CHAPTER 6

Dirtscapes

Contest over Value, Garbage and Belonging in Istanbul

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A man in uniform kindly held the doors of the elevator of Şişhane Metro Station open for me so I could jump in. He had a trash bin with him, in which he gathered empty 500 ml water bottles. It was not one of the large grey bags that non-municipal garbage workers carried around, but one of the green bins the municipal recycling management service provided. 'People drink a lot of water these days', I said, to break the usual awkward elevator silence. He smiled: 'It is hot today [in Istanbul]. I have been picking up a lot of these in the metro'. Like other garbage workers I have met, Metin (all interlocutors' names changed) complained about how people threw their waste onto the street and expected him to pick it up; that people are too lazy to take two steps to the next trash can; that they drop their garbage in front of him; that they would not talk to him or look him in the eye; that they treat him like a second-class citizen; that he hoped the municipal contractor uniform could restore his dignity, that it would lift him above non-municipal garbage workers, especially above 'those Romani who do a lot of the informal work'.[1]

Metin mentioned that foreigners treated him differently than most Turkish people, and went on to tell me about a group of Japanese tourists he was impressed with because they not only brought the trash to his bin but also thanked him. He added that most locals would rarely do that and would instead drop the trash right in front of him. In all his disappointment he asked me: 'Why would you not thank someone who does that kind of [dirty] work for you?'

While Metin himself was by no means in a privileged social position, he still occupied a higher place on the social ladder than his non-municipal colleagues. Even if classism still worked against him in everyday encounters, officially he was established as a proper citizen with social security, healthcare and a safe work environment.

Municipal officials claimed they hired people in their recycling management workforce regardless of ethnicity. The unofficial truth, however, is that the selection process was a discriminatory practice along intersectional lines of ethnicity and gender: there was a strong preference for hiring Turkish men. In the Turkish conservative-religious imaginary, women are not supposed to carry out 'dirty' work outside of the domestic realm, while it is acceptable that they work as cleaners in their own and others' households. Therefore, Turkish female garbage workers were frowned upon. It was, however, tolerable – or, rather, consciously ignored and looked away from – that Romani women and children worked on the streets picking trash from morning to evening: '. . . You know, in our [Turkish] society, women cannot work in the streets', Metin told me, 'but their [Romani] women are a different case'. Towards the end of my fieldwork in 2016, no one among the Romani group I got to know in the non-municipal recycling sector had any chance to benefit from the safer work offered by the municipality, especially not the women and children among them, who were left with the most precarious and less valuable garbage.

In Turkey, as much as anywhere else, garbage arranges society, space and culture and organises corresponding knowledges, practices, performances and institutions. In a way, it is a 'total social fact', 'at once legal, economic, religious, aesthetic' (Mauss 1966) and intersectional. It also relates to the creation and destruction of value, and, therefore, changes of status, ideals and orders of value with circulation (Thompson 1979). Among various actors who produce, manage and recycle garbage in its various cultural and material forms, my research deals with the contest among groups and individuals who co-create landscapes of purity and pollution in a process of contest and constant negotiation. As these actors define and defy urban, material and bodily dichotomies between value and garbage, they complicate and question structural binaries: they perform their roles along and against them, depending on spatial and situational context; they renegotiate Self and Other as they self-/stereotype, stigmatise and reflect. They equally organise and empower each other within groups who are in conflict with each other. I will draw on the specific case of recycling management in Istanbul as part of my fieldwork over the years 2014–16, and focus on the conditions of non-municipal garbage workers in Istanbul, particularly the minority group of Romani Turks.[2] Situating non-municipal Romani gar-

bage workers among other relevant actors, such as municipal services and recycling management authorities, my main questions are: What strategies exist to disable or enable non-municipal work with waste, and to accept or abject individuals and groups as part of a larger framework of social and spatial transformation in Turkey? What tactics and performances have developed to counter and complicate the situation?

It is striking how garbage workers go unnoticed by most of the population. I saw many passers-by dropping their empty cups from coffeehouse chains right in front of them. Some would even bump into garbage workers, as if they were invisible. Non-municipal workers would probably have preferred to remain in this invisible state and merge with the city, walking the streets they know better than anyone else. Their new visibility – not simply physically, but in front of the law – renders their practice illegal and leaves those who already carry out the least desirable work of the city in a desperate situation.

Multiple Abjections Devaluing Individuals

The forging of Turkishness and Turkish landscape through governmental strategies structures subjects into dichotomous categories that determine an individual as suitable (valuable) to be a citizen or not. This valorisation of proper versus improper citizens works most obviously against political and intellectual opponents of those in power. Concurrently, it takes less visible but more destructive paths among the urban poor such as Turkish internal labour migrants, many of them Kurds or Romani, and refugees – in short, those who do not belong to a 'hegemonic ethnoclass' (Wynter 2003). The process of devaluing individuals is intersectional in the form of a class-based, gendered and ethnic abjection.[3] Several governmental and municipal actors in Turkey, among other actors, used strategies to polarise civil society and create binary oppositions among its subjects and definitions of urban space: proper as opposed to improper citizens, and clean and healthy spaces, practices and bodies as opposed to dirty, dangerous and (culturally and physically) contaminated ones.[4]

The term 'White Turk' has been engaged differently by various authors during previous periods of history. I use it in reference to the hegemonically constructed ideal citizen: the nouveau riche, the neo-Islamic elite who have risen under the rule of the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; Justice and Development Party), also referred to as AK Partisi, the White Party.[5] Hereby, whiteness needs to be contextualised and differentiated from a Western understanding of a racial epidermal scheme. It goes beyond colour

and refers to ethnicity, class and different forms of capital. Many among the Turkish hegemonic ethnoclass have gained their position through prestige and privilege that came not through merit but through other channels such as inheritance, kinship, fictive kinship or clientelism. The subject is constituted through perceptual and conceptual boundaries (Kristeva 1982; Shimakawa 2002); the White Turk needs an Other in terms of class and ethnicity and abjects the 'not-I': Romani are exemplary Others to a Self that is constructed as a 'proper' Turkishness. The Romani garbage workers, although Turks by citizenship, often considered themselves treated as secondary citizens in their daily experience, performance and practice in the city. Older quarters and minority neighbourhoods were strategically selected and deemed structurally unsafe, which, in a risk-prone city like Istanbul, easily convinced better-off residents of the necessity to redevelop these areas. The ease and feeling of safety of the dominant Turkish Self in the face of cleansing urban space from unwanted bodies – that is, the urban transformation of settlements where minorities and migrants live – comes at a price: a prevailing culture of control not only subordinates the Other, but also contains the Self in gated communities through a 'politics of fear', by which I mean governmental strategies of a legal, spatial and biopolitical nature that create and then presumably target internal, external and ecological dangers, both real and imaginary. The performances of oppositional and non-hegemonic groups in response to such creations have been rendered dangerous, either because they do not mimic dominant identities and absorb state ideology (see Bhabha 1994), because these groups act autonomously, or because they criticise the state.[6] As stated, the individuals central to this research were particularly impacted. They were not simply workers of discard; their activity made them discarded in the eyes of Turkish authorities, as if they were wasted humans (Bauman 2004), as if their working material – trash – were turned discursively into an identity classification that always occupies the negative side in society discourses, namely Romani, woman, poor. Through their practice, the location of their homes in the city's ethnic, poor neighbourhoods, and their origins in the hinterlands and history as an ethnic group in Turkey, the Romani Turks as part of this research expressed their situation as Other to the rising 'white' Turkish Self.

From Tinkers to 'Trash Pickers'

The Self is constructed 'as a body in a spatial and temporal world' (Fanon 1952: 91). The inherent issue is not only that certain expectations are inscribed on the body as part of the individual's responsibility, but also that

this body carries the burden of race, ethnicity, history and ancestors (ibid.: 92–93). The very means of establishing citizenship and belonging to a country, in the case of this research the Turkish ID card, also became a tool to localise citizens along the axes of gender, history, kinship, ethnicity. On blue cards for men and orange cards for women were inscribed the names of holders' parents, registration of birth place, current home location, as well as religious affiliation.[7] The black letters on this document, sometimes interspersed with handwriting from officials, also inscribed the identity of an individual onto their body; this allowed employers to immediately locate a person on an ethnicity and class map of Turkish society, for example through Romani-sounding names, typical places of Romani settlement throughout Turkey, and the stereotypically ethnic neighbourhoods in Istanbul. If an individual's past and future are already determined through the inscription of one's identity card, what powers are left to the individual to change their fate? Many conversations with interlocutors touched on the question of fate or destiny at one point or another. One of these conversations took place with Adnan Abi, whom I accompanied during his tours and breaks.[8]

Adnan Abi, a male garbage worker in his early forties, leaned against his garbage-picking cart. Two young women, Hande and Berna, squatted in front of their cart next to his. Their cart became heavy once it was filled up with old paper, plastic and metal, which is why these two women, possibly fifteen or sixteen years old, were usually found together on their tours, picking through the valuable garbage of upper-class neighbourhoods. Their sisterhood not only ensured safety from outside control and dangers (policing), it also empowered them against male garbage workers from other groups. I had seen them successfully fighting off young men from another garbage workers' kin group. In conversation with the three of them on questions of fate and identity inscription, Adnan Abi asked the following:

> Look at these two young women. Wouldn't it suit this one to be a teacher? Wouldn't it suit that one to be a secretary? Isn't she pretty? Don't her eyes speak of her intelligence and vivid mind? Could you not imagine her sitting and greeting the clients of a large company? Don't you think that is what she could be doing right now if she had been given the chance to go to school?

The bitter smiles of the women spoke to what Adnan said. Not only did dominant municipal and governmental actors do very little to foster upward mobility for these women, but they added further to their hardship with recent laws that not only forbade the practice of non-municipal garbage work, but also introduced excessively exaggerated fines[9] for those (non-municipally contracted) individuals who were caught collecting gar-

bage as well as for those who supported them (by providing packaging materials, for example). Adnan continued:

> Like me, these two women haven't learned anything else but trash picking. My ancestors were tinkers in the southeast of the country. We would travel around and mend kitchen utensils, farming tools and repair machines. Then they didn't need us anymore, so we moved to the larger cities like Istanbul and were left with the work no one else wanted to do. My father was a trash picker, and I went with him on his tours, learning the tricks of the trade. My eldest sometimes accompanies me, he says he wants to contribute to the family income. I don't mind the work, it's honest work. . . . I don't even want to work for the municipality. I have heard that they don't pay on time and if they do, it is never the promised amount. What I pick and sell to the recycling facilities[10] is my money, earned with my sweat . . . Since the law has come out that forbids us to pick trash [in January 2016], I have lost about 30 per cent of my income. If they catch you, fines are high. If the supermarkets continue to help us by giving us their packaging material, they get fines as well. Some still do it to support us, others are afraid of having to pay 5,000 Turkish lira [fine].[11]

Romani interlocutors carried anger over the restriction of their mobility, as their agency was limited by lawfare (restriction of their practice and substitution with municipal services) and biopolitical othering (Foucault 1978; Fassin 2001). Romani resisted such governmental strategies, exactly by *not joining* the municipal recycling workforce and by *retaining authority* over their practice, time and earnings. This defence strategy spoke to their self-determination as Romani (Okely 1983) – a correlation between self-employment and self-identity that interlocutors emphasised in words and actions ('I am my own master', 'We are honest people'). By doing so, they evaded subjectification through the state and did not respond to interpellation, but circumvented it through collective efforts in their social networks. An example of this was the reorganisation of their mobility tactics after eviction from neighbourhoods near their work site. Authorities, however, did not consider this evasion as an empowering strategy by the Romani, but as evidence of their uncontrollability, their polluting or improper citizenhood – the performance they expected from the workers in the first place. Such a bias reinforced the Turkish nation-state's class-based and ethnic, even gendered, abjection of the Romani.

Most nation-states rely on a homogeneous definition of nationhood and citizenship, which is why those nations establish themselves by abjecting what is other, foreign – in the case of the Romani, not-Turkish. This is clearly stated through a double language of abjection: through alleged uncleanliness and by working with garbage. Practices of national abjection can reveal the politics of representation of society, specifically what is seen

as Other, as a fundamental part of the everyday (Shimakawa 2002). In the context of non-municipal garbage workers in Istanbul, their crafting of networks, subdivision and contest over urban spaces of valuable garbage, their performance with and against societal expectations can be best understood through the connection and reciprocal influence on multiple scales from body to city in which they negotiated their coming into visibility.

The garbage workers, predominantly non-municipal ones, are subjected as dirty or improper. They carried out dirty practices through their everyday dealing and valuation of what dominant actors deemed invaluable (garbage). They occupied what many officials considered dirty places, the 'dangerous' self-built settlements, squats in historic neighbourhoods, and slums of the city. Ironically, it is the garbage workers – the 'dirty people doing dirty practices and living in dirty places' – who, through their very practice of recycling garbage, keep the city clean, safe, proper, healthy and sustainable. They do so in a much more efficient way than the municipal recycling service because of their intimate knowledge of the city, where garbage appears and how to immediately respond to it.[12]

Urban transformation works as a governmental tool to cleanse minority neighbourhoods and informal settlements to implement residential and commercial projects. Biopolitics, through politics and media, defines the new Turkish identity and bodies. Lawfare supports urban transformation and biopolitics by legalising the destruction of minority neighbourhoods and illegalising not only their practices such as garbage picking, but also the support for their practice by other groups and individuals in the city through high fines.

'Someone Else Will Pick It Up'

Historically, authorities have used the argument of infectiousness and danger emitted by undesirable subjects of the state as sufficient justification for legal and physical action against these presumably impure subjects (Douglas 1984). The 'performative danger' (Mitchell 2015) in the case of the Romani was described by various interlocutors in authorities and among dominant groups through the language of purity and pollution: one must get rid of the 'unhealthy, unhygienic, uncontrollable, those who pollute urban space'. Those who have engaged this language of abjection imagined that pollution spread most literally through the infected bodies of workers in contact with dirt and diseases, while ideological pollution spread through the dangerous performances of otherness. One such performance was considered to be the Romani group's autonomy from the system: through their mere presence, but also by their actions, the garbage workers could infect

the thoughts of proper citizens, potentially leading them to act and think autonomously as well.

The avoidance of dirt as a matter of hygiene and aesthetics is a widespread notion in various countries, and, more generally, 'dirt [is a] matter out of place' (Douglas 1984: 36), an offence against order (ibid.: 2), and has to be eliminated for that reason. The littering culture in Turkey is a very particular one with regard to garbage practices and social implications. Both garbage workers and individuals who produce garbage have communicated the existence of a strong social hierarchy, in which littering – throwing garbage onto the streets, out of windows, into green areas and parks – became a performance of higher rank: the act of littering positioned one above those who will have to pick it up, those who were 'second-class citizens'. In Istanbul, therefore, dirt is paradoxical: on one hand, it is a matter that has to take place, because it was a means to establish a particular social order. 'Someone else will pick it up' were the exact words used by all of those I approached after observing them litter on the streets, in public spaces and in the most scenic spots of Istanbul – on the ferries, in parks that overlook the Bosporus, in playgrounds accompanied by their children. Most of those I asked also reported that they visited the respective spaces frequently, but had no concern regarding their littering; they were sure that someone took care of their garbage so they would be able to come back to a clean spot for their next visit. On the other hand, dirt is a matter out of place, in reference to its material object form but also the people who ensured that spaces in the city remained clean; their recycling practices and the locations of their homes were also matter out of place.[13]

Interestingly, some of those I asked why they threw their bottles onto the street were also convinced that they were creating work for someone else by leaving garbage. Among those, there was a shared cultural understanding of non-municipal garbage workers as part of a larger urban ecology, but also a social hierarchy. Through denial of social mobility and abjection as an ethnic group, Romani garbage workers have become a sort of 'caste', or hereditary class. This notion was broken, not in favour of the workers and their social mobility, but to dismantle and replace them as a group in the urban ecology. Municipal systems were one of the means to control the streets and to extract financial value from collected dirt. The value that garbage created for the non-municipal garbage workers was a value that authorities have laid their hands on, threatening the livelihoods of those who had no chance of becoming garbage workers in the municipal services. This results in a disregard for rising issues like child labour, discrimination, displacement. Therefore, affected groups often do not see themselves represented or included by other actors, which in turn is why they lack trust in actors who could potentially become their allies. Instead,

they derive support and seek empowerment from within their kin groups and larger social networks.

Dirtscapes

Landscapes of purity and pollution emerge from the production of knowledge over value and garbage and the use of 'abjective', binary constructions. I refer to these constructs as the 'dirtscape'.[14] The dirtscape stands in context with a particular culture of value and garbage, it has flexible boundaries, and subsumes what different interlocutors referred to as 'the uncontrollable, unhygienic, dangerous' in terms of space, bodies and practices. It is populated mainly by the urban poor, and often localised in squats in historic neighbourhoods, migrant self-built settlements, and low-cost housing. It gives justification to local authorities for measures of *temizleme* (cleansing) of space and people. The language of the dirtscape is made up of – but not limited to – metaphors and terms used by several bureaucrats and authorities, such as *temizleme*, tumour, cancer, undeserving, threat, danger, dirt (also referring to people), and the repeatedly mentioned imaginary of the *kontrolsuz* (without control). In sum, the dirtscape is a multiscalar phenomenon comprised of spaces, material objects, bodies, practices and performances, of values and rituals around dirt and cleanliness. It deals with dirt in its material, social and symbolic form, it is in constant flux and is renegotiated between different actors who each promote their differing cultural constructions of purity and pollution. Since the dirtscape consists of tangible and intangible layers of interpretation, its study requires a multidisciplinary approach to its constituent elements.

In Turkey, the line between cleanliness and dirt appeared to be the threshold of one's home: residents and guests likewise took off their shoes before entering to leave the dirt outside. The streets of the city, public spaces and parks were locations where dirt is left. At the moment when an item is dropped, it transforms from something valuable into garbage. The act of dropping something on the floor instead of in a trash bin is a result of either carelessness or intention. There is an underlying assumption that someone else will have to pick it up, someone less valuable: 'they treat us like garbage, too', as one garbage worker put it. It comes as no surprise that the non-municipal garbage workers in Istanbul are comprised of the urban poor – (internal) migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities; men, women and children alike. The stigma of garbage was reified in the places where they live: poor neighbourhoods, self-built settlements, squats in historic neighbourhoods. Apart from the latter, informal settlements often emerged in precarious urban locations: on slopes, close to highways, on polluted

ground near factories or garbage dumps. In 1993, a garbage hill exploded in the Ümraniye District of Istanbul, taking the lives of many who lived nearby and dealt with the garbage (Kocasoy and Curi 1995). While some squats and low-income settlements have grown into socio-culturally and economically diverse, strong communities who feel very much at home in their neighbourhood, others are the places of individuals and groups who have no choice but to live in the city's dirtscape. These are under constant threat of eviction from renewal projects that are part of an urban transformation.

Through 'trash talk', new avenues open up for an understanding of an architectural ideology, and architecture and urban planning as hegemonic tools to produce the 'clean' city (Argyrou 1997; Yiftachel 2009; McKee 2015; Martínez 2017). Ethnic cleansing is often disguised in spatial cleansing (Herzfeld 2006), that is, the act of getting rid of undesirable residents and users of a particular space through demolishment, redevelopment and exclusion of previous residents from the new development. Cultural constructions of dirty bodies, spaces and practices therefore implicate each other. People are treated as dirt, precisely those who live in the dirtscape, while, at the same time, they take care of transforming and recycling it.

A typical example of governmental strategies and lawfare that target the dirtscape can be found in the transformation of the historic neighbourhood of Tarlabaşı. Renewal Law No. 5366: Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalizing of Deteriorated Immovable Historical and Cultural Properties, often simply referred to as the 'Tarlabaşı Law', was approved on 16 June 2005. The law enables local authorities to expropriate property owners in presumably structurally unsafe areas (structural safety being determined by municipal experts) as a form of eminent domain. The developer claimed that it was indeed for the common good, because they were getting rid of 'the cancer of the city' (interview, Beyoglu Gap Inşaat, 2010). The tools of lawfare also empower local authorities to suspend and overrule the status of Historic Asset Protection assigned to specific areas by the Council for Preservation of Sites of Historic Interest. Thereby, Law No. 5366 is repurposed not to preserve and renovate Tarlabaşı, but to exchange residents and transform space. More needs to be said about resilience such as practices of (re)organisation.

What has become garbage for one person still has value for another. Non-municipal local networks of garbage workers precede municipal formal services and more recent, globally inspired social movements around dirt. Garbage workers, mainly *çekçekciler* ('pull-pullers', those who pull things from the garbage), earn their livelihood from collecting reusable and recyclable items such as paper, plastic, metal, appliances and other materials, often also hazardous waste, and delivering them in large carts or collection trucks to recycling stations distributed all over the city. Non-municipal

garbage workers have different forms of organisation. I have observed two main organisational strategies in two areas that are preferred garbage sites, that is, areas that produce the most valuable garbage: the commercial concentrations on Istiklal Avenue in Beyoğlu and the upscale neighbourhood of Nisantaşı in Şişli.

In the first case, the area around Istiklal Avenue, the garbage workers used to live nearby in areas such as Tarlabaşı. They used to come with carts to the Istiklal Avenue area and took the sorted garbage to storage areas of a *hurdacı* (waste dealer) (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). Many garbage workers in the Istiklal area were organised under a *hurdacı*, someone who owns or rents (or squats) a storage place, often old parking lots of empty historic buildings. These were located in the rundown quarters near the Golden Horn and Bosporus shore before the widespread urban transformation through the Galataport Project took its toll on them. The garbage workers could rent trash-picking carts for a rental fee of 20 TL (around $5.50) per day from their *hurdacı* (Şen et al. 2014) and earned around 10 TL per full cart delivered, leaving them with 40–50 TL (around $11–14) on a good day, which, at the end of the month, was still considerably below minimum income (around 1,645 TL gross/month), even when working weekdays and weekends. Once enough recyclable material had been collected, the *hurdacı* organised transport to larger recycling and transfer stations on his trucks and received payment accordingly. The transfer stations were a kind of neutral ground for municipal and non-municipal services, where the value of garbage is prioritised over questions of legitimacy of the collector.

In the second case, the Romani garbage workers in the Nisantaşı area of Şişli were organised differently. Many of them had previously lived in a

Figures 6.1 .and 6.2. Two types of carts could be rented from the waste dealer according to material. The pushcart is mainly used for old appliances or generally old used items with a potential for a second life. The white trash-bag carts carry plastic, paper and cardboard. Photographs by Aylin Yildirim Tschoepe.

nearby settlement west of Nisantaşı, but were evicted or forced out by gentrification. They had to move to Gaziosmanpaşa, further west across the Golden Horn, which was also already a target area for district-wide transformation.[15] Their constant (imposed) life on the move led them to adapt their mode of mobility and organisational structure in comparison with other groups of garbage workers. The Romani individuals who were part of this research were not organised under a *hurdacı* but carried out their practice mostly as part of a kinship group. As families, they have invested in their own garbage trucks, which brought them to the places with the most valuable garbage, and allowed them to use their trucks as stationary and mobile collection vehicles (Figure 6.3). Adnan, whom I mentioned earlier, was one of those who had to move further away, but returned to his previous work site using his truck. While some brought their own trucks and used them as a base while working on a site, other garbage workers, often in groups of two or more women, were dropped off in the morning and picked up in the evening by their families, as in the case of Hande and Berna. In many cases, three generations collected together: grandparents, parents and children. Roles were clearly defined between those who collected garbage, those who took care of younger children, and those who stayed close to the truck to alert the family in case of policing. Mobility was necessary to evade the exorbitant fines for non-municipal garbage work

Figure 6.3. Garbage collection trucks owned by a group. Photograph by Aylin Yildirim Tschoepe.

that had been introduced in 2016. At the time of writing these lines, the workers have already moved sites of practice.

Imposed Identity and Social Determinism

One might argue that garbage workers consist of a transient population. This may be true for refugees or internal migrants, who have brief stays and use trash picking as a temporary means to bridge a financially and personally precarious situation with the hopes to move on soon to another place. The Romani garbage workers, however, are not transient. They have settled in the city after being forced to migrate from their ancestral homelands. The social (and ethnic) hierarchy they have found in cities like Istanbul left them with the position of garbage workers, which they have been carrying out over generations.

Imposed identity becomes a burden as it is inscribed onto the body over time and space. Some officials have spoken clear words to the question of identity and origin; they deemed certain minorities 'unreliable and lazy'. Others have found more inclusive tropes: 'I don't care if the garbage picker is a Turk, Kurd, Romani or Syrian. I want to turn them into formal labour and avoid illegal practices [like child labour]' (environmental consultant, Marmara Association, 2015). While a potential solution to poor labour conditions and an encouraging prospect on the urban political agenda, there was a glitch in the implementation of this strategy: the reality of formalisation processes was that they favoured male Turkish individuals as garbage workers. None of the formalised municipal garbage workers among the pool of interlocutors in different neighbourhoods of Istanbul knew of female colleagues, or Romani workers regardless of gender.[16] Romani or other minority women have little prospect of formalisation for socio-cultural reasons. Instead of offering them safer, more lucrative options, women often end up having to deal with the more precarious waste, work more hours, are left without job security, and receive neither child support nor holidays. When the whole family had to work on the street, the lack of childcare as well as the lack of financial support or job security for the family forced them to bring their children along. Often, they did not have the option to forgo the need to use a young child as labour, so many children from the age of five years helped out as part of the garbage worker group.

Mücela, the grandmother of a family of Romani workers, sorted some garbage next to their truck in Nisantaşı. Four children accompanied the family: an older girl of around seven, two boys of around four and five, and a young girl of around two years played on the opposite side of the street in the entrance area of an abandoned building. Mücela was around forty-five

years old and dressed with a colourful scarf wrapped around her head in traditional fashion, a dark blouse and a wide, long skirt with flower prints. She married when she was eighteen and had her first child at nineteen. Her son got married and had children around the same age as she did, which is not unusual in Turkey. Mücela, always with one eye on the children, explained that she would prefer to have them at school, but that they could not afford to have one person stay at home to take them and pick them up:

> If [officials] would care about us, we would receive [subsidies] so the children would be able to attend school. The children shouldn't have to come here and go trash picking in the streets . . . They don't care about us anyway: I get sick often from dealing with garbage and my back hurts from carrying it.

I was surprised to hear this and asked why she did not get access to basic healthcare, as she should be entitled to get help in public hospitals.

> Well, that is what they pride themselves on [providing healthcare for all]. Yes, I can go to a public hospital, they pay for that, but they do not pay for medication I need. So, the doctor tells me I have pain, but I cannot afford the remedy.

The costs of medication were low, yet too high for someone who earned around 50 TL ($14) a day. When I left the field in 2016, the situation was already precarious and unpredictable for various garbage worker families. In fact, I could not find Adnan Abi on his usual route towards the end of my stay in Turkey, but was able to reach him on his phone: 'Adnan Abi, how are you? I could not find you on your route and haven't seen you for days. A group of refugees is picking in your area with push carts'. 'Yes, well, it has been difficult to be around there recently. We have been working somewhere else, I don't know what it will be.' Fearing for his safety and that of his family getting caught recycling, Adnan had to change his location, and when we last spoke he was working temporarily in other jobs.

Once the Romani workers leave the valuable garbage areas, other garbage workers, who are already in competition with them, will take over their routes. Precariousness and poverty will be passed down to those who feel they have nothing to lose: the unskilled among the refugees, who shun begging on the streets and are unable to find any other work in the marginal economic sector but garbage work. These are the ones who are even more desperate, willing to work for even less pay under more miserable conditions. These newcomers have not yet gone through similar skill-building processes and lack the social and spatial experience of the 'established' garbage workers, who have some, if few, chances of job mobility.

Conclusion: Performance and Knowledge as Resistance

Purity and pollution are culturally constructed notions as part of both locally and globally shaped value systems, which are flexible and contestable. From body to urban space, these systems are influenced by the nation-state's imaginary, instrumentalised through lawfare and identity politics, and manifested in the construction of a *dirtscape*. People, places, practices, their identities, histories and memories can be dirt, depending on their position along the trajectory from desirable to undesirable subject under the dominant ideology. The hegemonic agenda foresees cleansing the dirtscape: certain groups, their practices and performances, and neighbourhoods are symbolically and physically deemed dangerous and dirty, because they do not fit ideological visions of proper citizens and urbanity, because these places, people and practices are 'uncontrollable', and because they bear the danger of 'infecting' proper subjects and spaces.

As a governmental practice, citizens and urban spaces are brought under control through urban transformation. First comes the raising of fear regarding the threatening Other against a hegemonic 'ethnoclass' by depicting them as dangerous or toxic in a public discourse that constructs the connection of poor, ethnic populations with crime, drugs and violence.[17] Next, their spaces are rendered physically dangerous, that is, unsafe in terms of hygiene, structural stability and vulnerability to disaster – for many a knockout argument in earthquake-prone Istanbul. Third, a healthy, safe urban solution is propagated through newly transformed neighbourhoods for proper citizens in place of the previous residents.

Dirt has a financial, political, environmental, social and cultural value, and it is along those lines that different actors contest each other. Those garbage workers I have met do not pursue a political purpose; their practice is a survival strategy: garbage is collected for its reuse value. They bring garbage back into the commodity cycle. This is different from neoliberal environmental practices, which seek not only to commodify garbage and nature, but to eliminate possibilities for non-municipal garbage workers. The abjection of garbage workers and the strategy of forbidding their practices and redeveloping their living spaces is paradoxical: urban transformation does not drive them out completely – gentrified neighbourhoods not only advertise themselves as clean and safe spaces, but also produce valuable garbage. Thereby, they create the necessity for garbage workers to keep the spaces orderly, and attract garbage workers back into the neighbourhood.

What should receive consideration are the skills and creative energy that are necessary for collecting garbage in places such as Istanbul. Gar-

Figures 6.4. and 6.5. A non-municipal garbage worker arrives earlier in the day in order to pick the most valuable items before the municipal services arrive. Photographs by Aylin Yildirim Tschoepe.

bage workers are wanderers with an intimate knowledge of the city, urban rhythms and the lives of other dwellers through their littering practices and the archaeology of their garbage. They need to strategise and schedule routes and districts in order to avoid conflict with other groups and families, and coordinate visits to garbage sites before the municipal services get there. Understanding the traffic and parking situation in the city is key in finding suitable spaces for interim storage of garbage and garbage trucks. They have built experience regarding the nature of and time when garbage is brought out, and keep developing and inventing tactics to avoid policing and fines. The garbage workers in Nisantaşı had also set up and frequented designated social spaces, which served the purpose of meetings, exchange of information on the daily work situation, gossip and quick meal breaks. These spaces could change flexibly in order to escape a controlling gaze. The knowledge, experience and skill that are acquired through these practices of resistance and resilience could be leveraged towards a viable future for the garbage workers by themselves and other actors, who could be their potential allies – a future that may or may not be in garbage work.

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Notes

1. Many interlocutors used the term 'informal' or 'illegal' to refer to particular kinds of work in the marginal sector. I choose to avoid these terms, given that the form of non-municipal garbage work this chapter deals with comes out of a vernacular economy and practice. I have referred to the practitioners as non-municipal garbage workers instead of the terms one often finds or hears (or as workers use to refer to themselves), such as trash- or rag-picker.
2. Interlocutors have expressed a strong sense of identity as Romanlı, Romani (also referencing their belonging to a group with a network beyond the local), but they also stressed the fact that they are Turkish citizens. More will be explained in this chapter. They are referred to as Romani in this text as they preferred to reference themselves as such over other identity markers in the context of this fieldwork, but it is understood that identity constructions are complex and fluid.
3. I focus on the non-municipal garbage workers in order to raise awareness of those less visible in the current urban and social transformation. The cleansing of urban space from marginal groups such as Romani garbage workers goes largely unrecorded and unnoticed, but has gained a new momentum in the tumultuous post-attempted-coup period since July 2016.
4. My reading of governmental strategies in this context is influenced by Foucault (2000).

5. See Sandra and Ayşe Çavdar on neo-Islam and urban transformation, in the exhibition *Başakşehir: An Urban Model* (2014). Retrieved 20 November 2018 from https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/freizeit-natur-sport/veranstaltungskalender/sandra-schaefer-basaksehir-urban-model.
6. The category of 'thought crimes' describes the pen (of critical academics, journalists, intellectuals etc.) as another form of weapon. See Mustafa Akyol in *Al-monitor* (17 March 2016) on thought crimes (retrieved 5 December 2016 from http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/turkey-erdogan-introduces-new-thoughtcrimes.html).
7. At the time of my research, interlocutors were in possession of the older cards, which I describe here. Since 2016, new credit-card-sized ID cards can be obtained that do not display all the information on the physical card, but store it digitally.
8. 'Abi' means 'older brother'. The use of kinship terms for non-relatives in Turkey (sister, brother, aunt, uncle) is a sign of respect, empathy and personal connection through creating fictive kinship. The women were younger, so they would call me 'Abla', 'older sister'.
9. 'Restriction of Paper Picking and Fines', Zete online news, 21 February 2016 (retrieved 28 February 2016 from https://zete.com/bakanlik-kagit-iscilerini-issiz-birakti-toplayicidan-kagit-alana-140-000-tl-ceza/); 'New Arrangement Upsets Paper Collectors', Milliyet.com, 24 January 2016 (retrieved 15 March 2017 from http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yeni-duzenleme-kagit-gundem-2183439/).
10. Recycling facilities such as garbage transfer stations became the space where municipal recycling management and non-municipal garbage recycling come together on some sort of indiscriminate terrain.
11. My interlocutors spoke of a fine of 5,000 TL (approximately $1,390), which could go up to 140,000 TL (approximately $38,990). This legislation goes back to earlier years, but was enforced in January 2016.
12. According to interlocutors, garbage workers more diligently separate garbage and make use of what is reusable, while municipal services incinerate a large share of the collected waste.
13. Among other subjects currently considered 'matters out of place' (certain intellectuals, journalists, professionals and the political opposition)
14. I chose the term 'dirt' because of its ambiguity as both valuable and invaluable, in contrast to words like trash, litter or garbage. The phenomenon I describe as dirtscape emerges as 'scape' according to the definition proposed by Appadurai: 'terms with the common suffix *–scape* . . . indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements . . . and even face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, and families' (Appadurai 1996: 33).
15. The information on locations at a district level is already widely known. I have left out specifications when they were necessary for interlocutors' privacy and where they were unnecessary to understand the general dynamic.
16. I conducted this part of the fieldwork in 2015; towards the end of my stay in 2016, I did encounter some female Turkish municipal garbage workers. They

were, however, not part of the motorised cleaning force that did their work across all shifts and in all areas. The few women were on daytime shifts and were restricted to sidewalk-cleaning, equipped with a small vehicle or with a broom.

17. 'Drug Operation in Kustepe' (a poor/minority/migrant neighbourhood with many garbage workers), Hurriyet, 28 November 2016 (retrieved 6 May 2017 from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kustepede-uyusturucu-operasyonu-40261112).

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