave me money to go to a language school. She told me I should learn it until the next time she comes to visit. I mean, you become a bit passive when you are waiting for your residency. I don't know it is a different psychology. But after that I learned Dutch, I even started university again and worked for years here.

You also see how common is our cultures in those refugees centers. My neighbors were Afghan, from Kosovo, from the Balkans. Those ones were under Ottoman influence for years. Sometimes one of them used Persian words. I saw her celebrating the arrival of spring. What the Kurds today call *Newroz*. The Iranians also celebrate it. I mean there is no point to make a political issue out of certain things. You cannot ignore the diverse cultures of all these people or the common points in it. You need to nourish your ideas from it, not dominate them or erase the cultural, social context of historical traditions. How does it help to make *Newroz* a political symbol? Anyways. I joined the movement now because the new paradigm is alluring. I had to look up what 'paradigm' means in the dictionary when I heard every one talking about 'The new paradigm. Our new paradigm', but that is another thing. I know the movement since long time, if I wanted or if I agreed with past ideologies I would have joined already. But I didn't. Because today Rojava makes me excited.

LH 20 I think a women never belongs to a particular place. She can adopt to the colors of the places she goes to and she can contribute with her own color. Neither do I believe that what differentiates a woman and a man is biological but ideological. We can call everything 'ours', but a man would say 'mine'. That is why it is easier for us to build bridges no matter where we are from. The Rosas and the Claras have been the bridges between here and the Middle East

Your instincts lead you to those things that you have always been running after in life. It is not that conscious. Of course your surrounding, where you grew up are important as things that trigger these feelings. I grew in a family that was a PKK sympathizer. We are Kurdish. No one knows Turkish. It is a family that has never seen anywhere else than the village. And they come directly to Europe at the end of the 1980s. It is a really simple and unassimilated family from Nusaybin. So neither the mother, nor the father or the kids know any Turkish. I grew up as a Kurd, proud of it. My dad worked in the organization. My mom also worked for them. The friends came to our home everyday. You take them as a model because they are different,

the way they act. They know how to be a kid with kids and adult with adults. And you realize they don't belong to your surrounding. My family used to work in agriculture but my dad always worked away from home. We are 10 kids. four sisters and six brothers. The girls are older. My dad always said he would prefer one girl over two boys. Maybe because his daughters were the older ones, the first ones, that makes a difference. Or maybe because of the social traditions, I mean, in our region women are much more authoritarian at home. Maybe the men seem like lions outside but when they come home they know who holds the power there. At home the whole order was adjusted to our needs as the father was away, so women ruled the house. But the organization has to do with it as well. The ideas of equality, every one has a right to speak and all that. It was as an early transformation let's say. The family wanted to migrate at a moment when they started to get rid of certain groups like the Assyrians, the Yezidis who are always the first ones to be subjected to oppression. First they burnt down the villages. Batman, Mardin these are the first places they evacuated. The Armenians in Rojava that I met for example, they had also come from Amed, they spoke Kurdish. I mean, we lived together with those people, we were all neighbors. And everyone spoke each other's language. For example the regime in Syria also sent them by force to Armenia when the country was founded. They didn't want to go but were forced to and when they left they gave our friends the keys to their houses and our friends promised to protect them until they came back. Those people were the first ones to come to Europe and most of them took refuge in PKK because it was the only environment where they could continue to live as they were, live their cultures and Kurdishness. My family's economic situation was quite good. If it wasn't for these they wouldn't have to leave. But there was some hope, like 'I will go back someday'. But now we are the third generation. They still want it but now they will not go back, its too late.

My mom always had a problem to find her true self. She was cut away from her community here. There was this constant search to find yourself. She expressed this in many different ways which also affected us. She was very harsh for example. She had come to such a different society, she grappled with it. And she took it out on us. She always changed houses and of course we constantly had to change schools. Later on she told us that she never thought of us back then. Luckily we were social kids and were able to make friends. Imagine how selfish one can get. Or I mean when you are a kid you think of it as selfishness. While she was struggling she swayed us from one place to the other. We lived with our granny and grandpa. If they hadn't come we wouldn't either. Well, they were young then. And we weren't 10

people. There were some Kurds from Maraş and the Arabian populations. My dad made his circle pretty fast, he didn't have problems. We always lived as Kurds in Germany, even if we learned German. If you hear my siblings you wouldn't understand they are from a migrant family now. No accent whatsoever when they speak. At school there were Turkish kids. They always called us Turkish but we didn't understand, not even what they said I mean. They sometimes also said we couldn't be Turkish because we spoke another language. So is yours another one for us! Our common language was German. That way you somehow feel confident. Yes, I might have come from Turkey but I am different. I mean I have never considered Nusaybin or Mardin as Turkey. That is Kurdistan. I used to fight over it at school. The teachers would tell me 'But that is what it says on the map!'. But I would insist. I didn't have a doubt about it. I mean you are a foreigner in Germany whether you are a Turk or a Kurd, it's the same. My younger siblings also never felt like Germans. To tell the truth I felt being excluded many times. In the 1990s we used to go to Newroz or manifestations. I have been beaten so many times. Then you break your ties. When you realize you don't belong here. This system will never accept you. You came to their country, you need to keep silent like a slave and if you want to resist you go back to your country! I mean the way they treated me actually made it easier my transformation.

My granny, the mother of my father, also left a deep impression on my mind. She was my land. I dreamed of her face for a long time. She wore an apron, always had candies in her pockets to give to children. She had a lot of animals and she was always surrounded by cats. She was my connection to that place. And the only thing that I left behind. We also grew up with stories like *Şahmaran*, *Zêrka Zêra*. These stories tell you the moment humanity was defeated, when they humans betrayed nature. The story of *Simurg* for example. I mean on the other all the heroes in these stories are male, that's a different matter. It annoys you. And also my mother didn't know how to read and write but she told me all these stories. And when I saw these stories on the German television I would ask how that was possible. For example the Red Riding Hood in our version collects brushwood, *qirşik*. And in Europe it turns into a forest. Or *Atargatis*, Den Syria, the first mermaid, it is the story of the sacred lake with fish in Urfa. You see. Or what else...the Alevis have a *Hızır Orucu* (a three-days fast for Saint Hızır), they leave a bowl for Hızır to drink from when he comes, and in Scotland you have St. Augustine. I mean, how to describe it, the similarity of cultures or what... Or in Zoroastrianism the story of creation of the world, an egg with 7 layers turn into the Easter egg. I mean the Easter celebration in Europe is like a game, devoid of meaning. Yezidis, as

well, to pay their respects to the creation of the world will not kill an animal or shed blood on that day. Or the peacock, the *Tawusê Melek*, the protector of cosmos is the bunny. Well, we are a mixed family so we have some rites inevitably. My uncles were Yezidis, the other side of the family is...what have you. I think we were lucky in this sense. I have never grown up with hate. I mean there was this thing of course that the Turks are slaughtering us. And that's why I didn't learn Turkish. I mean it was frowned upon in my family. And even the ones who could speak wouldn't do it in public. You don't have to know the language of the one's who kill you, the enemy. Of course they can force you to learn it but there are people who didn't learn even then. So even by force they cannot make you. It is different to feel riled than to feel hate. I mean people and the systems are not the same. The revulsion I feel for the German system is three times stronger than what I feel for the Turkish state. But in reality all these systems are connected to each other, they run parallel to each other and they sustain each other. That is why it is important to be anti-system, not just against capitalism but against all the systems that oppress you. We usually talk about capitalism and forget the others. This could be the most basic Kurdish feudal system. For example, KDP²⁹⁶ is a dangerous system in my opinion. Capitalism is more transparent, you can wage your war against it. But feudalism tries to sustain itself by taking refuge in the society's traditions. It is important to realize this. I mean my youth passed going to demos, distributing pamphlets and bulletins, hanging posters anyways. Whatever you can imagine.

In my family there was no difference between girls and boys. I grew up in a Catholic region. So, I didn't feel that difference. But maybe only how the school principles, the nuns and the monks acted. We had to go to school six days a week, Saturday included. And the schools were extremely disciplined. We were notorious at school because we beat the boys and the rest of the girls were always ganging up with us. My dream was to become a doctor, I wanted to cure everyone without asking them any money. Who knows why. I mean I have last seen Kurdistan when I was six years old. In my imagination there were a lot of animals and people living together. That's how I remembered it. But I always felt I belonged to everywhere. That is, I think a woman never belongs to a particular place. I don't think it is fair to define an inseparable link between a woman and a certain place. She can adopt to the colors of the places she goes to and she can contribute with her own color. For me it is better to say I am

²⁹⁶Democratic Party of Kurdistan (Partiya Demokrata Kurdistan)in Iraq. It was founded in 1946 in the Kurdish region of Iran where the Iraqi Kurds led by Mustafa Barzani were taking refuge. The KDP has historically maintained a broad base of political allegiances, acting as a big tent party ranging from tribal conservatives to socialists. Today the party is regarded as populist and nationalist. And its organizational structure attracts a lot of criticism as the official posts are all occupied by Barzani's family members making its transparency highly questionable and thus susceptible to abuses of power and corruption.

from this world. I can be a Latin American or a Somalian. Neither do I believe that what differentiates a woman and a man is biological. It is an ideological thing. We don't act with the idea of possession or we don't dominate or rule people. We can call everything 'ours', but a man would say 'mine'. That is why it is easier for us to build bridges no matter where we are from. The Rosas [Rosa Luxemburg] the Claras [Clara Zetkin] have been the bridges between here and the Middle East. These were the women who humanized Europe. Only after having built those bridges with other worlds European women were able find their freedom. If they were to stay as a closed community only with each other they couldn't have freedom themselves. Then they would have also gone under the influence of the religion or whatever here. Just like Islam did, Christianity would bring them under control. These women became bridges themselves, they made women universal. Here they are not aware of it, or they have forgotten these really fast. They burnt down all the bridges, just like after WWII. And as the connection was broken their liberty was limited. Once you cut of your connection to the world, you can call yourself free as much as you want but you will not be free. The European women need to go back to those moments. For me the studies of Jineoloji is kind of like those Claras and Rosas, rebuilding those bridges. They revive the revolution. It is reviving women, making it universal again, giving back its colors and liberty. When I went back to the Middle East at 21, I understood being free as an individual is not enough. I mean if in other countries women still go around in burka your freedom means nothing. To feel this, to see this as a woman is very important. Sometimes I fell teed off when women contend with what they have. Your neighbor is being killed and you keep saying you are free. This is egoism and individualism. The type of woman capitalism wants to create. Jineoloji will break up with that. It will build bridges all over the world.

LH 21 I saw women everywhere, from Iraq to Iran to Sweden needed a roadmap but the struggle for liberty cannot be reduced to European terms of equality. When you put together all these stories I see clearly that the problem is with this system. It doesn't matter how democratic it is, I have never seen a system that brings equality for women in my life

I grew up in Baghdad as a Kurdish woman and I grew up feeling as a stranger. I mean I grew up struggling both for my gender and my identity. There has always been an identity problem for the Kurds there. Well, when I was a young woman I always felt the necessity of the struggle in social and political terms because my conditions also led me to it. Why did I have this feeling? Because we were always faced with genocide. The women were put into jails

everyday. That was what you saw in your young age. Those moments impacted me. I mean they caused me to think in a different way. Today I am telling you about 30 years ago now so then it wasn't possible for me to define or feel them as I do to you today. I mean there was always this feeling of unease but I also had difficulties to find the right way to do things. After living in Baghdad I came to Southern Kurdistan, *Başur*, after 22, thinking that maybe I could find some answers and I could have a different life. As a Kurd I always wanted to live in the mountains, in the greenery. There, it was a different struggle. So while I was trying to figure out a way to express myself as a woman I decided to become a journalist. I started to advance step-by-step but the political circumstances and the pressure on women was really heavy and even today this continues in that geography. I am from the Feyli Kurds²⁹⁷. In the 80s Saddam's regime committed a genocide and forced away 500 thousand people from Baghdad. Those people in reality didn't have any political demands against the government but they were just Kurdish. And this was the only reason they were killed. There was only one way out from this social pressure and genocidal mentality which was to get married and leave. So when I came South it was another struggle for me. But there were a lot of social problems there as well. A woman couldn't have a normal life in society. For example it was a very weird thing for a woman to drive there. It was unforeseen for her to work outside and stay until late. In 2003 when there was a regime change against Saddam, it was a chaotic situation. And at that time I was working as a journalist but I felt the pressure as a woman and a free individual. Those days, in our community in Baghdad you weren't allowed to go somewhere else to live. I decided myself to get married, no one forced me to. Before getting married I also talked to my future husband and told him that I wanted to be in a freer environment where I can express myself. We got married after having these talks. I mean we had some kind of a contract. In South I continued my life like this for a while. I did journalism on social problems even it was hampered. I mean our situation [journalist women] was neither socially nor politically that much accepted. Because the government's mentality was really similar to what forced us out of Baghdad. Apart from these reasons, once Saddam was gone I went back to Baghdad. After 2003, the Feyli Kurds we came together and opened an association. I continued journalism on one hand and on the other I was involved in activities at associations. But everything seemed the same, the regime, because it was still a male-dominant government and they didn't let us live. Three years later I decided to leave for Europe. I thought of it as a

²⁹⁷Feyli Kurds are an ethnic group historically inhabiting both sides of the Zagros mountain range along the Iraq-Iran border, and thus a cross-border population. Unlike the majority of Kurds, who are generally Sunni Muslims adhering to the Shafi'i school of Islam, Feyli Kurds are Shiite Muslims. Their dual religious and ethnic identity has historically exposed them to stigmatization, persecution and deportations most notoriously in the 1970s and 1980s under the Ba'ath regime and later on in 2003.

solution to my problems. We came to Sweden. And I thought I could start over again, do things I wanted to do. I worked in Swedish news agencies. But even there I couldn't find answers to my problems. I stayed there for seven-eight years working as a lecturer in universities at the same time. Well, journalism there is not like what we had in our country, it was really ordinary. Of course in our country there were lots of things to be considered news, there you didn't have that. So those seven years were really calm for me. I was used to an animated life. I managed living like this for a while but then I got bored. I mean when I arrived to Sweden I started getting to know the Kurdish women's movement, although from afar. But I didn't get a chance to learn that much about it because I didn't know how to contact them. One day they invited me to a television show as a lecturer. I met some friends there and through their contacts I found out I could reach out to the movement. In a short time, I read lots of things, the women's liberation ideology, philosophical approaches, Öcalan's analyses and then I started seeing a light and I felt I found solutions to my concerns. I have struggled for 20 years of my life but I couldn't find the correct strategy. And that's why I couldn't get any results. But then I thought it would be possible. I managed to find my own answers in this movement. Slowly I got more and more involved with the movement and I started doing more research. I started understanding better what I should do as a woman. I realized that if I didn't comprehend my own reality as a woman, then I couldn't analyze and understand neither the society nor politics or my own surrounding. I mean it was like a key to something special for me. I actually found out the way out from my troubles. Well, I always asked myself why I these always happened to me and why I could never get results and why I always had to struggle. In Sweden I worked in a TV channel for the Kurds of *Rojhilat* and I also worked as part of KNK²⁹⁸. I was given the chance to bring my own community's, the Feyli Kurds' problems there to the agenda. Then I could even take it to the European parliament's discussions, to a bigger public. I took part both in women's activities and in the mixed ones in KNK. But I feel like journalism is in my blood. Then when I heard about the women's television I thought I had to contact them. It attracts my attention because women are present in every level here. I have worked in women's news units before but being in a place based on the principle of women's liberty, where from the bottom to the top, at every level you see only women working and where the social problems and the political agenda are approached and analyzed from women's perspectives.

²⁹⁸ The Kurdistan National Congress (Kongreya Neteweyî ya Kurdistanê, KNK) is an umbrella organization that unites Kurdish political parties, civil society organizations, politicians, lawyers and human rights groups from across Europe to raise awareness of the political issues and human rights violations in Kurdistan.

I mean in Iran the problem was not only wearing a scarf or not. The system has the women under its influence. And Iraq they make it seem as if the only problem for women is to dress however they like. There are women who struggle but I think they also lack a road map. I was also one of them for a long time. I was always struggling and always aware of the system that oppressed us but didn't know about the possibilities to get out of it. I mean there was a need for a bigger, more extensive struggle. Now we are fighting for this. It is not that simple to be described in the European terms of liberty. And in Sweden just like any other European country everything is done within the limits of 'democracy' but in reality I felt the Swedish women also thought something was missing. I talked to some of the feminist women there. For example I asked them why they struggled in a democratic county, I mean, 'What did they want?'. There is injustice there as well, for instance in terms of salaries, employment rates and conditions or women cannot enjoy the same rights with men when they leave their jobs. I mean they also feel the need to struggle but in terms of equality. And as to my daughters..I have two daughters. Both of them are involved in the movement and they are conscious women. They are aware of certain things. They are aware of the importance of women's freedom. One of them decided to marry and she did although I didn't like the idea that much. But she convinced me that they could build up a relationship based on freedom. Her partner is involved in the movement and activities as well. The other one wants to live alone and rejects the European system. She is closer to our society but she is still in a personal quest. I believe any one looking for answers and rejects to believe what they are given is their faith, they will find their own way. My mom was a housewife. With her modesty and naturalness she gave us certain values. She always told us women should have power in their own society and should never stand in the shadow of their brothers or fathers. I was the only girl among four boys. That is why my family treated me different. Later on I had another sister but I had different responsibilities. My mom knows I take part in this struggle and she says she is praying all the time for me but she didn't get involved actively herself.

Well, when you put together all these stories I see clearly that the problem is with this system. It doesn't matter how democratic it is, I have never seen a system that brings equality for women in my life. These are problems we encounter everyday and they bring me closer to our system like the co-presidency for instance. I see how important is women's liberty. No where in this world women are free. Even when they are, they are always in the shadow of men. Liberty is a very deep subject. You can only talk about it when women start a quest with their

free will. It is very important for women to consider themselves as a building block of the society. And she should seek her liberty in the whole society, in every institution.

On a final note, women's life histories literally put flesh on the bones on the theorizations on colonialism, imperialism and the destructive outcomes of a hierarchical, binary and exclusive construction of modernity. Indeed these narrate history through the experiences lived in person, from the real life breaking the confines of the abstract language of scientific analysis. Women's stories also introduce bodies, feelings, thoughts and memories to the disenchanted narratives of anti-colonial struggles. Their words account for why colonialism cannot simply be undone by taking hold of states and declaring the freedom of nations imagined only through ethnic or national terms unless its practices and legacies that have been shaping social orders and ways of thinking, imposing hierarchies and naturalizing them is challenged by the suppressed, silenced, or marginalized realities. The orality of these life histories calls away the political to focus on the history of a human cartography that summons the violent erasures of colonial modernity to unsettle the rigid boundaries of the truth regimes and invariable histories established by empires and colonial nation-states and question the hegemonic models imposed by them. Kurdish women's life histories on one hand re-situate different faces of colonialism and expose the connection between territory and identity. They talk about oppressive kinship relations, domestic violence, forced marriages, the devastation of the nature and the rural and with it the social structures that sustained women, the economic, social and psychological burden of genocides, forced displacements, and migrations, the destitution, marginalization, humiliation and alienation from one's own culture and identity lived in the metropolises of Turkey but also in diaspora. That is, they tell the story of multiple borders that cross through women's lives, bodies and minds. In the face of historical colonial archives, these life histories conjure a deep ancestral memory about the history of the lands and the peoples who have lived long before colonialism separated and scattered them. A memory that is remembered and retold by one's own community, reconnecting the once disconnected pieces and fragments and liberates them, just like the territories where Kurdish women have been living, be it the homeland or diaspora. Further, although these stories draw on experiences from specific geographies, moments and cultures, they transcend their boundaries and embody the multiplicity and diversity of the world. They do not only destabilize the dichotomous structure of dominant Western imagination but narrate the past and present from the contact zones and through the overshadowed interconnections of the

histories of the peoples who struggle to sustain lifeways, stand against non-existence, uniformization, assimilation, annihilation and domination. In such manner, they disclose how history enacts both the role of subjugation and liberation.

And that is why opening up 'History' to other histories has been a heatedly debated issue in reclaiming social justice and transcending abyssal lines. Yet doing justice entails listening to the diverse epistemological and ontological standpoints that these other histories recount. The mental and alternative physical cartography exposed by women's life histories do not simply serve to recover erasures but also expose to view multiple voices, standpoints and emancipatory projects, in a spectrum of gender, class, the acknowledgment of ethnic diversity, autonomy and the right to exist. This rich variety of accounts complicate the oversimplifications of the monopoly of a narrow historical narrative of modernity and colonialism offering plural histories. In so doing, these life histories reveal women's desires, aspirations and imaginations that change the meaning of self-determination, autonomy and emancipation. Furthermore, they leave trail-marks to future alternatives against patriarchal, colonial and capitalist modernity so a different and decolonial future can be charted out by learning from the plural experiences of the world other than the ones told in the universal history of the West. Each narrative trickling through multiplex backgrounds of women of different ages, coming from diverse geographies and classes, with varying religious, political and social viewpoints and even speaking various languages uncover distinct realities. By the same token, they encourage us to ask different questions that, in addition to revealing untold facts, create potentials to imagine new social, political and epistemic possibilities, sets of social relationships, subjectivities and cartographies of emancipation and autonomy beyond the imperial and colonial boundaries and the impermeable frontiers of nation-states. These underpin decolonization as to create potentials for a prefigurative revolutionary imagination to engender a spatio-matieral consciousness in relation to other sites of struggle. Women's narratives mediate between diverse realities and translate them into familiar formats that strengthen the counter-topographies of anti-colonial resistance, solidarity and collective imagination. As such, life histories of Kurdish women present new paths of epistemic decolonization coming from the experiences, praxes and grammars of the Global South, reconnecting symbols, communities, movements and people as an answer to Northern driven hegemonic globalization to revive the hope in global social justice and decolonial presents and futures.

Conclusion

This thesis started with a strong conviction that the political and social circumstances, pointing at a deadlock at the time the framework of the work was taking shape in Turkey regarding the Kurdish question, could only be changed by a radical intervention in the dominant rationality. And the KLM was the only political actor that put on the agenda emancipatory practices that spring from counter-hegemonic experiences in building alternatives against the institutions that perpetuate injustice, discrimination, exploitation and violence. The incidents taking place during the last decades that have affected the sociopolitical landscape of Turkey, with increasing unrest triggered by the impairment of democracy, the curtailment of civil rights, suspension of the state of law, deepening social polarization and a drift towards autocracy and on the other hand accompanying mobilizations that present alternatives came across as opportune moments in which the anticipated change could flourish. And within this process, the Kurdish movement, as an overarching structure including all the institutions and organizations that orbit around the political claims of peaceful co-existence of differences, radical democracy and the self-determination of the peoples, has been one of the most influential agents at the forefront of this potential transformation. Hence, in the beginning, the core issue that inspired this work was to examine closely the opportunities and obstacles that heave into view with the propositions advanced by the Kurdish movement, in particular Democratic Modernity, Democratic Confederalism and Democratic Nation, as an antidote to the political, social and moral atrophy.

Looking at the bigger picture, the Kurdish movement is part of the grassroots resistances offering other windows of opportunities against the systematic injustices and oppression caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. These become especially important in an era that the crumbling of ideals such as democracy, equality and justice become ever more evident, the general corruption, the suspension of the law or the state of exception become the norm, the patronage of capitalist corporations and private interests trample over basic human rights and cripple states' legitimacy. While on the other hand, the decision makers foster the imagery of cataclysms to create consent for their ever tightening authoritarianism, austerity policies, disenfranchisement and deprivation of the people, the extensive militarization, social segregation and stigmatization of certain populations. These politics of despair make the authoritarian policies seem like the only option for a way out of this quagmire. In the face of these, the alternatives proposed by the social struggles demystify the blind conviction in

singular truths by multiplying the possibilities and invoke a thinking otherwise as the trailblazers for another world.

It is worth noting here that originally both the theoretical and the militant perspectives of this work were largely rooted in arguments laid by the Western critical thinking. And within this especially the more marginalized libertarian stream on counter-hegemonic resistances and emancipatory politics occupied a central place. These critical theories directly aim at the state as a site of oppression and consider nationalism as the ideological tool of legitimization for the ruling classes and instead advocate cosmopolitan solidarities embracing diversity across ethnic and cultural lines. That being so, at first sight they provide the tools for tackling emancipatory struggles such as the KLM. In addition feminist perspectives that equally shape my personal worldview bringing the gender oppression as an equally important site of struggle against domination provided me with theoretical foundations to approach KWLS. ON the other hand, the postcolonial and decolonial approaches and non-Western feminisms have deeply reoriented this initial standpoint pointing out the flaws of the original hypotheses centered on the nation-state as the core issue dealing with the colonization, subjugation and oppression of the Kurds. These perspectives have opened up new horizons calling forth the need to, first, open an extensive and upfront debate on modernity and colonialism in the Turkish context. And secondly, they spotlight the urgency of bringing in voices of subalternized groups that have been sidelined in the analyses of the modern critical canon in order to expose alternative and plural histories besides the dominant Western-centric one. Based on these, the investigation goes beyond just examining the Kurdish Liberation Movement as a counter-hegemonic resistance but branch out to framing as a first step the specificity of the conditions of Ottoman colonialism as part of the modern political project. And equally home in on its emergence at a moment that the Ottoman's were struggling to reconcile empire with the idea of nation and the governing practice of a modern state that gave rise to distinct anti-colonial resistances at the borderlands of the imperial domains. This historical critical overview is meant to establish the continuity between the empire and the nation-state and consequently reintroduce the discussion of colonialism as an intrinsic part of the Turkish modernity and the state formation. In doing so, the work also aims to challenge on one hand the Orientalist history writing that omits the role of the Ottoman empire from the history of global imperialism. And on the other intends to transcend the state-centric approaches and theories that restrict the horizons of the analyses within Western-centric definitions of the modern nation, territory, identity, subjectivity, and agency, which fail to take

into account the discussions over the pluriversal understandings of how territory and sovereignty might be constituted.

The scholarly works of the last decade focusing on the world imperial history beyond dominant paradigms has been generating fruitful discussions on modernity, colonialism and modern state formation through a post-colonial lens. Among these, the inquiries centering on Ottoman imperialism and colonialism based on Said's arguments in *Orientalism* and his later on retakes on the mutual constitution of "Occident" and "Orient" have contributed greatly to the methodological approach of this thesis. Said's thinking has been central revealing the implications of the elimination of Orient and Islam from the production of an effective history of modernity and highlighting narratives that speak from the connected histories, from the "imperial intersections" and contact-zones. The present work has only scratched the surface of these theoretical debates, and as such there is much future work to be done in this aspect. Nevertheless, this work hopes to contribute in turning the spotlight on the encounters that have taken place in those frontier zones between the empires, where diverse peoples, cultures, religions and worldviews converged. This focus is much needed to lay bare the roots of today's regimes of domination, hegemonic institutions, relations and injustice built on the fissures created by colonialism and imperialism especially in the contact zones under consideration.

This perspective helps display that the flaring unrest in all former fronts of the old Ottoman empire, the collision of superpowers, today represented by nation-states, especially in the territories that formerly set the stage for the global imperial contest between Europe and its 'Others', from Caucasus, to the Balkans and to the Middle-East, the colonial logic and strategies resurrected to occupy the driver's seat in global territorial, political, military and economic power are all part of this imperial and colonial legacy that is still very much alive. And Turkey as the heir of the Ottoman empire stands at the junction of this imperial revival as one of the protagonist in the war in Syria - as it was until recently in Libya - causing a refugee crisis that have uprooted millions of people from their lands. To this adds its role in the armed conflict between majority Muslim Azerbaijan and majority Christian Armenia and the escalating power play in the Mediterranean with Greece dragging Cyprus into the tension just to name some. The persistent neo-colonial structures that make their presence felt whether through direct military presence, or embargoes, underhanded political bargains between great powers and with multinational corporations that nullify the sovereignty of the people living in the territories in question is a familiar story. Nor are the sectarian politics that

foment and exacerbate tribal, inter-communal, ethnic and religious divisions, and personal interests in the service of the colonial project of *divide et impera* breaking news since the expansion of imperialism in the 19th century. Indeed, it is no coincidence that today it is being referred to the 'Balkanization of Syria' alluding to the fragmentation of the society into ethno-religious and sectarian enclaves as it has taken place in the Balkans and Caucasus during the demise of the Ottoman empire. In this sense, this work is not only about the colonial legacy of the Turkish Republic as the source of the 'Kurdish Question' but aims to discomfort the silence in Western history writing and locate this legacy as part of the global history. As such the Kurdish question becomes the Archimedean point of the chaotic situation in the territories where the thorny process of defining the ontological borders between the Orient and Occident is still an ongoing process against the backdrop of a much larger context of imperial intersections and colonial encounters.

This systematic discrimination of multiple territories at the margins of the Occidental world underpins today's enflamed nationalism and fundamentalist reactions both in Turkey and the rest of the Middle-East. All these act upon the same indignation caused by the perception of underdevelopment, deficiency, worthlessness, and a constant feeling of lagging behind or being tied hand and foot by the West. Further, they capitalize on an ascending nostalgia for the lost glory of an old empire incarnating an Islamic civilization, that once brought down the 'Western infidels' with its wisdom, philosophy and morality, and yet today is subdued and divided by the very same. This is the common denominator between the Islamic State's claim to liberate the Middle East from Western civilization's domination, announcing to finally put an end to the Sykes-Picot agreement that divided the imagined Muslim civilization, and Erdoğan's claims rejuvenating the subordinated 'Great Eastern civilization' represented by the Muslim Ottoman empire that fell under the colonial rule with the aid of the Westernized founding elites of the republic who betrayed the nation.

This seeming confrontation with the imperialist oppressor as the home turf of nationalisms nourished from colonial traumas fans the flames of sectarianism and reproduces the same division of the world into 'us' and 'them'. The current rule of the president Erdoğan capitalizes on this Western/Eastern, secular/religious antagonism and the manipulation of identity anxieties which become a political and ideological agent to rally the disenfranchised, the subalternized under a common-cause of people's liberation. And yet in the current political discourse, 'the people' is demarcated by the national community grounded on Turkish ethnic identity and religious belonging that ties the people to the supra-

national community of Muslims, the *Umma*. The war scenario in which the country is in constant attack, by the inside and outside enemies, thus aid on one hand in strengthening the formulation of authentic and exclusive identities. On the other the power holders leverage the situation to manufacture consent for the totalitarian rule and the eradication of the ‘enemies within’ that put at risk the unity of the nation. In practice this is translated into social cleansing and extermination of the absolute Others, a politics of ‘civic death’, revoking civil rights, excluding large segments from benefit and protection of the law, from economic opportunities and depriving them of their civil and political rights to visibility in the public realm. These politics today target any oppositional or dissident voice that goes against the state ideology cast as traitors from Academics for Peace, to women’s organizations, dissident sexualities, leftists, and once again the Kurds who bear the brunt of escalating totalitarianism.

Against this binary and monolithic world view based on the assumption of ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’ as diametrically opposed, disparate, unconnected and hermetically sealed entities, this research aims to recuperate the colonial history and rectify its absences from the intertwined histories of the people who are negated voice to enter into universal history on equal footing with Western-centric modern narratives. Moreover, the intention is not to articulate these histories to the traditional historiography but employ decolonial perspectives that turn the absent subjects into present ones who challenge the main premises of this historiography. The Epistemologies of the South and decolonial feminist perspectives have served me to consolidate the methodological framework that beyond revealing alternative stories provokes a paradigm shift in thinking about the modern premises. These perspectives suggest moving the locus of enunciation to the struggles of the peoples who have been radically excluded from the dominant modes of being and knowing. Further they invoke other ontologies and epistemologies that decolonize our ways of interpreting the reality. It should be reminded once more that colonization is not only the occupation of foreign territories, slavery, deterritorialization, political oppression, and economic exploitation but also cultural, linguistic, spiritual denial, uprooting, criminalization of lifeways, the distortion and overriding of the past, usurpation of the frame of reference, the draining of the context and content of oppressed peoples’ ways of thinking and existing. On this account, decolonization means a stance against epistemicide, an ontological restoration, counting on and acknowledging one’s own knowledge and experiences as valid sources to interpret reality. Such an understanding of decolonization equally demands the recovery of a communal memory as a form of justice.

The driving force of the anti-colonial struggles draw on these disregarded memoirs of enslaved ancestors, invasion and extermination. While these struggles have embarked on administrating justice to the marginalized, silenced, exploited and subjugated people, they focused their attention on the parallel drawn between freedom and foundation of a nation-state as the seal of self-determination. The embracement of nation-state without calling into question the historical and colonial processes that engender the specific form of political community, its monopolizing and homogenizing narratives and subjectivity hindered a critical outlook on the particular fields of power beyond material and political exploitation. Consequently questions of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, geographical situatedness, cultural, spiritual and linguistic hierarchies have been left out for the most part. These anti-colonial struggles equally overlooked the possibility of finding answers in their own people's ways of organizing the community and society which carried on despite colonialism in order to shape alternative realities that transcend the boundaries defined for us retrospectively by nation-states. Correspondingly, this work seeks on one hand to unravel the story of colonialism and rethink the paradigms of liberation from these multiple layers of absences. And on the other it focuses on grammars of resistance as the theoretical bases of future emancipatory alternatives that expand the signification of autonomy, sovereignty and self-determination beyond territorial and national limits.

In this thesis two main perspectives serve as a point of departure to create epistemologies in the service of radical social emancipation and transformation. The first one is Öcalan's perspectives elaborated in *Sociology of Freedom*, advancing the need for a radical break from hegemonic thinking as a first step to disengage with mental constructions that cripple the imagination, that he refers as 'Theory of De-linking' (*Kopuş Teorisi*). And the second is *Jineoloji*, framed by Kurdish women, as a proposal to systematize the marginalized knowledge and creations of women excluded from multiple domains of life and of history, their overshadowed and silenced accounts, experiences and diverse strategies of resistance. *Jineoloji* offers a geo and body political shift in the locus of enunciation in terms of historical analysis focusing on Kurdish women's narratives. These accounts disclose the interwoven patriarchal, colonial and capitalist roots of a hegemonic civilizational logic as the common denominator that cross-cuts the supposed temporal and spatial polarities of West/East, modern/pre-modern. They also uncover voices that are muffled by meta-narratives over geopolitics and state-centric modes of social inquiry while capturing the more subtle and complex subject positions that keep surfacing in the micro-political, in the interplay of the everyday

and private lives that are not considered relevant in the canonical theories and methodologies that examine inequality and domination. Kurdish women call attention to the colonial machinery as multilayered and interwoven praxes of domination and subjugation. Its strategies not only play on communities that have been negated becoming a nation but involves the institutionalization of hierarchically conceived differences, disciplining of bodies, regulation of social and political relations, aspirations and beliefs, and simultaneously the control over the possible field of existing, knowing and acting. However, Kurdish women remind that all these bear differently on gender although this has been sidestepped. Basing the analysis on Kurdish women's life histories reveals how colonialism meant the destruction of the social, political and natural life-spaces, the disintegration of the community ties that have sustained women. It also meant the cultural assimilation inferiorizing the Kurdish cosmology and the marginalization of traditional forms of social life in which women had an important role, and with it the denigration of traditional knowledge that women still rely on. Moreover colonialism strengthened the institution of a state backed patriarchal structure and gender roles subjugating women to tribal rules based on men's authority, reducing them to tradable objects, stripping them of their autonomy, their social status and power in public sphere and their role as community leaders. While the Kurdish women's narratives rework the history of colonialism and imperialism of the metropolitan societies through the erased realities, knowledges, imaginaries, memories, they serve as a subversive act of re-signification that alters the accounts of the homeland, territory, community and belonging. This paradigm shift in the remembrance of past events become the *mise-en-scène* in which both oppression and communal struggles toward liberation are recounted and theorized. Moreover, it contributes to the diversification of the present against monocultural thinking making available grammars of resistance and forms of egalitarian sociopolitical configurations at odds with the nation, the state and dominant civilizational configurations based on patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism.

On the other hand, Kurdish women's vision of liberation, finding its expression in their motto "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi" (Women, Life, Freedom), is not a simple declaration for women's liberation. It is more about the liberation of the whole life through the recuperation of overshadowed epistemologies and possibilities to expand the political imagination. This suggests bringing forth different ethical values to reshape the society on a global scale. The alliances that Kurdish women have been building with Third-world and Western feminist women create linkages between the local and the global and shine a light on opportunities of

decolonizing the way emancipatory theories, politics and praxis can be created collectively. Decolonization entails, then, articulating struggles to work within diversity in order to develop crosscutting languages of liberation based on the relational and the multiple. This way Kurdish women offer a pluriversal thinking that diverges from a universalism imposing its singular hegemonic truth and contrarily seeks creating critical dialogues between diverse epistemic, ethical and political standpoints that take place in decolonial contact zones.

Locating the vantage point in the interconnections and networks of peoples, geographies and ideas provide sites of debate accommodating diversity and polyphony. Such diversity allows for a co-presence, an ecology of knowledges, through which affinities that amplify the scope of alternatives and resistance against oppression can be built through the voices of collective subjects. This process, beyond doubt, is not without contradictions as it also contains contrasts that are constantly negotiated. That is where a dialogue between different critical knowledges and practices gain importance to enhance the reciprocal intelligibility between counter-hegemonic traditions. And yet not dissolving the specific identities and nullifying the different understandings of the world from diverse subject positions in the privileged narratives arise as issues that research needs to tackle.

On the other hand, research, especially in the Western context, is not an objective and value-free activity but is undertaken against the background of representations and ideological constructions shaped by the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist system. And there is little need to reiterate the substantial works exposing how Western scientific disciplines and academic work have been both shaped by and buttressed this hegemonic order. Despite all the honest intentions, critical scholarly works realized in Western academies are not immune from this critique. And for the same reason, those that pledge a radical social change bear greater responsibility in decolonizing the methodologies and methods of knowledge production. The proposals of decolonial scholars have stimulated a lot of introspection in the Western critical thinking. These opened up debates about the ethics of doing research and methods that are mindful of the role of how knowledge is gathered and codified plays on the colonial representations of the Others. And thus these intents of decolonial knowledge production reject re-inscribing their power by decontextualizing realities to fashion them into legible 'data' assimilated into dominant cultural, political and historical understandings of the world. Indeed Spivak had questioned long ago the impossibility of articulation of the agency and practices of resistance in Western grammars, representations and understandings. On the contrary to what many scholars contended, her assertions did not suggest the muteness or the

lack of enunciation and consciousness of the subaltern but called for a need to change both Western colonial epistemological and methodological conceptions that are unable to grasp the significance of non-Western spheres of reality. In this sense decolonial research becomes the site of struggle and encounter between hegemonic Western-centric epistemologies and interests and the interests, realities, ways of knowing and resistance of the patriarchal, colonial, capitalist modernity's Others. One way of redeeming the partial, patchy and distorted maps that hegemonic modernity created can be achieved by putting research into service of retrieving spaces of marginalization from which to develop agendas of radical transformation in the name of self-determination, decolonization and social justice. Laying out research not just as an academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake, one that strives for making a positive difference, demands changing the way we ask questions in which the grammars that stem from counter-hegemonic ethical, social and political imaginations, marginalized forms of knowledge and practices that resist to old and new forms of colonialism are given central place in seeking the answers and in the creation of new meanings.

In this sense Kurdish women's liberation ideology, that aims to create connections against the fragmentation of view points in the struggles of social justice and propose constructing new decolonial grammars based on alliances and not on hierarchized differences. The dialogues between struggles are hoped to offer new notions that can guide emancipatory utopias which help in the recovery of the critical nouns, such as freedom, equality, justice whose meanings are hollowed out in the Western-centric critical theory. KWLS already introduce powerful notions to our lexicon of emancipation such as '*Xwebûn*', defining oneself outside the subjectivities of the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist structures; "*Hevjîyana Azad*" (Free Cohabitation), proposing the construction of non-hegemonic relations between humans, and between the human and the nature, the non-human life, and 'Killing the Dominant Male', as a step to deconstruct the mentality of patriarchal domination very much instilled in every aspect of our lives. Correspondingly, this research hopes to contribute to the global epistemic decolonization which entails unearthing non-normative, hybrid conceptions and cross-cutting identities shunned by colonial knowledge and untold by the conventional historiography, in order to make them relevant in the construction of globally emancipatory utopias.

On the other hand, the methodologies and methods of Western-centric scholarship, its vocabulary as well as the demands of scientific, objective research are very much disconnected from the epistemological frames that others see the world, and organize

themselves in it. Consequently, the reasoning and postulations of Western-centric knowledge production do not make sense to explain the experiences of the colonized people whose world-views and lifeways have been marginalized. Nor do they resonate with their interpretive frameworks, or represent them or their concerns. The canonical theories on modern colonial world-system and the critiques of imperialism alike remain at the level of abstract analyses and theories. Despite their focus on bringing to light the historical experiences of devastation caused by and painful struggle against colonialism, their engagement remains limited with real life experiences of living breathing, feeling and thinking people. A research intending to divest colonial parameters of their hegemony so that what it means the loss of the connection with territory not only in a material sense but involving the culture, practices, community ties and the social significations it carries, and the following deracination, subjugation, denigration, non-existence and exploitation it entailed can be told differently. In this effort, the political discourses, poetry, music, dance, storytelling and other common sense and collective ways of narrating and living the history ushers in other dimensions to what we understand from imperialism and colonialism. In this sense, this work aims to let women weave their own narrative grounded in the landscapes, grammars, cultures and imaginative worlds of a people whose histories are interrupted and radically reformulated by imperialism and colonialism.

However, the power of written text in colonial knowledge production, theory and history writing entails a lot of questioning in undertaking such a research that attempts bringing out these histories from the other sides in the same written medium. Writing is not a mere instrument to communicate but involves an entirely different relation with knowledge, the way it is gathered, interpreted and codified. Writing has been ranked as an exclusive medium of expression of societies with a capacity of systematic and rational thinking, of a knowing and conscious subject that does not just make scribbles of what it sees in the natural world but that creates signification through words to explain reality. It is thus seen as a sign of a break between primitive past ruled by signs and a civilized and advanced present that reads through them and interprets. Written word also has the power to give a tangible character to what it transmits, to put flesh on concepts, to fix them in space and time so they become realities that one can substantiate. It creates the illusion of the sufficiency of touching and reading to prove the truth of one thing, against the transient, fugacious, volatile spoken word susceptible to faulty memories. Spoken word or the other ways of sensing through the body, the mind, non-verbal expressions and emotions whose effects cannot be quantified and objectivity certified

are thought to leave no trace. It is the modern historical consciousness that writing introduces making the human past an objective reality available to causal analysis, so that its reality can be determined. Writing thus serves to record particular facts, a *specific* past based on histories worth to be made permanent, and eliminate other ones that are not consonant with or useful for modern needs. The power of written text has helped the colonial Western-centric modernity to inscribe its values, subjectivity, hierarchized and unjust social, political and economic system. It has assisted the hegemonic understanding of modernity to implant its ideology into history and universalize the standpoints of the 'victorious', the 'master', the (heterosexual) men, the colonial metropolis as the authors and owners of social meanings.

That is why giving testimony is a very powerful need for the ones removed from this History in order to reinscribe lost meanings. This should be seen as a way of restoring a spirit, of self-regeneration bringing back into existence world fragmented and to regain the power to define and (re)create the world. Kurdish people, just like any other peoples denied entrance to Western-centric hegemonic modernity, do indeed pass on the memory of grievances inflicted over centuries as well as the testimony of the resistance against extinction. They share information and ideas and transmit cultural and social values in order not to lose the sense of community. They talk about it in almost every word uttered in the voice that evades capture, in languages incomprehensible for the Western ears, in laments, in epics, folk songs, myths, eulogies and slogans, at celebrations, funerals, manifestations, in the streets, prisons, squares, the front lines or in the private sphere secluded from the foreign eyes and ears, while preparing banners, manifestos, a community gathering, or singing a song for the lands and loved ones they left behind, for the cities, streets, houses, shrines and tombs shelled to dust.

But women tell distinct stories that once told out loud, discomfort all kinds of privileges and saturate the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist accounts, collapse it with other possibilities. Against the colonial forgetting, remembrance and memory then becomes the medium of alternative imaginaries and desires. It conveys different pasts, presents and futures through these narratives. Women's oral histories do not only shed light on the absences in the Western-centric accounts of modernity but equally rectify the critical theories on imperialism and colonialism by conjuring up the silences, providing scope for women to name the hitherto unnamed and represent themselves and the world in their own terms. This is a way of achieving cognitive justice to restore the dignity of women, not as victims but agents of their own history, past, present and future. These stories that allow women to theorize about persecution, sorrows and injustice inflicted upon them without having to refer to

constructions, grammars and conceptual frameworks that systematically excluded them and are thus disconnected from their reality, the way they have been living, feeling, sensing and thinking about what colonialism and resistance means. Consequently, using oral histories as a method have been a deliberate choice to at least situate my role and presence in a rearguard position so my ideas stand side-by-side to what women have to tell. It has helped me to form a sincere dialogue without eclipsing them, so that my voice becomes one of the many other voices that weave the narratives told. Therefore, oral histories locate the researcher as an interlocutor that listens and shares and not as an interrogator that asks premeditated questions to satisfy the need of proving hypotheses.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that this work is an outcome of my own interests, ideology, subjectivity, and cultural and ethical codes that in the first place brought me closer to the Kurdish liberation struggle and especially to women. The structure of it was shaped out of my concerns and the hypothesis and theories to support them out of my understanding of how reality is best understood as an outsider to Kurdish reality. The issues that arose during the process, concerning my positionality as a researcher with power in relation to knowledge production and the representation Kurdish women in an academic framework have been the source of a lot of personal reflection, contradictions, and at times skepticism about the usefulness of the present work. Why do I want to undertake the research? For whom am I doing it? And to whom it will serve? And what will be the consequences of this research? After all, the way scientific research has been implicated in the survival of the colonial project remains a powerfully remembered history for the colonized. That is also why being identified as feminists or anarchists, being analyzed through the theoretical conceptions emerging from (Western) experiences that have been unable to open up their epistemologies to seeing the world from the perspective of the one's who have suffered the worst consequences of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism, despite all their claim to fight against social injustice, is felt as an imposition for Kurdish women.

Oral histories have helped me to overcome the dominance that my own interests, desires, 'good intentions' and convictions create and to humble my pretension to give voice to women. Through our conversations it became more clear that the issue is not the lack of enunciation but one of communication and conversation open to dialogical listening and based on inter-subjective, reciprocal relations, whereupon knowledge can become a co-production. The intention here is not to charge the words of women with meanings whose contents are constructed through colonial parameters, or search for legibility, truth or women's political

consciousness. The principle objective is to make an effort to not only hear but try to see and think of the world and feel it through the intersection of ‘their’ reality and ‘ours’. Because the miseries and the pain caused by colonialism and the ongoing colonization are still being treated as if what happens in the Kurdish zones is solely and exclusively their problem and as if it has nothing to do with the lives of the rest of the people who live in Turkey. And yet, when it comes to defending the unity of the national territory their lands are considered to the bitter end to be part of it. On the flip side, the individual accounts of Kurdish women tell about the experience of a shared oppression that has to do with the violence inflicted on these common territories. They narrate the stories of all the ‘minorities’ erased from the ‘History’ of Turkey as well as of the women whose identities, at least the ethnic one, have never been the subject of colonial difference. Consequently, women’s histories are hoped, on one hand, to impel the ‘outsiders’ including myself, the ones whose identities are shaped within the colonial matrix of power to get a deeper understanding of the structures that underlie our privileges which contribute to other peoples’ oppression. And hopefully alter our relation with respect to these privileges at the many intersections of race, gender, class, nation, and sexuality.

As it stands, this work seems to be addressed to the ones who find themselves on the privileged side of the colonial difference and not to Kurdish women. And to a certain extent this has been only but one of the key intentions of this work. First of all, the experiences told in this thesis are not new stories for the Kurdish women; they have already heard it time and again, and lived it firsthand. And assuming that with this work I could reveal facts they did not know before through their own histories would also be assuming the superior position of a researcher who can set before colonized women analyses that they could not have deduced by themselves. During this research I have been told many times how disheartening it was for the Kurdish women, especially the ones involved in Jineoloji, to hear their own women folk underestimate their ideas and experiences and see them internalizing the inferior position, the ignorance imputed to them. In contrast, deconstructing the dominant narratives and rewriting other ones through oral histories has been a way for me to position myself as an ally to Kurdish women who ‘research back’, who want to encourage other women to trust in their own thinking, analyses and theories without seeking validation from anyone else but themselves. Luckily, during this process, I have been surrounded by Kurdish women with whom I saw eye to eye and who have always been very direct in their criticism and support and with whom I co-created the guidelines of the interviews. In fact they were the ones to

introduce me to all the women whose histories are narrated in this work. I spent most of the time in Kurdish women's associations, community institutions and civic organizations in diaspora, taking part in Jineoloji workshops and meetings organized with the international feminists; in encounters, debates and conferences organized with feminist scholars showing solidarity with the Kurdish women's liberation struggle. I stood side by side Kurdish women in 8th March and 25th November marches and gatherings with other local women's organizations bringing together different ethnicities, religions, cultures and languages. And I witnessed how important and liberating it is for them to be able to talk about themselves, to share their own opinions, emotions, to voice their demands freely in pedagogical events organized by women for their own community and how inspirational it is to feel the mutual support and the coming side by side of differences in solidarity. Without building this relation of mutual recognition, affinity and reciprocity, I would never be able to reach out to the women who let me in their lives and shared with me their stories with such frankness and nor would they, I believe, tell me half of the things they shared.

During these moments, I asked them what would be the questions they would ask themselves and the women of their community if they were to tell their life histories. Obviously there is no singular answer to this question, just as there is no singular definition of being a Kurdish women. Even though deciding where to start was the most tricky part for many, 'What does it mean to be free?' exposed itself as a leitmotif that seemed like the most proper place to start thinking about their own lives. This question evidently is an open question that defies the assumed nature of emancipation and with it puts a finger on all the other structures that have subjugated women. When talking about emancipation, highlighting perspectives trivialized under the labels of 'regional backwardness', 'poverty', 'underdevelopment', 'lack of education', 'tribal patriarchy' that served the colonizing Other to turn a deaf ear to the discomforting question of colonialism, make it inevitable for the ones who perpetuate the structures of oppression to face with those silenced realities. While many of us in Turkey still treat the 'Kurdish Question' through the lenses of the delusive difference nationalism creates, women's focal point minimize the centrality of it and bring out crosscutting configurations of structural injustice that is part of everyone's history and not just theirs. Furthermore, they ground all these to material realities in contrast to the abstractions of theoretical analyses. Consequently, the narratives told reflect the multiplicity of women's experiences, concerns, definitions, each one centering on different aspects in relation to emancipation/oppression. They talk about what it means to not be able to go to school when your brothers do; to be

burdened with the responsibility of making a living when you are only a kid; to be forced to serve *all* the needs of a man that you despise for the rest of your life; to feel embarrassed from your own culture, from your own mother's language; to find out what your people really have gone through but no one, even your family avoided in conversations; what it means to break your back to prove your worth as a women, as a migrant; to feel that you do not have the common references, memories and realities with the people in places where you are forced to live, and many more. For this reason, the narratives are left as they are told, without any analyses and interpretation to avoid classifying and incorporating them into the paradigms of modern narratives of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism. I think these life histories are powerful enough not to need the mediation of Western theoretical concepts and already talk for themselves. I did, however, change the names of the people who feature in these life histories, and of certain places or omitted them to not put at risk the lives of these women given the political situation at the moment this work was being undertaken. This symbolic act of caring has been important for me to make them feel that these interviews are not done with an intention to place their lives as any other information in the colonial archive but so that their experiences and ideas are not wasted and can touch the manifold silences of the colonizing Others, disquiet them, take them out from where they are hiding. These women's words and experiences are intended to encourage the ones who inhabit the privileged sides of this world to ask ourselves different questions, un-learn the truths we hold so dear and allow ourselves to be re-taught through what other, alternative histories offer. The reflexivity that this might invoke hopefully urges us, the privileged others, to think about our own difference and Otherness, open ourselves to different ways of existing and understanding the world so we can make a commitment to dismantle the structures of oppression based on their marginalization. In this sense, women's histories are decolonial pedagogical tools to transform the colonial mindset and create different future alternatives.

This, on the other hand, by no means conceals my presence as the researcher, or the 'outside activist' and an ally, who recorded, transcribed and assembled the interviews to be inserted in the manuscript of this work. Their accounts are exposed to the outside world through a plot that I assembled from their stories which I felt was the best way to expose the multiple transborder connections they themselves build. With this plot I aspire to break the privilege and the spatial fix of the centers and frontiers, and convey the meanings of a geography where women's memories and identities are shaped through violence and resistance towards other contact zones and settings where the narratives get more and more intertwined with multiple

other worlds and cultures of the West. And this is just but one way of linking these stories, that, if asked, Kurdish women could have done differently. On the other hand, I have no claim of authenticity or pure objectivity; a false pretense of the modern science to disguise its partial opinions in the form of universal truths. Nor do I intend to push aside my subjectivity and agency in this work that have shaped its framework just like the Kurdish women did. This I believe is also a natural part of what co-production entails, though it does not automatically nullify the unequal power relations and subject positions that play on knowledge production. That is why, not making any comments over these life histories was also a way of not fixing my version as the only one and leaving the possibility of future readings to be done, other connections to be configured out of this multiplicity they offer.

But after all, the encounter of different worlds and epistemologies do need the creation of a certain common ground through which multiple voices can communicate. This entails an issue of translation between cultures, languages and symbols that underlie these different epistemologies. I am not referring to one that assimilates meanings into the world view of the privileged but one that comes from the in-between spaces. These spaces allow for a dehierarchized exchanges to take place so that moving meanings can be created to connect many different worlds to each other and open them up towards pluriversal understandings. In fact, during the interviews, this translation has already been performed by the women themselves. Their narratives certainly passed from diverse filters, to decide what is to be said and revealed to me as an ‘outsider-insider’ but also to the rest of the world through this thesis and the way in which this was to be done. And these filters are embodied by silences as much as words chosen. But this time, women are the ones who decide not to pronounce certain realities, not because they are censored but maybe because not everything needs to be shared or because there are grievances of the colonial past that still require their time of healing before being made publicly present. I felt this the most at moments when I received calls from women telling me that they did not want to do the interviews anymore but they showed up anyway and told me things that will only exist in the exact moment and place they were voiced, between one person who told them and the other one who listened. And words do not do justice to express how grateful I am to be made part of those moments of unmediated communication which for sure changed who *I* am and who *we* are.

Also, these silences are made up of words that only make sense in the native language, carrying symbolical meanings that spring from the territory, the sounds, the smells, a certain relation with all that exists. These words are composed of certain bodies that incarnate

suffering and subjugation but also ones that conceive the community. Once they are pronounced they hang in the air without finding a place for themselves to rest, to dwell in. I am certain that those words in Kurdish that embody the idea of belonging, a 'home', a place in the world where one stands on and dwells in, were lost in a translation, as the interviews were done in Turkish, the colonizer's language. A language that women had to learn, most of the time not through their own will, in order to fit into a world where their language did not give them the basic right to have a voice. The problem here is not just what is lost between languages, but also the incapacity of verbal communication to capture all the other forms of non-verbal expression that equally reveal the way we experience the world. Beyond that, these women's lives and who they are, are much more than the words or theories that define, talk about and analyze them or in the best case truly believe that they can make a change. In this sense, I do not think this thesis in its written form is able to transmit the feelings that come into existence in a glance, a simple touch, the co-presence of the others' bodies, the sensation of complicity people feel when a smell or a song incites the same images, the same memories in different minds. The shared moments in the homes of the families who opened their lives to me, all the 'ordinary' things we talked about, the friendliness, the frankness, the eagerness to get to know each other can not be simply recounted. Nor is it possible to express the affection I felt when I returned back to the house of one of the women who told me their life histories, the gratitude of finding out that they cooked the food I like the most because they knew I would be visiting. Without doubt their willingness to include me in their everyday so I would learn whatever I wanted to learn not like in a school but by taking part or the trust I felt every time I thought how natural it was to be included in a community where sharing and caring is the basis of belonging is part of this thesis. Although there is no way to put in words the indignation of hearing about the injustices they endured and the respect and hope I felt seeing their indomitableness, the weight of certain silences, the days I spent hiding because I did not know what to say and how to say. These absences and silences are in fact full of presences that need to be engaged with outside the limited horizon that current methodologies provide. I think it is only possible to make sense and learn from these by building relationships of affinity and reciprocity, by trying to be part of the community not by assimilation but voluntarily. These are the feelings that foster belonging and through these we absorb whatever it is that makes up the body of 'our people' and pass it on.

Yet framing alternative methodologies that would prevent the loss of these non-verbal grammars as it happens in the current format we produce knowledge in academies is a task

that needs still awaits to be undertaken all together. This is one of the future proposals that come out of the present work and can contribute to the ways we lay out decolonial research methodologies and methods. Nevertheless, I must say that I still have reservations about the extent of decolonizing research in Western academic institutions such that other ways of producing knowledge through emotions, rites, practices of everyday life can be counted as valid methodologies. It is not because I undervalue the recent proposals hold forth by decolonial thinkers but because I believe that research is directly linked with the reality we live in. And living in a system founded on patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism I find it difficult to imagine this transformation only through theoretical analyses. The modern rationality that permeates our methodologies and methods in Western academies fall into the error of believing that by taking apart the stories, revealing underlying texts, building relations of cause and effect to explain the reality and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively, we can help people to improve their current conditions. While, this rarely prevent them from dying or suffering. I sincerely do not think we can accomplish a real change without self-reflection and the parallel transformation of our day to day realities, the way we live, act and organize. And inciting a structural change is much needed to transform our lives both through thinking, discussing, producing knowledge but also by keeping an eye on how the reality is being changed by the social actors, learning from their practices. The power of knowledge lies in strengthening these practices. But more importantly knowledge needs to lay the groundwork of making an intervention in the world, taking action and responsibility. If knowledge and praxis are not grasped in mutual connection, these other ways of knowing will be at risk of being articulated and assimilated into dominant epistemologies and methods of scientific knowledge production with no benefit for the people themselves and their lives. What I mean is to draw attention to the urgency to remove the halo of idealization that surrounds our intentions as academics and point out the insincerity of the philanthropist role we unintentionally assume. So, the best I can hope to contribute with this thesis is on one hand to provide insights that can foster these practices that are potentially transformative. And on the other I hope to encourage with this work a reframing of the way we see the world, the way we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask and the solutions we seek by learning from peoples' practices of resistance.

These resistances need to be made much more visible and the issues they bring up for a genuine debate including everyone need to be heard in the mainstream public space and not just in elite or intellectual circles. In similar contexts of colonial violence, militant scholarly

work, especially oral history, pushed for to the foundation of 'Truth Commissions', to publicly discuss the (colonial) crimes committed by the governments and state institutions, genocides, crimes against humanity and human rights violations. To hold administrations responsible for what has happened, point out the perpetrators who continue to occupy positions of political power, and to make public the testimonies of the victims. These commissions, by providing space for an explanation of what happened to whom, including the silenced versions of peoples' suffering help in reinstating the right to truth and the right to justice of the people who have been systemically subjected to violence. Further these provide the people with tools to demand accountability. The truth recovery and a new official narrative construction about the past is also part of the restoration of the historical memory of both sides. The memory of the one's who suffered injustice, by acknowledging their memory as part of history and of the one's who in one way or another have taken part in it and yet ignored the legacies of past violences. Managing these historical narrative is a way to foster peace building and reconciliation in the present and for the future. Indeed two years after the 'Kurdish democratic opening', in secret negotiations between the Turkish government and Öcalan, known as the 'Oslo Process', Turkey agreed to three protocols; the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission; a committee to craft a democratic constitution; and concrete procedures for the PKK's withdrawal from Turkey and subsequent disarmament, but never signed it. A straightforward dealing with the horrors of the past through dialogue to resolve conflicts, bring justice, foster co-existence and rebuild democracy requires the will of all the parts involved and efforts to bring change. Under the authoritarian social and political context and the ongoing violent conflict between Turkish government and the Kurdish populations, the possibility of talking about the colonial past, violences and their present legacy seems very unlikely. The Armenian's for centuries now have been trying to compel the governments to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide through international trials, and reams of scholarly work, reports, books, interviews and testimonies of the people who witnessed mass killings, deportations, robbery, plunder, pillage, rape, forced marriages, proselytization and much more. Though it does not change the fact that the genocide is still being denied by Turkey as one of the prime perpetrators of these acts.

Further, for any kind of initiative to exercise the right to truth and justice to have a real effect, the past needs to be engaged in a systematic manner. This is much needed to leave a comprehensive overview of a country's history and break up the monopoly of national history writing. In this way history can be extended to include multiple histories so we can ask larger

historical questions about the context and structural conditions that preceded the colonial conflict. In other words, the historical re-construction needs to ask questions about the foundations of the mentality that gave way to the historical events. Needless to say, these questions are most of the time not very welcome by the states themselves. Also, if these initiatives are not paralleled by institutional and civic mechanisms for dialogue, legal processes of accountability and settling accounts, economic and political policies that compensate for the wrongdoings but more importantly to eliminate the systemic injustices they will not change the unjust conditions of the people. For that we need to listen to strategies built up by struggles to open the door for the self-government of different communities, to their pedagogical propositions to abolish racism and (White/Western) superiority and to create new moral bases for a free society.

It would be unfair to think that the political and social mechanisms and institutions that should complement the desired systemic changes are not being created. All the local organizations, assemblies, self-managed cooperatives, political, economic, cultural, educative, sanitary, defense and justice commissions, autonomous women's organizations, the *Mala Jin* (Women's Houses) both in Bakur and in Rojava are the fruits of years of struggle Kurdish people have been leading to counterwork systemic injustice. These are a proof that they are not contented with an acknowledgment, recognition and reconciliation but want a systemic transformation. Ignoring the peoples' capacity to self-govern their lives and take decisions over their future leads to academic or intellectual proposals far from their principle concerns. Besides these have no use for struggles of self-determination, decolonization and social justice and understate peoples' will, power and strategies in reaching these goals.

With that in mind I refrain from making concrete proposals as the continuation of the oral history work done in this thesis. Nonetheless, I do not intend to see it as a finished project. On the contrary, this is just the 'middle' of much more to come to display how people have resisted to the patriarchal, colonial and capitalist world system by taking force from their own epistemologies, ancestral cultures and practices and highlight the transformative character of these from the contact zones of different territories and cultures. But I would rather leave the decision to the Kurdish women and the broader Kurdish community who are already undertaking for instance a considerable cinematographic work to record and recite their own recent history, the experiences of war and of the re-construction of the society in Rojava, whose upshots are already being shared with an international audience in many different

places of Europe and of the world. Also, during the last decade, Kurdish women have been producing vigorous written accounts, interviews, books, reports, novels and poetry to tell their history and to create convergence points with other women. Rather than advising what would be the best way to do things, I would like to offer this work to them as a source that could aid in future projects that they already have in mind, my assistance in realizing them and to serve as a connection with other struggles of resistance and alternative practices.

Nevertheless, the possible fields of research that the findings of the present work present should not be discounted. The insights offered in this thesis could be used in furthering the 'researching back', to bring together Kurdish women's narratives with accounts of the same colonial history told from other perspectives. They can provide the means to place these accounts side-by-side in ways that multiple versions are brought into dialogue to prompt more questioning about the 'truths' and self-reflection about our own identities and ideologies. And in diaspora the same encounters could be brought about between the Kurdish women and the Armenian, the Greek Rum, the women of other communities who were forcefully displaced from their native territories, so there can be a richer account of the colonial legacy. These connected histories would provide powerful tools to fill in the gaps of history and build further connections and affinities. Lastly, listening the second, third generations of Kurds who live in diaspora whose identities are formed in different social, historical, political and cultural contexts, interwoven with different historic realities of the countries where they were born and have grown up, hearing their concerns, perspectives and interpretations, their memory of the 'nation' and idea of belonging and ways of managing all this would be an invaluable contribution to highlight the global context in which anti-colonial resistance and struggles for social justice are embedded. These intersecting, transborder and transgenerational outlooks are very significant resources to address the structure of power relations that have flourished in the 21st century as an economic, cultural and political legacy of Western imperialism but also create counter-hegemonic globalization to fight against neoliberalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. They become even more necessary at moments when forced migration, the increasing population of refugees that are stuck at numerous borders of the First-world and elsewhere carrying with them issues of neo-colonization, political, economic and physical occupation of territories, destruction of peoples' natural environments are disquieting the Western world and challenging its basic civilizational premises.

To conclude, with this work I hope to have contributed first bring into surface territoriality specific yet globally contingent configurations of both hegemonic and anti-hegemonic structures, their multiplicity and intertwined nature through the narratives of Kurdish women and people who struggle to preserve their lifeworlds against patriarchal, colonial and capitalist modernity. I also hope to have provided space for them to tell the story of an egalitarian, free and cosmopolitan society, the non-exploitative relationships and the ecological future they have been building by grounding the basis of their ideology in the material reality without romanticizing their efforts. Besides, this work also pretends to lay out a perspective that locates the Kurdish Liberation Struggle as well as the women's liberation ideology as part of the dynamic constellations formed by global social justice movements. This is why one of the central objectives is to expose to view the extended genealogy of KLM and KWLS that stretches out from the anti-colonial and anti-imperial national liberation struggles to the Third World, indigenous and decolonial feminisms. And subsequently the analyses in this work are grounded on the epistemologies and experiences of the colonized as the starting point of the debates not just on the colonial past but also the future alternatives.

The struggle of the communities that have been subjected to marginalization, silencing and even non-existence, to exploitation, subjugation and injustice, on one hand expose that the desolate global state of affair indeed is part and parcel of the destructive outcomes of a civilizational logic, self-assured of its superiority and yet blinded by this self-adulation. This logic is unable to see the problems caused by its own existence let alone being able to provide solutions for it. That being so the ecological destruction, the devastation of the life space of native populations, genocides, the extermination of indigenous populations, cultures, languages and lifeways, the dismantling of communities; the discrimination and segregation of the urban poor, the proletariat, the workers; the wars waged on the 'Other' be it a Black, a Muslim, a Jew, a Gypsy or a refugee; the contempt for women, and non-normative sexual identities; the assault on landless peasants, the extermination few nomadic communities left on this earth; the criminalization and demonization of a Palestinian or a Kurd; the new enclosures and privatizations handing over the public goods to a privileged few dispossessing the rest need to be understood as inseparable outcomes.

On the other hand, these struggles are not incipient reactions to the imposition of a monolithic thinking, to the attempts of standardization and homogenization of multiplicity, of political systems based on exclusion or seizing power so as to have dominion over life. Although they stand against the containment and management of imagined civilizational differences, these

cosmovisions offer a much important paradigmatic change. They expose a chronicle of historic circumstances that prefigure different futures and routes that can be taken outside the capitalist colonialist and patriarchal modernity. Further, they present ethical and political options, guidelines to praxes built on nurturing life. The epistemological change advanced by struggles led by the indigenous, the Afro-descendant, the Black critical thinking, peasants, the women of the non-Western world and also an array of feminist, urban, workers', migrants', LGBTI+, ecologist, *indignados*, antispeciesist, anticapitalist Western counter-hegemonic movements, denounce the anthropocentric, androcentric, racist, strictly positivist and market oriented mindset. These resistances offer a tool kit that puts forth ecology, popular justice, gender equality, cultural recognition, ethics and politics of care, mutual responsibility, solidarity, people's power, autonomy and self-realization to create a "World Where all the Colors are Represented" as Kurdish women repeat time and again.

The hegemonic global order has long been falling apart at the seams and it has spared no effort to avoid the abyss that awaits clinging on the aggressive neoliberalism. Its founding rationale that values material gain over sustaining life has been one of the root cause of its collapse and the political and ethical corruption that the world is suffering today. This order has served to create a mode of governance that allows money to drive politics, consolidates wealth and power in the hands of the upper 1%, eliminates social provisions, replaces welfare with warfare expanding the reach of the police state and criminalizes and individualizes social problems. It has produced subjects given over to self-interest and unrestrained individualism, normalizing ruthless competition, privatization and commodification of every single thing, with a blatant disregard for human life. It has created a society in which agency is in crisis, subjects are infantilized and depoliticized. This hegemonic order has produced a world view that values war above peace, violence over critique and militarism over democracy. And today to create consent it uses public pedagogies of hate, fear, anxiety and terror as political instruments. It abolishes the distinction between truth and fiction, wages a war against public values of solidarity, collaboration and social responsibility and seeks out eradicating critical thinking. In order to save itself from the downfall, today, it is responding with ultranationalisms, warmongering, fascism, racism, bigotry, incitement to ethnic or racial hatred, misogyny, abomination of sexual differences, demonization of poverty and anti-intellectualism. The neoliberal tools of hegemonic order has dismantled the links between private and public life making it almost impossible to translate private issues into broader systemic considerations. It becomes more and more evident that foundation of cooperatives,

federations, solidarity groups are reduced to bandages that palliate the impacts of the global collapse but are incapable of forestalling it. We need to create a new kind of politics and ethics that addresses the global reach of power and the growing potential for mass resistance. This means we need to connect the dots so that the links between the local and global can be understood within the logic of wider forces and interests that shape them. And there is no doubt that we cannot go back to the drawing board over and over again if we want to accomplish a real and radical change. That being the case, learning from the struggles of the peoples who have been fighting against oppression and injustice is our way out against the erosion of a civic culture of liberty, of a historical memory drawing on collective democratic achievements and any sense of shared global citizenship. Kurdish women's liberation struggle, the new society being built in Rojava, alongside many other struggles that resist and gain ground against domination all around the world offer us a broad range of theorizations, strategies and praxis that broaden viable visions of a genuinely postcolonial and decolonial world.

Thus, it is constructive and insightful to consider these as simultaneously complementing each other and striving for analogous outcomes of liberation, self-determination, autonomy and popular sovereignty. These struggles are the driving force behind a global shift from a political and ideological imagination on one hand boxed up in nationalisms. And on the other, they offer decolonial alternatives against Western-centric ontologies, epistemologies and modular understandings that have been constituted through the colonization of the women, the native peoples, their lands and the nature, the expulsion and exclusion of the Other. It is obvious that the patriarchal and liberal reformulations of sovereignty, the State and territory will not provide us any hope of democratization, one that is constitutive of a collective empowerment of self-governance. Against the despairing panorama of the world, these struggles inform our hope to create change, they make it concrete and actionable. They provide us with other possibilities of social emancipation that feed our militant hope and practice to engage with the forces of authoritarianism and domination on all fronts. They lead the way for creating new forms of collective resistance, transforming our anger into collective struggles, and a basis for expanding our horizons of different futures in which everyone, all of us take part as equals and in which all the lives matter.

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