

Pipe dreams on a “half-island”:
Water, belonging, authority in northern Cyprus

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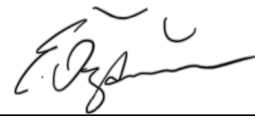
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Ezgican Özdemir, candidate for the PhD degree in Sociology and Social Anthropology, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This doctoral dissertation is an anthropological study of water infrastructure and its privatized management in northern Cyprus. Specifically, it traces the historical, political, economic, and social background, connotations, and impacts of an infrastructural upgrade, namely the Turkey-northern Cyprus undersea water pipeline project. Transferring 75 million m³ clean water annually from the southern region of Turkey to the northern territories of Cyprus, the water pipeline materializes Turkish domination by occupation in northern Cyprus, consolidates the Turkish state-dependent de-facto regime of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and unsettles historically established ethnic affinities of a hierarchical relationship between Turkish state and communities who live in northern Cyprus.

By historically situating water, infrastructure, and natural resource management throughout a series of shifting power relations and structures over the island, I show genealogically how local knowledges of water resources, in their material attributes as well as their symbolic significance, are constituted through competing hegemonic structures as they navigate over the island's terrain and resources for legitimizing their rule over the territories and its people. As imperial and colonial domination came and went, the island still remains as a contested land as it is divided into two with a breakaway and illegal state of TRNC in the north and an EU member state of Republic of Cyprus.

By taking the water pipeline megaproject to the center of this research, I probe into geopolitical questions of sovereignty, recognition, de-facto statehood, and territorialization ethnographically and highlight how the people of northern Cyprus reckon with non-recognition, dependency, and Turkish domination. I situate the megaproject within the context of Turkey and how political economic shifts in Turkey have reflected and still does, on northern Cyprus. Water infrastructure, as it takes up a plethora of meanings and material and symbolic significance, became a site where communities of northern Cyprus look for answers to who

they are, where they belong, and who they look up to. Northern Cyprus for them, is a “half-island” where exceptionality is the rule; inferiority over “motherland” Turkey, or as I call it their “internalized dispossession” is the condition through which they maneuver between the powers that have a strong hold *over* them and the powers *to* act upon their *own* world.

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Some parts of chapters 2 and 5 appear in my article “Scales of exception: water infrastructure, place, and ‘half-island’ in Cyprus” to be published in *Ethnos*. Some parts of chapters 4 and 6 have previously appeared in the working paper I wrote for Center for Policy Studies, titled “Documenting surrender: water privatization and governing dependence in northern Cyprus” in January 2020.

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List of abbreviations

- AKP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party
- BDP – *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* – Peace and Democracy Party
- BKP – *Birleşik Kıbrıs Partisi* – United Cyprus Party
- BOT – Build-Operate-Transfer
- CTP – *Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi* – Republican Turkish Party
- DSİ – *Devlet Su İşleri* – Turkish State Hydraulics Authority
- EOKA - *Ethniki Organosis Kiprion Agoniston* - National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters
- EU – European Union
- KKTC – Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti
- IMF – International Monetary Fund
- KIB-TEK – *Kıbrıs Türk Elektrik Kurumu* – Cypriot Electricity Administration
- KTFD – *Kıbrıs Türk Federe Devleti*
- KTHY – *Kıbrıs Türk Havayolları* – Cypriot Turkish Airlines
- KTMMOB – *Kıbrıs Türk Mimarlar ve Mühendisler Odaları Birliği* – Turkish Cypriot Union of Chambers of Turkish Cypriot Architects and Engineers
- RBP – River Basin Planning
- RoC – Republic of Cyprus
- SİD – *Su İşleri Dairesi* – Turkish Cypriot State Hydraulics Authority
- TCCC – Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce
- TCFS – Turkish Cypriot Federated State
- TDP – *Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi* – Communal Democracy Party
- TOKİ – *Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı* – Mass Housing Administration
- TMT – *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı* – Turkish Resistance Organization
- TRNC – Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
- TÜSİAD – *Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği* – Turkish Industry and Business Association
- UBP – *Ulusal Birlik Partisi* – National Unity Party
- UN – United Nations
- UNFICYP – United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
- WFD – Water Framework Directive
- YKP – *Yeni Kıbrıs Partisi* – New Cyprus Party

Introduction

On a summer day in Karpasia peninsula of Cyprus, I sat down next to friends overlooking the Mediterranean towards mainland Turkey. It was the end of my field research in June 2017. A school age child and his family were sitting next to us with their folding chairs. The mother was closing her eyes into the blazing sun. The father was standing around smoking his cigarette with one hand and drinking his Tuborg beer with the other. The child called his father, “look dad I am making buildings from sand.” Covered in wet sand, the child approached his father and pulling him down into the construction site of what seemed to be the construction site of a building complex. The father became enthusiastic as he planned what to make from the sand on the Ayfalon beach: “Look, I think it is best we make a bridge here, it is going to be great. It will be like the London Bridge... maybe we make here the Big Ben, how about that!” The father and son played in the sand for a while until I heard the father say, “I have a great idea, we make a dam here and it will be just like the *Project of the Century*. We make a pipeline underneath and connect Cyprus to Turkey. Just like that *Project of the Century*!” As I heard this, I got up from my seat just to be able to hear better what else they said to each other about the pipeline. But that was it. As they built several rectangular shapes with different heights and sizes, they also ended up building a big ditch, supposedly the pipeline’s destination point of Geçitköy dam. The son got distracted and went swimming. The father lit another cigarette.

This dissertation revolves around an undersea pipeline infrastructure between the south of Turkey and north of Cyprus, the third largest island on the Mediterranean Sea. It is the so-called Project of the Century, a “dream come true”, and what Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called a “masterpiece.” It is also a technological complex of two dams—Alaköprü dam in the Mersin region of Turkey and Geçitköy dam in the Girne region of northern Cyprus,—pumping stations, treatment plants, a large undersea pipeline hung on the seabed, and other underground pipe connections that span across the north of the island.

The mundane activity of a Turkish Cypriot father and son that I depicted above, in a way, sums up a few facts about Cyprus. The first thing that the father thinks about when his child wants to build stuff is London, its bridges, and a monument. The Turkish Cypriot diaspora in the UK, especially in London, and their back-and-forth travels between their former empire and the island have shaped local culture, dialects they speak, the currency they save money in, products they consume, and imperial monuments they look up to. The colonial period ended more than 60 years ago, but London has remained a reference point. Once characterized as “inconsequential possession” (Varnava 2009) or seen as part of the strategic and geopolitical imperialism of Britain (Trimikliniotis and Bozkurt 2012), Cyprus was one of those nations that got its independence from British colonial rule in 1960 during the post-World War II period. Today, the postcolonial condition of Cyprus can be traced both territorially and infrastructurally— from spaces like British Sovereign Bases across the island’s geography (Akrotiri and Dhekelia) to micro-spaces of water fountains and postal boxes spread across every village, town, and city with the moldings of ER (Elizabeth Regina).¹

The second “monument” the father thought about to build from sand was the “Project of the Century”. An undersea pipeline infrastructure project was introduced as such by the so-called “architect of crazy projects”, the president of the Turkish republic Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Referred to in news and social media as a project of the century, the father on the beach, just like many others I have encountered in northern Cyprus, brought up this phrase in a genuine and excited manner. The “project of the century” was a set of pipes laid under the sea, between mainland Turkey and the island of Cyprus, materially tying the south of Turkey to the north of Cyprus. Inside the pipes, clean and drinkable water is meant to run through. That water originates in the Dragon spring of Anamur, Mersin, flows into the dam of Geçitköy

¹This is more the case in the southern part of the island. The water fountains with ER can be occasionally spotted but most, I imagine, have been removed after the Turkish invasion in 1974, for the purposes of Turkification.

in northern Cyprus, and ends up in the households and fields of communities who live in northern Cyprus.

The pipeline infrastructure meant *more* than what it materially was and functionally did at that instance. Just as Big Ben meant a colonial past of the island he lived in, the “Project of the Century” meant a “connected” present—both connected by a pipeline that was to provide clean water and connected already by memories of “liberation” by the Turkish armed forces, an ethno-nationalist ideology, and a metaphoric relationship between a mother and a baby as the relation between Turkey and northern Cyprus is sometimes described. Just as the British imperialism had once constructed a power constellation that lingers to this day in the island’s geography, politics, and economy, the Turkish state complicates political questions like who or which state holds power over what part of the island, how has Turkish domination transformed in time and space, and what it means today, for Turkey to maintain and *materialize* its authority over the contested Mediterranean island. At the center of these geopolitical questions is the existence of a *de-facto* state: Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Unrecognized by the international community, it is still in action, operating as any *de jure* state would. Geopolitically, its existence and legitimacy are constantly contested. Locally, however, this question of legitimacy is sought in *the ways* in which the TRNC state operates with a constant interrogation of whether TRNC is a “normal” state or not.

The pipeline was built by the initiative of the Turkish state in order to provide water resources to the parched land (Hitchens 1997) and people of northern Cyprus. The resources in the aquifers of the territory were dwindling, precipitation lower than ever, with a de-facto state that supposedly does not and cannot invest in a solution to the water scarcity problem (Nachmani 2000; Hoffmann 2018; Mason 2020). For some, the Turkish “motherland” came to the rescue once again and brought the “water of life” or *ab-ı hayat* to those living in the northern parts of the island. The father and his son at the beach and the monuments they attempted to

build from sand that day on the beach encapsulated for me where this dissertation stands, historically, politically, and conceptually.

In this introduction I will explain first, why I choose a historically informed account of water, its infrastructure, and management on northern Cyprus and how this relates directly to the ways in which Cyprus’ contemporary geopolitical status and how the so-called “Cyprus problem” came about. I will discuss methodological considerations and argue here, that going beyond the “geopolitics” and “ethnic conflict” lenses is necessary in order to investigate northern Cyprus and its peoples’ changing sociopolitical conditions of living under a de-facto state. Second, I will explicate why and how I situate the water pipeline project, within a political economic conjuncture of “New Turkey”² and its authoritarian neoliberalization. For this, through the lens of Turkish state’s territory-making and state-making efforts, I seek to understand how northern Cyprus becomes part and parcel of such political economic conjuncture of the Turkish state, authorizing itself by way of water resources management and monumental infrastructures. And third, I will develop a framework that this dissertation is situated in, whereby three conceptual clusters of (1) materiality, (2) sovereignty, authority, and territory, and (3) agency and subjectivity drive the discussions and analysis of my ethnographic findings from my fieldwork in northern Cyprus. As part of this conceptual framework, I show how these three clusters of concepts—all within the subfields of anthropology of water and material infrastructures, anthropological accounts of the state and territory-making,

² “New Turkey” refers to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s discursive election campaign strategy in 2014, through which he and the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party) consolidated its hegemony and have become the dominant party in the government since then. The 2014 elections are taken as a breaking point from an old Turkey marked by secularism and Kemalist ideology. The term “New Turkey” in Turkish academic literature therefore is taken as a framing device that posits AKP’s politics that went beyond the 2014 elections. Therefore, it refers to “a highly polarized and fragmented society along secular, religious and ethnic lines, with a strong leader and weak opposition... [with] risks and uncertainties in the areas of democracy, living together in diversity, and active foreign policy” (Keyman 2014, 21).

and anthropology of politics—give rise to (and reinforce) emic concepts and constitute situated meanings and ideas of location, belonging, and authority.

Entangled histories of an island

In this section, I will introduce the island of Cyprus in a brief historical account, provide demographic details, and explicate how the environment, water resources, and its management are directly related to the geopolitical question of the “Cyprus problem.” The historical periodization of Cyprus in the last century will be very brief here since throughout the dissertation I will be unpacking key moments in history in relation to water resource management and government of the island. While problematizing such representations, what follows will therefore be a concise version of what history books on Cyprus cover regarding its political history, demographics, ethnic conflict, and geopolitics.

The people of Cyprus

Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean region, has been grappling with imperial and colonial rule, struggle for independence, ethnic conflict, partition, population exchange, military occupation, and recognition and non-recognition of multiple states for longer than a century. Generally attracting attention mostly because of its strategic location, being at the peripheries of European continent and western Asia, Cyprus, since the late Ottoman period in 1800s, has been characterized as a pawn or a tool to gain control over trade routes, territories in the mainland, and strategic location for a military base.

As an Ottoman province from 1571 until 1878, the island received Muslim settlers from the mainland, yet the majority of the population was still Greek Orthodox. Today, the population in Cyprus is more multicultural than ever, especially with recent migratory routes fluctuating in the eastern Mediterranean. Usually represented through a dichotomous identity of a Greek Cypriot majority and a Turkish Cypriot minority (usually thought of as approximately a 70-30 ratio), there are *other* Cypriots (Akçalı 2007) across the island including Maronites, Latins, Gypsies, Armenians, Jews, along with, British settlers, Turkish settlers from

Anatolia and Kurds from southeastern region of Turkey (Kurdistan), Syrian and other (documented or otherwise) migrants from the Levant region, among many other groups. Especially in northern Cyprus, the territory under scrutiny in this dissertation, Maronites, Greek Cypriots, Pontians, Syrians, Afghans, Kurds, and Turks live along with Turkish Cypriots. The population of northern Cyprus is a debated issue especially in relation to Turkish “settlers.” As Trimikliniotis and Bozkurt say, there is a tendency to “lump together persons into one category as if they make a homogenous group; in fact there are different groups, who enjoy different legal status and rights in a real but unrecognized regime” (2012, 3). The Turkish settlers, having come to northern Cyprus at different times and from different regions of the country, differ in what they do on the island; either as seasonal workers, military staff, or settlers who enter into the informal sector. The uncertainty and fluctuation of their numbers (approx. 120.000 to 220.000 settlers) render the Turkish settlers a controversial topic in the local politics (Hatay 2017).

Therefore, throughout the dissertation, I remain careful not to generalize the people of northern Cyprus as Turkish Cypriots. Instead, when I talk about my interlocutors as a group of people, I prefer to refer to them as “communities of northern Cyprus” rather than “Turkish Cypriots.” Even though I did not spend any time with the rest of the minority communities in the north, the oft used umbrella term for people of northern Cyprus as “Turkish Cypriots” (especially in Turkish academia) is erroneous and problematic and therefore, I make such a choice throughout this thesis in an effort to recognize the presence of minority populations.

Spatial and political (re)configurations of the island

Spatially, Cyprus is divided not just by the UN-managed Buffer Zone spanning west-east drawn in 1964 as the ethnic turmoil heightened, but is also divided in pockets of military zones including the British (British Sovereign Bases) in the south, and Turkish armed forces in the north. The island’s geographically strategic location in the eastern Mediterranean has made it a fought over territory among “external” powers since before the late-Ottoman period.

As I explain more fully in **chapter 1**, the island went through a series of administrative, legal, and infrastructural transformations when the Ottomans “leased” the island to the British empire in 1878 in exchange of security guarantees from Russia with the Cyprus Convention in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878). As Hitchens explains “from 1878 until 1914 Great Britain ruled the island on trust for Turkey, but when in 1914 Turkey joined forces with the Axis, Cyprus was annexed to the British Empire” (Hitchens 1997, 41), hence Cyprus was colonized for both strategic and imperial purposes.

During the British colonial period (1878-1960), both Turkish and Greek nationalisms emerged that led to violent inter-ethnic conflict between the two communities. The Orthodox church-led anti-colonial struggle for Greek Cypriots became synonymous with the project of *enosis*, meaning union with Greece. For Greek Cypriots, *enosis* was synonymous with freedom from the British colonial rule, but for Turkish Cypriot minority population, it “meant neocolonization and forced exodus from Cyprus” (Ertekün 1984, 2). The Turkish Cypriots were perceived as obstacles to their freedom from British colonialism and objective to unite with Greece. They were seen to be unable to live with the Greek Cypriots in mixed villages, nor were they “recognized in the economic, commercial, or administrative fields” (3). A full-fledged ideology, guerilla movement named EOKA, and the blueprint for many policies in Cyprus, *enosis* was then countered by the Turkish Cypriot minority population with the project of *taksim* (partition) as the central ideological stance for the counter-guerrilla faction Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT – *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı*). For EOKA, Greek nationalism and union with Greece were not the only goals; fighting against the British rule also meant fighting the Turkish Cypriots, among whom many had been enrolled as British auxiliary policemen against the EOKA rebellion (Papadakis, Peristianis, and Welz 2006).

Aktar et al. (2010) stress that nationalism in Cyprus was, in a way, a product of and “developed in tandem with the processes of the formation and building of the Greek and

Turkish nation-states” (xv). While the Greek Cypriots ethnically affiliated with Greece, a former province of Ottoman empire that won its independence in 1821, Turkish Cypriots looked to Turkey, the nascent republic, which won its independence war against occupying forces like Greece, France, and Great Britain, in 1923 with the Treaty of Lausanne. The two largest communities of the island had different “motherlands” and believed that Cyprus was either “naturally connected” to the Ionian islands (Dodd 2010, 3), or “geographically attached to Anatolia [of mainland Turkey] but geological transformations caused it to break away” (Navaro 2012, 53). Such dichotomies in narratives and ideologies are a product of not only the British colonialism itself, but also the ways that the two communities have responded to the colonial rule.

As the island claimed its independence from British colonialism in 1960, the new Republic of Cyprus as a state was established upon many convoluted diplomatic discussions and geopolitics between and among Greece, Turkey, Britain, UN, NATO, and the United States. According to Constantinou (2008), the Republic of Cyprus was an exceptional state in its inception. Denying the principle of self-determination to its population, Republic of Cyprus was neither locally demanded [nor] supposed to be.

Had the right of self-determination been granted in 1960, the majority of Greek Cypriots would have voted for union with Greece (*enosis*) and the majority of Turkish Cypriots for partition (*taksim*)... The creation of the RoC was therefore not an anti-colonial, ideological aim but a realpolitik compromise that was especially bitter for the Greek Cypriots (Constantinou 2008, 149).

An elaborate “guarantor system” was replaced with the colonial one, appointing Greece, Turkey, and Britain to be guarantors of the nascent republic and giving these states the right to

intervene in the domestic affairs of Cyprus.³ Thus, Republic of Cyprus, as a so-called independent state, was originated out of a state of exception (Schmitt 2006).

The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot ethnic conflict continued on from the beginning of independence until 1974. On July 20, 1974, with the support of the Greek junta, a military coup against the Archbishop Makarios, who was the president of Republic of Cyprus (RoC) at the time, led eventually to the invasion of the island by the Turkish armed forces. Turkey as a guarantor state, entered the island with a military operation that they called “the peace operation”, which culminated in the partition of the island. Turkish Cypriots have already been retreated into enclaves across the island and a “Green Line” (also known as the Buffer Zone) was already drawn as a border between guerilla factions of EOKA and TMT around 1963. Partition was both geographical, political, but also ideological. Turkish Cypriots, having been displaced, confined and marginalized in enclaves as refugees in their perceived homelands,⁴ embraced the Turkish soldiers upon their arrival as their “liberators” or, in the words of the Cypriot scholar Niyazi Kızılyürek, a “tribal God” (Hatay 2008).

Having supposedly brought “peace” to the island, the Turkish armed forces was thought to have ended its military operation in the late summer of 1974. However, more than 4 decades on, 40.000 Turkish military personnel still operate fully in the barracks that they have built where once Greek Cypriot homes stood. The Turkish state ideological position was and still is that the existence of the Turkish Cypriot minority population on the island, their Turkishness first and foremost, and recently their more emphasized (however inaccurately so)⁵ Muslim-

³ More clearly put, Constantinou explains this as follows: “the guarantors had only a qualified right to militarily intervene, and this had to be combined with either rationales of self-defense, UN enforcement action, or invitation by the state of Cyprus” (2008, 150).

⁴ It is estimated that 25,000 Turkish Cypriots (one fourth of the entire Turkish Cypriot population at the time) and 700 Greek Cypriots were displaced in the 1963-74 period (Gürel and Özersay 2006).

⁵ Here, I am referring to the AKP-era Turkish state policies and discourses on the Turkish Cypriot communities and the new political elite’s emphasis on Turkish Cypriots’ Sunni Islamic beliefs. As most of my interlocutors have stressed however, Muslim religiosity among Turkish Cypriots is mild, or rare at best, though a study on this particular topic would be important to pursue.

ness, all render the island to be an *extension* of Turkey hence the Turkish nation. The post-1974 era was marked by the exit of Turkish Cypriots from enclaves and settlement to the northern part of the island, and a state building process which resulted in the establishment of “Turkish Federated State of Cyprus” until 1983.

Following the Turkish military invasion, on August 20, 1975 the Vienna III agreement was signed as a result of the ongoing inter communal talks between the two populations of the island. The agreement stressed that there would be no pressure for Greek Cypriots to move to the south. The Turkish Cypriots however, referred to the Vienna III agreement as the “Population Exchange Agreement.” It was interpreted as a similar one to the 1923 Lausanne Exchange Treaty between Turkey and Greece.⁶ Whereas for Greek Cypriot officials the agreement did not entail a forced exchange as it clearly stated that both populations were free to move or stay where they resided. However, for Turkish Cypriot officials, the island was to be divided not only territorially but also ethnically. Following the ethnic division in subsequent years, on November 15, 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared a state, yet remains unrecognized to this day by the international community.⁷

After decades of the closed border policy, on April 23rd, 2003 the TRNC authorities opened the border—the UNFCYP patrolled Green Line or Buffer Zone—between north and south, allowing the formerly displaced Greek and Turkish Cypriots to visit their former homes on both sides and reunite with their neighbors and acquaintances.⁸ And a year later, the largest international effort led by then-Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan put forth a plan for the reunification of the island. What would eventually be called “the Annan Plan”

⁶ 1923 Lausanne Exchange Treaty was signed by Turkey and Greece after the end of Independence war of Turkey; the agreement states the ordering of the population exchange of Greeks in Turkish land to move to Greece and Turkish people to move to Turkish land from Greece.

⁷ The only country that recognizes TRNC today is the Republic of Turkey; the international community refers to northern Cyprus as “the occupied territories of the island”.

⁸ Smith, Helena. “Jubilant Cypriots cross the divide” *The Guardian*, 24 April 2003. Accessed 15 June 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/apr/24/cyprus.helenasmith>

proposed the solution of establishing “United Cyprus Republic”, a federal state that would join the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot states together and form a federal government apparatus.⁹ Proposing a constitution, federal laws, territorial arrangements, maps, a single national anthem, and a flag, the Annan Plan was presented to both communities in referenda on April 24, 2004. With a high voter turnout on both sides, 76 percent of Greek Cypriots voted “No” and 66 percent of Turkish Cypriots voted “Yes” to the Annan Plan. Consequently, the failure of the Annan Plan solution has rendered the Cyprus problem ambiguous as ever. Following the referenda on May 1, 2004, the Republic of Cyprus gained accession to the European Union, foregrounding the significance of the border between north and south which became the eastern-most border of the EU periphery.

These major historical events that shaped what is commonly called “the Cyprus Problem” today have not only transformed the trajectory of national and transnational politics in the region but also shaped the ways the people of Cyprus find meaning and make sense of their political subjectivities in this vast repertoire of critical events. The history of the island has been one that has affected and still impact on both Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities; the critical events are constantly being utilized as tools to legitimate claims to land, sovereignty, and other rights by both the Republic of Cyprus and the de-facto TRNC.

Today, the “Cyprus Problem” is one of the last standing sovereignty disputes in the European continent. It is a “problem” as it became a synecdoche for anything that has to do with the island. It is also a real problem on a day-to-day basis for both north and south. Scholars have written about the intricacies of the diplomacy and politics involved in various “solution” proposals put forward. However, a “no-solution solution” (*çözüksüzlük çözüümü*) as most people in northern Cyprus call it, has become dominant lately, in “a period when the political

⁹ To read the full document of the Annan Plan, see: http://www.hri.org/docs/annan/Annan_Plan_April2004.pdf

climate of Cyprus seems to have been temporarily ‘stabilized’ without a settlement, in an uneasy sense of ‘unsettlement’” (Trimikliniotis and Bozkurt 2012, 2). The Cyprus Problem is one of land and property, and partition of the island, as much as it is a problem of sovereignty and proportionate representation. Negotiation processes come and go; most recently the Republic of Cyprus and TRNC along with their guarantors met in Switzerland under the leadership of the UN, and again no solution was reached. The bicomunal and bizonal federal state solution, a legacy of the Annan Plan, has now been replaced with a “two-state solution” for TRNC and Turkish officials when the last negotiation meetings occurred in 2021. Today, Turkey is pushing for TRNC to be recognized as a separate state more than ever.

Beyond the ethnic conflict

Just as most works on Cyprus give primacy to the geopolitical questions it has posed and the structural changes to its governance through imperialist and (post)colonial periods, similar primacy is given to the ethnic conflict perspective and ethnic duality of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that the people of Cyprus are simplistically seen through. The opposing ideologies of *enosis* and *taksim*, which I briefly explained above, render Greek Cypriots to be nationally and ethnically attached to Greece and Turkish Cypriots to Turkey. The hard ideological lines were drawn long ago during the British colonial period when anti-colonial struggles ensued prior to 1960. Trimikliniotis and Bozkurt contend that

Cyprus is either perceived as a problem of historic enmity between Greeks and Turks, manifested as an identity conflict over control of a state, or alternatively as the manifestation of geopolitical conflicts reflected in the externally imposed rigid constitutional structure, which imploded into fragments due to foreign machinations...Both approaches essentialize certain aspects but they ultimately fail to capture the essence of the Cyprus problem in a holistic manner (2012, 4 emphases in original).

I agree with their statement and contend that ethnicity and identity as problems that originate from a dichotomous perspective of conflict are not sufficient to understand the contemporary sociopolitical dynamics that the communities of northern Cyprus grapple with. Neither is it enough to focus on the “foreign machinations” and the way Cyprus becomes a pawn in a

geopolitical game of strategy. However, for this dissertation, my aim has not been to “capture the essence of Cyprus problem;” such a task is for political analysts and international relations experts. Rather, through an anthropological study of northern Cyprus and its material politics of infrastructure, I problematize the singularity of the “Cyprus problem” and argue that there is a plurality and multiplicity of “Cyprus problems” that the people of Cyprus as a whole have been dealing with. Water scarcity being one of them, these problematics are entangled not only with each other, but also with the way power is exerted on the island’s space and people by multiple interest groups, states, and institutions.

My focus on northern Cyprus is *not* because I wanted to focus solely on ethnic and indigenous Turkish Cypriots. Instead, my departure point is the *space* through which the Turkish state ideologically, politically, and territorially was captured since the military occupation of Turkish armed forces in 1974. Yael Navaro relatedly extends her research on northern Cyprus “beyond the conventionally studied [and drawn] fault line between Turks and Greeks” and focuses on conflicts *internal* to northern Cyprus (2012, 51). While I do not take the “south” or Republic of Cyprus, as a space of inquiry—its people being beyond the scope of my reach—I try to take the island as a whole in its environmental and ecological specificities. The dissertation zooms into northern Cyprus specifically, and zooms out to perceive the whole island, while not taking any of the old and new borders for granted.

All in all, I aim to move beyond the categorizations of ethnicity, nationalism, and identity, which all delimit a thorough understanding of northern Cyprus and the hegemonic and non-hegemonic practices and discourses of place-making. As the Turkish military occupation (*işgal*)¹⁰ rendered the space militarized, unrecognized, and “stuck in time”, the communities of northern Cyprus lived on, transformed in their expectations from the future and rememberings

¹⁰ This term “occupation” might have been more taboo in publics in northern Cyprus, as Navaro (2012) said, however, it is becoming more mainstream and accepted in certain progressive and center-left political circles.

of the past. True, the ethnic conflict that led to a bloody civil war for longer than a decade (1963-1974) and the consequent ethnicized partition of the island is not only a reality: it also shapes the imaginations, ideologies, and memories of its people. Instead, I seek answers to questions of sovereignty, statehood, and identity elsewhere, probably in an unseemly place that is material infrastructures of water. A focus on water resources, its infrastructural assemblages, and the techno-political implications will help go beyond the ethnic conflict lens, which pertains limitations of reducing Cyprus to a binary. The traversality of water, its trans-territorial nature, and the multiplicity of socio-political meanings that go beyond national borders, all contribute to this study to understand the co-constitution of people's material surroundings and their ways of belonging to those surroundings.

Beyond the geopolitical

The so-called "Cyprus problem" today is deemed to be a first and foremost, *geopolitical* one, which is an approach that "seemingly [provides] simpler explanations to complex world problems that promise to ease uncertainty surrounding our perilous futures" (Firat 2022, 1–2). With continuous shuffling of governing structures and territorial reconfigurations, Cyprus has been spatially contingent upon external powers' geopolitical and strategic interests. In this dissertation, I take these complex geopolitical nuances that revolve around Cyprus in an ethnographic manner through which

geopolitical actors (be they elite, expert, professional or lay) imbue abstract spaces with geographical signification and locational politics through discourse, imagination, practice, performance, and policy which make sense to different people in various places at particular times, albeit to varying degrees (ibid).

Taking cue from this, I choose to perceive expertise and professional communities of practice in an ethnographic manner (as I demonstrate in **chapter 6**) and show that policy and professional work revolving around a geopolitical project such as the pipeline at hand, have the potential to reveal fundamental insights regarding politics and state-society relations. Tracking such expert opinions, professional policy work, and technical knowledge and praxis are just as

significant to this thesis, as political and lay actors' construction of self, collectivity, and what they deem to be political and technical.

Additionally, these geopolitical actors and their production of certain expert knowledge regarding natural resources and technological infrastructures are directly co-constituted with political motivations and interests on imagining and ordering territories that these resources are located in. For this reason, as will be apparent in the first two chapters of this dissertation, cartographic representations of the Cypriot space in their geopolitical signification are part of the objects of inquiry precisely because of the simplicity they are meant to imbue and the complexity of territorializations that they in fact suggest. Maps, marking lines on them that demarcate territories, scaling spaces, naming and re-naming of places are all part of a cartographic reason that came with western modernity with an impulse for “systematicity, boundedness, and totalization” (Painter 2006, 347). States' desire for “mappability” of spaces and motivations to imagine and realize spaces with borders point directly to practices of territorialization and rendering places and its people controllable and legible (J. C. Scott 1998). Maps of Cyprus are in abundance, especially at every negotiation talks for a potential “peace and reconciliation” of the “Cyprus problem.” The expression of “what kind of a map will Turkish Cypriots or the Turkish state will bring to the table this time?” is common during the news coverage of these diplomatic talks. The geopolitics of the Cyprus problem therefore, comes with a “cartographic neuroses” (Pickles 2012). Not only this, representation of environmental and “physical” components of the Cyprus terrain are never short of geopolitical complications. For instance, as I explicate **fully in chapter 2**, representation of aquifers and boreholes on maps by different powerful actors in and around the island gets etched on political and administrative maps selectively with naturalizing yet deeply political categories of river basins.

Throughout this dissertation, I problematize this mentality of maps, or cartographic rationality by unpacking representations of water resources and infrastructure in the way they are part of the exertion of power and state ideologies of territorialism. For this and in order to go beyond the geopolitical lens, I juxtapose the mentality of maps with *mental maps*¹¹ of local actors: how hegemonic representations of the island, its environmental terrain and competing political territories are reflected in the imaginations of *location* and narratives of place. I turn to mental maps and the constitution of locations and belonging in a later section of this introduction.

Histories of water infrastructure and its management in Cyprus

Cyprus has been identified for decades as a water-scarce island. The geopolitical and diplomatic convolutions that concerned the island, having attracted scholars of social and political sciences, almost always trumped the environmental realities and its sociopolitical ties with and effects on the geopolitical stalemate that people of Cyprus have lived with. Even though scholars of hydrology, environmental sciences, and engineering have called water scarcity the *second* Cyprus problem, it has not attracted much social science scholarship, especially from social anthropology. This dissertation aims to close this gap and problematize how water and resource management remained as a concern for “science” and were kept epistemologically separate from social and political domains.

Throughout the dissertation, I contend that water resource management in Cyprus has been a “matter of concern” for guarantor states and central to geopolitical intricacies and diplomatic relations in and around Cyprus. As I explicate in **chapters 1 and 2**, imperial and (post)colonial powers that came and went and which asserted hegemony over the island territories were all concerned with resource allocation and management, water being the

¹¹ Here, I allude to “mental borders” that Navaro (2012) talks about in studying the affects of borders in their tangibility.

primary one of them. Water resources, reckoning with its scarcity, and its management are therefore part of the techno-political domain for multiple “transitions” that Cyprus goes through politically, administratively, and governmentally.

The periodization that I have recounted above is repeated time and again with a focus on either diplomatic or geopolitical (re)formations and complexities, or with an ethnic, religious, and territorial duality of “north-south” or “Turkish-Greek Cypriot” axes. A focus on environmental resource management, specifically that of water, goes beyond these options of analyzing the multiple temporalities of transition and provides a site of inquiry—both materially and symbolically—whereby territorial divisions and extra-state connections can be investigated in a more holistic light that does not take these ethnic and/or national (dis)connections for granted. Rather, a genealogical study of the managerial and governmental transitions that Cyprus’ water resources go through across time form the basis of how water is valorized and rendered knowable and how this in turn, sheds light on the way peoples of northern Cyprus have come to reckon with their material surroundings and political imaginations.

As I demonstrate in the first chapter especially, a historical investigation of how water was once valued as a common good “for the people” or later as a technical, produced, infrastructural commodity to be manipulated and controlled, helps me to understand the political economic transitions marked by capitalist mode of production and privatization. Therefore, a moral economy of water, in other words, the values and ideologies that gather around an object, and its twists and turns in multiple power structures and temporal frameworks, highlights the “traversality of water” (Muehlebach 2018) spanning across boundaries of both materiality and sociality. I turn to this more fully in the third section of this introduction. In this next section, I explicate how and why I situate the contemporary water

pipeline infrastructure in the political conjuncture of “New Turkey” and its contours driven by a changing AKP politics of neoliberal hegemony and authoritarianism.

Territory-making and neoliberal politics of infrastructure in (new) Turkey and beyond

The megaproject of the water pipeline, as demonstrated throughout the dissertation, in all its material and symbolic devices, consolidated Turkish power over northern Cyprus and its peoples’ dependence on the Turkish state. However, it would be a mistake to situate this water supply project merely as part of the new AKP regime of Turkey of the past 20 years. The idea of supplying water to Cyprus is neither new nor specific to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s regime in Turkey. It is also not specific to northern Cyprus that the Turkish state applied top-down and paternalistic infrastructural policies such as this one in its recent history.

In this section, I will build on this background and argue *first*, that a critical approach to the Turkish state ideology of territorialization and modernist developmentalism is needed to understand the nuances of this particular megaproject in the ways it attempts to legitimize Turkish state power beyond its sovereign borders. *Second*, I argue that the megaproject sits in a political economic conjuncture of neoliberalization, corporatization, and authoritarianization of Turkish state and society, which extends its reach to northern Cyprus as a free playing field for tapping more than ever into the foreign investment and advancing the Turkish economy in the global market through a de-facto state and bypassing its people.

Contextualizing the megaproject: Turkish state and territory-making processes

As I will argue in **chapters 3 and 4**, I situate the water supply project within a political economic conjuncture of territorialization, neoliberalization, and authoritarianism. Amid the post-2001 economic crisis, which hit Turkish economy immensely and had to be remedied with heavy IMF structural adjustment conditions schemes, the AKP, as a socially conservative and economically liberal party, rose to power under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2002. With the co-optation of Islamism in the Turkish nationalist state ideology after the military coup d’etat of 1980, the AKP consolidated its power in the elections by mobilizing the

working classes, and marginalized populations of Sunni Islamic faith from the rural regions of Turkey. Democratization, de-militarization, and economic liberalization were accelerated in the first years of the AKP rule. Portrayed as an “Islamic democracy” by the west in the first few years, the AKP rule slid to authoritarianism with the Gezi uprising and deterioration of labor rights and civil rights coupled with drastic sociopolitical polarization (Adaman and Akbulut 2020).

Because of such twists and turns that the AKP politically maneuvered, there has been an urge to particularize whatever has occurred in the post-2001 economic crisis as an AKP-specific event or transformation, rather than keeping in mind of the political conjuncture of pre-AKP governments and their similar if not same political decisions, especially regarding Turkish state’s role in northern Cyprus. Even though there has indeed been an authoritarian turn in Erdoğan’s rule, seeing it as a dramatic rupture between “two eras” of “belle époque” and “authoritarianism” (ibid.) for AKP is insufficient especially when it comes to understanding the place of northern Cyprus in pre- and during-AKP years in Turkish politics. In Chapter 4, I show how Erdoğan’s neoliberal authoritarianism with a populist and developmentalist agenda is rooted in a much earlier process of Turgut Özal-era¹² economic liberalization and authoritarian state re-centralization (Sevinin 2022). Through an understanding of the political and economic contours of the recent history of Turkey, I interrogate how these processes of liberalization resonated in northern Cyprus within a state and business network of economic and political interests and motives.

Cyprus entered Turkish politics as a “national cause” as part of the Turkish state’s strategic and geopolitical considerations regarding the island and its region much earlier than the 1974 “peace operation”. The ethno-nationalist ideology ingrained in the formation of the

¹² Turgut Özal was prime minister of Turkey between 1983-1989 and president between 1989-1993.

Turkish state also incorporated pan-Turkist elements, rendering the Turkish nation inclusive of “outside Turks” as well. The national security and wellbeing of “inside Turks”, according to Nikos Moudouros, was also under threat if “outside Turks” were under a potential “hostile encirclement” (2021, 14–15). This ideological standpoint regarding the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus rendered the “Turkishness” of the minority population on the island significant (and in turn their Cypriotness quite insignificant and eradicated) to the Turkish state. Throughout the dissertation, I argue with this historical premise that Turkish Cypriots and later the northern Cyprus territory, was part of the Turkish state’s “national cause.” As Yael Navaro points out, the attachment between Anatolia and Cyprus is mentioned in children’s history books with the “claim that Cyprus was once geographically attached to Anatolia, but geological transformations caused it to break away to become an island” (Navaro 2012, 53). Not only was the island perceived as a “natural” extension of mainland Turkey, but this geographical and naturalized reasoning was also coupled with a “civilizational geopolitics of rivalry” with Greece (Özkan 2015).¹³

Therefore, the Turkish Cypriot community and Cyprus, having been enrolled into the Turkish state’s official ideology of ethno-nationalism, mattered immensely to governments from left to right on the political spectrum. The notion of “homeland” or *vatan* in Turkish, sat at the center of this nationalist official ideology. In relation to Cyprus, then, Turkey was “mother homeland” or *anavatan* and Cyprus and “Turkish” Cypriots were “baby homeland” or *yavru vatan*. Geographic spatiality of *where* a nation is located and to *where* it extended therefore formed the basis of these concepts, which today turn into colloquial reference points for both Turkish and Turkish Cypriots. These concepts as connective devices for spaces and people were re-established with Turkey’s military operation in 1974 and hence “activated

¹³ Behlül Özkan also adds a third reasoning for Cyprus to become a national cause for Turkey, which is that, within the context of Cold War, Greek Cypriots posed a threat of communism (Özkan 2015).

‘imperial’ politics” (Moudouros 2021, 14). With the construction of a territorial, social and political structure, the Turkish state went beyond its strategy of eliminating a threat against its nation, and Cyprus as “national cause” became a geographical and political extension of Ankara where the state’s official discourse of modernism, civilizational mission, and developmentalism extended beyond its sovereign borders: northern Cyprus, the Turkish-occupied territories of the island became in a way, “another homeland”, but a “baby” one nonetheless.

The structural inequality that formed the basis of Turkey’s tutelage in northern Cyprus through these overarching discursive devices of “motherland-baby land” dichotomy is continual as well as transformational for the Turkish Cypriot and other communities of northern Cyprus. The *colonial* logic this relationship has posited (Moudouros 2021) materialized in the ways the Turkish state constructed what I call in this dissertation, a “*domination by occupation*” both in the political and economic domains, as I specifically demonstrate **in Chapter 4**. Going back to where I started this section, namely the AKP-rule with its neoliberalization, developmentalism, and authoritarianism, the Erdoğan regime in Turkey maintained, as well as advanced this domination by occupation in northern Cyprus through a series of neoliberalizing policies and perpetuating this structural inequality. As such, the ruling political elite of the de-facto TRNC, mainly the Turkish nationalist factions, were co-opted in this process of consolidating hegemony in the name of development. As demonstrated **in Chapter 3**, the megaproject both in its associated discourses and in its material formations and attributes, therefore, is a prime example of such developmentalism of the AKP rule. Now, I turn to how the AKP government has consolidated its hegemony within Turkey and beyond in northern Cyprus through the construction and infrastructure sectors.

Neoliberal authoritarianism cast in concrete and trickling from pipes

In this thesis, I situate the water supply project as part of the perpetuation of aggressive neoliberal projects by the AKP rule and as part of a series of other megaprojects, which all one

way or another were characterized as “project of the century.” These include the third bridge in Istanbul that connects Europe and Asia, the Istanbul airport, Marmaray, a train line that runs under the Bosphorus strait connecting major hubs of business and residential areas to each other in the city of Istanbul, major arteries of highways, tunnels, and other transport infrastructure, the list goes on. The Turkey-northern Cyprus water supply project is no different in that (1) Turkey attempts to reinforce its hegemony and domination over the occupied territories through this pipeline, (2) the project invokes a civilizational and modernist discourse that go hand in hand with Turkish state’s official ideological standpoint in relation to northern Cyprus, and (3) the official rhetoric around the water pipeline, as shown in **Chapter 3**, points to the state “serving” its people by bringing the Turkish brothers and sisters “water of life”.

Hande Paker, in relation to the these megaprojects, identifies four components in this developmentalism discourse: “the primacy of development/economic growth, the emphasis on grandeur, the politics of serving, and claims of environmentalism” (Paker 2017, 108). All four components exist with the water pipeline infrastructure project at hand here, as demonstrated throughout the chapters. What is interesting and important however, is the ways in which political actors in northern Cyprus have reacted to the megaproject with an inward-looking and reflective manner underlining self-identifications, ways and locations of belonging, and political and moral conditions and connotations of their subjectivities, that centered on *acquiescence*. I turn to these subjectivities, structures of feeling and agency in the last section of this introduction.

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s regime held on to a three-pillared neoliberal system of authoritarianism, populism, and developmentalism that impacted on and driven by the environmental and spatial reconfigurations through infrastructural investments on energy-transport-construction sectors (Adaman and Akbulut 2020). By mobilizing foreign investment, his government completed infrastructural projects, both large-scale and small, kept the

economy afloat by stimulating the construction sector, and fulfilled the imagery he had promised to his constituency of a leader who “gets it done.” A man of action and authority, his leadership veiled a series of kleptocratic, nepotistic, and clientelist networks between state and business, enabling extractivist and neoliberal motives, which had especially dire consequences for the environment and natural resources of the country (Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel 2017). The developmentalist visions of the AKP government are no different from the previous governments in Turkey. In fact, development and a modernist and civilizing mission has been a constant state ideology especially when it is about the control of the environment with a fixation of growth and prosperity and hence control of its people. As part of its territorializing technique of rendering certain populations Turkified and hence, legible as “proper” citizens in the eye of the Turkish state, the Southeastern Anatolia Project, or *Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi* (GAP for short) is deemed to be the quintessential socioeconomic engineering project of Turkey with the main component being water infrastructure.

As a high modernist project, GAP is an important example for this dissertation for two reasons. First, it shows that infrastructures like dams, hydroelectric plants and irrigation systems “[transform] *waterscapes*, water use and access, and biophysical realities of the region” as well as “alter villagers’ understandings, narratives, and imaginaries of the Turkish state” (Harris 2012, 29 emphasis mine). GAP is irretrievably intertwined with the Kurdish minority population and the state’s violent and authoritative hold on them. The Turkey-northern Cyprus water supply project similarly reorganizes environmental spaces within and beyond the sovereign borders of Turkey and constitutes the ways in which Turkish Cypriot and other communities *relate* to the state and their political and moral visions of who and *where* they are—that they are located in babyland (*yavru vatan*) and half island at the same time. Second, GAP, having been planned and executed over the span of few decades since the 1970s, suggests the continuity in the Turkish state’s ideological blueprint of infrastructural power,

developmentalism, and high modernism. Therefore, the megaproject at hand is not specific or unique to the AKP-era state-society relations. Rather, Erdoğan's regime re-legitimizes the Turkish state power's encompassment over multiple waterscapes by diverting water streams into spaces where its reach extends to places like northern Cyprus precisely because of the "state of exception" it had enabled to be sustained to this day through a political and economic domination by occupation.

Besides this continuity of developmentalism as one of the pillars, as I show in **Chapter 4**, the neoliberalization of the Turkish economy has directly impacted on the geopolitical stance northern Cyprus has kept in the eyes of the political and business elite in Turkey. With what I call a "*rule by protocols*", the Turkish state has time and again consolidated its infrastructural and political power through economic aid packages, structural adjustment plans, and decrees and directives imposed upon the de-facto TRNC state, because of which, the Turkish state is likened to the IMF of TRNC. A series of privatizations in the TRNC state-run enterprises has brought about fundamental change in its political economy as well as the way political actors imagined what "neoliberalism" entailed. As the pipeline was built and started operating in the summer of 2016, the public in northern Cyprus had already moved on from the heated debates of whether water privatization was just, the political and strategic motivations behind it, and the kind of sociopolitical resonances it had in TRNC *realpolitik*. More importantly, as the meanings of water and the pipeline multiplied, the significance of a "neoliberal policy" such as privatizing the public utility infrastructure, was translated locally in diverse and unexpected ways. A market logic is central to the policies, political and economic configurations surrounding the megaproject. As such, this neoliberal logic is co-opted and adapted to a political rationality of the Turkish state's domination project in northern Cyprus. Taking cue from Brenner and Theodore therefore, I take the water supply project, not simply as just another neoliberal instantiation or a global phenomenon, but rather "emphasize the contextual

embeddedness of neoliberal restructuring projects insofar as they have been produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 351). I am interested in how the term “neoliberal” is *articulated* in different instances and by different groups in northern Cyprus. As such, I look at how such localized embeddedness and its complex interaction between extralocal forces has come into process the way it has because of geohistorical realities and “existing economic frameworks and political circumstances” (Springer 2011, 2566). For northern Cyprus, these circumstances were conditioned by a state of exception that multiple states have chosen to maintain and a domination by occupation that the Turkish state has legitimized through hyper-memorialization of “liberation” of Turkish Cypriots backed by an ethno-nationalist affinity metaphorized as kinship relations.

Adding to this, through ethnographically exploring what this “actually existing neoliberalism” means and how it is translated in the locality of northern Cyprus, I go beyond a purely political economic investigation of neoliberalism as a series of extractivist, top-down, commodity-fetishist policies with a fixation on economic efficiency and profit. Instead, I aim to showcase how neoliberalism, as actually understood and made sense by diverse publics, “can contain its negation—the vision of a decommodified, disinterested life and of a moral community of human relationality and solidarity that stands opposed to alienation” (Muehlebach 2012, 25). I do this especially in **Chapter 5** when I delve into the much-contested and short-lived opposition movement against water privatization in northern Cyprus.

Throughout this dissertation, the overarching conceptual thread of the co-constitution of material and meaning also relates to this strand of discussion, where I put together a political economic investigation of water infrastructure and its privatization, and the *moral economies* of water infrastructure that inform and are informed by material and economic structurations

and governmental processes. For the concept of moral economy, I take cue from Didier Fassin and a fundamental question he asks: “What value do we attach to human life as an abstract concept?” (Fassin 2018, 23) I ask a similar question, what value do techno-political actors attach to water and its infrastructure to make sense of social and political situations of contestation, authority, and hierarchy? Fassin conceptualizes moral economy as “the production, circulation, appropriation, and contestation of values as well as affects, around an object, a problem, or more broadly a social fact” (ibid). Following his conceptualization, I investigate “the variations in values and affects over time and how they enter into tension or competition with one another” (idem: 24), and trace the multiplicity of values, norms, and meanings that assemble around the artefact of water in order to reveal the tensions, conflicts, and alliances that are constituted within the various fields of power and authority.

Relatedly, **chapter 6** highlights how actors who participate in this political contestation against privatization overlap also as technical experts, through which they navigate in the field of water management. In this chapter, I highlight multiple ways of producing expert knowledge on water infrastructure and how this knowledge production is imbued with historically established categories and values regarding water and the spaces it traverses in the Mediterranean region. Just as those who contest neoliberal politics, actors with expert positions also relate their communities of practice and their ethos of technical work with a moral politics of responsibility as a stance against imposed as well as internalized notions of incapacities.

Fluid and material connections: water, belonging, and authority

As mentioned above, the dissertation positions the megaproject within the geohistorical circumstances of the island and political economic conjuncture of Turkey. Besides this, I also take the components of the megaproject—water resources, the pipeline, dams, and other infrastructural facilities—as objects of inquiry within a conceptual framework that brings together the materiality and meanings of objects as co-constitutive and in dialectical relationship. As the water supply project assembled various infrastructural materials, people,

natural environments, inanimate objects, as well as diverse publics, it also (re)constituted a network of power, action, inaction, and multiplicity of old and new meanings endowed upon places, people, and environmental resources.

The water pipeline infrastructure therefore became a literal and reflexive *site* whereby a social consciousness of symbols, old and new allusive devices, metaphors, and meanings in relation to water and its location(s) got attached to. It is *literally* and *materially* a site because people from all walks of life went to the actual dam site in northern Cyprus, reminiscing about the past, admiring the present, or anticipating an uncertain future for their half-island. It is also a reflexive site because the material assemblage of the megaproject, mainly the water that runs through it, became a jumping off point and moment in time, for my interlocutors to reflect on fundamental issues like willpower, location, and what I call throughout the dissertation, *internalized dispossession*—which all correspond to the general concepts of this thesis which are sovereignty, territory, and agency, respectively. Now, I turn to these themes that together inform and build on my conceptual framework.

Water: elemental resource and a matter of concern

Water and the pipeline became synonymous with Turkish aid in northern Cyprus. It also meant Turkish tutelage—some called it “the end of our non-existent sovereignty”, or others said, “a water that condemns us to full dependence”. How can a natural resource and a scientifically developed infrastructural technology hold meanings like nurturance of a mother’s gift as well as a condemnation and an existential crisis at the same time? And how does an elemental material that is the prime necessity for all living beings take up a plethora of symbolisms through its material attributes, where it runs from, through, and to, and who it is believed to be owned by? I ask these questions throughout this thesis and probe into the many meanings, symbols, materialities, discourses, and imaginaries of self and community for Turkish Cypriot and other communities living in the north of Cyprus.

Water is not only the *sine qua non* of life (Hastrup 2013), but also that one cannot think of water resources without land, territory, and human societies and vice versa. Territories come with resources, the most main and necessary one being water. Human-environmental relations occur mostly with a focus on water resources; territories are fought over by empires and states to have control over because of the water springs, rivers, and seas; landscapes are made meaningful for human societies through water's utilitarian, aesthetic, economic, and political significance. Water is globally scarcer than ever due to climate crisis with rising temperatures, sea levels, and heavy industrialization and carbon emissions, and lower levels of precipitation. In the recent anthropological literature, water is identified as a "total social fact" alluding to Marcel Mauss, arguing that it is natural, elemental, biological, social, economic, and political all at the same time (Orlove and Caton 2010). Pertaining to all domains of life, water challenges the nature/culture (Hastrup 2013) and state/society (Carroll 2012) dualities; it is a scientific object as well as a bio-political tool for governing territories and populations.

The main objective of the Turkey-northern Cyprus water supply project is to bring water to the northern parts of the island under the premise that the island has been struggling with water scarcity, unable to replenish its underground resources sustainably, as well as water desalinization due to seawater seeping into the main aquifers of the island. The "transferred" water in question is diverted from southern Turkey, specifically from Dragon Creek in Mersin province. Therefore, the megaproject intersects nature with technology; it is both an abstraction to be manipulated and controlled by experts and professionals and an "object of governance" to be distributed, managed, and governed. While I focus more on the governance aspect of water both historically and in the contemporary politics of water in northern Cyprus, the multiplicity of meanings of water—from its elementality, fluidity, unpredictability, and traversality among others—still cannot be decoupled from how for most of my interlocutors, water is a "matter of concern" (Latour 1993). In order to probe into these various meanings of

water, I take the materiality of water as a significant aspect that informs the engendered social and political articulations of water in northern Cyprus. Relatedly, I take cue from the way Lisa Björkman pays attention to water's material attributes:

Water is a medium with which to explore material and symbolic dimensions of political contestation at the intersection of large-scale infrastructural dynamics and intimate forms of knowledge, power, and authority. Water is extremely heavy and unwieldy, extraordinarily time consuming and expensive to move... by the same token water's materiality means that actually *getting* it has necessarily spatial and temporal dimensions (Björkman 2015, 14 emphasis in original).

Water scarcity as a knowledge was already years in the making before the construction of the megaproject. And as a technological feat, the infrastructure project tackled a difficult task of moving water from one space to another—this received awe and admiration from most people in northern Cyprus. However, the heaviness and arduousness of water and its interaction with a human-made technological system gave rise to contrasting characterizations of water. Ownership and territoriality—where the water is from, or who owns it—mattered immensely to people in northern Cyprus. One of the most repeated diverging characteristics of the “local water” and “transferred water” pertains to its materiality. Whereas the local water is deemed as salty, bitter, and scarce, the transferred water is abundant, sweet, and potable. In northern Cyprus, one does not have to see the water in its materiality to talk about its purported inferiority. Meanwhile, when the transferred water started flowing from the pipes into the Geçitköy dam, the visibility of its flow, its material abundance conveyed diverging meanings of health, prosperity, as well as imminent flooding of villages in the vicinity. Thus, the material attributes of water participate actively in the way people ascribe value on the resource. For my interlocutors, water's quantity and quality conveyed situated norms and values about life, death, and power imbalances between them and the state that supposedly enables abundant water access.

Patrick Carroll, in his study of water in California, takes water to be a “boundary object” at the intersection of governance and science, utilizing Bruno Latour’s concept of “matter of concern” (Carroll 2012). This “critical point of contact” as he calls it, is what generates “new discursive, organizational, and material forms in both realms” (489). It is not just that water is an object of government, but also technoscientific, according to him. Just as in California, in Cyprus, the “water problem” was one of state formation, technoscientific endeavor, as well as sociocultural values and primordial meanings of life in general. While Carroll does not dwell too much on the latter, in this dissertation, I adopt a holistic view on studying water in that, both myths and meanings of water as well as its management and governance in the midst of several shifts in power structures, are important in the case of Cyprus. For this reason, I attempt a genealogy of water and its scientific and governmental management in Cyprus and trace both where water flows, or where it is believed to flow to and from, and simultaneously where power flows, is exerted upon the resource management schemes and their re-configurations.

In this thesis, I repeat that both in historical accounts and in conversations with Turkish Cypriot interlocutors, that water, its scarcity, quantity, and quality cannot be spoken about without attending to how water came to be known as scarce or low in quality. When water is a common artifact and a public good, flowing in channels, collected from wells and boreholes, its *interaction* with the human-made infrastructures that render it to be an object of government *and* a matter of concern, rather than an elemental form “out there”. Similarly, when water is owned privately, enclosed in spaces of privilege or restricted from use for certain people and not for others, it stirs up and engenders diverging ways of valorizing its quantity and quality, controlling its use and access, and where it is networked and connected. In both instances, publicly and privately, water is within the purview of government and states navigate their control of water and their power over the people who use it through regulatory practices, policy frameworks, and management systems.

What I am concerned with in this dissertation is water scarcity in Cyprus as a scientific fact *as well as* a social, political, and scalar construction of knowledge. As a diplomatic and geopolitical matter of concern, the knowledge of water scarcity is directly related to constructions of diverging scales that indicate where Cyprus is located within the region. Water is an object of government and politics *not in spite* of its naturalness and materiality, but *precisely because* of these attributes. Now I turn to the interaction and mediation work that infrastructures are meant to conduct and their material role in assembling and disassembling people, water, and situated ideas about authority.

Material infrastructures

Infrastructures like pipes, cables, roads, tramways, and others have attracted increased anthropological attention in the past few decades and seminal works that deal with public infrastructures have been published (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018; Larkin 2008; Mrázek 2002; P. Harvey, Jensen, and Morita 2016; Dalakoglou 2017; Schnitzler 2016; Anand 2017a; Carse 2014; Stephen Graham 2010; Steve Graham and Marvin 2002; Weizman 2012). Bringing out a mundane utilitarian and technological artifact to the center of anthropological inquiry, these works have taken the niche topic of public infrastructures from science and technology studies into the study of anthropology, most of the time with a humanistic approach, and occasionally with a focus on the human and non-human interactions that infrastructures constitute and reinforce.

This dissertation shows that the materiality, spectacularity (Schwenkel 2015), and hyper-visibility of the infrastructure project are co-constituted with the hegemonic discourses, local narratives, regulatory practices, and managerial restructuring of the public utility system it reorganized. Following Antina von Schnitzler, I argue that water infrastructure in northern Cyprus is “a socio-technical assemblage of materiality, discursive, fiscal, and organizational forms and relations” (Schnitzler 2016, 21). What is at stake is the very relationship that communities in northern Cyprus have established (and continue to do so) with pipes, water

flows, its quantity and quality that animated fundamental issues of the self and the collective. In 2016, the water supply project, for my interlocutors, became both a site and vantage point to reconsider long-established attachments with Turkey, which animated questions of moral and political action, *internalized dispossession*, and Turkish state dependency. The overarching argument of the dissertation entails simplistically put, the *materialization, manifestation, or consolidation* of Turkish state hegemony and domination over northern Cyprus through the infrastructure project of the water supply pipeline. Repeating such terms throughout the coming chapters, I now briefly unpack what this term means for this project—mainly the materialization of power and domination in pipes and water. And this discussion must involve where the actual materiality—the tangible objects that make up the project—stands in relation to a plethora of meanings and ideological stances that it gives rise to.

The topic of material cultures and materiality has been long debated in anthropology, with many authors being particularly critical of the primacy of subject over object. Throughout this dissertation, I have been wary of perceiving objects at hand—water and the pipeline mainly—as mere “semiotic representation of some bedrock of social relations” (Miller 2005, 3). As water traverses across landscapes and urban and rural environments alike, a conglomeration of materials, objects, humans, and other living beings are assembled in a network of interactions, always changing and never static. While human-centered approaches to space and landscapes “privilege [studying] memory, discourse, the imagination, and representations,” (Navaro 2012) the presence of objects and their material attributes in the possibility of these representations in the first place, might get unnoticed or brushed off. For this project, what drives the imaginations, meanings, and questionings in and around water, its infrastructure, and the management *are* the very quality— its salinity, brackish taste, or sweetness—quantity—scarcity or abundance, i.e. whether the dam is dried up or about to flood—of water. What kind of materials were used in older pipes and if there is any truth to

new pipes being low-quality materials or as someone speculated “scrap material from China” all became matters of concern for people to make sense of the water resources of the island.

For instance, as soon as water as an elemental and vital resource becomes “public” through human intervention, as it gets diverted, put in pipes, and starts flowing through an infrastructural formation, it immediately takes its place in the mental and discursive configurations as *less* of an elemental resource, and *more* of a human right, a common good or a commodity, depending on its accessibility and ways of distribution. Water then, *is* “a matter of concern” (Latour 2004), in its ability to *gather* infrastructural materials like pipes, pumping machines, storage pools, barbed wire surrounding treatment facilities, debris like salt, rust, and rubble, farmers, politicians, engineers, activists, maps, legal documents, songs, speeches, novels, eucalyptus trees, and many other things and beings into an *assemblage*.

The dualism of subjects and objects, or society and non-human materials, that dominated anthropology, as Daniel Miller contends, have proved to be a significant debate in the anthropological study of infrastructures as well. The question of whether the “tyranny of subjects” (Miller 2005) or in other words, primacy of humans and their changing relations over studying material and environmental surroundings, have occupied the investigations of infrastructural spaces and objects like roads, water meters, electricity grids, and so on. In this dissertation, I attempt a more balanced investigation of subjects and objects, their co-constitution, and the constitution of a location called the half-island as a mental map for people in northern Cyprus. The invisibility of the undersea pipeline is juxtaposed with the hypervisibility of its discursive and imaginative representations. Further, the mundanity of water renders it invisible or unnoticed, which is juxtaposed with the multiplication of meanings and moral and political ideologies attributed to water. It is when water and infrastructure in their interaction, or more simply put, when water flows through technological artifacts, that allows both materials to *do* something for modern humans, that is, access a vital resource.

The objects that I study in this dissertation are mainly water resources and the infrastructure that enables humans to get access to the resource in its allocation and connection. This includes the main pipeline underneath the sea, the distribution and pumping stations, in their technological artifacts and systems, the connective pipes (old and new) that form a network of distribution across urban and rural spaces of northern Cyprus. All these objects, materials, and spaces create an assemblage of an infrastructural system. And such assemblages cannot be decoupled from the subjects—the human action, practice, discourses, and relations that objects animate. As I explicate throughout the dissertation, it is not the mere materiality, elementality, or naturality of water—ontology—that lead my interlocutors to contemplate their belonging and struggle for existence and willpower. Rather, it is the very interaction between the quantity, quality, and location of water and the people’s reflections of collectivity and the self that renders these assemblages available to be known and possible to be reflected upon. The technological infrastructure, both in its mundanity and spectacularity, is a crucial component of this network whereby people of northern Cyprus develop political and moral meanings about not just the water they started receiving in their taps, but also the conditions of the possibility of the “half island” as the location of their belonging. Related to these conceptual considerations, Penny Harvey contends that:

To focus on the specificity of material agencies is to interrogate what it is that particular materials bring to infrastructural assemblages, to trace what economic and political trajectories they congeal, and to discover the specific relations that become integral to their ongoing existence... A focus on the materiality of infrastructures invokes something beyond material life and seeks to address the complex entanglements of human and nonhuman lifeworlds” (2015).

Therefore, it is the very *relation* between water and infrastructure that comes to the fore as integral to people’s reflections on their livelihoods and political subjectivities that become deeply entangled with infrastructural assemblages.

State(s) of sovereignty, territory, and power

The water supply project consolidates Turkish state power, re-establishes contested territorial claims, and raises questions of sovereignty, as much as it transfers water resources to communities of northern Cyprus. Following this argument throughout, the abovementioned themes maintain a steady presence both in the ethnographic findings I present and the analyses I suggest.

The state, both the Turkish Republic and the de-facto TRNC, is central to the kind of reactions and articulations my interlocutors had regarding the construction of the water pipeline infrastructure and the privatization of its management. What is at hand in this dissertation is a dual state structure; a protectorate ‘mother’ state that extends its political economic reach as well as imaginary and symbolic authority beyond its territorial/sovereign borders. The other is a de-facto state structure, one that renders an illusionary or ‘make-believe’ character (Navaro 2012); it remains unrecognized as a breakaway state challenging the Republic of Cyprus as well as European Union sovereign borders.

Territorializing practices like mapping, securitizing and militarizing spaces, and manipulating natural resources are all part of the repertoire of modern statecraft. As Wendy Brown says, “the state is not a thing, a system or subject, but a significantly unbounded terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules, and practices” (Brown 1995, 174). In a similar vein, James Scott highlights state-making as a practice or a series of techniques of typifications, abstractions, and standardizations that are indispensable to rendering the state’s subjects and populations legible and governable (J. C. Scott 1998). While I agree that the state is relational and a series of praxes within the pervasive fields of power, these accounts do not put enough emphasis on the material objects of these techniques of governance. Paying attention to the materiality of infrastructure and its emergent and changing environmental surroundings, I agree with Patrick Carroll in his conceptualization of the state as not a singular actor, but as “a heterogeneous *assemblage* of humans and non-humans: of land, dams, levees,

aqueducts, maps, meters, organizations, discourses, individuals and so on” (Carroll 2012, 490 emphasis mine). In this line of thinking about the state, notions of sovereignty and territory also open up and can be traced in the way materials and meanings along with human discourse and practice are assembled within the field of state power. It can be located in aquifers, pipelines, as well as state actors and activists against water privatization. Thus, as Carroll contends, I avoid an “overemphasis on jurisdictional sovereignty (understood as absolute) and geopolitics (understood as international), as key defining criteria of statehood” (ibid). Rather, instead of adopting a strictly defined concepts of sovereignty or territory in my study of northern Cyprus, I choose to emphasize locally embedded emic categories of willpower (*irade*) and half-island (*ada yarısı*) respectively. The de-facto TRNC state, having laid claims of sovereignty over the northern territories of the island with the backing of the Turkish state and armed forces since 1983, has produced a kind of political rule whose people or de-facto citizens still look for an intimate kind of sovereignty that they framed as willpower—or at least they chose to do so to me at a time when the pipeline was built, water privatized, and questions of governing capabilities and self-sufficiency emerged. I agree with Yael Navaro when she writes the following:

Sovereignty is worked on in a given territory through time and is a long-term process of negotiation, contestation, and mediation between various actors within a terrain of materialities and physical properties (Navaro 2012, 43).

In this dissertation, I take cue from Navaro and perceive sovereignty not “as a top-down act of political will or event” (44). Instead, I view it as a processual and continual enactment of agency that can be traced in my interlocutors’ yearning for governing themselves (specifically regarding water utility systems) and the simultaneous purported failure to do so. The enactment of agency then, is a give and take process of action and inaction circumscribed in a heavy sense of internalized dispossession. Such oscillating actions and discourses is where willpower comes to the fore as a guiding principle for what is “normal” for my interlocutors who believe

themselves to be from an “abnormal geography,” which bring me to the notion of geography and territory.

As with my approach to sovereignty, rather than taking the concept in its strictly political meaning of state practices of demarcating land and enforcing authority over the space and its people, I choose to focus on how the territoriality of the Turkish state is *translated* on the ground as a particular kind of *location* that is imbued with historically informed and politically charged structures of feeling. Throughout the thesis, I refer to the half-island (*ada yarısı*) as an emic concept pervading the discourses I encountered on the field. While it is not a term that they specifically started using with the construction of the water pipeline, it is this infrastructural upgrade that led people to a reconsideration of *where* they perceive themselves to be located in. And half-island, I noticed, was a common expression to be taken seriously, not just another “Turkish Cypriotism” that most Turkish citizens would brush off. The half-island etched in the mental maps of people in northern Cyprus, invokes a deep sense of awareness that the island is divided. This awareness also comes with an understanding of what this territorial and mental division entails—a sense of exceptionality. The fate of the island, as mentioned in the first section of this introduction, shifted when the Republic of Cyprus was declared as an independent state, no longer a British colony and also *not* a part of Greece either. A state of exception, in an Agambenian sense has been in effect since then, exceptional spaces emerged, exceptional rules challenged others, exceptional measures were adopted for two communities in conflict. Following Costas Constantinou’s argument that these “Cypriot states of exception are *co-dependent*” (Constantinou 2008, 146 emphasis mine), this dissertation extends his idea of exceptionality and argues that these “symbiotic” exceptionalities become the condition of possibility for them to expect self-sufficiency and self-governance, yet fail to do so.

Upon the culmination of the division and subsequent declaration of the breakaway state of TRNC, for Turkish Cypriots and other communities the state of exception “[became] the

rule, the horizon of possibility, the way things are; the normal something one perpetually lacks, invents or simulates” (Constantinou 2008, 145). Thus, territorial reconfigurations of northern Cyprus, along with other territorializing techniques of material, political, and economic impositions of the Turkish state were all conditioned by a state of exception which bore a multiplicity of other state of exceptions that got translated as part of Turkish Cyoriots’ changing subjectivities. Abnormalcy and exceptionality then are conjured as part of my interlocutors’ interrogations of who they are as well as where they are located. Half-island then becomes more than a location that evades long-established categories like babyland-motherland; it is part of their practices and discourses of belonging.

Bringing all of these considerations together, a conceptual thread that my narrative holds on to throughout the thesis, is how *power* operates and is perceived in northern Cyprus vis-à-vis the Turkish state, specifically a *hierarchy* between the Turkish state and the de-facto TRNC state. The pervasive rhetoric of motherland-babyland in everyday language and politics comes directly with a hierarchical relationship of maternity of Turkey and infantilization of the de-facto TRNC. I perceive such power hierarchy not as a dichotomous one of superiority and inferiority—even though I have heard many times such representations from both Turkish politicians and people of northern Cyprus—but a dialectical relation where alliances are formed and conflicts ensue simultaneously both imaginatively and in the political sphere. The hierarchical relationship between the two states has been characterized as one of patronage (Sonan 2014; Mason 2020 among others). In this thesis, I take patronage as a notion that actors in northern Cyprus navigate within hierarchical fields of power—within state institutions, economic agreements, and other political entanglements—where at times, they become hyper-conscious of the material hierarchies, contest them discursively, and have momentary agentic capacities to resist patronage. And at other times, these same actors, as they express and exclaim such cravings to purge such hierarchies through agentic action, go back to their self-

learned structures of feeling marked by inferiority and an internalized dispossession. Thus, these situated hierarchies in northern Cyprus are not a clear cut, patron-client, “powerful over the less powerless,” or mother-baby relations; rather, it is the *maneuvers* around these variegated hierarchies through which political actors in northern Cyprus form alliances and get into conflicts in processual ways. In the techno-political field of water infrastructure especially, hierarchy between ministries and other state offices involved with the work of transition from the old management system to the new, is rather a field where Turkish Cypriot state officers oscillate between trusting the patron state and discursively revolting against impositions and concessions that they have to abide by. Lastly, I will turn to the notion of agency and what I call throughout the thesis, my interlocutors’ expressions of “internalized dispossession.”

Agency and internalized dispossession

One of the most often used expressions in Turkish Cypriot colloquial language is a rhetorical question: “*Neydi olacağı?*” It may be translated directly as, “What was going to happen anyway?” But contextually, it is mostly asked in a desperate situation, if a person wants to communicate a sense of resignation or despair. More specifically, it may mean an assessment after a moment of failure. This failure would not necessarily mean that the person did not get into action. She just might have acted upon in the effervescence of the moment, whatever the circumstances were. And yet, consequences were undesirable. So she would say, “what was going to happen anyway?” with a feeling of regret that she should not have expected the consequences to be better, because the conditions were set badly in the first place, according to her. “*Neydi olacağı?*” is like an utterance of mild self-flagellation for believing that things could turn out better every time.

This expression, unrelated to water or infrastructure completely—though I heard it so many times during my 16-month field research—sums up what I call here “internalized dispossession.” It points to a kind of agency that is ready to be deployed, but its intentions and consequences are not contingent upon the actual realization of any practical action. Rather, it is

an internalized, embedded, and gradual process of being dispossessed of the agency to act upon something that drives the people I spoke to a sense of resignation. If materials and objects, like water, pipes, trees, dams, documents, office spaces, maps, and pumping valves, all come together as an assemblage along with end-users, activists, state officials, hydrologists, and engineers that make up a continually emerging, changing, and entangling network of infrastructures and communities, then the participation of those materials into human reflection should not be taken so lightly. As explicated in this introduction and in later chapters of this thesis, I take the materiality and meanings of the water pipeline infrastructure as co-constitutive, in a dialectical relation of making and unmaking each other, rendering each other sustainable through constantly emerging knowledge and political concern. The materiality, resemblance, and situated meanings of the pipeline under the Mediterranean between “motherland” and “babyland” led to symbolisms, metaphors, and creative narrations of how water and pipeline are knowable. These political symbols trickle into the social consciousness at moments when dispossession of power and resources become highly noticeable. Even though I am not talking about a kind of social consciousness that is uniform, homogeneous, or singular, this configuration of belonging can be understood as “structures of feeling” (Williams 1977), one that Yarimar Bonilla defines as “moral sentiments of shared exploitation, imagined solidarity, and collective readiness for action” (2015, 5). The structures of feeling that my interlocutors in northern Cyprus communicated with me however, also encompassed resignation and futility *simultaneously* with this “readiness for action”.

Relatedly, the invocation of morality in laying claims to their state by the Turkish Cypriot activists I spent time with points directly to the agentive action they intend to embark on, namely to self-govern and specifically self-manage the water utility infrastructure instead of a “foreign” private company. Thus, considerations of laying claims to their own state, standing up against the Turkish state’s imposition of privatization are characterized as moral

imperatives and as part of their internalized dispossession. Fulfilling these self-assigned moral imperatives through action would dismantle hierarchies, reverse such dispossession, and maybe even constitute a “normality”, according to some. It is these kinds of agentic orientations that drive my interlocutors’ maneuverability, intended actions, and reflections of who they are as a political community (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

Chapter 1 – Waterscapes of Cyprus: a genealogy of the water management and its entangled histories at the turn of the century

In contemporary Turkish Cypriot society, there is a common idiom: *Evkaf'ın su meselesi*, meaning Evkaf's water issue. It literally refers to the complicated ownership of and disputes over water resources along with land by the *Vaqf* institution—transliterated in Turkish (Cypriot) language as *Evkaf*—in the late Ottoman era Cyprus.¹⁴ Today, it refers to a situation or incident that is prolonged unnecessarily by some sort of dysfunction or structural matter, or even any institution that does not function well. The coming of water from Turkey through the pipeline project and the elongated process of *who* will govern the water, *how much* it will cost, and *what* it means socially and politically, made a lot of people utter these words: The pipeline matter became an “Evkaf'ın su meselesi.”

“Like everything else in this ‘country-like place’ (*ülkemsî yer*)¹⁵, this new water also became Evkaf's water issue” Metin, a self-declared eco-socialist who, at the time, was a member of the Nicosia municipal council, said to me sarcastically. What he said and many others uttered about Evkaf's water issue is a loaded statement today. The oft used idiom most of the time refers to that very “country-like-but-not-quite” status of northern Cyprus—to its supposed dysfunctionality, incapability, and lack of self-sufficiency, according to many people. My presence for conducting research on water politics was funny and ironic at best to some: “Ah right, so you here to solve the Evkaf's water issue, huh?” Nonetheless, I wondered: Why allude to an old, tedious, and convoluted series of lawsuits (which I unpack in this chapter) about water well disputes to talk about their “internalized dispossession” to self-govern?

¹⁴ The Evkaf, or *Evkaf-ı Hümâyün Nezâreti*, was a ministry in the Ottoman empire, in charge of administering *vakf* properties. The rest of the chapter will explicate more fully what this institution stands for, its significance, and what *vakf* properties are as opposed to other property categories.

¹⁵ With this, he means that northern parts of the island are *his* country but not quite a country because of its de-facto state status.

Further, what was the significance of the Evkaf administration in Cyprus? What did this peculiar religious institution have anything to do with contemporary water politics in northern Cyprus? My interlocutors who brought up the idiom of Evkaf's water problem, I guessed, also did not think there would be a connection in fact. Yet, the 19th century Evkaf affairs, transition to the British colonial administration, and water management somehow intersected. The people I encountered in northern Cyprus therefore, by alluding to the Evkaf affairs and Evkaf's water issue, historicized water, pointing to the entangled histories of water management. In this chapter, I unpack this historicization, provide a historical outlook of the "waterscapes" (Swyngedouw 1999) of Cyprus, and how the discourses and practices around water and property ownership, the vicissitudes of the Evkaf institution and its role in water management were carried into the present situation of water infrastructure in northern Cyprus.

Water practices include treatment, distribution, provision, management of water that flows on taps; there are also management of natural water resources: river management, rainwater catchment, drainage of swamps, irrigation techniques, and so on. These practices are both techno-scientific activities that are meant to make access to water and its use easier, quicker, or more efficient, and political-governmental activities that states use as tools to scope out its sovereign territories and control and govern its populations. Opening wells or draining swamps therefore are part of the project of legibility for the state. The more standardized and monitored the process of water provisioning and management is, the more the state can determine and control who is (and isn't) getting the water and under what conditions.

Water wells, fountains, channels, and mills are abundant in Cyprus. The island is historically "an early model of plantation agriculture" with a "highly sophisticated system through the skillful management of wells, irrigation channels, and water mills" (Jennings 1993, 6). Today, some of these structures are abandoned, relics of the past, others are still in use. From the tip of the eastern shores in Karpaz peninsula, water resources are spread across the

northern parts of the island on both sides of the Pentadaktylos mountain ranges. Once its abundance and nowadays its scarcity, water has become a significant lens through which Cypriot economy and sociocultural relations can be scrutinized. Water's ownership, allocation, distribution, and management are all relevant to governing the landscape where different powerholders have had their grip on the island for strategic, economic, and political reasons over centuries. For the purposes of this dissertation, I choose to start from when a major shift from a supposedly pre-capitalist economy of Ottoman Cyprus to an integration of the island into market economy through British colonial practices of private ownership, property relations, and capitalist governmentality. This chapter will introduce water in, of, and around Cyprus and its relation to *(1) how people of the island made sense of the vital resource, (2) and how different state and power structures have handled water resources as an object of government in different periods.*

Part I: Waterscapes of Cyprus: myth, meaning, and the taming of nature

Over centuries, Cyprus and its water resources oscillated between abundance and scarcity. In a semi-arid ecology like Cyprus, evaporation, salinization, desertification, deforestation, and decreasing annual rainfall due to the climate crisis constitute a geo-physical reality not only for the island, but also for the eastern Mediterranean region. The third largest island on the Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus and its communities have experienced structural and political changes through colonization, annexation, ethnic strife, military coups, partition, and an ongoing multiplication of patronage ties to foreign states. The diminishing water resources is a point of political contention today, though this was not the case before as will be later shown.

Today, water scarcity is known over the island (both north and south of the Buffer Zone) as the *second* Cyprus Problem—the first being the political stalemate and division of the island. Giving a lot of importance to this environmental “matter of concern”, both governing bodies of the island over the past couple of decades have taken serious measures to alleviate water scarcity. However, before delving into this, I take seriously what my interlocutors have

repeatedly pointed to, as mentioned above. Most conversations, for interviews or otherwise, with Turkish Cypriots of the north have had to go back to Evkaf, the late-Ottoman period, its transition to British imperialism, and so on. For Metin or Behçet (whom I introduce in Chapter 6), who is a retired civil engineer, as well as many others I present throughout this thesis, they felt the need to give me a historical reading of water scarcity—at times recited from official history books, at others with the use of hearsay and myths. Evkaf, being at the center of these introductions to my interlocutors' readings, lingered on in its idiomatic meaning pointing to the messiness of the histories as well as the prolonged “dysfunctionality” of their de-facto state. Therefore, the water issue of the island, as expressed by the people of the north, is entangled with histories of domination and patronage, as well as structures of feeling (Williams 1977) that revolve around internalized dispossessions both material and agentic. As such, the first chapter of this thesis will take a step back and scrutinize how in different historical periods water has been dealt with on the island. How did the idea shift from water abundance to scarcity? What kind of transformations in water governance occurred as imperial powers came and left? And can we talk about a *genealogy* of administration of the island's water resources in order to highlight political patronage and imperial domination and its co-production and co-transformation of Turkish Cypriot society?¹⁶

Water in Cyprus: a genealogy of how it became a matter of concern

This thesis is not about the abundance or scarcity of water itself materially, but its *discourse and knowledge*—how water became an environmental knowledge to be reckoned with for Cypriots and its multiple imperial powerholders across time. For this, in this first chapter, through archival material, I choose to look at continuities, ruptures, and conflictual moments of how water is made into an object of governance and *knowledge* in the island. To historicize

¹⁶ I will only be focusing on the impact of water resources and governance on the minority population of Turkish Cypriots for the purposes of this dissertation, though historical analysis and sources I utilize tackle the island and its people as a whole.

water and show how water became an object of government (Carroll 2012, 492) is to investigate the ways in which water as a *public utility object* and an *object of ownership* constituted some of the main political discussions in Cyprus over the years as the island's administration as it transformed. To investigate these aspects of water in the case of Ottoman Cyprus transitioning into British colonial Cyprus means to take the Evkaf as an administrative and managerial institution that relates directly to how circumstances of ownership and access to water was controlled by a centralizing and transforming state. The Evkaf, as Cyprus transitioned from an Ottoman province into a British colony, has come to stand for a quasi-state for Turkish Cypriot minority population marginalized by the Greek Cypriot population whose majority advocated for union with the Greek state during the years when they struggled for independence from the British empire. As an Ottoman institution that once held immense economic and political power through religious, educational, economic, and political leverage, the Evkaf symbolized the Ottoman and muslim heritage for Turkish Cypriots, whose existence and basic rights were undermined because of Greek Cypriot *enosis* ideological standpoint. Relatedly, former general director of Evkaf in Cyprus, Barış (1991) suggests that while the Evkaf (*Kıbrıs Vakıflar İdaresi* in Turkish) in Cyprus stood for charity and philanthropy, it also acted as an institution that protected the rights of Turkish Cypriots and backed the Turkish Cypriots' "struggle for existence" during a time of marginalization and loss of governmental control and representation (315-16). The author tells how Evkaf institution lost its administrative importance and control of infrastructural establishments like water wells, aqueducts, etc. to the British-led Nicosia municipality. This infrastructural loss of control of an institution that stood for principles of philanthropy and provisioning for the good of the people has come to determine a specific reading of Turkish Cypriot minority rights advocacy—one that revolved around property and administrative rights. Today, Evkaf still functions as a foundation holding control over vakif properties, meaning properties for the purposes of charity

for the people, and as a religious institution. More than that, since 1956 when Evkaf was handed back to the Turkish Cypriots, it maintains its role in championing Turkish nationalism with Islamic principles in northern Cyprus. In its own official website, they state that “besides its religious and social duties, it was given roles such as establishing economic, industrial, agricultural, and touristic ventures and businesses, as well as partnering with already existent economic ventures” (“Kıbrıs Vakıfları’nın Kısa Tarihi” n.d. translation mine). As will be explicated throughout this chapter, Evkaf as an established institution played a central role in the transformations of water management and politics in Cyprus at a time when power was being handed over from one empire to another and its different ethnic groups of people had found themselves in a turmoil of colonization and nationalism.

While the main focus of the thesis is contemporary water politics and infrastructures in northern Cyprus, a brief genealogical study of the Evkaf’s role in administration and management of water will highlight the conditions of the possibility of the present situation of water and its politics of dependency in northern Cyprus. Historical accounts of Cypriot transformations in linear narratives are abundant and still growing (Kızılyürek 2002; 2016; Hill 2016; Beratlı 2020 among others). Rather than repeating such an account of linear development, here I attempt to center water management and ownership as the objects of inquiry and understand how it came to be knowable and governable by the powerful, how knowledge of it was (re)produced over decades, the conflicts and hierarchical structures and institutions around it, and instances and incidents that ruptured, defined, and shaped the vicissitudes of its governance.¹⁷ For this, following Michel Foucault’s concept of genealogy (1978), rather than searching for the “origins” of a problem—water scarcity and management in Cyprus—I choose to trace the way water infrastructure systems and their management point

¹⁷ For developing this chapter, I thank particularly Eda Sevinin for their intellectual support and discussions of genealogy and history.

to shifts in power structures in Cyprus. As the main concern of this thesis pertains to power and domination in northern Cyprus—both power to act and power over others—I show water infrastructure can be a temporal and spatial avenue through which “submerged problems” (Koopman 2013, 1–2) that constitute subjectivities of a group of people.

What does water aqueducts and other infrastructure have anything to do with how my present-day interlocutors in northern Cyprus feel about the Turkish state? How has water scarcity come about as a “problem” and one that became the “second Cyprus problem” (Hocknell 1998; Hoffmann 2018)? I attempt to problematize this identification of a second Cyprus problem here and offer a genealogical approach to how water management became so imbued in politics and power transformations over the years. The “Cyprus problem” most often refers to the ongoing partition of the island and the persistence of a breakaway state of TRNC in the northern territories. I contend that water infrastructure, its quantity and quality, and its management are *not* secondary to these political and geographical concerns that people of the island has been grappling with. Rather, water, in its multiple meanings and materiality has been at the center of changing power relations in and around the island for decades and is constitutive factor of what people deem the “Cyprus problem” to be. When I say I problematize the notion of water scarcity, I do not mean to deny the bio-physical and climatological fact that the island’s water resource have been scarce for so long. Rather, I am interested in problematizing how water scarcity has become knowable, by whom, and the practices around it that are directly informed by hegemonic views of how water and its infrastructure ought to be managed. For this therefore, I look at how the Evkaf’s power over the infrastructural management and ownership has been shifted to British colonial administration via the Nicosia municipality and how such transformation has impacted on the ways in which people perceive certain institutions and powerholders, which all contributed to constitution of patronage relations of domination and dependency. The matter of concern in this thesis is the contemporary water

pipeline infrastructure and this chapter will try to understand genealogically the conditions of possibility of this megaproject.

As much as the scope of this thesis allows, I trace in moments of power shifts how water, its ownership, practices around it, and its management and governance arises as a “matter of concern” (Latour 2004). Bruno Latour gives primacy to matters of concern as part of his realist attitude to social inquiry, rather than matters of fact, which he identified as scientific facts and objects cultivated polemically becoming “highly complex, historically situated, richly diverse matters of concern” (Latour 2004, 237). Here, I propose to look at the scientific and vital object of water and the technical and institutionalized act of managing it as a matter of concern, in all its historical, political, and polemical twists and turns in the context of the island.

Therefore, rather than presenting a linear historical account of the island, its environmental facts like its natural resources, **I look at how the present situation of water scarcity as publicly known came to be known as such through shifts in governing mechanisms, and the shifting center-periphery power dynamics. Through the lens of water as something that is co-constituted with society at large, we can look at key instances in history that was transformative for the island (and the region), such as the British take over from Ottoman rule—the colonial shift; the independence from the British colonial rule; the civil war period; post-division era; and post-Annan Plan era.** All these instances are significant (which I explicate throughout the chapter) mainly because managing the ownership and practices around a techno-scientific and modern object like water was dealt with in ways that contributed to the entanglements of power and authority today. At every step of the way, water and its constitutive power became apparent one way or another, permeating the political scene and disappearing simultaneously.

Intersections of water, myths, and religion in Cyprus

Water brought communities together in Cyprus, just as any other place. With the Ottoman rule of the island, many previously constructed water structures like mills, aqueducts, fountains, and so on, were repaired and renewed. The Ottoman elite, high ranking military men, etc. paid for such repair and new erections of many other fountains out of their “good will.” Especially fountains had a cohesive role in making communities, leading people to relate to each other in different ways. Still seen here and there—some with running water, others dried up—one can still see these *çeşme* or fountain structures all around the island and beyond wherever Ottoman lands stretched. Running water meant health, prosperity, and sociality in Ottoman Cyprus. According to Hikmetağalar (1992) and many other scholars of Ottoman and Islamic history, it was of utmost importance for Ottoman sultans to “bring water” to where they conquered in the name of Allah. Written in the Qur’an was “man is made of water” and this was a guiding principle for them to open wells, build fountains, and so on, for the good of the people (1992, 20).¹⁸ Additionally, water was a theme in many of Ottoman architecture, artworks, poetry, and so on. In its functionality and aesthetics both, this resource was everywhere; it not only brought people together on a daily basis around fountains, it created jobs for storing, quantifying, and managing water. *Suyolcu* was such a job; meaning the one who makes way for water, the job description was to maintain water ways and calculated and organized distribution meters (ibid).

Besides Islamic meanings of water, springs have a significant place in Greek Orthodox religion as well. Once believed to heal the sick or have “miraculous” effects, springs all around the island connected to Orthodox religious history, would be the sites for chapels, churches or in other words, places dedicated for God. These springs called *ayazma* (or *hagiasma* in Greek language, meaning holy) were named after saints, convinced many to convert to Christianity,

¹⁸ Such an act of philanthropy in the name of pleasing Allah is called *vakf*, which will be dealt with extensively in the next section.

and engendered many myths and stories told among the communities of Cyprus to this day (Bağışkan 2001, 100–101). These myths are stories that usually point to the holiness of the water of a certain spring; miracles occur, people get healed, and water of the spring is endowed supernatural characteristics to it.

Myths of water in Cyprus and Anatolia are said to resemble each other a lot; especially converge both in water's miraculous attributes of healing (particularly leprosy) and also in its actual materiality. Claude Lévi-Strauss is right when he wondered whether myths were a way for us to find order in the disorder of our world:

Mythical stories are, or seem, arbitrary, meaningless, absurd, yet nevertheless they seem to reappear all over the world. A 'fanciful' creation of the mind in one place would be unique—you would not find the same creation in a completely different place. My problem was trying to find out if there was some kind of order behind this apparent disorder—that's all (Lévi-Strauss 2001, 3).

While my reference to Levi-Strauss should not be taken that I make a structuralist claim on myths about water in Cyprus and Anatolia, the quote above simply shows that the arbitrariness of myths about where they originate, whether they resemble others, and so on, is significant here. As myths about it sprout here and there, water seems to be an overarching category for these types of stories in the eastern Mediterranean. Turkish Cypriot archaeologist and researcher Tuncer Bağışkan collected these mythical stories and saw similarities. Greek or Byzantine mythologies of water in Cyprus resembled those of Anatolian and Islamic ones and vice versa. For instance, almost the same story of a girl and her dog being healed by the waters is the myths that originate both from Skylloura or Yılmazköy village in north of Cyprus and from Yalova, a provincial Ottoman town known for its hot springs today.¹⁹ Myths therefore,

¹⁹ Tuncer Bağışkan (2001) provides a detailed account of all these myths and stories, which I only exemplify with a single myth in the following section for the scope of this thesis.

give us a sense of order; their purpose are in a way, to explain unexplained or unexplainable events.

Further, according to Bağışkan (2001), the springs of Lapithos, Kephlovrysos is said to be sourced from Anatolia, connected under the Mediterranean sea. With no specific region of Anatolia, the myth goes that “once upon a time” a beggar was drinking the water from a spring in Anatolia in which he dropped his wooden container that had his food in it. The container had a secret section/compartment that contained his saved money. Having lost his savings and his food at the same time, the beggar later on came to a village up in the mountains of Kyrenia. He noticed in this village that they use the same container he had lost as a water cup for chickens in a pen. He opened up the container and finds his secret compartment with his money intact. The container travelled all the way from a spring in Anatolia to the Kyrenia mountains where the owner of the chicken pen found in a spring there, which showed how there existed a tunnel between Cyprus and Anatolia where water could travel (Bağışkan 2001, 104–5 translation mine). As I will later show in Chapter 2, this myth of connection is carried across time to explain contemporary political connections between northern Cyprus and Turkey.

The author also retells other myths of similar story—water travelling between Sicily and Greece, water wells connected between Mecca and Konya in Anatolia. The material connection of water tunnels, wells, and springs somehow become meaningful in a symbolic sense. Water’s anticipated flows and “traces yet to come” (Ballesterro 2019b, x) create connections, materially manifested in myths and stories. These can be connections between objects, humans, animals, and elements like water or fire.²⁰ Myths about water across the Mediterranean do have in common that they can be tied to each other, heal humans and animals, and stand for social and political imaginaries of who is attached to where.

²⁰ There is an expansive anthropological literature on myths, which can be discussed as a way to explain these water stories.

Landscape, water, and subsistence

The term *ab-i hayat*, meaning water of life is a common one in Ottoman and Islamic cultures. As explained above, water of life is a trope that is the center of many myths intersecting Ottoman stories, Islamic doctrines with Greek mythology or Persian ones. Its materiality—fluidity, unruly and fleeting character, and unpredictability—has rendered the resource to symbolize fundamental dichotomies in the world like health/illness, cleanliness/dirt, nature/society, and life/death. The powerful symbolism of it therefore, became not just an articulation of wealth, power, and authority, but also a discursive tool for communities to simply tell each other didactic or romantic stories of nature and culture. Beyond these stories were the vital character of water for subsistence and productivity, which made its scarcity a consequential issue to reckon with.

Antonis Hadjikyriacou's research on the Anthropocene and Cyprus shows us that water scarcity was not a reality for the island in the Lusignan and Venetian periods. Pointing out that Cyprus was the biggest supplier of sugar in Europe until the 1490s in the Lusignan and Venetian era of the island, Hadjikyriacou shows that sugar cultivation as a water-intensive crop had a massive impact on the hydrology of the island. As investment came from Venice, the labor-intensive and water-intensive production of sugar required considerable hydraulic power, which indicated clues about the water and hydraulic energy over the island during the 1400s. As he contends, timber extraction for the requirement of sugar production led to deforestation, which is one of the biggest environmental impacts on the island over four centuries of water-intensive agriculture. Sugar then, was substituted with cotton, another water requiring crop; the cultivation moved across the island from west to east during the Ottoman period. Hadjikyriacou argues therefore that with capitalist mode of production, and the agriculture of crops such as sugar and cotton show that Cyprus was once able to sustain such water intensive cultivation.

Dry and semi-arid landscape of today has little to do with how Cyprus was in the past (Hadjikyriacou 2022).

As Ottoman governors prioritized water supply to communities, chain of wells, aquifers, and aqueducts were built and repaired for both everyday use, small-scale agriculture, and animal husbandry. Before detailing these systems of water supply and their management (which I do in the later section of the chapter), I now look at how water and the way people



Figure 1. The aqueducts surrounding the city of Nicosia can be seen in blue in this map. Source: <https://kitchener.hua.gr/>

used it—be it running or still—had connotations of productivity, idleness, or health and/or dirt/illness for British colonial administration in Cyprus. Having detailed what water meant mythically in Ottoman, Islamic, and Christian cultures so far, I turn to the western gaze and how British colonialism constructed an image of land and water resources and in turn subjected people of Cyprus in particular ways.

“Civilizing mission” on barren lands

For the British colonial administrators, arrival to the island upon their takeover of the territory, meant rendering the lands legible and productive as efficient as possible. For this, memoirs and journals of British colonial officials are telling in terms of how they perceived the waterscapes and its people. Tabitha Morgan, studying the journal of the first High Commissioner Sir Garnet Wolesley, shows us the “civilizing mission” of the British to “tame” the arid landscapes of Cyprus:

Morale declined further as the men marched through the arid landscape, noticing the chalky treeless hills and the absence of running water. ‘Where are the forests we thought Cyprus was covered with?’ Wolesley pondered in his journal, before concluding that ‘like everything else that made this country a splendid one in ancient times, the forests have disappeared under the influence, the *blighting influence, of the Turk*’. The concept of a degraded landscape, its decline attributed to *both native apathy and Ottoman greed*, recurs frequently in colonial writing on Cyprus... Conversely, supporters of a British presence in Cyprus, like Horatio Kitchener, who drafted the first comprehensive land survey of the island, maintained that, as a civilizing nation, Britain had a moral obligation to restore Cyprus to its *former* prosperity. Kitchener argued that there were ‘many places in the island ... just waiting for the hand of the capitalist to change them from *barren wastes to their former fruitfulness*’ (Morgan 2010, 5 emphases mine).

For Wolesley and many other British colonial officials, it was the Turks, or the Ottoman governments, who left the landscapes unchecked and *barren*, which accordingly led to a supposedly lack of productivity in Cyprus. Civilizing mission for the British, as an idea, meant restoring this stagnation by getting a hold of its terrain and also its waters. Capitalist mode of production was key for developing agriculture and efficient use of land. Engineers who were appointed to develop the infrastructure of the island like roads and irrigation wondered whether it was impossible to “...to develop material resources, revive agriculture, reclothe the bare hills with forest, create commerce, and thus provide for the maintenance of a largely increased population?” (10).

The “barren” lands of the island were accompanied with swamps and marshes that were deemed as unhealthy and abominable (17), which led officials to “discover the sort of tree that

[was] most suited to Cyprus.” Imported from Australia, seeds of fast-growing eucalyptus trees were planted as “a method of draining low-lying marshy areas and thereby reducing the malarial threat” (ibid). As a colonial endeavor to dry up the swamps, eucalyptus trees today are told to be one of the reasons why water is scarce across the island. This however, is debunked by Turkish Cypriot ecologist Zorlu Yıkıcı (2015), whose volume on the ecological history of eucalyptus trees in Cyprus, claiming that this is wrong. In the preface of his comprehensive report, he says that the eucalyptus trees, with a long history dating back to 1879, were accused during recent years of heavy desertification, believed to have contributed to the aridity of land, leading to what he termed “deterioration of the island’s hydrology” (*bozulan hidroloji*) by many TRNC citizens and officials over the years (Yıkıcı 2015, 9 translation mine). He repudiates this direct causality by explaining how eucalyptus trees were in fact a resistant species to arid and semi-arid climates like that of Cyprus, flourish the ecosystem around them like becoming home to many endemic bird species, and were beneficial to tackling epidemics like malaria (2015, 7 translation mine). Regardless of whether eucalyptus trees were factors in the aridity and water scarcity of the island, these species were and still are, points of contention where nature was discussed as part of the fluctuations of water resources of the island and how powerholders produced knowledge based on scientific reasoning as well as political animosities and conflicts.

Back to the “civilizing mission” of the British, the first attempts to develop the island with an Orientalist mindset were characterized as improvised and an anomaly to the other colonizing missions of the Empire:

This extemporising approach became a feature of the British presence on the island and resulted from a combination of factors. Politically, Cyprus, unlike any other colony, was an anomaly. Its occupants, unlike other colonial subjects, were Christians with what the colonists perceived to be echoes of classical Greek in their speech, echoes which resonated in the picturesque ruins of the landscape. At the same time the colonists located the island very firmly in the Middle East rather than Europe and derived particular pleasure from its exoticism. At the level of policy, doubts over the island’s changing strategic value led to confusion and an absence of long-term planning, while

development programmes were hampered – or abandoned entirely – because of financial constraints. Despite the enthusiasm and energy of the first British arrivals on the island, the foundations of colonial rule were far from firm (18).

As will be shown in later chapters, Messaoria plains of the island located in the northern parts were particularly important for the British colonists to irrigate and develop agriculturally.²¹ Samuel Baker²² in his writings, pointed to the unruliness of waters in Cyprus. He remarks on how water was wasted before the British arrived; the free flowing of waters in public fountains meant, for him, a waste. Controlling its flow, using it for efficient purposes was mandatory for colonial administration and its the civilizing mission.

Water, like fire, should be the slave of man, to whom it is the first necessity; therefore, his first effort in his struggle with the elements should reduce this power to vassalage. There must be no question of supremacy; water must serve question of supremacy; water must serve mankind.

Therefore, dominance over the communities of Cyprus also comes with dominance and control over its water. Colonists like Wolseley, Baker, and Kitchener all point to the need to cultivate land and put water into use efficiently. The calculating and capitalist logic of colonial administration gets etched onto the waterscapes of Cyprus as its people are deemed "lazy", "idle", hence unproductive. Such orientaling views however, were contradictory to how they also perceived Cypriots as part of the Greek heritage. In between seen as exotic people and people of Greek, hence European, origin, people of Cyprus were ambiguous in their subjectification as the colonized. While the island was situated in the Middle East by the British, its people were seen as somewhere in between. Its landscape were to be restored to its former lushness, its waters tamed, and its people educated back to their "civilized" Greek origins.

²¹ Today, this region of the island is most arid and at the time of my fieldwork period in 2016-17, the Turkish State Water Authority was in the efforts of irrigating Messaoria with the imported water from Turkey along with alternative plans of irrigating the Omorfo region.

²² British colonial officer?

In this section, I have presented how water became known in Cyprus over centuries of different rulers and socio-cultural associations. Water, as a resource object, or “a boundary object” became part of sociality, ethno-religious relations, and governance structures, *not simply* because of its materiality, quantity, or its resourcefulness, but precisely because of the meanings, myths, and knowledge it gave rise to. The tropes of sociability, productivity, and cultural reproduction in different periods of Ottoman rule and British colonialism then, are contingent upon the ways in which landscape in its resources (water) and ecosystem, are transformed, networked, and rendered knowable.

These meanings, myths, tropes, and dichotomies that revolve around water as an object, which can be called water’s “epistemic multiplicity” (Ballesterro 2019a) become part of a “moral economy”, a network of norms and values with deep cultural and historical roots (Tilt 2014), that are shaped by and shape the economic and political interactions in the Cypriot landscape. Ottoman values of running water, dichotomous notions of purity/health and disease, as well as British civilizing and normative impositions of water as a technical tool of capitalist rural production all come together as a network of moral economies that at times clash and at others morph into each other. This network of moral economies in different periods when different imperial and power structures ruled the land, constitute the “economy” of water—how it is managed, utilized, and governed—as part of territorializing techniques and strategies. Having presented these moral economies of water, I now turn to the “water regimes” or the economy of water. The practices of territorialization as part of the Ottoman rule as well as the transition into the British colonial rule, are informed by these moral economies. Part of these territorializing practices concern property regimes, state institutions like the Evkaf, and how changing governing authorities regard water and its infrastructure vis-à-vis the perception of local populations in Cyprus.

Part II: From Ottoman dominium to British imperium: property, land, and water regimes in Cyprus

In this second section of the chapter, I look at the Ottoman land code in Cyprus in order to understand who owned and controlled water rights before the British took over the island, and the ways in which water was a “boundary object” (Carroll 2012) for Ottoman-era (1571-1878) Cyprus. To talk about water resources and their ownership and management is to also talk about land code and property rights and laws in the Ottoman Empire.²³ My interlocutors, as I will show in later chapters, repeatedly told me how they believe water to be a common good, a human right, and “the source of life” which could not be commodified. With a deep sense of awareness in capitalist production and commodification processes, they told me about the transversality, universality, and omnipotence of water. These convictions that drove their political action and discourse, just as in any other context, can be traced in the formation of values and norms that revolved around water in time. Not only this, such moral economies of water, ideas about who owns it or its accessibility are directly related with how land and property was organized and how this organization went through transformative periods.

As I will explicate in this section, water was perceived as part of the *vakf* lands in the Ottoman empire—whatever land was of the *vakf* property, meaning for the purposes of the people, water resources that fell within the scope of that land was also included as part of it. *Vakf*, or *waqf*, in Arabic transliteration, as an Ottoman term, refers to a system of property with the principles of Islamic faith and philanthropy, with the literal meaning “to stop”, or “detention” and technical meaning “dedication” (Middleton 1900). *Vakf*, or *Evkaf* in Turkish (Cypriot) dialect refers to the pious foundations—any property, moveable and immovable,

²³ It is important to note that in the Ottoman Empire, private property does not exist in the strict Western sense. What this means is that all property—moveable or immovable—belongs to the Sultan and the state. *Vakf* properties are precisely crucial because of this as they have become instruments to “move” property—transferring it through inheritance—as it is not possible with other types of property. Therefore, *vakf* as an institution have come to be associated with corrupt practices of property throughout the Empire. For this, an extensive analysis is done by Eda Güçlü’s masters thesis (Güçlü 2009).

that is for the good of the people, bequeathed by *Allah* to the ones in need. This idea of water as part of charity and in general vakf properties, can be likened to the idea of the “commons.” The common lands became enclosed in 17th century England with the advent of capitalist mode of production. Even though the Ottoman land and property structure had a different set of systems, and went beyond the mere categorization of “commons” or “common lands”, capitalist relations of production and private property regime made its mark to the Ottoman Empire. At the center of this transformation was the Land Code of 1858, as “the establishment of new institutions with new policies, creation of new categories, and development of new practices” (Güçlü 2009, 10). Property relations were central to Ottoman state’s changing control mechanisms including population and cadastral surveys, income registers and so on. Wakf lands remained outside of these mechanisms as these properties were non-transferrable and non-divisible. With the Land Code of 1858, perceived as a turning point in property relations (Islamoglu 2004), land in Ottoman provinces like Cyprus, was organized under five legal categories: freehold (*mülk*), state lands (*mîrî*), uncultivated lands (*mevât*), common lands (*metrûke*), and waqf lands (*mevkûfe*) (2009, 15). As I explain throughout the following sections, Land Code, as it centralized the Ottoman state and reordered Ottoman lands, was essential in the way capitalist relations and mode of production made its mark on the property relations and made way for private property and especially the transferrability of *vakf* lands—practices that were adopted and adapted to the Ottoman legal and economic system. This process of adaptation, as will be shown, had an impact in the way Cyprus became the British mandate and later with independence from it.

Land ownership in Ottoman Cyprus

As a province of the shrinking territories of the Empire, land ownership in Cyprus was no different than that of any other provinces. During the 19th century, the administration of the Ottoman empire province were in fact, corrupt and mostly inefficient in Cyprus: “Governors were changed frequently and sought to satisfy their own and the Sultan’s financial needs at the

often ruinous expense of the populace, Greek and Turkish Cypriot alike” (Dodd 2010, 2). Before going into the intricacies of water ownership and management, it is important to understand first, that land and water came together in the way they were perceived in these categorizations of property and ownership. Second, property and land relations were organized under the Evkaf institution, the main state body that regulated these relations. In the following, I show how Evkaf as an institution became a powerful structure that both land and water relations in terms of property ownership, were contested.

The Evkaf of Ottoman Cyprus was an institution where maladministration and high-ranking officials’ struggle for economic power occurred especially towards the end of Ottoman rule in Cyprus in late 1800s. Evkaf İdaresi (Evkaf as shorthand), was not just the pious foundations—the lands and property that generated revenue for philanthropic purposes—it was also a financial institution. Its purpose was “to administer local properties that were dedicated to religious and charitable causes, administer and tax them and report to the Ministry of Evkaf in Istanbul” (Bouleti 2015, 75–76).

Thus the Cyprus Evkaf was administering most of the financial life of the community, was connected with the religious (Sheri) tribunals, and formed the only means of public welfare of the community and its main administrative connection to the government in Istanbul (ibid).

A religious institution and structure, Evkaf was established in Cyprus in 1570 when the Ottoman Empire conquered the island and “[converted] the cathedral of the city into a mosque and laying it as the first pious foundation in the name of the Sultan followed by others soon after” (N. Yıldız 2009). The institution’s main mission is to run all the religious affairs and maintain all religious buildings such as mosques (ibid.) Since its establishment in Cyprus, it runs also as a charity and/or philanthropy organization that helps low-income people and those in need in material donations like accommodation, scholarships, and so on. The institution, owning many monuments, buildings, land, infrastructural artifacts, and structures of all kinds, protects these “vakf” properties and collaborates with the Department of Antiquities and

Monuments (ibid.) Evkaf institution, therefore, has its origins in Islamic law, in which charity and philanthropy, *sadaka* and *zakat* are one of the central pillars of the Islamic religious practice. In fact, from its inception, helping and protecting the poor, widowed, slave, and orphans was essential to Islamic practice and helping the people meant service to God (Söylemez and Ortakçı 2017, 7).

...a founder [of a *vakf* property] who has accumulated private wealth decides to endow his personal property for a specific, often pious, purpose... the privately accumulated wealth of a pious Muslim becomes God's property (Çizakça 1998, 50).

Any *vakf* property is meant to be for the good of the people, directly a service to God; its revenues are ought to be not for profit. Vakf system in a way, was a form of social services in the Ottoman Empire as a mechanism of redistribution of wealth (ibid). Mescid-u Nebevi, a land in Mecca is known to be the first *vakf* land and its significance comes from a well and a date palm plantation (*hurmalık*) that was bequeathed to the people by Caliph Omar bin Hattab (Söylemez and Ortakçı 2017).

Buildings, land, and any other property that is *vakf* property, meaning under the guardianship of Evkaf, are meant for the good of the people; their purpose of construction or acquisition is not for any profit. On the contrary, Evkaf owns these properties for the people to benefit from. The trustees of any *vakf* property, create these sites, buildings, and other artifacts, in expectation of prayers and blessing for their soul (N. Yıldız 2009, 118). Evkaf properties are just like any other vakf property in other Ottoman provinces. And one of the most important facts about a vakıf property is that it is non-transferrable, nor can it be inherited.

...mosques, tekkes, medreses, imarets (alm houses), aqueducts, bridges, libraries, hans (commercial buildings providing short term accommodation and storage of merchandise), customs houses, administrative and military buildings. The sole responsibility and ownership of this kind of vakfs now belongs to the Evkaf Administration. (ibid).

When the Ottoman Land Code came into force in 1858 under the Sultanate of Abdülmecid, the Empire was undergoing the Tanzimat (Reorganization) period (1839-1876), in which a series of modernizing reforms in the centralization of the state, public administration, education, and law were being enacted. These reforms were meant to “unify and centralize the government in Istanbul[...] and to limit the involvement of foreign states and their citizens in the Empire’s internal affairs” (Solomonovich and Kark 2015, 222). The 1858 Land Code, being one of these reforms is known to be not only a legal change that brought Ottoman land ownership system closer to the western private property system, but also a social change that dispossessed the peasants and dismantled the *timar* system, a feudal fiefdom system. The Land Code of 1858 was to make land more legible, classified, and taxable for the Ottoman Porte. With the enactment of the 1858 Land Code and the Evkaf administration becoming more centralized in 1839 with Tanzimat reforms, under tighter state control, the Ottoman province had to undergo a series of changes. The Evkaf was now centralized under a Ministry in Istanbul, which “took over the management of endowments, in particular removing them from the hands of high-ranking officials and local notables” (Singer 2011, 560).

Only a couple of decades later, Cyprus was leased to Britain in 1878, “under Ottoman nominal suzerainty and effective British control” (Rappas 2019, 640) as a result of the Russo-Ottoman war and in exchange of a British-Ottoman alliance against any potential Russian attack.²⁴ Britain, obligated to pay an annual tax to the Ottoman Porte, recognized and guaranteed “the preservation of the Islamic court” and appointed a British delegate and Muslim representative for the management of the Evkaf institution. With this, Cyprus became effectively under British control, though in the beginning of this annexation, it was supposedly strictly non-colonial (ibid). The Ottoman-British Convention stipulated that the religious

²⁴ Historical analysis of British colonial presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Crown’s changing motives over the region are vast, though not under the scope of this dissertation.

institutions over the island would be preserved, mainly the sharia courts, and Evkaf. Under dual control of a Muslim resident appointed by the Porte and a British administrator, the Evkaf under British occupation (until 1914) and subsequently the colonial period (until 1960) quickly became not only a headquarters of the Ottoman Porte until its demise, but also the representative institution for Turkish Cypriot society in Cyprus (N. Yıldız 2009, 121).

Though in principle, the Evkaf of the Ottoman Empire was supposed to be a philanthropic and religious institution, Nevzat and Hatay (2009) show how in the case of Cyprus province, it was corrupt and neglected and “all interests and wants were subordinated to the greed of the Ministry of Evkaf, at Stamboul [Istanbul]” (914). In fact, with the Tanzimat reforms, centralization of the Evkaf under the single jurisdiction of a “secular administration directly responsible to the Evkaf Ministry” (ibid), the struggle for power and autonomy ensued. With the decline of the autonomy of the Evkaf, social services in the Empire shifted to the state, meaning that the vakıf revenues meant for educational, health, etc. services were considerably defunded or diverted. The local *ulema* and the *mütevellıs* or trustees of vakf properties were no longer autonomous; the revenues from vakf lands and buildings such as schools, tekkes, medreses, mosques, and so on, were diverted to state purposes like funding its own personnel (Singer 2011, 560), instead of “the good of the people” as it was originally meant. The economic power of the local religious elites of the Evkaf (the *ulema* and the *mütevellıs*) in Cyprus were established through fraud and maladministration after the Tanzimat reforms. The Land Code reform especially made that possible. With the legal changes of transferal of property, ownership, and so on, the *vakf* property

had been illegally transformed into [what is called] *İcaretetin vakıfs*, which allowed the occupier the freedom to transfer property usage to third persons and pass on the rights of occupation and transferal to unlimited generations of inheritors” (ibid).

This conversion and illegal transferal of ownership, as part of the maladministration of the vakıf lands, paved the way for a version of “private property” that did not exist in the strict sense,

before in the Ottoman property law. Vakıf lands could not be transferred or inherited, unlike *miri* land which could be turned into *mülk*. The *İcareteyin vakıfs*, “the form of double rent paid for waqf immovable assets” (Güçlü 2009, 2) became, in a way, a way to subcontract the land to generate revenue, privately own, transfer and inherit, and make profit out of what was meant to be property that sustained economic equality and redistributed wealth. According to Amy Singer (2011), Evkaf lost its credibility either because

they tended to dwell either on the loss to the imperial treasury resulting from revenues being ‘locked up’ in endowments or on the harm caused to the endowments by incompetent or dishonest management (559).

So, the mismanagement of the Evkaf was not unknown or unfounded until the British administration took over the island in 1878. The complaints of mismanagement or the claim that the Evkaf lost its power after the British took over the administration may well have been from the “aggrieved trustees [of vakıf properties] who were either completely discharged of their duties or brought under the discipline of arrangements introduced by the new ‘modern’ administration which required them, for instance, to pay their dues on time”, according to Nevzat and Hatay (2009, 915). While some sources claim that it was the British take over that corrupted the Evkaf management and its Islamic pious and philanthropic principles, there is ample evidence that the misallocation of funds, diverting revenues, etc. were due to the struggle for economic and political power amongst the local elite and also the Porte’s heavy intervention to the Evkaf affairs in the 19th century.

Between dominium and imperium: transition years

As soon as the British officers arrived to the island upon the Convention, the takeover, in all its administrative, political, and social nuances was influenced highly by the Ottoman *millet* system that already existed on the island and the rest of the territories of the empire.²⁵ The first

²⁵ A *millet* in the Ottoman empire is an administrative entity of every religious or ethnic community that interacts with the Porte/Istanbul, which had its own laws and own leader.

High Commissioner of Cyprus was *not* instructed “to establish a British colonial administration, but a model Ottoman administration under Ottoman law. The island was to be a *prototype* for the British administration of the Sultan's domains in Western Asia of which the Cyprus Convention was the cornerstone” (Markides 2013, 92 emphasis mine). The supposedly “non-colonial” character in the early years of the British administration have transformed the Muslim community in Cyprus, as in it rendered it a religious community, a *millet*, “[severing] the tie of the Muslim-Ottoman community from the Ottoman government in Istanbul” (Bouleti 2015, 74). So, the Muslims of Cyprus, later identified in more ethnic terms as Turkish Cypriots, was primarily defined by their religious institutions by the British—namely the Evkaf, the Shari’a courts, and the Chief *kadi* (the religious judges). Evkaf therefore, took great importance in maintaining the power and influence of the Muslim elite over the island, since before the British, even though they were a minority (approx. 25% of the population), they still functioned as the ruling class of the island (75).

According to Bouleti (2015), the Cyprus Convention “took the form of hasty and roughly sketched guidelines that were left open for interpretation by the new administration” (ibid). The guidelines that religious institutions like the Evkaf were to remain on the island and its authority intact did not really work for the benefit of the Muslim community in the end. In fact, the British claimed control “from within”, whereby most of the pressure was felt on the Muslim community and the Muslim elites of the island. Acting as successors and protectors of Ottoman authority in Cyprus, the British rule accentuated the bicommunality of the island. Muslims, being the ruling class during the Ottoman period, gradually lost their authoritative positions as the majority Christian community entered the competition of occupying public offices and posts. Not only this, Christian community’s demand to unite with Greece, became even more heightened when Crete joined Greece in 1898 (79). Political activities and advocacy

work for *enosis* by Greek Cypriots ensued, as they believed that Muslim community should succumb to unification with Greece since they are only the minority on the island.

While scrutinizing the origins of ethnicization of communities of island, nationalism, and ideological differences of *enosis* and *taksim*²⁶ are beyond the scope of this thesis, the political affairs of the Turkish Cypriots—once identified as Ottomans of Cyprus, then a *millet*, later Turkish Cypriots—and the power shifts with the British administration that Evkaf has gone through are important. The head of the Evkaf was perceived by the British as the “official” political head of the community. Besides this political relationship with the British, Evkaf is significant to understand how the Muslims (or Turkish Cypriots) of Cyprus over time, lost their land holding power, their financial authority, which loss extended eventually to the Ottoman Porte’s land claims over the island. Rappas (2019) scrutinizes how the British took control over tax collection and built expertise on the Ottoman land law, in order to “control the tangle of social ties weaved around property transfers” (626). According to the author, “Cyprus constituted for British authorities an unprecedented terrain to acquire a working understanding of the Ottoman land laws” (631). Before the Cyprus Convention, Evkaf stood as the sole institution that conducted such affairs, holding immense social, political, and economic power. The institution’s authority dwindled as mentioned above, with corrupt trustees, maladministration of vakif revenues, etc. Additionally, the vakif lands (*arazi-i mevkûfe*) and the Ottoman Sultan’s claims to all lands (*arazi-i mîrî*) of the island eventually were challenged by the British, claiming that the title deeds were “unintelligible” or “unreliable” (634), or establishing competing land registry structures like an ‘independent’ mixed commission, whose members would not back Sultan’s claims to Cypriot lands from the point of view of the Cyprus

²⁶ *Enosis* refers to the ideology of union with Greece. As a reaction to it, *taksim* became an ideological standpoint for Turkish Cypriots that meant partition of the island.

Convention (636). Rejecting the Sultan's claims to property in Cyprus essentially made way in time for the British to transform "Sultan's dominium into their own imperium":

First by permanently ending any pretention on the Sultan's part to interfere with lands considered as public domain; and second, by extending their official protection of Cypriots occupying the lands claimed by the Sultan (ibid).

Rappas (2019) calls this a double process of 'nationalization' and privatization of land in Cyprus. This process impacted the Evkaf properties and their trustees (paid administrators)—the Muslim elites of the island—immensely. By 1914, when the British Empire fully annexed Cyprus, the trustees were compensated with a lump sum after the British abolished small vakif properties, rendering vakif property holding obsolete and the Evkaf authority no longer significant. Along with Evkaf, the British also took control over the Islamic court and the chief justice (ibid). The Sublime Porte no longer reigned in Cyprus.

The Evkaf as an institution, property ownership, and competing land rights are hence important to the progression of how Cyprus became a colony of the British Empire and no longer under the Ottoman Sultan's dominion. Once a symbol of Muslim authority and Ottoman elite, Evkaf lost its power and vakif properties as well. Yıldız blames the "ill management" of the Evkaf to the British rule "as well as the enthusiasm and excitement for the adoption of new concepts and ideas based on Western culture and the great attempt to form a secular society" (2009, 151). The author, while not explicating the kind of ill management and neglect there was on the part of the British, claims also that over time (and after the independence of the island and then its partition) the vakif lands and monuments disappeared as part of the efforts to get rid of the Ottoman heritage, especially in the south of the island (N. Yıldız 1996). Vakif lands and properties also included water wells, aqueducts, water mills, and so on. As examples to these structures and infrastructures, the aqueducts (Arap Ahmet Paşa and Silahtar) of the walled city of Nicosia are barely standing today.

Evkaf's water in Cyprus

But what of this “Evkaf’s water problem”? This is directly relevant with the oft mentioned ill management of the Evkaf institution, as well as the colonial takeover of the island. In this section, I will explicate the water vakıfs and then understand how this struggle for managing them led to a legal and political entanglement. Nevzat and Hatay point out that “in a parched landscape such as that of Cyprus, aqueducts and other water sources provided significant income to the Evkaf until it was forcibly deprived of such resources” (2009, 916). These monuments or infrastructural artefacts—old and new, retrofitted, built anew, and so on—like all other pious foundations’ lands were meant “for the benefit of the local people and the newly settled Turks” (N. Yıldız 1996, 93) when the Ottoman Empire conquered the island in 1571. The two main aqueducts Arap Ahmet Paşa and Silahtar are what concerned the origins of the abovementioned common Cypriot expression. Both vakıf properties, these two aqueducts had trustees who donated money for the maintenance and function of these aqueducts, channels that carry water all throughout the city of Nicosia during Ottoman period. The aqueduct systems work with a network of wells that surround the city north and south. By the time the British took over the island, Arap Ahmet Paşa aqueduct system had 248 wells, built, repaired, expanded, and maintained by several trustees of the Evkaf over centuries of Ottoman rule (94). The aqueducts systems were “important vakf [properties] to ensure the continuous water supply to the citizens as well as to sustain the maintenance and repair work for the existing system” (N. Yıldız 2009, 129). Further, in almost all vakf properties and buildings, some sort of water well, tank, irrigation system, or water-related function existed, including in mosques that were converted from churches after the conquest.²⁷

Clean water supply was a big concern for the Ottoman governors in Cyprus, as the island was water-scarce for centuries and rainfall was unreliable for the replenishment of the

²⁷ Yıldız (1996, 2009) provides a comprehensive list of vakıfs in the Ottoman period in Cyprus.

underground water resources of the island. Water vakıfs therefore, was significant in maintaining, for the population to have equal access to the vital resource. With the Ottoman conquest and administration, “the existing water systems were inspected and repaired and new ones were constructed” (2009, 140). The money spent on these water infrastructural systems, which were all demolished during the conquest, came from governors, high ranking military officials, and other business and/or religious elites who all had a stake at infrastructurally developing the island, especially its water conduits and aqueducts for the city of Nicosia. All these, being vakıf properties, were under the control of the Evkaf, as explained above.

The British takeover of the island marks a moment that not only shifted the management of these infrastructural systems from the Evkaf to the hands of the British controlled municipality, but also reshuffled power relations on the island locally and vis-à-vis their old and new “rulers”. As mentioned above, the British takeover is usually blamed for the decline of Evkaf and its ill management. When the Cyprus Convention was signed in 1871, the agreement posited that the Evkaf was to be managed by the *murahhas*, delegates (one British appointed and one appointed by the Ottoman Porte). Kara and Çelik (2011) claim that Evkaf’s decline occurred under the total control of these delegates as well as the *muhasebeci*, accountant of Evkaf, who was appointed for assisting the British administrators for the Evkaf’s inspection. When Istanbul did not appoint a separate delegate and made the current accountant (hired by the British) as the delegate himself, this gave the British administrators the prerogative to claim that he worked for *them* as they paid for his salaries. This created a conflict of interest and on top of this, the British administrators were displeased by the fact that there was a continuous revenue flow back to Istanbul via the Evkaf.

Cypriot scholar Mustafa Haşim Altan wrote two volumes of a history of vakıfs in Cyprus—to this day, the most comprehensive archival work on the Evkaf of the island. Starting off with the significance of water in Islam, the author provides archival material for the “*vakıf*

sulari”, or vakif waters of Cyprus. For Quran, he says, water is important both because humans are made of water and also water is a source of “*sevap*” or good deed (Altan 1986, 1:470). Altan adds to this notion of water in Islam and says that according to “Turkish traditions and customs”, water is a symbol of goodness and charity. Water of the island therefore, flowing streams, springs, wells, rainfall, lakes, and so on, were all under the Evkaf control. In the Ottoman civil law, “the right to drink water” is legislated and given to all subjects. Accordingly, all subjects have a right to use “private water that flows”, “water for the purposes of agriculture and animal husbandry”, and “water just as people use ‘light’ and ‘air’”, and “water that is unclaimed” (471). Once this right to use water and even drink water becomes a matter of law promulgated by the Ottoman Sultan, it leaves room for Ottoman subjects to not only interpret the legal regulations in different ways but also contest them. These types of contestations become all the more pressing and have consequences given the context of the British administration takeover and its strained relationship with the Evkaf institution.

Altan recognizes the expression “Evkaf’s water issue” (*Evkaf’ın su meselesi*) and claims in his volume that he will explicate where it comes from. Though in a disorganized form, he uses copious amounts of British and Ottoman archival material to understand that Evkaf’s water issue is a series of legal and administrative disputes on who owns which water, which water changed course and became *another* person’s or *vakif* land’s water, *who* controls *vakif* waters, and whether Evkaf can maintain control of *vakif* waters without giving into the British controlled Nicosia municipality. All these matters amount to water becoming a matter of concern for the state, which puts water and its infrastructural networks in a direct relation that is contingent upon either state power, Evkaf’s regulatory power, or British municipality’s jurisdiction one way or another. Especially for Evkaf, even though infrastructures like aqueducts or wells and land that has water are posited to be *vakif* properties, *for* the people with a philanthropic principle, they still fall under the purview of the state hegemony that renders

water resources, the infrastructure, and the way they interact and form a network, controllable, knowable, and manipulable by the state. It is the interaction between water and the infrastructure therefore—the formation of networks between natural resources, human actors, and human-made infrastructures—that give rise to notions of ownership, access, and other valuations.

Legal and administrative disputes of water ownership

Now, I turn to some of the examples that Altan presented in his archival study in order to explicate why Evkaf's water issue is important to understand for the purposes of my thesis.

Altan explicates the many reasons of legal and administrative disputes of what became Evkaf's water issue:

- Dried up wells
- The water channels and water courses falling into ruin or destruction
- Lands irrigated with vakıf waters were turned into property to be developed as part of town planning and zoning
- Water scarcity for the city networks and its replenishment with vakıf waters
- The disputes between vakıf trustees
- State institutions not following the Evkaf terms and conditions and changing procedures arbitrarily
- The discrepancies in the list of items for water usage
- The terms and conditions of Evkaf waters being open for interpretation and arbitrary decision-making
- The contested ownership of waters that fall under a vakıf land or property
- The contested right of the people to use the vakıf waters that were sold to private ownership
- The determination of who owns which water (1986, 513-14, translation mine).

The following example that Altan provides in his archival collection, proves significant to first, understand the kind of legal disputes that were in question during this time of administrative transition, and second, show how water was described, classified, rendered legible in legal terms, and also its ownership contested. As much as its quantity has been contested, found scarce, and efforts were made to replenish it, water, I contend, is less of a matter of quantitative fact, and more of a matter of administrative and political concern in Cyprus. It is precisely this that renders the long discussed “water scarcity” problem of the island, a common knowledge.

The court case is an appeal to a judgement that defendant shall be restrained from using the water source in question. According to the judgment statement that Altan presents, the defendant owns land in the vicinity of vakf property, namely the Isphingar (Cafer Paşa) water channel and spring. The spring as it comes to the surface of the soil ran its course “cross[ing] over to a portion of Defendant’s land from there ran down into the [Isphingar] channel.” The spring that feeds into the Isphingar channel (a vakf property) therefore went through a property privately owned by the Defendant of this court case.

Defendant admits that any surplus water not used by him in irrigating the land belonging to him over which the stream flows has customarily plowed into the Isphingar channel. He contends that he and his predecessors in title to this piece of land have always used so much of this water as they had need for. Some years ago, Defendant purchased the land from one Lambro, and on that purchase he became registered as the owner of the land with one measure of water... It is admitted that Defendant has recently *constructed certain works*, the effect of which has been to *divert the course of water* so as to prevent any of it from flowing in its ancient and accustomed course to the Isphingar channel. There is a considerable amount of evidence that since the Defendant has made these works the water in the Isphingar channel has been diminished by as much as about 4 or 5 measures. (516-17, emphases mine).

The Defendant, as they constructed certain infrastructural works in order to effectively use the water from the spring, claimed that as soon as he brought the said water into the surface from *another* point that is located in *his* land, the water becomes *his* water, as it runs through the infrastructural works done by him.

He apparently considers that if he brings the water to the surface at any spot *not actually identical* with that where the water naturally broke out on the surface it *cannot be regarded as the same water*. Defendant, notwithstanding his admission that this water customarily run into the Isphingar channel, says that it does not belong to [vakıf], and on these grounds he says that the judgment is wrong (517).

While the British court recognized the “joint ownership” of the water between the representative of the Evkaf and the Defendant, still, the Defendant can only use “one measure”

of water and *not* allowed to divert the water from the vakf channel. The court then, decided that the Defendant's contention of water being *different* was wrong.

Under these circumstances [the Defendant] has constructed certain underground works in the immediate vicinity of the spring which have had the effect of tapping the water and bringing it out on to the surface at another spot where Defendant can make a use of it more advantageous to himself. It is quite clear that the water he brings to the surface is *identically the same* as that which has from time immemorial broken out at the spring and then run down to the vakouf channel and we are of opinion that the acts of the Defendant constitute an interference with the accustomed use of the water which the Plaintiffs are entitled to be protected against, must therefore confirm the judgment of the court below and dismiss this appeal with costs (517-18).

Water becomes differentiated in its ownership as soon as its source, location, and course changes—especially when it runs through infrastructure. Natural resource is no longer “natural”; it is rendered treated, therefore, becomes “owned” rather than just *there*. The court under the control of the British administration of the island interestingly found the Evkaf's right and ownership superior to the Defendant's argument that he deserved more than one measure of water. Even though there is evidence that most of the time the British governing authorities took decisions against the Evkaf, which led to its decline in power, this court case shows how water—its abundance or scarcity—is not a matter of concern solely in its quantity, but in the way institutions and people claim authority and ownership over it. Such contestations constitute how water is *known*. Its materiality and quantity—whether the Defendant consumed one measure or more and where the water came out of and through whose infrastructure—cannot be decoupled from the way water is imagined, qualified, and owned.

Of responsibility and caprice: struggle for authority

Besides this court case as an example, Mustafa Haşim Altan provides a series of reports, memos, and correspondences between the Evkaf officials and British authorities, which all point to a struggle for power and authority. At the center of this struggle lies the Nicosia water court case, otherwise known as “Evkaf's water issue”.

Ahmet Hulusi Efendi, the Ottoman Evkaf accountant (*muhasebeci*) strongly reacted to the transfer of Nicosia water management from the water commission into the hands of the Nicosia Municipality. He claimed this to be illegal and petitioned for the annulment of this decision. Corresponding with the British colonial officials, Ahmet Hulusi Efendi requested Evkaf to control all units of vakıf waters and the transfer the management of water works to the Evkaf. As part of this, he petitions for the management of Arap Ahmet aqueduct and water and its revenue to be directed to the Evkaf (Altan 1986, 1:523).

The memo that Altan quotes, written by Falk Warren (the Chief Secretary of British colonial administration), states that the water of Arap Ahmet aqueduct has been “Evkaf property *ab antiquo*” and that it has “[never been] questioned before and further, it was stated that in time past all who lived near this aqueduct bought their water from the Evkaf” (ibid). Listing all sales in years—from digging of wells, consumption of ‘measures’ of water, and cost in piastres—the officer points out details of how the Evkaf has managed Arap Ahmet water over the years.

Upon providing such facts in his memo, Warren goes on to oppose the Evkaf accountant, Ahmet Hulusi Efendi’s petition for re-transfer of management. He states that if “administration [was] placed in the hands of one official (muhassabadjı – [*muhasebeci or accountant*]) instead of a corporation (municipality), there would certainly be more complaining and the interests of the many would suffer” (525). The Chief Secretary’s position is obvious when he contends that the Evkaf department’s staff at the time is in no capacity to take over such a role:

...the administration will be more efficient and give greater satisfaction to the inhabitants if left in the hands of several responsible persons than if left to the caprice of an official, who, for the present at least, has quite as much to do as he can properly manage (ibid, emphases mine).

With “no competent staff to carry out the water trust” (526), the Evkaf was therefore deemed as not capable to manage the Arap Ahmet aqueduct and water. This type of petitions, memos, and back-and-forth correspondence between the Evkaf officials like Ahmet Hulusi Efendi and Falk Warren, is part of a series of disputes that question and contest who holds power over water and its infrastructure. Altan, as part of his explanation of “Evkaf’s water issue”, presents the proceedings of the Supreme Court Judgment Nicosia Water Case from February 2nd, 1917,

between the Delegates of Evkaf and the Municipality of Nicosia. Concerning the management of the two aqueducts of Nicosia—Arap Ahmet and Silihtar aqueducts—the court case establishes the fact that these aqueducts were vakıf properties and that “from time immemorial” they were managed by the Evkaf, until the British government gave it to the hands of a Water Commission (573). In addition, the court states that the aqueducts and the wells are *icâreteyn* vakıfs (double rented vakıf properties), which means that it was (and could be) subcontracted and transfer ownership in order to make profit out of these properties. Therefore, the surplus revenue of these water systems of Nicosia were *not* used for religious and philanthropic purposes, rather to make additions and extensions to its infrastructure (ibid). To recall, as stated earlier in this chapter, *icâreteyn* vakıfs are those that “allowed the occupier the freedom to transfer property to third persons... and illegally sold and turned into private properties” (Nevzat and Hatay 2009, 914). According to the court, these aqueducts and wells have been turned into *Icareteyn* vakıfs, meaning that water and its infrastructure such as aqueducts and wells, lost its religious and philanthropic characteristics and that they were, in a way, privatized, having lost its “vakıf” characteristics. Though not privatization strictly speaking, the double rent system, established back in 1591 (J. R. Barnes 1987), paved the way for infrastructure to be privately owned.

Back to the court case, the text states that

every vakf is of a sacred nature... the motivate of dedication is the seeking to approach God and worship Him by the gift of property for philanthropic purposes but it does not follow that the property made vakf is attached to a religious institution, we find that this contention is bad (Altan 1986, 1:578).

The court, in short, contended that because these aqueducts and wells are *icâreteyn* vakıfs and not Mazbuta (those vakıf properties solely for the benefit of the religion), the term ‘administration’ used in the Cyprus Convention referred to only the mazbuta vakıfs to be managed and administered by the Evkaf. Altan says elsewhere in his collection that the British

went out of the conditions and rules of the Evkaf and changed statuses of water *vakıfs* themselves.

***Icâreteyn* vakıfs: privatizing water “for the people”**

Icâreteyn vakıfs as a change in the original Hanafite waqf law system of non-transferrability and inalienability of vakıf properties, according to Güçlü (2009), were adopted mainly because of practical reasons:

recurrent fires demolished not only private buildings, but also sources of waqf revenue, be it a house, shop or warehouse. For those many religious endowments that did not have sufficient revenues for reconstruction and renovation, leasing waqf possessions for a longer period of time appeared as a solution (2009, 2).

This, having led to a reconsideration of what vakıf property entailed, shifted the way these lands, resources, and infrastructural systems were perceived by the state, which in turn, were manipulated by the British administration who took over administration of property relations in colonial Cyprus. As stated at various times throughout this chapter, the corruption of the Evkaf administration was also partly blamed to the *icâreteyn* system of double leasing. However, as Güçlü contends, it was “signs of a new process of *state building* in the nineteenth century, and construction of modernity that materialized in a kind of trial-and-error process” (5, emphasis mine). As a divergence from the principle of inalienability of vakıf property (9), *icâreteyn* system was well-established at the time of the Cyprus Convention and the takeover of island’s administration by the British empire. Here, I contend that this property leasing system enacted by the Ottoman Porte form the basis of what private property looked like and how privatization of seemingly common resources and lands—water and its infrastructural networks—was already practiced over the island territories as well as other Ottoman provinces.

Whether the water vakıfs in question—the aqueducts—were *icâreteyn*, *mazbuta*, to be managed by the Evkaf or the Municipality, the point is that water and its infrastructure was the focal point of power struggles in a period when Cyprus went through a major shift from Ottoman dominion into the British imperial hold. Corruption and mismanagement of the Evkaf

in Ottoman Cyprus, as often recognized by the British colonial administration, were given as reasons to “modernize” the island’s property relations. However, practices such as the *icâreteyn* system and Evkaf’s ownership and administration—or more correct term would be trusteeship—of vakıf lands and resources as well as the introduction of the Land Code into the Ottoman property system were all gradual yet firm developments of a modern, territorial, and centralizing state-building, which go against the characterization of the period in Ottoman empire as in decline. Güçlü proposes an alternative to this decline paradigm which “has been usually understood as the degeneration of the state, moral corruption of the statesmen or society, collapse of land system, ... devastation of economy and decadency in education among other things” (2009, 4). Instead, she contends that the practices and legal and institutional changes explained above, point to a state that “was pragmatist in shaping laws and responsive to social and economic necessities” (5).

This line of thought makes sense for the case of a changing Cyprus in 19th century and especially for understanding genealogically what “Evkaf’s water issue” stands for today both historically and as a figure of speech. Water and infrastructure, its ownership, management, access, and practices around it were all imbued with how the Ottoman Porte structured a property system which evolved in time and resembled that of a capitalist mode of production driven by commodification and revenue generation. Further, these practices, as the administration were given to the British empire, evolved even further with a different set of moral economies and economic considerations of water’s value, ownership, and how it should be managed. What is further important here is how a form of privatizing land, water, and/or infrastructural arrangements have a long history dating back to Ottoman empire. The megaproject at hand in this dissertation led to the controversial privatization of water and its infrastructure. Many wondered what was exactly privatized; was it *their* water? Or did they privatize *Turkish* water coming from mainland? Did they also privatize their lands where

pumping stations and purification plants stood? Who owned them and who could access them? The Evkaf may no longer be part of the discussion for the contemporary infrastructure, nor is it a stakeholder. It simply remained in a figure of speech where people referred to corruption, stagnation, and inefficiency. Yet, as shown above, Evkaf, its operations, relations surrounding the British takeover and its standing as a symbol of declining Ottoman empire has a deeper history of practical solutions and social and economic interests that employed alternative practices of privatization as part of its management of water and its infrastructure. Privatization is therefore, not a modern phenomenon, at least for the case of Cyprus water vakıfs. Powerful elites had the ability to change the status of water, install new infrastructure, or upgrade old ones, which rendered these land and resources as vakıf. Such status of property in turn, makes it possible for these “trustees” (or one could call them “patrons”) to manipulate rights and ownership.

Concluding remarks

As it will be seen in the rest of this dissertation, privatization of state-run enterprises are central to my interrogation of the contemporary water pipeline infrastructure. It is a practice part and parcel of not only a liberalizing Turkish economy in the 1980s and onwards, but also a neoliberalizing and authoritarianizing Turkey under the rule of AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party). The undersea water pipeline megaproject revived more than a century old saying “Evkaf’s water issue”; most of my interlocutors joked amongst themselves that I had come to northern Cyprus to *solve* “Evkaf’s water issue” as part of my research on the pipeline and Turkish dependency of northern Cyprus.

In this chapter, I attempted a genealogical approach to understanding how water and its infrastructure was set at centerstage at a time when the island was being transitioned from an Ottoman province to a British suzerainty and later colony. First, I detailed how moral economies around water infrastructure were constructed, overlapped, and adapted to each other as governmental structures shifted and paradigms of modernity and capitalist production

applied to the lives of Cypriot communities. I illustrated how in myths, religious representations, and other stories revolved around water, wells, springs, mills, and other hydrological infrastructures constituted certain norms and values about how water as a vital resource was conceived in meaning and practice. The meanings and stories of water are manifested in materiality.

After tracing how people perceived water in the island, in the second part, I showed how water infrastructure and its management were contingent upon changing power structures on the island. I detailed how the intricacies of the Evkaf as an institution and the notion of vakıf property actually illuminate what kind of economy Ottoman Cyprus had in terms of property relations, ownership of and access to water and how economic structures of the Ottoman dominion had to be adapted to that of a British colony—one that was explicitly promoting efficiency, technical expertise, and capitalist mode of production.

With this genealogy of the expression “Evkaf’s water issue”, I showed that representations of the Ottoman decline, corruption, and pre-capitalist economy are in fact, at odds with certain practices, relations, and efforts that promote modern centralized and territorial state building. Water scarcity as a knowledge, is less about the quantitative scarcity of water—though it is a scientific fact that water *is* indeed scarce on the island—and it is more of a matter of administrative and political concern. Such scarcity knowledge to be reckoned with are attached to tropes of corruption, dysfunctionality, inefficiency that are carried onto contemporary times in the case of Cyprus, as will be seen in the later chapters. Having dealt with water as an object of government in a time of transformations over the island, in the second chapter, I now turn to spatial and scalar representations, cartographic reason applied on the environment and infrastructures, and tropes of connection and disconnection at a time of turmoil, ethnic conflict, and partition.

Chapter 2 –Scaling the island: From water-scarce to water-dependent



Figure 2. Former US president Bill Clinton and Former Turkish president Süleyman Demirel meeting about the Cyprus Problem in 1995. The source of the photo is not available. I acquired this through Cemil's post on his Facebook feed.

The image above (Figure 2) is a famous one of former US President Bill Clinton and former Turkish president Süleyman Demirel, during a meeting about ‘the Cyprus Problem’ in 1995. Cemil posted this on his Facebook a couple of years after my fieldwork in northern Cyprus, with a caption that said, “geography is on our necks, the stick is in their hands”. The caption ends by tagging his political organization as an alternative to how he describes the situation for Cyprus. Cemil is a Turkish Cypriot and a member of a socialist political party, for which neoliberalism is the top agenda to fight against. As will be seen in later chapters, he became a critical interlocutor during my fieldwork in northern Cyprus. “Is geography our fate?” is a question that I hear a lot in Cyprus, Turkey, and beyond in the eastern Mediterranean region.

It is indeed a loaded question, if not a rhetorical one. Cemil, Metin, Ediz, Zeynep, Melda, and many other people I met in northern Cyprus—whom I will introduce in the coming chapter—have uttered that question during my time with them. They feel disempowered and unable to make decisions regarding their future. But is it all because of geography? Their geographical location matters immensely to Turkish Cypriots. After all, for years, they have been characterized as “that place stuck in time.” Cemil’s and many others’ references to geography reminds one of Aihwa Ong’s articulation of geography; that it is “never only about physical spaces but fundamentally, about the emerging contours of power shaped by human decision and institutional agency” (Ong 2008, 117).

In the image above, Clinton and Demirel look over the map of the island (what seems to be a geographical one and not an administrative one), as Demirel shows with the end of the wooden stick to Clinton the northern parts of Cyprus—the parts that are occupied by the Turkish armed forces to this day. It is unknown what Demirel was showing to Clinton specifically in the Karpaz peninsula of the island or what exactly he was talking about Cyprus’ geography per se. However, the image encapsulates how Cyprus over time has become a geopolitical location and matter of concern for multiple states. Further, its water, at the center of this geopolitical agenda, became a boundary object through which governance, science, and subjectivities intersect.

In both its distant (Chapter 1) and recent history (Chapter 2), Cyprus island and what it politically and strategically stands for, have been pushed and pulled, prodded, cut and put back together so many times on maps, documents, agreements, and spatial and infrastructural technologies. The water resources and its management has been directly related to and impacted by these techniques of government—imperial, colonial, and its contemporary mutations. While Chapter 1 discussed these ways of ordering land, property, and water in Ottoman and British colonial eras and created the conditions for knowing and governing water

in specific ways, this chapter will focus on how geography, the production of landscape, and resource management have been at the center of struggles for power and authority in and over the island. Throughout the dissertation, I take water politics to be directly a politics of geography, landscape that shape and are shaped by power dynamics. Therefore, this chapter will trace how changing waterscapes of Cyprus are represented cartographically in time and how competing logics of these representations are informed by and inform the ways in which the island's terrain, waters, and people are connected and disconnected over time.

Part I. Conflict, cooperation, and development in a parched island

Cyprus and Wittfogel's hypothesis

Water scarcity and the problem of using ground water and surface water in an efficient way has been a matter of concern around the time when Cyprus gained its independence from the British Empire. The water problem has been a geomorphological one however, it never stayed as such—as a mere ecological issue to tackle. Water seeped into the politics of ethnic conflict, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot nationalist ideologies of *enosis* and *taksim* as various powerholders on the island—Greece, Turkey, UK, and the US—discussed water potential and resource management.

Historically, water scarcity of the island of Cyprus has been deemed the second 'Cyprus problem'—the first being the ongoing the Turkish military occupation of the north since 1974 and the consequent political stalemate. Importing water to the water-scarce island was first proposed by British officials and American investors in the mid-1950s before independence from the British.

Nihat Erim, a Turkish politician who was influential in writing the constitution of the independent RoC in 1959, wrote in his memoirs about his encounters with Sir Hugh Foot, the last governor of Cyprus—before the island's independence from the British colonialism. Joking about bringing independence to Bermuda, his former post, Hugh Foot was there to now "liberate" Cyprus. Erim remember that at a luncheon at the Ambassador's summer mansion up

on the Troodos Mountains, Sir Hugh Foot says the following: “You want to keep Cyprus under your control, right? Let me suggest something to you. Cyprus does not have water. Bring some here through undersea pipes from Anatolia” (Erim 1975, 97 translation mine). Only 45 miles was between the island and Turkish mainland, thought Erim and others. If water can be transferred through undersea pipes, then why not water, he thought.

We did a quick calculation on that day. How much would it cost to put some pipes under the sea for a 45-mile distance? If I remember correctly, it was 10 million dollars. In 1959. For 10 million, this could work, we thought. When we said, where could we find this money, our English friends told us, ‘Do not fret. We will get it from the Americans. America will pay for it!’ And this was such a memory between us and them. But can we actually bring this water to the Turkish parts of Federal Cyprus today? (p.97-98 translation mine)

It is apparent from Erim’s account that water was recognized as an object whereby controlling it would mean maintaining a hold of the island itself. Acknowledged by both Turkish and British diplomats, an undersea pipeline was a topic of conversation as they could roughly estimate its cost and confidently declare that ‘Americans would pay for it’. Around the same time, as the independence of the island and establishment of RoC was underway, British officers along with the local administration had agreed for an American company to conduct a feasibility study on options for transferring water resources to the island.

Erim’s recollections of his conversations with British officials about controlling the island and finding a remedy for its water scarcity remind one of Karl Wittfogel’s famous book *Oriental Despotism* (1957), where he argues that there is a definitive and direct causality between human control of water resources for irrigation and production, and the emergence of centralized political authority. Calling it the *hydraulic society*, Wittfogel poses the hypothesis that large-scale irrigation infrastructure leads to “centralized coordination and administrative bureaucracies, which, in turn, result in greater political integration.” (Bichsel 2016, 356). Wittfogel’s *hydraulic hypothesis* of autocratic governments or despotic rules directly constituted by water infrastructure especially irrigation remains highly deterministic and

critiqued by many scholars to this day (Worster 1992; Swyngedouw 2007). However, the concepts and hypothesis of Wittfogel still has some purchase when looking at large-scale infrastructures that (post)colonial states emphatically endow meanings of nation-state and identity on technological development (e.g. dam construction). Wittfogel's thesis posits infrastructures to be purely technical and not recognizing fully the sociality of technical artefacts and its indivisibility from "regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, environmental flows, funding mechanisms, governance forms, etc." (Obertreis et al. 2016, 172). Despite this critical point, his thesis is one of an exploration of geography and political rule and has galvanized research through his "dialectical understanding of a changing human society in a changing nature as a continuous process" (Bichsel 2016, 361). Keeping these in mind, I now turn to my exploration of how discussions and reproduction of knowledge of Cyprus' water and its scarcity is imbued with dynamics of authority over the island.

A technocrat and a nationalist 'historian'

Going back to the case of Cyprus, besides Nihat Erim's conversations at high luncheons in colonial Cyprus, dubbed as "Thorp Report", "Cyprus: Suggestions for a Development Programme" was commissioned to the United Nations by RoC and British officials. Thorp Report was one of the first and most comprehensive study of the hydrology and geology of Cyprus in relation to its developing economy. Conducted with supposedly a strictly scientific manner, it lays out "an intensive economic survey of the Island and provide[s] the [RoC] Government with a report, with recommendations for future action." (Thorp 1961, v). At the time, around 80% of Cyprus economy is dependent on agriculture, a negligible percentage being industrial—this makes water to be a highly important resource. Thorp acknowledges water in Cyprus to be not available equally both throughout the year and in different areas of the island. Pointing to its unruly and unpredictable characteristics, Thorp says that "in addition to the problems of unequal water distribution, *man himself has created another inequality because of the pattern of development and control which he has allowed to develop*" (Thorp

1961, 6 emphasis mine), recognizing that water is not only unequally distributed because of its natural attributes. Rather, it is human manipulation and development that maintains such inequality of distribution and access.

Before detailing recommendations for and ways of irrigation, techniques and methods that improve efficiency and access to water resources, Thorp mentions the hypothesis that the ground water, or in other words, local springs of Cyprus island may be connected to those of Anatolia, or mainland Turkey:

There are some people who believe that some local springs might have their origin from, or be actually fed by, the continent, particularly from the Taurus range in Turkey through a subterranean river under the floor of the Mediterranean. There are geologic and hydrologic arguments against this notion. Record and measurement data for a number of past years have consistently shown that spring discharges in Cyprus are affected by local seasonal variations and even by annual rainfall variations. Furthermore, official maritime maps show that between Turkey and Cyprus there is a wide sea-valley with a depth of more than 3,500 feet. It seems quite impossible for water to flow so far at such a depth and then come up in Cyprus at points where natural springs can be explained by Cyprus' own geology (1961, 7).

Thorp refers to what Mustafa Haşim Altan, historian of Evkaf institution (see Chapter 1), has repeatedly published about specifically in his two volumes of Evkaf archival records, that I cited in chapter 1. The knowledge of water and its connectivity between Cyprus and Anatolia has circulated, through Altan's publications and consequently reports such as this one. When he argues that there are people who believe that the springs of Cyprus are connected to and fed by groundwater of Anatolia, a series of mythical stories (that I presented in chapter 1) turn into geological knowledge. Altan published his archived series of essays on Cyprus and Turkey in northern Cyprus newspaper, *Kıbrıs Gazetesi* recently. He declares Anatolia (not the Turkish state) as the “*eternal* guarantor of the island”, and argues that Anatolia has been so for centuries: “Anatolia has been guide to Cyprus throughout history; it determined its future, shaped it socially, ruled its climate, controlled its sea... made way for its import and export trade, and provided for it in times of famine and draught” (Altan 2022 translation mine). He takes a

geographical terrain of Anatolia atemporally and suggests that the terrain, no matter which state or political formation there is/was, *rules* the island. Anachronistically, he uses the guarantorship of as an idea—one that dates back to the Treaty of Guarantee in 1960—that has no end or beginning. The geography of Cyprus is “a natural extension of Anatolia in the Mediterranean” (ibid, translation mine).

He continues, “whoever studies the history of Anatolia and the island, will inevitably be faced with this reality. Whoever denies this and argues otherwise, will be faced with the *truth* eventually” (ibid). He posits this natural, geographical, social, and even political connection between mainland and island to be the scientific and historical *truth*, whereby the island’s natural characteristics and its geological and geographical affinities explain its social and political ones.

Altan provides some sources to prove his thesis that the island is naturally connected to mainland, or Anatolia:

...there are fossils of *Hippopotamus minutus* (pigmy hippos) and *Elephas Cypriotes* (pigmy elephant) dating from the Glacial era²⁸ in the caves of middle Meseoria Plains.²⁹ These findings prove that the island and mainland are naturally similar and connected to each other geomorphologically, in terms of its soil structure, its history of [social] life, archaeologically, and anthropologically (ibid).

Archaeology and natural history therefore, are proof for the author that Cyprus is *ought to be* connected to Anatolia and thus its political control. Going back to the quotation from the Thorp Report, it is clearly a point of contention how the groundwater of Cyprus island is replenished, whether it is connected to a stream or river to Turkey, or if its levels are dependent on rainfall and/or local seasonal variations. Regardless, the island’s water is and has been a matter of concern—its geographical and “natural” qualities are not mere attributes per se, it becomes a

²⁸ However, he does not specifically indicate which glacier era.

²⁹ It is located in the northern mid region of the island, today included in the de-facto TRNC control.

tool for some to legitimize political rule and control. And precisely because of this, Thorp Report was commissioned in a post-independence Cyprus by its nascent republic so as to establish and consolidate state authority over geography, the resources, and hence its people. Altan goes on to state that it was Ronald Storrs—former governor of British mandate Palestine and later governor of British mandate Cyprus—who claimed that the springs and ground water of are dominantly on the northern parts of the island, closer to mainland Anatolia, which proves that they are connected to each other. He bases his strong argument that especially springs of Lapithos, Karavas, and Kythrea, do not originate locally but get fed by springs of Anatolia by citing two different authors—Sir Ronald Storrs and N.C. Toufexis (his monograph called “The Springs of Cyprus” of which I found no records).

The point however, is not that the springs are or are not connected to Anatolia and that there is or is not geomorphological, hydrological, or climatic similarities between the two terrains. Rather, Altan, a historian of Cyprus, engages with water in a way that essentializes its naturalness and ‘eternity’. Water in its ever-presence and connectivity is reason enough for territories to be politically and socially connected, according to Altan (Storrs and Toufexis as he cites them) and many others later on—especially regarding the water supply project, as I will explicate later in this chapter. What makes this juxtaposition between Altan’s usage of water’s connectivity between Cyprus and Anatolia and that of the Thorp Report, revealing is that the same type of “knowing water” can be manipulated to legitimize divergent political rationalities. For Altan, the naturalized and essentialized connection between Cyprus and Anatolia legitimizes a political attachment. For the Thorp Report, such way of knowing the connectivity as it gets questioned and even critiqued, form the backdrop and reasoning as to why a systematic and efficient usage of water is necessary for the development of the island’s economy. The colonial administration, a Turkish Cypriot nationalist historian, and a UN report,

having reproduced the same knowledge feeding off of each other in a cyclical manner, for completely different logics and motives at different time periods in Cyprus' recent history.

Going back to the Thorp Report, the vitality of water and its hydrological and geological attributes are less important than the “effective marshalling of resources and their efficient use” (Thorp 1961, 2). For the UN representatives, who conducted this study of economic development, efficient use, *and* its use for national interest rather than individual private interest, are the primary goals in order for Cyprus' agriculture to develop and hence its economy. Advocating for sea-water conversion—i.e. desalination—Thorp suggests in the report that another potential solution would come from the petroleum industry where technology of a *floating pipeline* would be possible to transfer water from the mainland. Interestingly, Thorp while mentioning this, does not specify *which* mainland, thus indicating a non-preference to whether he, or the UN, perceives a preference to Greece, Turkey, or otherwise. In contrast to taking geographical and geomorphological concepts as taken for granted facts and reasons for political affiliations and/or divisions, Thorp has a strictly technocratic view and one that is imbued in the international development ethos and expertise of the time. For him and for UN experts, water is a resource to be increased, put to use efficiently, and distributed for the national economic interests and “the productivity of ‘land, labour, and capital investment’” (Pyla and Phokaidis 2018, 117). Water is abstracted, a resource to produce, detached from its environmental totality, to be “made ready” for the betterment of human society. This technocratic strict division between nature and society is seen all throughout the Thorp report.

He proposes strictly practical solutions, taking for granted that water is scarce, has been scarce for a long time, and that previous governments (i.e. British colonial government) did not carry out an efficient use of the island's water resources. To remedy this, he proposes to survey the existing groundwater resources first and also, to conserve surface water with dam building.

According to Pyla and Phokaides (2018), such solutions were “in tune with the UN’s techno-scientific logic of ‘taming’ and conserving the ‘resources’ of nature in the name of development” (118). In fact, Thorp believed and said in the report that aiding the ‘underdeveloped’ countries for their economic development was an important mission in order to avoid them from getting under the influence of the Soviets. For this, nature and its resources were to be enrolled in their techno-scientific expertise. The surveys that Thorp suggested, occurred in 1962 and in 1973 under the assistance of UNDP, right at the peak of the ethnic conflict years. Turkish Cypriots, having been retreated into enclaves, cut off from the rest of the island, during these years, suffered water shortages, lack of electricity and so on. Thorp Report and its consequent surveys “were largely devoid of Turkish Cypriot participation” (Hocknell 2001, 173).

On the one hand, Thorp and in general the UN, had both a local and regional rationality in dealing with water. In terms of scale, Cyprus’ water was both a local resource, scarce, mismanaged, and inefficiently used for private interests; it was also a “geodata” (Pyla and Phokaides 2018) to be surveyed, controlled, produced, and technically put to use for the economic development of the region. The practical solutions proposed by the Thorp report like surveying and conservation became part of the developmentalist logic of the UN, which implemented similar types of technical assistance programmes in the region. In fact, Cyprus, in terms of its UN-implemented water resources programmes were seen as a “laboratory for research applied to economic development problems of the Near and the Middle East” (Pyla and Phokaides 2018, 120).³⁰ Later, as will be seen in maps, this scale comes to fore as a significant one that situate Cyprus and its water in regional terms, centered in regional units of geographically and ecologically understanding the eastern Mediterranean.

³⁰ The authors cite the following report for this: (United Nations Development Programme 1970).

On the other hand, Mustafa Haşim Altan's writing, though supposedly historicizing water resources and its Ottoman past, reflects a particular kind of seeing Cypriot land and resources. For him and later for Turkish technocrats who planned and framed the water supply pipeline project, the ethnic affinities of Turkish-ness is justified and enhanced because of a so-called natural connection—that of spring waters of the region. For such a point of view, the geomorphological connections and disruptions on landscape and water courses dictates nation-state borders, sociopolitical ties, and who claims power over whom. Water is then, either too technical and perceived to be tamed, controlled, produced, and put into a process of productivity and consumption. Or water must be taken for granted; wherever it goes, it dictates life as we know it—social and political life. It holds power so much so that it orders terrains connected and hence shapes territories.³¹ Geological and/or hydrological knowledge (scientifically proven or otherwise) become motivations for political affiliations and animosities; water's connectivity and scarcity motivate political projects—Turkish domination by occupation in Cyprus.

Infrastructural (dis)connections and ethnic conflict

So far, I have dwelled on knowledge production about Cyprus' water and contestations and divergences over how similar ways of knowing water can be exploited to legitimize different political logics and authority-making claims. In this section, I turn to material conflicts and political motivations and choices in action. As part of the nation-state building process for the Republic of Cyprus, knowledge and practices of/around water are put into play, while at the same time competing logics of geographical divisions as well as ethno-religious ones inform territorial claims and hydro-scale making efforts.

Thorp report, while having this developmentalist and technocratic rationality, does not in any way mention or recognize *local* and ethnic antagonisms that dominated the island, which also impacted its management of water resources as the island went through a geographical and

³¹ Here, I approach differences between terrain and territory keeping in mind (Elden 2010).

socio-political partition, which lingers to this day. In the following section, I highlight not just connection that point to water resources, but one that also included other infrastructural arrangement—another crucial provision for modern life—electricity. An exchange of infrastructural needs occurred in the years following the civil war, which I call *tacit cooperation*. Transboundary resources, as Altan points out in his writings (as I have shown in the previous section), may lead to hierarchies, political affiliations, and conflicts alike. The ethnic conflict in Cyprus engendered a *tacit* infrastructural exchange whereby geographical scale again, comes to the fore as significant to understand politics of waterscapes in Cyprus.

Upon escalation of Greek Cypriot nationalist movement called EOKA, and its counter-movement TMT among the Turkish Cypriot minority, the Buffer Zone³² agreement resulted in the partition of the island, which was then consolidated with the Turkish military operation and consequent occupation of the north in 1974. Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot and other communities of the island were all impacted by such re-territorialization, first with enclavization, and later with population exchanges, and so on. It was not only the landscape and borders that were reshaped upon such reshuffling of power dynamics following a full-fledge civil war between 1963-1974. The island was also materially impacted as resource allocation and infrastructural dilemmas followed the sudden territorial reconfiguration of the island. At this point, state actors from both sides of the Green Line or the Buffer Zone had to negotiate resource provisioning.

A stark political and territorial disconnection was an obstacle to both sides of the island in their redistribution and allocation of resources—mainly water and electricity. Peter Hocknell (1998; 2001) problematizes the concept of transboundary resource allocation, the idea of

³² The Green Line also known as the Attila Line or the Buffer Zone was formed in 1964 when the ethnic strife between Greek Cypriot EOKA fighters and Turkish Cypriot counter-guerilla group TMT (Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı) culminated in the creation of enclaves and a dividing line that isolated the Turkish Cypriot minority. The Buffer Zone is patrolled by UNFICYP to this day and divides the island into two.

cooperation itself, while at the same time reveals an infrastructural connection at a time Cyprus was defined by division and conflict. As Hocknell argues—and I also show throughout this chapter—there are competing geographical scales when different state actors navigate water scarcity, its allocation and distribution over the island. On the one hand, Cyprus is normatively seen in “an all-island scale” as a single unit for integration and cooperation. However, in reality, the island had ceased to be a single unit, first scattered into enclaves, and then partitioned into two sides—north and south. Water management, as much as it is a centralized endeavor for state to embark on, could not be realized in a waterscape³³ like Cyprus. Therefore, municipal and more localized scales come to the fore as prevalent since also groundwater resources of the island have been scattered and unequally distributed in aquifers throughout the island. This was also a significant point for some of my interlocutors from different parts of the northern territory; ones from Kyrenia thought water scarcity was exaggerated, while at the same time people of north Nicosia found it urgent that the imported water from Turkey should have come long ago. Most Kyrenia towns are located around and on the outskirts of the Pentadaktylos mountain ranges, where Kythrea and Lapithos springs and others feed their tap waters plentifully. Nicosia however, as it has been the most populated urban center/capital of the island’s both de facto and de jure polities, have suffered water shortages for decades.

With the military occupation of the summer of 1974, the Turkish armed forces expanded their hold of the island tenfold. Turkish Cypriots via the Turkish military, having grabbed 40% of the island terrain (Hocknell 2001, 164). This led for Greek Cypriots to not only lose control of tourist hubs like Kyrenia and Famagusta, where hotels and resorts brought considerable amount of revenue, factories with 26% of the manufacturing output (2001, 165), and so on. Importantly, the Green Line, as it was drawn, had a clear problem of access of

³³ I borrow this term from Eric Swyngedouw and it will be explicated in a theoretical framework section in the Introduction.

resources for both sides: “Greek Cypriot community had now lost direct access to the largest underground aquifer in Morphou” (Hocknell 1998, 227). on the other hand, Turkish Cypriots were excluded from the discharging rivers from the Troodos mountains (ibid). Thus, while Greek Cypriots held the less reliable resource of surface water, dependent on rainfall heavily, Turkish Cypriots took control of the groundwater under the danger of overextraction and sea water intrusion.

Along with access to the aquifer and its main boreholes, Greek Cypriots also lost access to the Kythrea and Lapithos springs, which had, at the time, 60% of the water available in the island for irrigation (2001, 176). The disconnection, partition, and territorial reconfigurations however, called for urgent solutions, as to how both sides of the island were to access resources. As per Thorp Report’s proposition, Makarios, the first president of RoC, as well as the archbishop of the Greek Orthodox church of Cyprus, declared the motto “not a drop of water to the sea”, fighting against wasting the scarce resource and advocating for efficient usage, which led to a large dam program. Cyprus came to possess the largest concentration of dams in the world in the early years of the Republic before the ethnic strife and consequent partition (2001,172). While the Water Development Department of RoC, along with foreign assistance like the UN or the World Bank conducted feasibility studies, planned comprehensive programs, and got ready to implement infrastructure projects that was to remedy water scarcity problem in a supposedly island-wide perspective. Nonetheless, Turkish Cypriots were readily separated from such plans or surveys as their self-declared governing structure of Turkish Federated State of Cyprus (TFSC)³⁴ attempted to be self-sufficient. While RoC attempted different infrastructure projects, the biggest being the Southern Conveyor Project (SCP) in 1984 (under UNDP consultancy with US\$300 million investment from the World Bank), the TFSC looked

³⁴ This temporary governance structure was later renamed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1981.

for ways to replenish the Morphou aquifer, which they heavily relied on for their 80% revenue coming from citrus production in the same region (2001,179). All in all, the persistent “island as single unit” scale, to “domestically” finding ways to remedy water scarcity for the “national interest”, as it was also mentioned in the Thorp Report, was not possible since the beginning of the Republic because of (re)territorializing practices of boundary making and a full-fledge civil war.

Tacit cooperation of infrastructure

After the partition, just as the TFSC had a hold of the Morphou aquifer, so did the Republic of Cyprus control major electrical power sources in the south—namely the Dhekelia and Moni thermal power stations “with a capacity of 204 megawatts to cater for a maximum consumption of 174 megawatts island-wide” at the time (Hocknell 2001, 187). The electricity distribution network traversing the Buffer Zone continued to operate, supplying electricity to Turkish Cypriots in the north despite the political division.

Water allocation and distribution remained informal and required all the more political strategy especially after the Turkish invasion of the north. Conflict and political maneuvering after 1974 shifted to the field of infrastructure. During the years of the ethnic conflict, Turkish Cypriots retreated into the enclaves, continued to receive electricity though with major disturbances of cuts in the areas of violent confrontation. Later, during the post-1974 partition years, RoC and external actors like the UN deemed infrastructural provisioning like electricity to Turkish Cypriots in the north to be a humanitarian cause. Technical assistance from Turkey for building power plants to Kyrenia did not come until 1981. (Hocknell 2001, 188). Framing it as “resource dependency as *casus belli*”, Hocknell tells that power cuts that continued to occur and increased in the 1980s and 90s. These cuts on the northern side were interpreted as politically motivated, “[to prevent] the further development and strengthening” of the de-facto TRNC state (190). As the TRNC suffered an economic embargo since its inception in 1983, the electricity supply also became part of these sanctions as Turkish Cypriot political elites

have interpreted. By the 1990s, having been dependent heavily on the south for electricity, Turkish Cypriots were fed up with power cuts that were supposedly intentional on the part of the AHK (Electricity Authority of Cyprus), especially on days like “Atatürk day” or other national days for the TRNC. Having received aid to build power stations of their own, the north by 1995 had Teknicik power plant, which had suffered an explosion—allegedly done by Greek Cypriots as sabotage. Electricity therefore, became a site where conflict lingered and utilized for both sides’ political and ideological endeavors.

Turkish Cypriots, though cooped up in the north with the protectorate of the Turkish Armed Forces, in turn perceived such provision of electricity as an entitlement (Hocknell 2001, 193), since international aid and investment came to the RoC and not to their unrecognized government. Added to this, the Greek Cypriot Electricity Authority of Cyprus (AHK) did not accept any electricity bill payments from Turkish Cypriots since accepting payments from a Turkish Cypriot authority would mean recognition of the government in the north. Framing it as a humanitarian gesture, RoC government therefore had Greek Cypriots subsidize Turkish Cypriots’ electricity for years. Hocknell wonders “why the north refused to pay, and the south continued to supply” even if the Greek Cypriots would not accept any payment from the north in any case (194).

In fact, a “water-for-electricity” exchange had been in place since 1963, at the height of the conflict. This informal infrastructural exchange was a tacit way of cooperation.

Principally, electrical power was needed to operate the Morphou water pumps and so maintain water supplies to the south. Both electricity and water supplies had generally not been sanctioned since December 1963 because of the fragmented population segregation; it was not possible to cut off such services in Turkish quarters and enclaves without disrupting substantial numbers of Greek Cypriots (ibid).

This practical reasoning along with a humanitarian motivation is directly related to how the population, no matter what kind of ethnic conflict they had been in, was seen as a single unit as the island was taken as the scale of an integrated and unified whole. Transboundary relations

across the Green Line involved both stark conflict and partition and tacit cooperation and connection. Such a history of complex relations of connection and division continue to dominate the ‘Cyprus Problem’.

While external forces and actors of development insist on a “national” or island-wide scale in their efforts to plan and improve the economy of Cyprus, the reality on the ground is less simple as it is shown in this section. And infrastructure—mainly water and electricity—are sites where a politics of scale-making plays out. This not only engenders particular political scale and image to be aspired in the developmentalist logics of technocrats Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot, Turkish or beyond. It also shapes politico-geographical imaginations among populations, which I focus on for the Turkish Cypriots with the contemporary efforts of remedying water scarcity of the north.

Water’s fluid, connective, and pervasive characteristics constitute an island scattered, divided, and ever-changing in scalar terms. A whole island unit is at once a dictated and desired scale, through which water is quantified, surveyed, and aspired to contribute to the capitalist logic of developing the economy. Meanwhile, smaller scales of borderlands, enclaves, and later the big divide and the “north” becoming a scale of its own, all render water scarcity of the island to be at the heart of the geopolitics. Politics of the conflict, cooperation, peace and war become directly contingent upon and are shaped by infrastructural convolutions—water access, replenishment, and distribution.

So far, I have focused on how different scales and meanings of water are shaped by each other as Cyprus became an independent state in 1960. In the post-colonial period and during the conflict years, I have shown, water scarcity was at the forefront of scalar politics. Questions that dominated were how to efficiently use water, replenish it, quantify and distribute it in order to make way for the economic development of the whole island. The civil war, having disturbed such endeavors, also shaped the way Cyprus and its water problem was

scaled—whether it was a problem for Turkey, the UN, Greece, or the region? In the following sections, I shift gears to look at how these scales were represented cartographically by different powerful actors, states, and institutions. At the same time, I do this as I continue discussing how water scarcity in the 1990s and 2000s continued to be a matter of concern and completely imbued with the politics of post-conflict and the potential peace between the two sides of the island.

Unpacking the “peace water” rhetoric

Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand tells in his book about several years following the partition of the island in 1974 that TFSC (Turkish Federated State of Cyprus) was in a state of desperation and destitution. Not only did the TFSC was made into a state completely dependent on the Turkish economy, it also adopted all the problems of the Turkish bureaucracy. This, according to Birand, led the Greek Cypriots to win the economic war and Turkish Cypriots to continue on with their destitution as a self-declared polity (Birand 1979, 106 translation mine). Having been a correspondent for the diplomatic talks between the US, Turkey, Greece, and Cypriot officials from both sides, Birand says that “even the water came from Turkey” at the time and that there were no way to pump water for irrigation purposes. Stuck in a state of no production and poverty, water was essential to get out of such a moment of stagnation. As explained above, the water for electricity exchange took place as it was needed yet stood for a significant problem of recognition for both sides.

Water became many things at once during this period of transition, stagnation, and significant change at the same time. It was a powerful resource, it brought tacit formations of infrastructural cooperation (section above). Water and its infrastructural arrangements were also a source of security concerns; it could easily become a source of threat, a tool for exerting violence against one another. Breaking of pipes somewhere could have sparked gossip and scandal of the other side being the culprit for it; sabotaging production and livelihoods (Pyla and Phokaides 2018, 123). It could also be a discursive and strategic tool for diplomatic

relations regarding Cyprus. Especially for Turkey, water as a strategic developmentalist instrument is not a new phenomenon, nor is it specific to Cyprus. While I discuss this instrumentalization of resource development of Turkish hegemony and its “hydraulic mission” (Conker and Hussein 2019) in Chapter 3, here, I show how bringing water to Cyprus has been attempted many times, sometimes under the guise of peace, and at others, in the name of economic development.

Rauf Denktaş, the first president of de-facto TRNC, was an enthusiast for a water import solution involving a joint project that would be offered to the whole island. The Turkish state, in the name of aid and development, have tried multiple times to import water with different technologies. While they brought water in tanker ships in the years following the partition, in 1998 water was transported in what are called “medusa bags” (see Figure 3), floating on the sea as they were pulled by ships (D. Yıldız and Çakmak 2014). Implemented by the Norwegian company Nordic Water Supply, the project came to a halt quickly when the medusa bags burst causing considerable loss of water and cost (“Balon patladı, Kıbrıs’a su taşınması durdu” 1999). Having brought water 2 million tons of water over a period of four decades—though the transferal was sporadic and not at all on a regular basis—the medusa bags in the end became another project that politicians like Rauf Denktaş and then Turkish president Süleyman Demirel used as a potential for a peaceful solution for Cyprus. While Denktaş said that “in case there is a request, this water could be given also to the Greek Cypriots”, Demirel also confirmed this by saying that “transferring water with medusa bags is the beginning of



Figure 3. Medusa bags floating on the Mediterranean Sea, carrying fresh water from Turkey. Source: (Yıldız and Çakmak 2014).

transferring water through pipes in the future; it is possible to provide this water to the south as well” (Maden 2013, 107–8).

Over the years, many discussions ensued as to the long-term suitability of undersea pipes, water tankers, or even water bags, all of which were tried; some worked for a while, others failed. Most of these projects one way or another became part of the diplomatic talks regarding the political stalemate of non-recognition of both sides and the ongoing partition. Any rhetoric of peace or ‘water of life’ that came from the Turkish side, resulted in Greek Cypriots deeming the “water-for-peace scheme as ‘an emergency response to the drought on the northern side and a further attempt to integrate the north with Turkey” (Hocknell 2001, 185). The talk of peace and cooperation ended up failing to trump the stark reality of militarised land occupation. And for Greek Cypriot officials, occupation of land also meant occupation of water resources and aquifers.

The Turkey-northern Cyprus pipeline was already approved by the Turkish state with a government decree in 1998 upon the failure of medusa bags project (Rende 2007). Having done feasibility reports and such, the company Alsim-Alarko, the project was meant to bring 75 million m³ of water to northern Cyprus, just like what the pipeline of today promised. However, this solution was also deemed either as not so economical or technically not feasible (G. Elkiran and Ergil 2006).

Part II. Competing hydro-scales and cartographic rule

Most of the texts that I cited in the previous section such as Altan's writings, Thorp report, and so on, deal with water scarcity and potential solutions in northern Cyprus and take different kinds of scales and interprets them to produce a certain kind of knowledge of water scarcity. First, the "original sin" that caused water scarcity is that of British colonialism. The British, having planted eucalyptus trees, a species not endemic to the island or region, supposedly caused today's dire problem of water scarcity and that it should be dealt with *by* Turkey. Second, and a reason that it shall be Turkey to find a solution, the governments of TRNC over the years have not managed water efficiently. Water scarcity is a geographical matter of concern, according to authors, whereby the *absolute* measure or reference point to deal with water of northern Cyprus is the Turkish mainland, regardless of water's potential across the Buffer Zone or RoC's solutions to water scarcity. but this conclusion that it is Turkey's "problem" to deal with, as explained so far, has had diverging motivations for different state actors—however all with a scalar motivation nonetheless. For Turkish Cypriots and Turkish officials, it is the vicinity and "natural" geographical and hydrological connections between the island and the mainland. As shown in the first part of the chapter, authors like Maden (2013), Çolakoğlu (2018), Yıldız and Çakmak (2014), and others take up the issue of water scarcity as not just a *technical* and *developmental* problem to deal with, but a *nationalistic* problem that *Turkey* should deal with. For external powers, it was driven by a scalar vicinity of Turkey and again a geographical advantage for an efficient and technically easier solution.

Scale as constructed, processual, and constitutive of territories therefore, comes to the fore as key to understand the constitution of waterscapes of Cyprus. Harris and Alatout (2010) employ the term hydro-scales in their comparative study of Turkey and Israel, which refers to how scalar constructions of nation-state building processes are not just contingent upon and constitutive of territorial claims and authority, but also inclusive of hydrological projects of controlling and laying claims to the waters of the given territory. Keeping this in mind, for the

rest of this chapter, I illustrate how scalar constructions and cartographic representations of Cyprus and its waters remain in the center of political conflicts and alliances. Before chapter 3, this is also where I introduce the Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline project through its cartographic representation and show how in the contemporary period, different stakeholders over the island navigate in their structurations of hydro-scales.

The Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline and “cartographic reason”

Water in nature, “out there”, scarce and to be replenished, as an environmental matter of fact, as one navigates oneself on a map north-bound, becomes a national or “Turkish” matter of concern. Water shifts from a natural resource to replenish to a tool for a hegemonic project to integrate and dominate. This second section of this chapter will lay out in detail, how academic literature and policy knowledge is produced on the water resources of the island from both sides and specifically the undersea water pipeline by the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot state affiliates and how such knowledge reveals shifting power relations that are etched on the geographical representations of the island both materially on maps and also symbolically on the “mental” maps of the people affected by.

Maps of Cyprus—demarcating territories, claiming spaces, and positioning military posts—were omnipresent throughout my research in/on (northern) Cyprus. Historical and contemporary representations of the island, and especially its hydrological and geological aspects to understand water scarcity maps have proliferated as I navigated my way through literature, news articles, and books. The case of Cyprus is a prime example why the traditional view of maps as the mirror of nature is problematic and critiqued time and again in political and human geography. The scaled representation of reality, cartographic works not only evoke a particular social construction of reality but also articulate a multiplicity of how a place can be perceived from different vantage points and power constellations. A quick jogging of my memory reminds me from geography classes in high school that there are different types of maps that articulate different aspects of the given space. A physical map represents the rivers,

mountains, hydrological and geological formations with different techniques and colorings indicating elevation, sea level, and so on. An administrative map demarcates administrative borders of localities like villages, towns, municipalities, provinces, etc. A political map on the other hand, will show us sovereign borders of countries in different regions. They neatly and unquestionably present a snippet of time and space, as if everything and every line is where it should be, as if those lines were there atemporally. As any other social scientists would, I clearly had a problem with the many maps I saw of Cyprus—the “messiness” of a geopolitical stalemate had been forcibly put into these tidy cartographic representations. These very cartographic imaginations and the gaze with which map producers and those who commission these maps have produced and still produce identities (Pickles 2012, 12), coded who is a subject of whom, and whether these subject formations in turn reproduce that very neat world those maps articulate.

Thus, I start my interrogation of maps and cartographic reason in relation to competing claims of sovereignty over territories through geomorphological demarcations and encompassment of other environmental aspects. And I do this by first looking at how the Turkish state authorities have done this with the pipeline in question. After a brief introduction of the pipeline, I will then move on to competing scalar constructions of contemporary situation of water resources over the island.

The Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline, the transferred water, dams, and other components of the megaproject, all evoke a material presence of Turkey in the north of the island, as I come back to in the rest of the dissertation. The infrastructure ‘mega’project is ‘mega’ with its encompassing of a vast terrain, monumentality, and hypervisibility (Flyvbjerg 2014). Its grandeur comes from not just the finances and technological innovation it took to build this network of infrastructures; it is a project of ideological and territorial scale-making through major planning that enters into constructing public infrastructure. With the

KKTC SU TEMİN PROJESİ



Figure 4. The map was retrieved from the Turkish State Hydraulics Works (DSİ) website, however the page on the pipeline project is no longer available.

infrastructure project, new maps proliferated, new (pipe)lines were drawn, old lines forgotten. With Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s ‘masterpiece’, as he called it in the inauguration ceremony (which I extensively analyze in Chapter 3), the Mediterranean Sea and the region takes on a new meaning; the still-contested waters and land of northern Cyprus becomes the terrain where the geopolitics of the region becomes even more strained.

As I entered the office of DSİ (Devlet Su İşleri – State Water Authority), a Turkish state institution in north Nicosia, I was met with large posters of a specific map (see Figure 4) and other representations of the pipeline. A 3D rendition of the pipeline as a model was positioned right at the center of the office when you pass the secretary desk. Scattered here and there were the samples of what the pipes are made of, and other materials used in the technological feat of Erdoğan. This map quickly became ubiquitous in northern Cyprus’ political scene. It centred on the under-sea pipeline and the additional pipes that were to be constructed, courtesy of the Turkish state. The pipes’ pervasiveness was highlighted in neon colours traversing the full extent of the north of Cyprus and the south of Turkey.

When I first saw the map in 2015 preparing for my field research, it followed me everywhere, or I followed it: at the DSI office, its website (now no longer has a landing page of the pipeline project), on YouTube videos showing the construction of the pipeline, in NGO reports that lay out the benefits of the pipeline to the region, and so on. When I first moved to north Nicosia, I was fixated on seeing a more detailed blueprint of the old and new pipes of water. Somehow, I was not convinced by the neon colors of this map; I needed to see the old lines *not* indicated on this one. But when I spoke to the TRNC bureaucrats at the local SİD (Su İşleri Dairesi), the Water Works Department of the TRNC, and people from other state institutions like north Nicosia municipality, the hydrology department etc., I was merely met with either, sarcastic remarks like ‘you want maps huh? You and everyone else in this department [SİD - Water Works]’. They either ignored my request for a detailed map of pipelines repeatedly or uttered a solid ‘No’. According to many whom I asked, this was because this was not your ‘*normal*’ place where maps existed and were readily available.

Documents like maps, title deeds, and other ‘legal’ paperwork have all been material devices studied by anthropologist Yael Navaro as ‘make-believe documents’, who points to how such document making practices are ‘sovereignty in the making’ (Navaro 2012, 44). This

map in question here, different than those produced by Turkish Cypriot experts in the TRNC Maps Department that Navaro conducted fieldwork with, extends Turkish sovereignty materially through pipes and water. Remembering Navaro's ethnography and how her interlocutor Kemal claimed that most maps are secret because they are military, I figured that state documents like pipeline blueprints might also not to be given to lay people because of security or political reasons. But why did everyone at the TRNC State Hydraulic Authority (Su İşleri Dairesi)—a central state institution, de-facto or not—claimed to not have it themselves? For a while, I thought this pointed to the de-facto and/or unrecognized state of the country.

Those officials I spoke to, who said this is not a 'normal' place where maps are abundant, look for that ordered, legibility of their space in a geographical image. It is exactly this western idea that maps suggest—the mapping impulse of “systematicity, boundedness, and totalization” (Painter 2006, 347). References to the lack of staff and expertise, or self-attributions of inefficiency or inadequacy, and most of all, lack of maps echoed in these state offices. Then, for them, 'normal' posited a western idea, but I turn to this later (Chapter 5). As I was informed by several bureaucrats, DSİ (State Water Authority of the Turkish state) came in from Turkey and took over all operations, including the maps. Maps were nowhere to be found, old or new.

At first glance, maps are representations of places, made from grids of latitude and longitude—classifying, objectifying, visualizing, and rendering the globe legible (S. F. Green 2005, 30). As Sarah Green (2005) puts it,

Maps do more than simply assert in a formalistic positivist way where you are located. They also capture differing forms of coming and going, of seeing, and failing to see and differing attempts at fixing place both temporal and spatial, across a range of scales (31).

For social research—even for geographers, they usually remain in the background, as context, or a mere metaphor for something else (Painter 2006, 346). Spatial arrangements, like mapping borders and other infrastructural entities like pipes, usually serve the interests of dominant

groups. Cartographic rationality, positing this western gaze of classification and standardization render the actual space and its people legible to political and economic powerholders. Just as formulating policies and implementing them to control populations, state power deploys this type of knowledge for the purposes of situating a locality in a politically strategic way that serves the political economic interests of the state (which usually comes in allegiance with private enterprise). In turn, such scale making practices of states and powerholders also produces scalar thinking in the communities whose locations are continually made and unmade by these territorializing practices of states. Maps are part of the field of power relations that resonate not only in the realm of high politics, but also that of the social, which is always in the making.

This is apparent in one of the most comprehensive books published regarding the Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline by Elif Çolakoğlu. With the use of a “persuasive map” on the book cover (see Figure 5), the northern territories of the island is represented with the

de-facto TRNC map. The terrain of the island, as indicated with greens and browns displays the geographical/physical attributes—Troodos mountains with high elevation and so on. The



Figure 5. The cover image of Elif Çolakoğlu's book named "Su politikaları bağlamında Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın bugünü ve geleceği" (the name of the book is translated as "Present and future of northern Cyprus in the context of water politics") (Çolakoğlu 2018)

northern parts however, are "Turkish" Cypriot. Persuasive maps, according to John Pickles, is "a type of cartography whose main object or effect is to change or in some way influence the reader's opinion, in contrast to most cartography which strives to be objective. Persuasive cartography thus seeks to manipulate symbols in order to influence some" (In T. J. Barnes and Duncan 2011, 198). The de-facto flag, as a powerful symbol that can be seen on this particular map, is etched on the terrain of the Beşparmak (Pentadaktylos) mountain range located in the northern parts as well. Made of rocks and paint, the flag of TRNC can be see all the way from

Limassol, a southern city on the island. The conspicuity of this symbol marks the northern territories to be nationalized as TRNC, adamantly there. The book in general, reproduces this with the way it describes the water resources and the history of its management, as will be explained below.

Thus, maps are linked with centers of political power and cartography has never been an autonomous mode of knowledge. It is part of a *techno-political* terrain whereby states, supranational institutions, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and so on produce and manipulate space as a practice of governmentality. Instituting normative programs of configuring spaces and its people, cartography via its patrons (power holders) valorizes spaces through processes of articulation and disarticulation, rendering these spaces operationalizable and governable (Ong 2008). Not just spaces, but also the resources, materials, and the environmental potential of a terrain is what is under scrutiny. Mapping practices also renders legible where water flows, where it stops and gets collected, and who accesses it. Cartography just like infrastructure then is yet another technique of territorialization. The map of the pipeline project above coupled with my time there, thus showed me the difference between how things are meant to appear and how things are in northern Cyprus. In other words, it showed me the difference between how Erdoğan's megaproject enacted and consolidated a powerful tie between two spaces, and how Turkish Cypriots' self-attributed 'abnormal' situation, which I unpack in the rest of this dissertation, attempted to challenge that very tie.

Before I unpack the megaproject in all its material and semiotic components in the coming chapters, I continue with an analysis of cartographic representations of the island, how hydro-scales are produced, and the ways in which environmental units like "the island", "river basin", "aquifers" and the "Eastern Mediterranean region" are naturalized and dictate political affiliations.

Production of river basins as hydro-scales

As explained in the previous sections, the production of multiple scales of the island—where it is located, connected or disconnected to, and how borders and waterscapes are manipulated by state and inter-state actors—is important to understand the recent history and politics of water scarcity in Cyprus. Are the water springs “naturally” connected to Anatolia? If so, what kind of discourses and practices came about as the island got partitioned into two political structures? These were the kind of central questions that occupied the geopolitical talks amongst Turkish and Turkish Cypriot political actors. Furthermore, the post-conflict years were integral to how both sides made sense of hydro-political conflict and cooperation, which also made an impact on the question of recognition.

In 2004, the Annan Plan failed to reunify the island with a hard vote of “No” from Greek Cypriots and following that, RoC became part of the European Union.³⁵ As part of the Annan Plan, a plethora of maps were produced, negotiations were directly in regards to which part of the island would be under control of what federated state, whether Morphou aquifer—the biggest water mass under the territory—would be on the “Turkish” side or “Greek” side (Varnava and Faustmann 2009, 154). Gaining shorelines, taking control of resources, and including the agricultural regions to territorial divisions were all part of the negotiations and this remains to be the case, as there is still no “solution” to the partition and ongoing occupation of the north by the Turkish armed forces. “Bringing a map” onto the proverbial “table” is *the* objective during negotiation processes.

Once RoC became part of the EU *acquis Communautaire*, Cyprus was integrated into a whole set of new relations on a regional scale of the European Union. The eastern Mediterranean state was integrated into the European market, socio-political structure, and also

³⁵ For the purposes of this dissertation, I do not go into detail with the referendum process and the Annan Plan. For a comprehensive analysis, see (Varnava and Faustmann 2009).

geographical scale. The development of water resources and its management was part of such process of integration. While the de-facto TRNC reinforced territorial political division via the Turkish occupation, the RoC was integrated under a separate scale of a "union". The overarching idea of the island being geomorphologically and infrastructurally a single geographical unit became more official and dominant then ever when the Annan Plan failed and the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the European Union in 2004 (Ker-Lindsay, Mullen, and Faustmann 2011). While Republic of Cyprus made policies and planning and enacted laws following the island as a *single unit*, Turkish Cypriot government looked to "motherland" Turkey for financial and infrastructural aid, as explained above. Despite this development, the Buffer Zone became less temporary, division prolonged and Turkish occupation of the north strengthened. The European Union Water Framework Directive (WFD hereafter) adopted and implemented in EU states since 2000 (European Union 2000), became one of the EU directives to align with in the Republic of Cyprus. The WFD aimed at implementing a standardized framework for integrated river basin management for all member states to achieve 'good water status.'³⁶

As an attempt of social and political engineering (Johnson 2015), the EU WFD is characterized with the idea that "natural" borders like watersheds or river basins are "out there" to be discovered and regulated (ibid). The objective of standardization therefore comes with the practice of naturalization of such categories for rendering the European space taken-for-granted and managed in terms of its "naturalness." Along with standardizing criteria for good surface water and groundwater status, the WFD aimed at establishing and managing river basins, environmental policymaking, and rendering effective public participation. As soon as it became a member state, Republic of Cyprus first enacted the WFD as a law: 'On the

³⁶ For a detailed study on WFD and its implementation in different EU member states, see (Boeuf and Fritsch 2016).

Protection and Management of the 2004 Water Law’ (Water Development Department 2016). As part of this Cyprus River Basin Management Plan was to be developed; the first one enacted and implemented for the period 2009-2015, following of Strategic Environmental Assessment process in 2005, and the second one is for the period 2016-2021 (ibid). through such legalization and “nationalization” of the water management, decision making processes and regulation of the water resources shifted from a local to both a national and regional scale.

River basins are significant as they point to how in the case of Cyprus and its water scarcity, scale and access are negotiated by different actors and institutions through producing geographic and hydro-morphological knowledge. The EU WFD, with a Europeanized vision of an environmental governance regime, delimits space through river basin boundaries and takes the category of river basins as natural “waiting to be discovered” and already existent in nature (Johnson 2015, 190). As an inherently political act, territorialization through implementing “natural” categories such as river basins and watersheds for the EU does not simply denote its goal for sustainable development. Especially in peripheral territories such as that of Cyprus, the WFD and RBP point to a Europeanized kind of geographical scale, which in turn suggests attempts at social and political engineering for that particular territory (ibid).

The River Basin Plan for Cyprus adopted in line with the principles of WFD, contains



Figure 6. The 2nd Cyprus River Basin Plan shows the 9 hydrological regions of the island. The Buffer Zone is not included in this map. Source: (Water Development Department 2016, 35).

action plans for climate change, flood risk management plan, and drought management plan. Besides providing methodological suggestions of the management of water resources, and statistical analysis of resource use over the island, the RBP first and foremost demarcates and describes what the basin's scale is (See Figure 6). It covers all the island and is considered as a single hydro-morphological unit. The European Union, not recognizing the TRNC as a state, also officially claims along with the RoC that Turkish Armed Forces occupied the northern parts of the island. Because of this just as in any other jurisdictional matter, 'the application of the *acquis [communautaire]*³⁷ is suspended in those areas of Cyprus in which the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control' (Water Development Department

³⁷ *Acquis communautaire* is the term used for denoting the European Union's legal jurisdiction under the EU law. It is usually referred to as *acquis* as a shorthand.

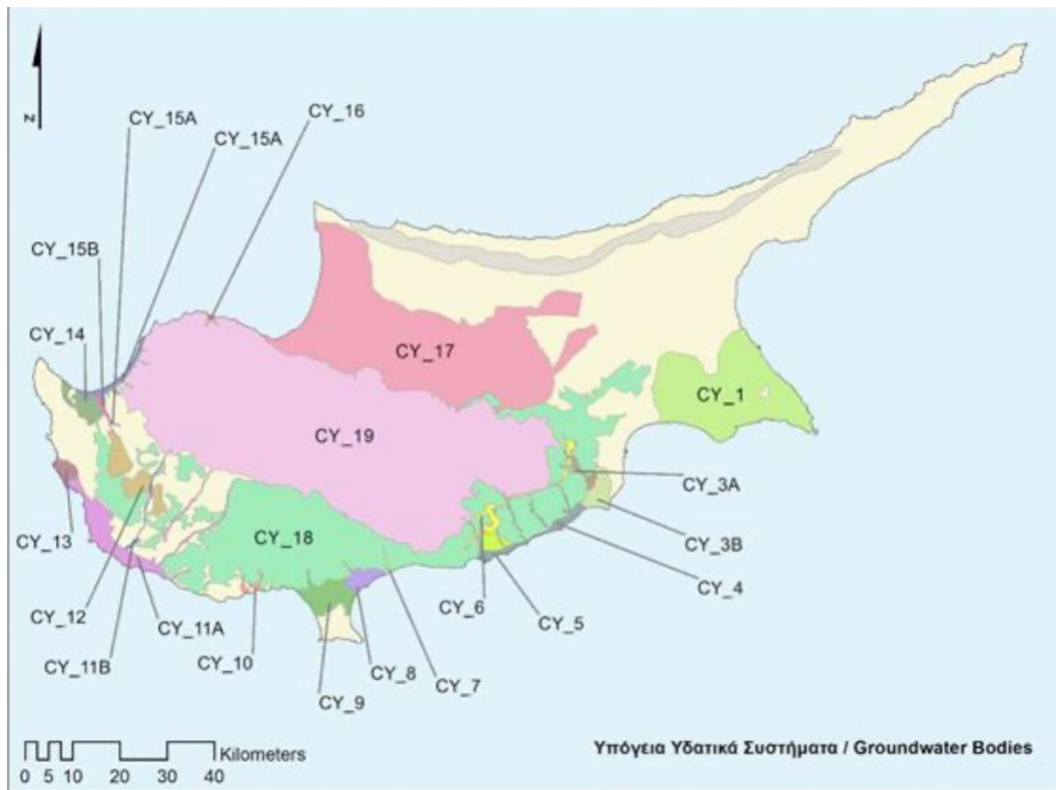


Figure 7. The groundwater bodies of Cyprus. Source: (Water Development Department 2016, 87)

2016, 13). The RBP therefore, describes a basin in which there are 70 watersheds, 47 of which under the control of Cyprus. Besides the acknowledgement that the north of the island is under occupation by Turkey (37), the RBP does not mention any TRNC state body, institutional framework, management practice, etc. The RBP uses cartographic representations that does not exclude watersheds, dams, and aquifers of the north (see Figure 7).

The representative map with geomorphological attributes deliberately excludes any political demarcation on the island; the Buffer Zone is not visible, neither is any other disconnection between the two sides. The whole island as one unit is both politically and hydro-morphologically justified through such cartographic representation. Further in the management plan document, the lack of demarcation remains but details on the northern part of the maps cease to exist. Coupled with the content of the document, maps that represent the groundwater

bodies, protected areas, wastewater plants, etc. does not show most of the attributes of the north.

The same kind of cartographic arrangements can be seen in official documents and published books about the Turkey-north Cyprus water pipeline project. The megaproject that promised to end water scarcity issue for the north of the island brought forth a separate connective materiality for the north—one that further consolidated the Turkish dependency and control and rescaled north Cyprus a space to be less as part of the whole island and more of that of Turkey. As part of the rescaling process, science and technology, including hydrology, cartography, and geology became political agents (Jasanoff 2004, 14). Since the construction of the megaproject, academic articles were published with titles such as ‘Peace Pipeline’ (Dilek 2008), ‘A River of Peace’ (D. Yıldız and Çakmak 2014; Sümer 2015) along with NGO reports that provided political analyses (Kimençe 2014) and book publications that claimed to inform the scientific community specializing in civil engineering and water security and management (Ağralıoğlu 2016; Çolakoğlu 2018; Keser and Uğurtay 2019). None of these mention the EU WFD or Cyprus RBP as frameworks that inform the hydrological and infrastructural practices and planning that revolve around the megaproject. One cartographic representation of the aquifers does not even show the south of the island. The *half-island*³⁸ completely torn off from the rest, in the most advertised rendition of the megaproject, is connected through a (pipe)line to Turkish mainland (see Figure 8). Çolakoğlu, the author of the book where this map is used in, argues in the first page of the book that Greece and Turkey, as two of the protectorates perceive water management in Cyprus as a matter of national security. She adds ‘Despite the benevolent approaches of the Turkish side, the Greek administration of the island has time and

³⁸ The half-island (*ada yarısı*) is an emic term used by many in the northern Cyprus that indicates how people imagine the *location* they live in. Here, I use the term in order to describe what the maps in question do in terms of enacting divisions and producing a hegemonic scale born out of the military occupation. I deal with this term more ethnographically later on in the dissertation.

again adopted a negative attitude towards peace talks. Therefore, these negotiations unfortunately ended with no positive results' (Çolakoğlu 2018 translation mine). With no citation to EU WFD, Çolakoğlu concludes in the book that Turkey has gained a strategic advantage with the megaproject for water export sector and that the project could bring peace to the region. More interestingly, she suggests the reason why peace is not reached is solely because of the Greek Cypriot government, who remain skeptical and that 'Enosis ideology and their fanatic nationalism obstructs [Greek Cypriots] to [achieve a peaceful solution]' (2018, 155 translation mine). The pipeline project then, becomes a site where political and territorial

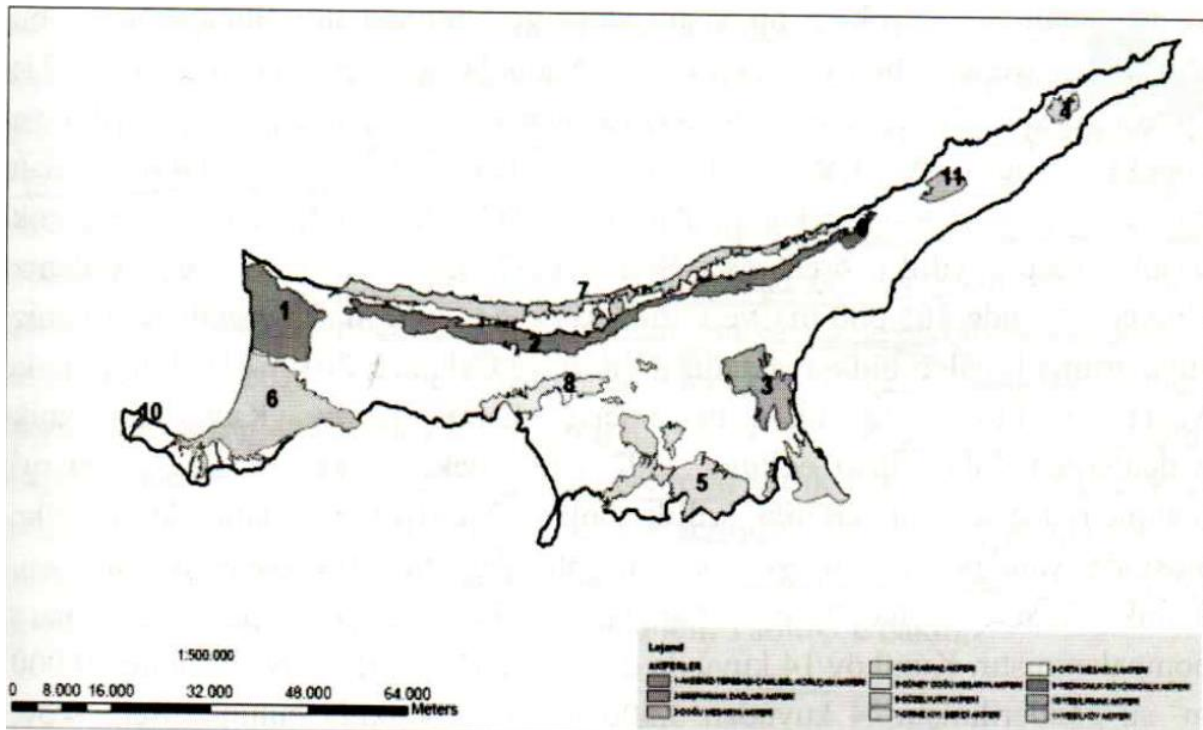


Figure 8. The aquifers of TRNC. Source: (Çolakoğlu 2018, 9)

claims regarding the island are made and hegemonic knowledge about the north gets legitimized through cartographic representations coupled with a particular kind of political narrative.

In another publication on the pipeline project, published by the same company that constructed the pipeline, Kalyon İnşaat, chooses to prioritize other river basins and not the EU appointed Cyprus River Basin (Ağralıoğlu 2016, 31–63). The section of the book is titled 'The Geographical Scope of the Project and Marine Law'. The author signifies that the water

originates in the Toros Mountains of southern Turkey in the Anamur River Basin and does not give any mentions to Cyprus River Basin. Detailing the section with the climate, temperature levels, wind, rainfall, and so on, the book gives primacy to a scalar rationality of its own. The south of Cyprus does not really exist on the Mediterranean Sea. River basins, therefore, are not natural units; their delineation, citation, and selection over others are all political acts that bring both nature and its management and also knowledge-making processes about that natural environment, at the center of power and politics.

Setting up boundaries in river basins, representing them by producing cartographic knowledge, and all in all, ordering nature for the purposes of human advancement are all seen in the examples in this section. As Menga and Swyngedouw (2018) suggest, water and its infrastructure emerge as ways in which “states actualize power over its territory” (4)—ruling politicians, in line with their ideological blueprints, construct geographical scales and territories that consolidate their hegemony over their sovereign borders. The case of Cyprus shows that such efforts can go beyond the sovereign territorial scales. Through producing hydrological knowledge on a given geography, adapting scales of where regions are demarcated or which territories river basins encompass, not only states like Turkey challenge internationally accepted territories and river basin regions, but also intergovernmental entities like the European Union consolidate where its demarcated region lies and standardizes and integrates hydro-scales within its borders.

On the one hand, Republic of Cyprus, as a member state of the EU, goes in line with the standardized WFD and its appointed territorial demarcations, naturalized categories of river basins, its standardized water management practices and treats the north of the island as an extension of the Buffer Zone—in other words, ‘no-man’s land’ (Papadakis 2005). Water exists there in aquifers and watersheds, yet TRNC is not a state, and people who access water do not get any mention. On the other hand, Turkish state, in its capacity as the funder of the

megaproject in north Cyprus, commissions certain publications, which all reproduce a hegemonic yet unpopular knowledge regarding the north of the island. South of the island is erased completely; it is a ‘half-island.’ These disconnections in geographical scales and their cartographic representations do not just reproduce diverging hegemonic views regarding the island; they are also translated in people’s lives in north of the island, which I turn to in the rest of this dissertation.

Concluding remarks

This chapter interrogated past and present knowledge production of Cyprus’ water and infrastructure through a lens of scale and geography. While the first part continued where chapter 1 left off with a genealogy of water scarcity, its management, and its entanglement with competing political rationalities that dominated Cyprus’ geography, the second part shifted gears into a more comprehensive study of the construction of scale through cartographic representations of water resources and infrastructures spanning across the environment of Cyprus.

I traced how tropes of connection carry through in time with different powerholders over the island and the ways in which moral economies of water inform the application of hegemonic logics of colonialism, developmentalism in a postcolonial space, and cooperation and conflict at a time of ethnic and political turmoil. As such, these constructed norms of connection and disconnection of the island materially and politically, is reinforced with cartographic representations, construction of environmental categories like river basins, and production of standardizations for regions to render them legible and knowable to states’ authority over the geography.

As explained, cartographic reason, or the mentality of maps to draw neat and intentional lines on the image of the island, has come to inform the “mental maps” of its people, especially those of Turkish Cypriots, as I will unpack in the rest of this dissertation. In chapter 3, I turn to a more comprehensive introduction of the water pipeline megaproject and un-entangle the

contemporary dynamics of domination, dependency, and the co-constitution of materiality and meaning of an infrastructure project.

Chapter 3 – “The Gift” of the motherland: the material and the meaning of a pipeline

...we refuse to accord primacy either to the powers of human representation to account for material forms, or to the powers of materials in their imagined, ahistorical, elemental state to determine infrastructural forms. Instead, as things become political only through relations, we call for a recognition that materials and ideology together participate in the makings of infrastructure, politics, and publics. (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018, 25).

This chapter introduces the Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline project and the co-constitution of its material components such as water, pipes, land and property, valves, plants, rust, and salt, as well as its multiplicity of meanings and values attached to them in discourse and practice. I argue here and throughout the dissertation that meanings, including values, norms, moral and political claims, as well as engendered metaphors and tropes that assemble around the water pipeline are co-constituted through the material components and characteristics of visibility and spectacularity of the pipeline. In other words, the production of contemporary moral economies around water and the pipeline are constituted through the pipeline’s material, concrete, and naturalized attributes. And vice versa, its very hypervisibility, materiality, political economic significance, and grandiosity are impossible without the political meanings and socially situated tropes attributed to it.

In this chapter, I situate the pipeline *materially* in two ways. First, I unpack the pipeline as a material artefact, in its tangible attributes—i.e. its matter. Second, I analyze its materiality as techno-political matter whereby its scientific and technological attributes are embedded in a political economic conjuncture in Turkey and are part and parcel of a series of governmental techniques of controlling populations and nature simultaneously. Then, I couple this interrogation of materiality with the ways in which the pipeline stands for a multiplication of ideas, meanings, affects, and imaginations. First setting the stage with the inauguration

ceremonies of the water pipeline project, the chapter will show how infrastructures bring together multiple fields of power through their form as well as give rise to a constellation of meanings.

The inauguration

On October 17th, 2015, ministers from the Republic of Turkey and the de-facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) inaugurated the Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline project with two consecutive ceremonies—one in Mersin, where the Alaköprü dam is located, and the other one next to Geçitköy dam in Girne, northern Cyprus. The \$450 million-worth³⁹ water supply project is a 107-kilometer-long undersea and underground pipeline, which promises to transfer 75 million m³ of clean water from Alaköprü dam on Turkish mainland to Geçitköy in northern Cyprus. The water carried across the Mediterranean is committed to provide “life”, “peace” (e.g. D. Yıldız and Çakmak 2014),⁴⁰ and prosperity to the farms and households on the Turkish-occupied territories of northern Cyprus for the next 35 years.⁴¹

A pipeline to civilization

On this day, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then-prime minister and now president of the Turkish Republic, gave a speech at the Anamur dam site first, that was not just about the pipeline project. Speaking of democracy, civilization, and terrorism, his first speech that day sounded more like an election campaign speech.⁴² He stressed on the infrastructural achievements that his AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party) regime has enacted since the party came to power in 2002.

Since 1954, my birth year, there has been 461 water reserves built in our country until 2011. We, in a thousand days only, built a thousand water reserves and irrigation channels and brought water to 1,7 million decares of

³⁹ At the time of its construction came to an end, 1.6 billion TL was approximately 550 million USD.

⁴⁰ As explicated throughout the dissertation, these words have either been used in advertisement campaigns, inauguration speeches, expert pieces on newspapers, and other online and offline venues.

⁴¹ This will be expanded on in the following chapter in an analysis of policy documents, protocols, and political economic deals.

⁴² Turkey had general elections on 1 November 2015, only a couple of weeks after the inauguration speech on 17 October 2015. Erdogan’s party then won the elections for the second time.

land in this country [Turkey]... Because we had said, “water is civilization”; we had said roads are civilization. Notice, for 79 years, this country had 6100 kilometers of road. In 12 years, we built 17 thousand kilometers of road. If you want to be civilized, if you want to be a modern country, you have to do these things. Can a country be civilized if they did not have water? But remember, when we were the mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, there was no water running at times; the citizens could not find water to shower and to get clean. We solved that problem in one year. We have come so far!⁴³

His speech was embellished with historically charged ideas of modernity, civilization, and efficient living which have resonated in the construction of the Turkish identity dictated through early republican nation-state building ideology. More generally however, the speech also illustrates what Brian Larkin (2013) and many other scholars have repeated about infrastructures representing the possibility of modern life; its future-oriented characteristic of always reaching for better, faster, more efficient, and simply for more marks our contemporary conditions of possibility for modern life. For Erdoğan, it is water and roads that clearly mark whether a society is “civilized” or not. While referring to all the infrastructural advancement that Turkey has gone through, he also makes a clear distinction between before and after. This usual “us vs. them” or “before us and now *with us*” rhetoric operates also in this context, in enhancing the political polarization of Turkish society and it heavily relies upon Turkish nationalism that have for so long, marginalized those who refused to or failed to assimilate into a singular and homogeneous identity of being a Sunni Muslim Turk. Further, he also portrayed the construction of the third bridge in Istanbul also as “a civilizational project” at a time when the Gezi Park movement continued (Paker 2017). Large-scale infrastructure projects like the third bridge that crosses the Bosphorus or the pipeline project between Turkey and north Cyprus have become synonymous with the AKP-era “infrastructural fetishism” (Knudsen 2019). His emphasis is not just on successful infrastructure projects within the sovereign

⁴³ Translations from Turkish to English are mine. For the full speech by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, see: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/35721/turkiyeden-kktcye-su-temini-projesi-alakopru-baraji-acilis-torende-yaptiklari-konusma>

borders of the Turkish Republic. He extends their achieved “civilization” to a land beyond—a land where there is a shortage of water, hence ostensibly no civilization, no modernity—no life.

Untimely slogans

As the ceremony came to an end in Mersin that day, at the other end of the pipeline, the inauguration of the pipeline was only half done. Erdoğan and his entourage crossed the Mediterranean via a helicopter and landed in Girne, at the northern end of the island, a land the Turkish state occupies militarily since 1974. An audience gathered in front of the stage set up in Geçitköy, Girne, at the dam site where this “water for life” would be stored and distributed throughout the north. The de-facto⁴⁴ president of TRNC, Mustafa Akıncı, who is a popular figure in northern Cyprus, especially supported by those who want recognition and end of Turkish patronage, came up on stage to give his speech. He said, “one must commend Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for completing this project. He really believed in it. Late Süleyman Demirel⁴⁵ had promised us back in 1998 that he would be the one to build this project. But achieving this was Erdoğan’s fortune.” Cumhuriyet newspaper reports what unfolded after Akıncı said this: the crowd started loudly chanting slogans of “Recep Tayyip Erdoğan”, which ended up silencing Akıncı and pausing his speech. Akıncı was only able to intervene after a while when he said, “my friends, please keep your slogans for when Mr. Erdoğan gets here. In the meantime, I also have a few things to say today.”⁴⁶ The media, later on, deemed this moment to be newsworthy as it alluded to only a few years back when Akıncı expressed his opinions on the hierarchical relationship between Turkey and TRNC.

⁴⁴ Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is an unrecognized and de-facto state in northern Cyprus and its president would therefore also be “de-facto” and unrecognized as such.

⁴⁵ Süleyman Demirel is an engineer and Turkish politician who was a recurring prime minister between 1963 till 1993, and acted as president of the Turkish republic between 1993 and 2000. Previous to his political career, he was a general manager of State Hydraulics Authority of Turkey between 1955 till 1960.

⁴⁶ <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/erdogan-slogani-atanlari-susturdu-389891>

As the slogans came to an end, Akıncı stressed on what was to become one of the most pressing controversies in Turkish Cypriot politics in the upcoming year. He raised his voice once again to the microphone and said, “We have to manage this water well. As Turkish Cypriot society, this water must become our achievement, we must find the most efficient and rational ways to govern it with our own institutions.” As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the provisioning and management of water has long been a political matter of concern that went beyond simple infrastructural provisioning; they have been enmeshed with ethnic conflict, politics of recognition, and a matter of sovereignty. The Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline project immediately put its stamp on Turkish Cypriot politics as a reminder of those fundamental issues that concerned both sides of the Buffer Zone. This time, these issues became embodied in the privatization of water resources and its management along with the construction of a “megaproject.”

Making pipe dreams come true

After Akıncı’s speech, the master of ceremonies was ready to rouse up the crowd; he summoned them to pay attention to what was about to happen.⁴⁷ He said, “Yes, are we ready? Let’s see those hands, let’s see those flags up again. The time has come. He is coming. He who honors us with his attendance from Turkey to our ceremony in TRNC, our heart, the one who assures us of our unity and fellowship is coming! The architect of crazy projects is coming: the president of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan!” The crowd started screaming, whistling, and clapping; flags were back up in the air, flapping in between umbrellas. Like awaiting a rockstar at a concert, it seemed like people finally got what they came there for. Selfie sticks, smart phones accompanied the flags as he commenced his speech. After commemorating all the fallen and wounded Turkish soldiers and Turkish Cypriot fighters

⁴⁷ The description of the event that I provide in this introduction of Chapter 3 is based on a YouTube video taken by an audience member who took down the video recently, which can no longer be accessed. For clarity, my description is only of the video and *not* the event itself as I was not present at the inauguration ceremonies. Instead of the deleted YouTube video, see this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=To5R1kbc3uE>

(*mehmetçik* and *mücahit* respectively) from the military operation of 1974, Erdoğan thanked God and said, “I am in joy and feel the righteous pride that we kept our promise.”⁴⁸ Referring to the pipeline project as a masterpiece, he continued his speech as the audience suddenly became more focused on the oversized Turkish flag being carried around on the heads and hands of the crowd: “We are not just inaugurating a dam here; we make a dream come true, a dream of so many decades... As Mr. Akıncı has pointed out, ‘The green island had turned yellow;’ now *we* are fortunate to return it back to green.” At the other end of the pipeline—the Geçitköy dam site in Kyrenia—Erdoğan described to the crowd the water mass he had viewed from the helicopter: “We have seen love, excitement, and our masterpiece. We have a saying in Turkish, ‘The donkey dies and only its saddle is left, man dies, only his masterpiece is left.’ Are we to be remembered with our work or with our statements? That is the question. And this dam is a great example with which this saying is meaningful.”

Having a place in the world

Erdoğan’s speech was repeatedly addressed to “his brothers and sisters” as is characteristic of his speeches to supporters. Turkish Cypriots are also treated discursively as a people with a familial relation. The official nationalist narrative highlights the ethnic ties between the Turkish “motherland” and the Turkish Cypriot “babyland”—these loaded terms, as I unpack later on, were sprinkled on his speeches throughout the ceremonies. Just like his speech in Anamur dam a few hours before, this one also steered away from the pipeline: “...we will continue our eternal brotherhood⁴⁹ (*kardeşlik*) and sense of solidarity forever with no disruptions. We continue our efforts for our Cypriot brothers to *have a place in the world*... Last week, I had a meeting with Mr. Obama, we spoke of Cyprus. The other day, I was at Brussels in Europe, we

⁴⁸ <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/35720/turkiyeden-kktcy-su-temini-projesi-gecitkoy-baraji-acilis-torende-yaptiklari-konusma>

⁴⁹ Since Turkish language has a separate word for “sibling-hood”, which does not quite exist in English, I choose to translate *kardeşlik* as brotherhood. The idea of *kardeşlik* that Erdoğan talks about in this context is more fraternal and masculine, hence “brotherhood.”

also spoke of Cyprus with leaders there” (emphasis mine). With these words, he declares this current way of relations between Turkey and TRNC to be perpetual, permanent, and non-negotiable. Maybe more importantly however, the quote above implies that Turkish Cypriots have not yet had a “place in the world” due to non-recognition. Erdoğan takes it upon himself (and the Turkish state) to *make* that place possible—but only in his terms and for the benefit of the Turkish interests, as I will later explicate through policies and political action revolving around the pipeline. His words from the inauguration speech in 2015 still resonated with people of northern Cyprus in 2016 and parts of 2017 when I lived in north Nicosia. Not exactly asking about “their place in world” or whether they had one to begin with, I was there to conduct a research on the water pipeline project and its material and symbolic dimensions for communities in northern Cyprus. I heard expressions of a sense of location, long discussions of where they are connected to, and whether their geographical position had something to do with their self-declared “abnormality”. Having a *place* in the world was a common theme and desire—maybe not always in terms and conditions of how Erdoğan or the Turkish state dictated it to be. The pipeline encapsulated most of these interrogations and entangled and changing subjectivities.

Speaking of world-making and finding a place for Turkish Cypriots, Erdoğan closed his speech as he talked about the region and how the transferred water has the potentiality to bring peace to eastern Mediterranean; that they shall call this water “peace water” and give it to the Greek Cypriots (*Rum kesimi*):⁵⁰ “May this Anatolian water make way for a season of living together as one in hearts and minds, give us the fruits as it roots deep.” After giving the mandatory peace message, he returns to his *modus operandi*: “My brothers, let’s be one, let’s be big, let’s keep alive. And don’t forget; one nation, one flag, one motherland, one state, we

⁵⁰ The Turkish state does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus as a state and refer to them as either *Rum kesimi* (Greek Cypriot part) or *Güney Kıbrıs Rum Yönetimi* (can be translated as Southern Greek Cypriot Governance).

walk to our future with this mind.” And with these words, the northern Cyprus-Turkey water pipeline, Erdoğan’s masterpiece, his “project of the century”, was inaugurated.

From skies to sea: “Gifting” potentiality

The event that I described above—the inauguration ceremonies of the pipeline infrastructure—lays at the center of this thesis. It is what Max Gluckman (1940) would have called “a social situation” with “moments of social life in the very process of formation” (Kapferer 2005, 92). The ceremonies brought together communities—Turkish Cypriots, Turkish immigrants, and others—social structures and institutions—Turkish state, de-facto TRNC state, ministries from both parties—and entangled relationships of so-called brotherhood, hierarchy, conflict, and peace. As a process laden with micro dynamics, the situation reveals macro-historical processes that are integral to the conditions of the situation’s possibility. It “refers to a total context of crisis, not just contradictory and conflicting processes but a particular tension or turning, a point of potentiality and of multiple possibility (2005, 89). The components of the inauguration ceremonies, staged as the complete opposite of a “crisis” moment, encapsulate the sociopolitical transformational potential that this megaproject would ostensibly bring to northern Cyprus. It is deemed for so long as a space where time stood still, with “stunted temporality” (Navaro 2012, 7), without political recognition, and in complete isolation from the rest of the world (except Turkey). The ceremonies evince that people, institutions, and relationships are very much in flux and dynamic in northern Cyprus. The “half island” and potentially (and supposedly) beyond was now being “gifted”⁵¹ with notions life, peace, development, and civilization through a water pipeline.

Inauguration ceremonies are stately rituals through which material technologies like pipelines, tramways, new metro lines, and so on are celebrated in their multiple meanings for

⁵¹ This is an emic term that I picked up from my interlocutors in northern Cyprus. The speakers at the ceremony do not use this word; the audience interpreted as such.

both the end-users and investors alike. In many places, ribbon cutting, political speeches, pressing buttons, and turning levers all ritualize the inception of an infrastructure and mark the ending of its construction. It indicates a feat against nature; taming it and turning watercourses to directions that human populations may need. On the one hand, the new infrastructure's immediate and material effects are localized, specific to a limited space, on the other hand, its symbolic drive knows no bounds. Relatedly, Penny Harvey contends that “[inauguration] ceremonies endorse a scale in which local interest is irrelevant, superseded or transcended by the force of a ‘public work’ that may be located but is no longer local” (P. Harvey 2018, 95). However, the case of Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline megaproject, I argue, proves that the local still matters, despite the transcendence of the megaproject through its spectacularity beyond the local. Rather, the pipeline rescales the local in a wider scalar horizon—be it national, transnational, global. As part of Erdoğan's many “crazy projects”, the third bridge in Istanbul that connected European continent to Asia, did not only impact local populations and ecosystems on both ends of the bridge. Having been advertised even at provinces in the eastern end of the country—some 2000 kms—the bridge was scaled up to the national. Announcing a bridge that would not impact directly any local populations on the eastern end of Turkey, the government endorsed the multiscalar attributes of these infrastructure projects emphatically. In turn, projects like these including the pipeline was grounded in multiple scales and yet kept its localities in their constitution of meaning and values in vernacular terms. The grandiosity is therefore not just in the materiality of dams, the volume of water, and circumference of pipes but also in the way the megaproject is situated discursively in multi-scalar terms.

The pipeline is celebrated to be the one of its kind—a water pipeline that crosses sovereign borders underneath a sea. Erdoğan's declaration that water brings modernity to populations and render their livelihoods to be “civilized” is resonant in the official Turkish state ideology. The many Turkish governments over the past few decades have imposed

development plans, economic programs, and many other economic measures that rendered the Turkish state to be “an external disciplining force” (Bozkurt 2014, 84) in northern Cyprus.⁵² The inequality between the “motherland” Turkey and “babyland” northern Cyprus is not simply on a discursive level; the non-recognition of TRNC and its political and economic dependency on Turkey is manifested geopolitically as well whereby Turkey as its official protectorate of Turkish Cypriot population represents them in the international arena diplomatically. The disciplining force of the Turkish state, as it has applied for decades onto its own populations and territories like that of Kurdistan region for instance, is driven by a civilizing mission that orders nature and marginalizes people in its own sovereign borders. Such an ideological blueprint has come to be enforced on northern Cyprus as well. Today, the pipeline evokes such a force that defies sovereign borders in the name of aid, fraternity, and ethnic affiliation. It does so, not only in the way it materially reorders space, economy, and infrastructures, but also in the way that it animates old and new tropes, visions about futures, engenders new symbols and metaphors, and activates “place-making” and “world-making.” The inauguration as a ritual, points to this co-constitution of material and meaning amid uncertainty and a potentiality. And according to Penny Harvey, such an event as the inauguration of an infrastructure project, suggests that “something more than the [material] form is needed for the infrastructure to deliver that which is expected of it” (P. Harvey 2018, 96).

Erdoğan started the Alaköprü dam inauguration speech by telling the crowd about another technological feat. He declared that the night before, the Turkish state had launched the “TÜRKSAT 4B” satellite to space from the launching station in Baykonur, Kazakhstan. He continued, “we have witnessed such a success in the skies last night, and today, we are here to

⁵² See Chapter 4 for these economic programmes and protocols

witness a similar feat under the Mediterranean Sea.” In his endeavor to create monuments from skies to sea, the Turkish hegemon told the audience, “I always say to you, remember: ‘We have not come to this position to become masters (*efendi*); we have come upon this nation to be servants (*hizmetkâr*).” Ever since AKP became the ruling power, a politics of service has become dominant in their agenda, whereby efficiency and prestige come to the fore as their utmost goals to “serve their people”.

Hande Paker characterizes this politics of serving through megaprojects and infrastructural advancements as a tool for hegemony building (Paker 2017). As part of the infrastructural state power (Mann 1984), Paker contends that logistical intervention and reordering of the ecology through policies have come to be central tools for the ruling government in building legitimacy and widespread consent—hence, the resilience of hegemonic power of the AKP government. Following a Gramscian approach to hegemony building, Paker illustrates through three main megaprojects that infrastructure building “for the common interest of the people” or “as services delivered to the people” has generated consent through such developmentalist discourse. Additionally, Adaman and Akbulut (2020) also argue—again following the Gramscian concept of hegemony building through consent and coercion—that authoritarianism, populism, and developmentalism make up the three pillars of the neoliberal and extractivist regime of Erdoğan’s AKP. In their Gramscian analysis of Erdoğan’s almost 20-year rule, the authors show that AKP rule has carried with it authoritarianism all along, and argue that there is always an element of coercion that necessarily accompanies consent (3).

Both Paker (2017) and Adaman and Akbulut (2020) emphasize the developmentalist discourse of the AKP and how such agenda has crystallized during the AKP era and their promotion of “the trifecta of the energy-transport-construction sectors” (ibid), which especially has caused (and continue to do so) detrimental effects on the environment. Megaprojects, thus,

are not only mega because they are grand, monumental in their size and economic impact; their mega-ness also has something to do with the creation of consent and support from which the AKP regime draws.—It encompasses a vast terrain with monumentality and hypervisibility (Flyvbjerg 2014). Its grandeur comes from not just the finances and technological innovation it took to build this network of infrastructures; it is a project of ideological and territorial scale-making through semiotic and material processes that enters into constructing public infrastructure, as I show throughout this chapter (Anand 2017b; Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018; P. Harvey and Knox 2012; P. Harvey, Jensen, and Morita 2016; Larkin 2013).

In the case of the Turkey-northern Cyprus pipeline megaproject, consent is vocalized in vernacular terms as a “gift” (*armağan*), that the AKP government has provided water to people of northern Cyprus, as a gift, according to some of my interlocutors. The hierarchy between the Turkish state and TRNC, over the years, have generated an assumption that there would be an underlying prerequisite that Turkey would aid northern Cyprus. As this materialized in the political economic domain by way of economic aid packages, aid was expected as much as it was needed as it was perceived by many Turkish Cypriots. The notion of the gift, as the water and its pipeline was repeatedly characterized, however, have come to epitomize a loss of trust against their “motherland” as soon as the news of privatization made headlines in newspapers. Serving the people, aid, and giving the “water of life” discourses that AKP government and Erdoğan played up to, created consent as much as coercion by way of economic concessions. As will be seen in later chapters however, such constraints were not simply political or economic ones. The loss of trust and the disillusion of the gift were interpreted as a moral collapse for people in the north.

The long-established ethos of “babyland” as an embodied identity became entangled with being mere subjects obligated to be party to a neoliberal transaction, *not* one of aid. This disillusionment at times, occurred in real time throughout my time there; as soon as I asked my

interlocutors about water being privatized, their loss of trust was visible with astonished faces they would ask: “so this is not a gift then?” Though gifts may “appear free and disinterested, they are actually always constraining and interested, entrapping their recipients in a relationship of obligation” (Yeh 2013, 15). This relationship of obligation, as Yeh contends in her study of development in Tibet, reinforces the act of giving a gift as a form of symbolic domination. The recipient “lose[s] some measure of autonomy and freedom” and “implicitly acquiesces to the *social order* that produces the gift” (idem: 33, emphasis mine). And it is this sense of acquiescence for my interlocutors that permeates their senses of belonging and identity, renders them actively complicit to that social order—the occupation and dependence—as well as have moments of contestation and a desire for reclamation of their autonomy. As one person said to me, they felt they were being condemned (*mahkum olmak*) to this water, expressing the obligation and complicity in moral terms.

Territorializing “the local”

Erdoğan’s presence at the inauguration ceremonies, his development-cum-civilization discourse, along with heavy overtones of serving the people, does not apply to the Gramscian understanding of hegemony through consent. After all, Turkish Cypriots are not able to vote for him or his party during elections in Turkey. Creating an illusion of inclusivity for his “Turkish Cypriot brothers and sisters”, the developmentalist speech goes beyond the political economic goals of neoliberal extractivism and aligning the state with a market logic. Erdoğan’s speech at Anamur, next to the Alaköprü dam, encapsulates the broad support and consent he has gained over the years: The megaproject, built with the Turkish taxpayers’ money, aims to provide the clean water, taking it away from Turkish communities in Mersin, selling it to a private company, simultaneously to be sold to Turkish Cypriots with a profit margin. Yet, here was a massive crowd, clapping for Erdoğan who shows them the dam and says, “this is what a

nation looks like, this is localism (*yerlilik*).⁵³ At once, he scales up and situates northern Cyprus “in the world”, as mentioned above; with a firm idea that international recognition is of utmost concern and it is through Turkish state’s support that this will be realized. Meanwhile, he also scales down to suggest that autochthony precedes anything, lumping the communities of northern Cyprus into that autochthonous idea in which the infrastructural efforts of the Turkish state to develop “the nation” includes peoples outside the sovereign borders. Northern Cyprus therefore, is at once included in the “imagined community” that Erdoğan talks about as a “Turkish nation” and excluded from it in an effort to render the TRNC state as a fully recognized polity.

According to Eyal Weizman, “political action is fully absorbed in the organization, transformation, erasure, and subversion of space” (Weizman 2012, 7). The molding of space, the processes through which territory is made through a set of relations, become all the more visible through material infrastructures that conspicuously operationalize a set of territorial, political, and economic practices in the name of public provisioning. Of course, these simultaneous territorialization and de-territorialization processes are not new or specific to northern Cyprus. The Turkish state has a history of developmentalist and civilizational visions in its effort to build a nation-state. As such, the environment and infrastructure sits right at the center of state-society relations and the state’s hold on space and its people (Harris 2012). The reinforcement of nationalism and dominant political rationality of the Turkish state—especially its pillars like developmentalism and statism—operates especially through getting a hold of the water resources. Just like in any other territorialization practices and the legitimation of state sovereignty (Tilly 1985), water resources, like rivers, aquifers, lakes, and so on are especially significant in states’ endeavor to get a hold of. In order to “territorialize,”

⁵³ *Yerlilik* in Turkish, points to both the locality in the sense of the location, and also the locals, in the sense of the people. While I do not think Erdoğan uses this term strictly to mean “autochthony”, I take it as such along with the two meanings of the word.

states render the complexity of environmental and material surroundings simplified, legible, and knowable. There is a vast literature specifically on the ways in which the Turkish state has done this in the southeastern region (Harris 2012; Yüksel 2011; Oğuz 2021 among others), and elsewhere within its sovereign borders.

To illustrate, the case of GAP (*Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi* – Southeastern Anatolia Project) is the biggest infrastructure project in modern Turkish history that encapsulate “the ways that state-society relations and understandings of the Turkish state are evolving in relation to ongoing waterscape and infrastructural trans-formation in the upper Tigris-Euphrates basin” (Harris 2012, 29). Not only this, GAP is also an example that highlight the co-constitution of materiality and meaning, or in other words, the economic and material configurations impacting and are impacted by the moral economies and a constellation of meanings and values on a multiscalar level. It is a multi-sector regional development plan, which was initiated in 1950s as part of Turkey’s nation-building. Involving hydroelectric plants, irrigation, and many other infrastructural development components, the Turkish state has not only tapped into “nature” in its extraction to ostensibly improve economic growth; the project rendered the northern Kurdistan region of Turkey “a laboratory” to *engineer* nature as well as its marginalized peoples.⁵⁴ Charged with a high modernist and developmentalist mentality, GAP is entwined with the Kurdish Question that dominated Turkish politics for decades. The project especially focused on the hydroscaapes of the region—mainly the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Building large-scale “spectacular” infrastructures like dams, irrigation networks, and hydroelectric plants, the Turkish state utilized GAP as “a policy tool to address the economic roots of Kurdish separatism” (Çarkoğlu and Eder 2005, 170). Hydraulic infrastructures of GAP, presented as technological marvels, characterized by politicians as “handcuffs” for the

⁵⁴ The southeastern region is where Kurdish communities dominantly reside in Turkey. Heavily securitized and militarized, these territories are contested since the inception of the republic.

rivers or “golden bracelets” that “beautify” the Tigris and Euphrates (Conker 2018, 886), are all territorializing tools to legitimize domination over space and the marginalized peoples that contest the very state power that encroaches upon their livelihoods. Changing water courses, dictating what crop to grow, where to live, and where to leave, the state exerts its power and political agenda over the space. According to Akbulut, Adaman, and Arsel, such top-down state implementation of material infrastructures and its symbolic and ideological blueprint “concretize[s] and reinforce[s] the hegemonic project of the state” (2018, 102).

Performative infrastructures and structures of feeling

Going back to the Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline, the transferred water originating from the Anamur springs of Toros mountain ranges in Turkey flows through the pipeline that hangs in the Mediterranean Sea. As it runs its re-directed course, it changes its status of ownership, its end-users, and eventually animates a whole set of meanings for the communities of northern Cyprus. From commons to commodity, the transferred water becomes a commodity to exchange between the Turkish state and end-users in northern Cyprus via a number of institutions such as the private company that “buys” the water from the state and sells it to local governing bodies, i.e. municipalities, which would then deliver it to the people.

Before unpacking this set of transactions, in its political economic contours and context, however, I turn to those meanings, ideas, metaphors, old and new tropes, and the “structures of feeling” (Williams 1977) that the pipeline project have brought about among my interlocutors in northern Cyprus. So far, I have discussed how the inaugural event in its discursive details highlights the relationship between, (1) material presence, visibility, and grandiosity of the pipeline and political and economic ideologies, and between (2) states and institutions that are meant to represent its people and the reproduction of space and territory through non-coercive means like public infrastructures. Large-scale infrastructure projects like the water pipeline to northern Cyprus (or the GAP in southeastern Turkey) are public spectacles; they constitute and are constituted by materials like concrete, metal, plastic, etc.

They are encapsulated in performative enactments like inauguration ceremonies which signify the multiplicity of meanings endowed upon them (Schwenkel 2018, 122). These ceremonies “convey to hopeful populations the potential for social transformation” (121).

With their capacity to promise change and growth to people, infrastructures, as Schwenkel notes, also mark the end of something else. Here, I am reminded of how my interlocutors Tülin and Zeynep reminisced about their childhood as they stared into the water



Figure 9. Zeynep's feet are visible in her Instagram post of our Geçitköy dam site visit in April 2016. Used with permission.

mass in Geçitköy dam (Figure 9). We went there together as the dam remained half full, the picnic site around it unfinished. Tülin looked over to the bushes and the now-barren hills around the dam and said “you know, this used to be a beautiful site. Zeynep, do you remember? We used to collect mushrooms around this pond.” I had realized then, that Geçitköy dam used to be an artificial pond, made in 1990 through an economic cooperation protocol between Turkey and northern Cyprus.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ I unpack the economic cooperation and aid protocols in Chapter 4.

A few months later, I encountered a man (who told me he was a Turkish immigrant living in northern Cyprus for more than a decade) at the same roadside lookout spot, who exclaimed, “Finally, the water of life is here. He did it! He connected us back to Turkey.” The dam, while disassembled one ecosystem, causing people like Tülin and Zeynep to ponder upon their childhoods, also assembled other people around it, who look at the same spot in awe imagining the water to be a blessing. While the man kept a future oriented vision of how this infrastructure project will bring blessings, Tülin and Zeynep looked to the past. Having created childhood memories in one entanglement of technology and nature, Tülin and Zeynep no longer related to the site—no longer an artificial pond with its former ecosystem, now a dam site with concrete rubble, a few bushes, and makeshift roads around it. Then, when an infrastructure gets constructed, it is the end of another one. Along the way, the redundancy or end of an infrastructure is never the end of the sociality, memory, and publics that once gathered around such spaces of intervention.

Upon the first batch of water pumping through the pipes and into the dam, the people living in northern Cyprus flocked to the outskirts of the water mass and enjoyed a view of the landscape—the vista of Pentadaktylos forests gained new meaning with the presence of the incoming water—a piece of motherland. Having caught the public attention, the shallow reservoir and the water rushing through the pipes into the dam invited people to have picnics around it. A man even made it to the front page of many newspapers, because he enjoyed the incoming water a bit too much by swimming in it after a few hours of daytime drinking of whiskey. In his interview on a local newspaper, he described the water as “holy”, and that President Erdoğan was so mighty that now northerners like himself, will no longer suffer from poor quality water resources of the island. He declared that the water is so holy and healthy that it will heal his arthritis, which is why he decided to let himself into the cold unprocessed

spring water that came from Dragon creek in Mersin of southern Turkey. For the man interviewed, water was not just life, but also life endowed upon them by the motherland.

The dam stood for something for many people in northern Cyprus. It was and never will be it seems, just a dam. With its “pedagogical and performative roles” (Gupta 2018, 67), dams have political intent, a spatial and temporal vision, and their assembled parts are more than materials and technological objects. Extending the viewpoint of Kaika and Swyngedouw (2000) on urban networks, material infrastructures like the water pipeline and the dams become “the *iconic* embodiments of and *shrines* to a technologically scripted image and practice of progress” (121, emphasis mine). The dam provokes people, standing grandiose and enmeshed with the environment. It becomes iconic of what constituted and constitutes the “half island” as a collectivity, historically situated, spatially connected, and politically in a “state of exception.”

In the remainder of this chapter, I continue my exploration of the project’s infrastructural components and turn to several ethnographic moments that drove my interlocutors to contemplate on meanings, metaphors, and tropes that assembled around the water pipeline. I especially dwell on what Erdoğan promised northern Cyprus to have, “a place in the world”, and how my interlocutors in northern Cyprus made sense of their location and material and affective (dis)connections in discourse and practice.

Fluid meanings, concrete promises

Today, the megaproject invokes various tropes about this connection between northern Cyprus and Turkey. The pipes not only connected the two spaces—the island and the mainland—to bring a necessary resource to a water-scarce island; it also conjured up old and new allusive devices that pointed to *where* northern Cyprus is, both geographically and politically. Melda, a Turkish Cypriot who lived in Turkey for many years throughout her university years, reminded me of a pop song from the late ‘70s that featured nationalistic and militaristic sentiments about northern Cyprus.

My race has joy in the Mediterranean
My homeland continues beyond Mersin
From Kyrenia, we built a road to Anatolia
My glorious army has triumphed in Cyprus.⁵⁶

The song's lyrics are in fact inspired by a novel called '*Girne'den Yol Bağladık*' which would translate as 'We built a road from Kyrenia' by Özker Yaşın. The novel puts the Turkish military 'peace operation' to Cyprus in 1974 at the center stage and tells a story of war and liberation. Both the song and the novel invoked a connection—one that was deeply desired once (and maybe still is), as Turkish Cypriots looked at the Turkish state and military for its care, compassion, and emancipation for a long time. Melda pointed out this song and its metaphorical purchase to me in a cynical manner, when we were discussing all the lands that were expropriated for the specific purpose of the megaproject: 'our lands suddenly became property of the Turkish Republic, how and when did this happen?' The connection that the song refers to is epitomized with the words used for Turkey and northern Cyprus in the general public, news media, history books, and other venues: motherland and babyland (*anavatan* and *yavru vatan*). For most of my interlocutors who think alike with Melda, these expressions, used in a sardonic manner, nevertheless barely lost their historical and political weight for many across the political spectrum in both Turkey and northern Cyprus.

The words, *anavatan*, motherland, and *yavruvatan*, babyland evoke a long history of social and political relationship. The word "motherland" is a frequent one used across some nations,⁵⁷ where ethnic and atavistic relatedness motivate an affinity. Or motherland simply points to nationalisms that suggest the primacy of space and land in constructing national identities. Babyland however, is unique to northern Cyprus and its stance in relation to the

⁵⁶ The lyrics are translated by the author. Lyrics in Turkish can be found here:

<https://lyricstranslate.com/tr/yasemin-kumral-girne-den-yol-bagladik-anadoluya-lyrics.html>

⁵⁷ One example to this would be Russia. Though the term motherland is common, fatherland is also used widely.

Turkish state. It is a land miniaturized, carbon copied in its materiality, people, and politics—or it is understood to be as such. It suggests hierarchy between two lands; one is bigger than the other. One nurtures the other. One is responsible for the other and scolds and controls the other’s behavior when “she” sees fit. It is a relationship of authority and power. These monikers of motherland and babyland remain widely used in everyday life and institutional politics in both countries. Against the backdrop of these representations of this maternal tie, along with the songs and novels mentioned above, the long awaited, highly planned across decades water pipeline completed a metaphorical circle of meanings as *göbek bağı*, the umbilical cord.

Indexing this unequal relationship of *dependence*, the umbilical cord was used widely by my interlocutors as a shorthand reference for the water pipeline. At the core of such dependency lay heavy military support across the north, annual financial aid packages that kept the de-facto TRNC economy afloat, and many other material and governmental assistance. For Turkish Cypriots, the umbilical cord is not simply a shorthand for their political and ethnic attachment to the Turkish state. As the megaproject made the metaphor of umbilical cord possible, it also raised an awareness of the problematic and unequal character of this attachment. It echoed the historically established patronage relationship between the Turkish state and northern Cyprus centered in this very metaphor of a mother and baby, which in its core is ‘*abnormal*’ as my Turkish Cypriot interlocutors often described it. The idiomatic reference to this relationship of authority is cited in almost every mention of Turkey—it is invoked every time a Turkish Cypriot talked about ‘motherland’. The former de-facto president of TRNC, Mustafa Akıncı—a critical voice of Turkish dependency and patronage—cited the strained relationship many times during his political career. Before getting elected as de-facto president, Akıncı extended the mother-baby metaphor and remarked that the crawling baby needed to start walking on their own: ‘Such mother-baby relationship between states is wrong. It is time for this “baby” to stop crawling and start walking upright and with no help. Instead

of this compromised relationship of mother and baby, it is time to build a relationship of siblings.⁵⁸ Akıncı's stern stance on self-determination led to a polemic with Erdoğan, who responded that northern Cyprus would remain a 'babyland', rejecting any calls for equality.

Further, the pipeline was likened to other things from the opposite end of the political spectrum way before the megaproject was built. Sırrı Süreyya Önder, a former MP in the Turkish parliament affiliated with the Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* – BDP),⁵⁹ gave a speech in the parliament on January 4th, 2012 and said that it is good that Turkey is transferring so much water to northern Cyprus and that 'northern Cyprus has become the large intestine [of the Turkish state]; you need all that water to wash over this large intestine.'⁶⁰ Önder explained this metaphor—yet another corporeal one—by reminding the parliament that Turkish state and enterprise together built a neoliberal system of dodgy businesses, a paradise for the mafia, prostitution, and gambling in northern Cyprus.⁶¹ Implying that this so-called 'state' in northern Cyprus then, needs to be washed away, he lays out a multi-layered critique riddled with metaphors. Önder says outright in the end that 'northern Cyprus is under occupation', one of the most unpopular opinions in Turkish politics, whichever way one leans, left or right.

The metaphors created commonly used monikers. The names turned into an idiom sarcastically used most of the time: 'after all, we are *yavru vatan* (babyland)', uttered by Turkish Cypriots to convey a "state of exception". And the idiom is now extended into a full-on saga, an umbilical cord, the large intestine, and so on. The material connection and the location of the megaproject led to metaphorical discourses of where Turkish Cypriots are

⁵⁸ <https://www.mustafaakinci.com/akinci-benim-kulak-verecegim-ses-kibris-turk-halkinin-sesidir/> Translated by author

⁵⁹ Peace and Democracy Party was a Kurdish left-wing party, which was shut down in 2014.

⁶⁰ <https://t24.com.tr/haber/bdpli-onderden-kibris-icin-kalin-bagirsak-benzetmesi,190064> Translated by author.

⁶¹ For a detailed analysis on casinos and gambling in northern Cyprus, see (J. Scott and Asikoglu 2001). Also for a thorough analysis on uneven development and tourism in northern Cyprus, see (Özdemir 2020).

located in relation to Turkey—both geographically and politically. In the following sections, I illustrate through conversations with my interlocutors, how these metaphors and discursive devices inform people’s constructions of self, collectivity, and temporality in relation to *where* they are.

De-facto addresses, (un)likely connections

The address of every residential home, office, state building—every unit—in northern Cyprus has to end with ‘Mersin, Turkey’. If one does not put in this ending for postage, whatever you are sending via mail cannot reach the recipient. Northern Cypriot spaces and the people who live in those spaces are *nominally yet not officially* in Mersin, Turkey. They are somewhere, but *not* officially there in Turkey. For people in northern Cyprus, location—where they are and where they want to be—mattered immensely to them. The condition of living in a de-facto country rendered their location questionable and questioned by its people. Northern Cyprus, scaled as unofficially part of Turkey through its address, is already “practically Turkey” as most of my interlocutors said, while at the same time expressed how unsurprising it is to see this megaproject come to being. Their state of exception, *exceptionality (istisna)* or *abnormality (anormallik)*⁶² as they called it, *was* the condition of this megaproject’s possibility after all.

As Cemil, a Turkish Cypriot from Morphou, picked me up from *Ercan*, the only commercial airport in northern Cyprus, and drove into the city of north Nicosia, he pointed out to me the monumental TRNC flag etched with white and red rocks on the Pentadaktylos (*Beşparmak*) Mountains. The natural environment became sites where the Turkish hold on northern territories and the military occupation is tangible, visible, and is what sustains Turkish power and ideology (Navaro 2012). Cemil ironically wondered who or which institution pays

⁶² I unpack these emic terms in the coming sections and the following chapter.

for the electricity that lights up the flag every night,⁶³ making it visible all the way from Paphos in the southernmost part of the island of Cyprus. Since our first meeting in Ankara in October 2015, where he was living and studying to receive his Master’s degree in political science, Cemil was excited to share with me the peculiarities of the island. I thought that he even enjoyed my naivety and embarking on research of a place that I had never been. In the car on my first day on the island, he reported to me the following: “We are divided [with the south] on the surface, but at the end of the day, our shit runs together under our feet.” The geographical and political division of the island hid a disregarded story of infrastructural connection

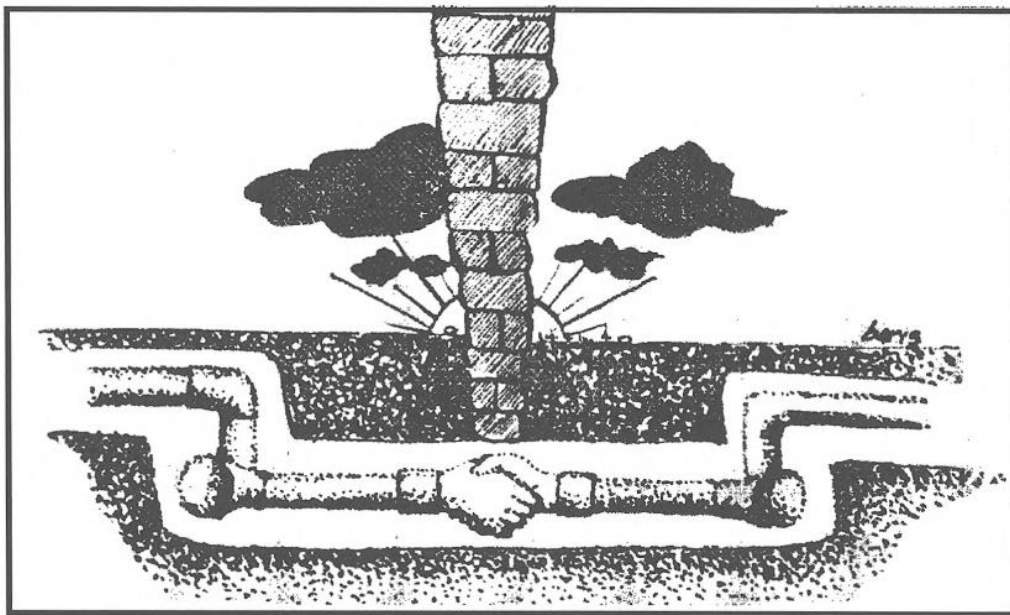


Figure 10. The caricature depicting sewerage cooperation was published in Yeni Düzen newspaper of northern Cyprus in 1979. Reproduced in the mentioned UNHCR report (1996), I retrieved the image from Hocknell (1998).

(Hocknell 1998). Cemil was referring to the sewerage infrastructure of Nicosia, naturally, a single city-wide system as part of what is called the Nicosia Master Plan devised in 1979 bi-

⁶³ Cemil’s reflection pushed me to pursue the answer to this question. A few months later, I found out that there is an association for the electrification of the TRNC flag—namely, TRNC Beşparmak Mountains Lighting Association (*KKTC Beşparmak Dağları Işıklandırma Derneği*).

communally⁶⁴ (See Figure 10). I had come to the island to study clean water infrastructure with a focus on the Turkish state-funded undersea water pipeline, and the dynamics of dependency with Turkey. However, the joint sewerage of the island and the powerful statement by Cemil about “their shit running together” showed me on my first day in Cyprus a glimpse into the kinds of conversations and utterances that I was to hear during my fieldwork on connection and partition. The oft used reference to a state of being “somewhere in between” (*arada kalmışlık*) was marked by a bitter sense of sarcasm that prevailed throughout my time there.

After we had a modest lunch at one of the trade unions’ cafeterias, he told me we had to stop by at his aunt’s place. He told me he could not go to that part of the city and *not* visit her as it would be rude. His aunt Şerife greeted us happily and Cemil introduced me as she insisted that we have Cypriot coffee. I asked her whether she had any opinions about the transferred water and the newly built pipeline from Turkey. She told me firmly, “I do not want the water of the dead, I heard they built the dam on top of a cemetery in Anamur [Turkey]. Instead of drinking that corpse water, I can drink my *own*, coming from my *own* land... But we do need [clean] water, that much is true.” The conversation about the water pipeline project, or ‘water of the dead’ ended with Şerife uttering “If Turkey says we live, we live. If Turkey says we die, we die. This is how it goes around here, my child.” As the first day of what was to become a year and a half fieldwork period in northern Cyprus came to an end, I was struck by these unexpected conversations about feces, death, and water. I was particularly surprised by how my first conversation about the pipeline infrastructure ended up being one of life and

⁶⁴ The Nicosia Master Plan is a bi-communal project of developing the city of Nicosia infrastructurally and in preservation of its heritage, especially the walled city. It included a detailed assessment of the city's structure and developed a long-term plan for its future development. The UNHCR (1996) report on the sewerage project as part of NMP claims that the project is an accomplishment, an example for the world, and “a tribute to a people's effort to view themselves as a whole and to work together despite the physical and political separation of their communities.”

death. The supposed river of life and peace really meant an existential dilemma. Like Şerife, many of my interlocutors in northern Cyprus had similarly indecisive, oscillating, and loaded statements about the transferred water. These conversations on my first day with Cemil and his aunt Şerife revealed two things to me: that the divided island of Cyprus may have a different story of connection infrastructurally, and that the pipeline may have stirred deeper unease among Turkish Cypriots, in contrast to Turkish president Erdoğan's presentation of the water and pipeline as a 'gift' and 'the river of life.' Indeed, Şerife had called it the very opposite of that: 'the water of the dead.'

Like Şerife, another Turkish Cypriot, Zeynep's mother Aliye was adamant about distinguishing "*their*" (i.e., the Turkish state's) water and "*our own*" water. From a coastal village west of Kyrenia called Vasilya, Aliye said she was happy about the water she already got on her taps. "You see, we have this clear and beautiful water from the springs of Beşparmak mountain. I even get it checked at the state laboratory every year to see if it is drinkable, and it is!" Once a teacher, she became a public servant and worked at the parliament for many years in legislative auditing, and later became a member of her local council. Aliye said that other villages and towns probably need the transferred water, but not Vasilya and not the villages in its vicinity. That day when I met her for the first time, she added that the pipeline and the transferred water meant something more than *need* and that the megaproject materialized what she talked about in her residential and work circles all the time—Turkish dependency (*bağımlılık*).

First, thinking about the materiality of water, Aliye makes a clear distinction between *my* water and *their* water, just like Şerife. In its elemental form, in nature, water is fluid, unruly, and unpredictable, and conditioned by gravity. Its natural attributes suggest that it is omnipresent, connected, and universal. When it is out there, there is no notion of ownership. It is the human intervention, when one acts on it, changes its course, controls its status, location,

conditions, that water becomes visible or intelligible to people who encounter it. Aliye is content with *her* water, but “that other water” coming from Turkey is separate in her thinking. Claiming a sense of possession, she distinguishes the element because of its different locations, diverging in the way they flow, and what these locations meant politically. Water is at once an element and no longer just an element as soon as it enters the thought process of humans. It can be considered as an artefact, “acculturated through human action, endowed with personal qualities and identity, and used to invoke meaning” (Strang 2004, 6).

Second, Aliye brought up politically loaded terms that afternoon, ones that permeated in the discussions regarding the water pipeline infrastructure every time Zeynep and I went over to her house for lunch or a quick coffee. Turkish dependency, their lack of sovereignty, non-recognition all contributed to Aliye’s thought process about the newly built water infrastructure. Having worked at the de-facto TRNC parliament for all these years, she affirmed to me that of all the people, she knows how northern Cyprus have been so dependent on the Turkish state. The dependence was on economic and political level. Now on an infrastructural level, Aliye and Zeynep both agreed that this dependency was different.

In fact, Turkish state’s economic aid to de-facto TRNC has been directed to infrastructural development for so long that some of these public works went unnoticed. Roads, electricity, telecommunications, are all constructed and developed with the aid from Turkish state (see Chapter 4). Throughout my initial conversations with Cemil, Şerife, Zeynep, Tülin, and Aliye all made me wonder, why *this* project, why *now*? And how did the water pipeline infrastructure become so visible and not *other* projects?⁶⁵ Turkish aid is omnipresent in northern Cyprus. As such, its (in)visibility became not only a discussion point for my

⁶⁵ To this particular question, an environmental engineer provides some answers in Chapter 6.

interlocutors, but also an avenue for me to inquire and understand the material and ideological dimensions of the water pipeline project.

Visibility of infrastructures

The pipeline in its material form is only possible and knowable with the discourses and practices around it. First, it is an assemblage of technological materials: kilometers of pipes made of high density polyethylene, dam constructions, buildings dedicated to pumping stations and treatment plants, barbed wire that enclose these expropriated spaces, dirt roads and sealed roads that connect sites of construction, a picnic area along the Geçitköy dam, a makeshift look out site to the water mass in the dam, newly planted trees, cemented dead spaces in and around the construction sites, the list goes on. Every time I drove from Nicosia towards the north, passing the roads along the Pentadaktylos mountains, I saw worksites with signs of DSİ (Devlet Su İşleri – State Hydraulics Authority of Turkey), the flag of Turkish Republic and the de-facto flag of TRNC. With empty containers laying on the dirt and large pipes that stood idly either as discarded or surplus, one of these worksites looked empty and created an apocalyptic sense of “dead space” by the roadside. On a day that I drove once again to Aliye’s village Vasilya, a man stood around in the worksite as if he was the person in charge there. I pulled over to say hi and ask a few questions about what this worksite was for. Disgruntled by my presence there, he told me that I cannot stop my car there, that this worksite is no longer in use and that he was

not allowed to talk to anyone regarding the project without permission from the main office of DSİ. I was not surprised with this response, as I got the same one when tried to enter the treatment plant in Çamlıbel. Fenced off, the treatment plant looked like a fortress of some sort. These lands where the project made its mark were expropriated by the TRNC and were “given” to the Turkish state, rendering them state property. But which state, I was unsure and so was everyone.

As I contemplated on these materials, buildings, and spaces that the megaproject gave rise to, coupled with Aliye’s commentary on Turkish dependency, Şerife’s water of life and death, I am reminded of Susan Leigh Star’s argument that infrastructures are only visible when they break down. Spearheading a whole new subdiscipline of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and taking infrastructure to the center of social inquiry, Star’s contention seemed not so

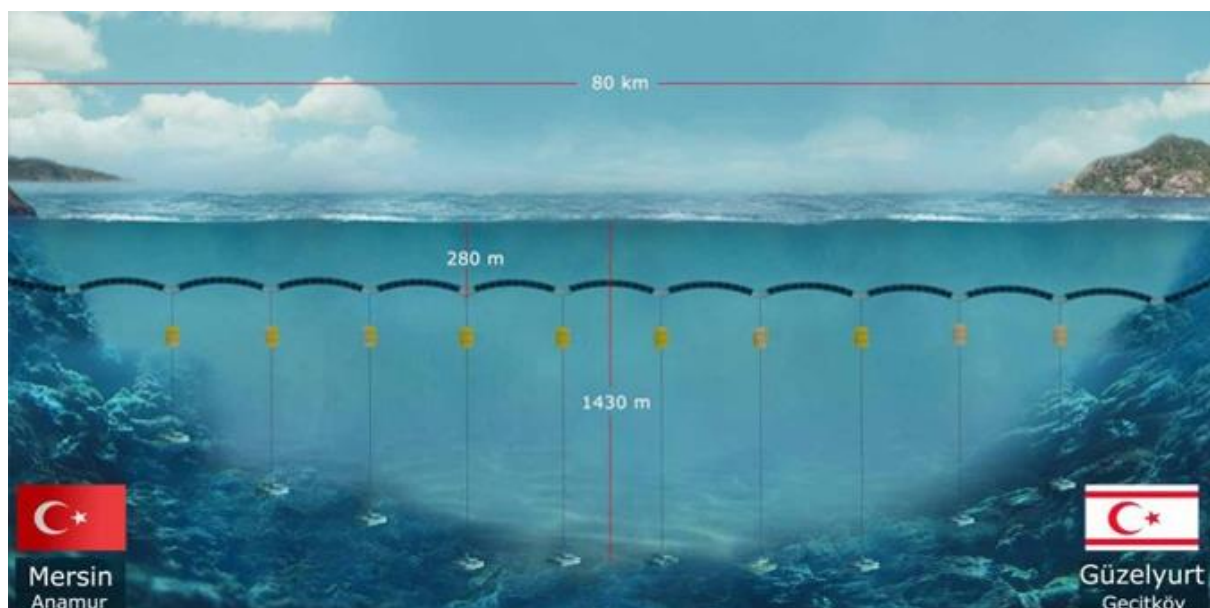


Figure 11. The pipeline attached on the seabed along the submarine "valley" between Mersin and Geçitköy. The photo was taken from the DSİ website, which is no longer available online.

convincing anymore. How is the visibility of an infrastructural assemblage contingent upon its functionality? For a long time during fieldwork, I observed the materials I listed above, always with the same sign of DSİ, Turkish state, and TRNC, and wondered about the visibility/functionality debate. The one component that everybody talked about was not

visible—naturally so. Attached on the seabed of the Mediterranean sea between southern Turkey and north of Cyprus (see Figure 11), the pipes that made a line between the two landmasses in their material form were secondary to what they stood for as an idea. The visibility argument that Star made raised questions for many scholars on whether her contention applies to only the Global North; if it disregards the rest of the world where infrastructure is in a constant state of dysfunction or not there; and how the functionality of an infrastructure is made sense of politically and representationally.

Infrastructures, from the get-go, are within the domain of “matter”; they are technological ensembles meant to produce things, relations, and meanings. Their materiality is integral to the politics around it and vice versa. As Brian Larkin discusses extensively, there is a supposed hierarchy of materiality as the ground or base of an object and its “higher levels of discursive meaning” (Larkin 2018, 177). Rejecting this split or leveling between the technical and the symbolic, Larkin contends that they are mutually structuring; the materiality of an infrastructure comes into being through “nonmaterial arguments that governed their existence, regulating how [the] ensemble operated in the world” (2018, 181). Going along with his line of thought, the pipeline’s materiality and visibility is not possible without the discourses, intentional human actions, and a multiplicity of rationalities. The visibility of an infrastructure is not only contingent upon its materiality and functionality, but also on whether it is acted upon by people discursively and politically. It is the very relationship between an infrastructure’s materials and ideas that surround it that makes it visible, knowable, and reflected upon. As Brian Larkin argues, “visibility and its opposite is not an inherent quality of infrastructures but *practices* whereby politics is struggled over” (Larkin 2018, 186 emphasis mine). As demonstrated so far in this thesis, water and its infrastructure is always already visible *not only because* of its material aspects—water’s quantity (scarcity), the location and functionality of pipes, wells, aquifers, and aqueducts—but precisely because how it has been

known and knowable through the politics surrounding it. The visibility of water pipeline project, therefore, is made possible through political and representational processes. The pipeline infrastructure, whether it is visible or not, concretizes structures of feeling and animates discursive and political action and interrogation of belonging and territory, as well as temporal thinking of past connections and future uncertainties.

When Tülin, Zeynep, and I visited the Geçitköy dam site, we passed through the windy mountain road to the west of Kyrenia. Driving west from Nicosia, we first passed by numerous “night clubs”⁶⁶ with names like *Harem*, *Lipstick*, and *İmparator* (Emperor) standing by themselves in the arid fields by the roadside. Tülin interjected as she drove the car, that Turkey has built a “quasi-legal” network of businesses like these brothels besides public infrastructures like roads and pipelines. She wondered about the lives of the women⁶⁷ who resided and worked in these buildings. Having not yet left Nicosia, I was struck by these buildings and their conspicuity and ostentation. The conversation steered from night clubs to the roads that we drove on towards Kyrenia region. Zeynep, this time, said that even the metal road signs came from Turkey. The roads, built with the finances that came from economic aid packages, used raw materials shipped from Turkish mainland, along with labor force that seasonally get appointed there. Navigating oneself in the north was “thanks” to companies that built roads and produced those traffic plaques that indicated distances, speed limits, and other traffic rules that won a tender by the Turkish state on behalf of TRNC. The Turkish state presence was etched all over the material formations of buildings, buildings of workplaces, and infrastructures, creating a network of matter, places, and people in the northern territories.

⁶⁶ The brothels in northern Cyprus are referred to as night clubs.

⁶⁷ Most women, Tülin told me, who work in these brothels are from eastern European countries with dubious immigration status.

“Between Geçitköy and Alaköprü, ‘we built a connection’”

After stopping by at the makeshift roadside look out spot, we quickly arrived at the Geçitköy village, only 2.3 km away from the northern coast, populated with approximately 200 people,

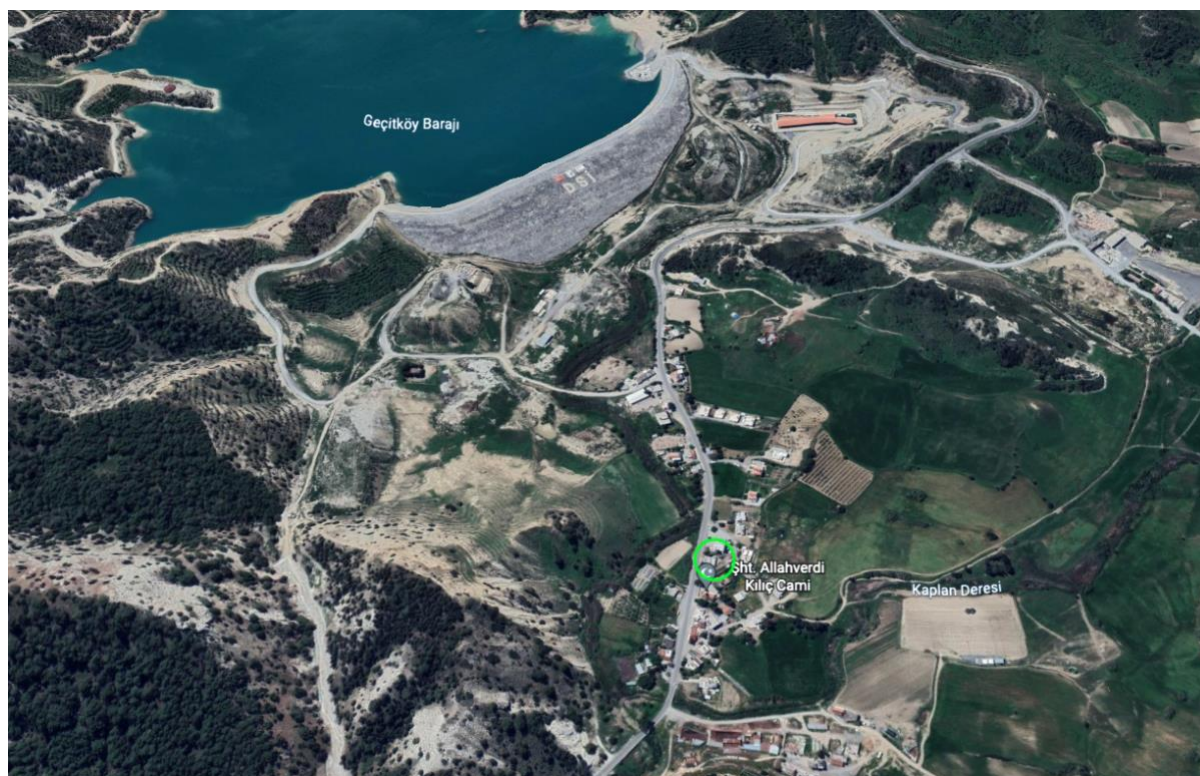


Figure 12. Geçitköy dam and the wall constructed for it is visible from a quick Google Earth viewing. The green circle indicates where the Geçitköy coffee house and village square is located. Source: Google Earth

mostly immigrants from Turkey (most of whom were in fact Kurdish). Zeynep immediately saw her acquaintances from the village, sitting at the outdoor coffee house and greeted them. The *muhtar*, the representative of the village, approached and greeted us and offered us some coffee immediately. Calling the water in the dam, water like candy (*şeker gibi su*), he told us that the village already started using the water with no charge as soon as the water filled the former reservoir through the newly laid pipes. Geçitköy is located in the vicinity of a few military barracks, and its *muhtar* told us about daily affairs and experiences with the military personnel. Here was a “Kurdish” village in a coast region of northern Cyprus, where around 40.000 Turkish military still reside. And upon the construction of the Geçitköy dam, it was now rumored that the village would be “placed” somewhere else. “There is no Geçitköy sign on the road anymore! We went to the [Turkish] Embassy and asked about the road signs,” the

muhtar told us. He also said that there is imminent danger that one day the dam would overflow, leaving the village flooded and destroyed. On the one hand, the *muhtar* and the people gathered in the coffee house, exchanging conversation between different tables, praised the “candy water” and that this “gift” was so significant to them. On the other hand, the impending danger of an overflowing dam right next to their coffee house and small grocery shop worried them (see Figure 12). Zeynep, the *muhtar*, and Naciye talked about people’s livelihoods in the village, building houses, setting up “gardens” for subsistence agriculture to provide for their families, and the prospect of abandoning all of that. Zeynep and Tülin looked at me with a smile when the *muhtar* said that one was once able to provide for oneself for a month just by foraging for mushrooms around here. Those days were over; but at least they had the gift that was water in the dam.

“We had much trouble during the construction [of the dam], but they gave us so much. They asked what we needed. We said, this and that. And they provided, no questions asked. At least, *they get things done*” said *muhtar*. I was immediately drawn to the moment of the inauguration speech of Erdoğan who said the following:

If Turkey works hard with tenacity, ambition, and determination, there is no project, no goal that it cannot achieve. When we inaugurated a 150 year-long dream of the project Marmaray, everybody said to us, “You are daydreaming.” Did the Marmaray train go under the Bosphorus? Yes, it did. And now, we are building the Eurasia tunnel, construction will be completed next year. And here, we built a connection from Anamur through water. *This nation gets it done!*

The rhetoric of “getting it done” echoed even among communities like Geçitköy village. The *muhtar* thought that the infrastructure project was a true act of service and a gift from the Turkish state. Reading between the lines of service and efficacy, such rhetoric has most often underlined a moral vision of politics and one that differentiated the ruling regime from the previous ones—the “us vs. them” that I discussed in the beginning of this chapter. The efficacy does not only come from technological feats and megaprojects that they built—in other words

material successes and interests. Erdoğan drew powers from “an ethics of efficacy” whereby his efforts to legitimate and consolidate his power come from a “calculative instrumentalism” (Piliavsky and Sbriccoli 2016, 374). With the *muhtar* of Geçitköy repeating the same words, it became evident that there indeed was *virtue* in efficient action (idem: 375).

Later in our conversation, *muhtar* revealed what exactly they do, according to him, to “getting things done.” Having paid billions of Turkish Liras for “unimportant and tiny” properties, the state silenced the residents of this region and “bought them” for the sake of building this infrastructure. “They sold us really good” (*Bizi iyi sattılar*)⁶⁸ he said precisely referring to doing things efficiently. These figurative acts of buying people off and selling people was where efficacy lies, according to *muhtar* along with the people nodding at him in the coffee house that day. While *muhtar* focused on the Turkish state buying and selling in order to create consent, Naciye, Zeynep’s acquaintance kept saying, “this village does *not* exist” because this village was not on maps or road signs anymore. Zeynep thought that this was a way for them to acclimatize the residents with the notion that there was an imminent threat of flooding. It is evident that the unreliability of the dam infrastructure has put people’s ways of living in deferral, whereby the promise of distribution, provision, and access to resources has the potential to sporadically turn into destruction and abandonment.

At the far end of the pipeline, where the transferred water originates, there is the Dragon creek of Anamur, Mersin. Trickling down from the Toros mountain ranges, Dragon creek has been the source of many communities’ livelihoods. Ranging from agriculture, animal husbandry, and freshwater fishing to extreme sports like rafting and other leisurely activities, the sustenance and social lives in the region depended on this water source. As soon as the TRNC water supply project’s construction was initiated, various problems ensued. While the

⁶⁸ The term is an expression that means they were exploited by the state.

project promised “life water” (*can suyu*) to one community, it took away that same “life water” from those who interacted with and lived around it in the first place. Creating mass consent in northern Cyprus, the infrastructure project produced other sites that led to mass discontent (Erensü 2017, 120). Declaring that they demand *their* water back, Anamur Environment Platform (*Anamur Çevre Platformu*) protested several times at onsite events and online via their Facebook page.⁶⁹ The pipeline project and the building of Alaköprü dam led to the Dragon creek drying up, rendering the water still, and odorous in the end. Not only was the water no



Figure 13.. Anamur Environment Platform shared this photo along with a caption saying that the villagers of Akine will be imprisoned in concrete TOKI houses. Source: shorturl.at/hwyA7

longer there to flourish the human and non-human ecosystems, but it also became a detriment to its surroundings. The material loss of an idea of ownership of water led to an emergence of political discontent and contestation. Since 2011, people from many occupations, such as banana producers and fishermen, have protested the water supply project and the Alaköprü

⁶⁹ Anamur Environment Platform Facebook page can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100069901083569>

dam.⁷⁰ The generative capacity and promises of one infrastructure project, became the cause of environmental degradation and crippling of livelihoods.

While the *muhtar* and residents of Geçitköy contemplated whether they would be forced to move due to imminent flooding, three villages across the sea had already been displaced, one of which is the Akine village. As the location of the Akine village became inconveniently placed where the plans of Alaköprü dam were drawn, TOKİ – Mass Housing Administration (*Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı*) built a separate village a few kilometers north of where the dam and hydroelectric plant is situated today (see Figure 13). Formed in 1984 “to enable home ownership for low-income citizens and prevent the proliferation of unauthorized irregular settlements (Kuyucu 2014, 616), TOKİ was first a credit dispensing mechanism mostly. Reinvented in the 2000s with the ascension of the AKP regime, it became a key institution in the ruling party’s efforts for urban regeneration and boosting the economy, especially the construction sector. TOKİ became “an extremely powerful land broker and housing developer with the authority to sell state land to private developers, use this land to develop ‘for-profit’ housing through private partnerships, construct subsidized mass housing units for lower-income groups, and change the planning and zoning status of state-owned plots” (ibid).⁷¹ The TOKİ scheme became synonymous with the AKP regime dominating many industrial growing towns. As the quintessential tool for neoliberal market-making mechanism (Kuyucu and Ünsal 2010), TOKİ urban transformation projects most often eradicate informal settlements known as “*gecekondu*” (Civelek 2017), however there are many cases in Turkey where state-led infrastructure projects, most often dam building to manipulate water resources, also led to mass displacements and forced evictions. GAP, mentioned previously, as the most

⁷⁰ <https://anayurtgazetesi.com/haber/10987173/muz-ureticilerinden-su-tutma-protestosu>

⁷¹ There are thorough analyses in the literature regarding urban regeneration and TOKİ schemes across the country during the AKP regime, examples of which are, but not limited to (Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008; Batuman 2018).

comprehensive project to socioeconomically transform the fabric of nature and the livelihoods of its people, included dam-building projects like Ilısu dam and Atatürk dam predating the AKP regime. Encapsulating the statist, top-down, developmentalist, and ethnicist approach of the Turkish state, dam building and hydroelectric plant-building (namely HES) rendered nature and its resources to be a tool for neoliberal economy, with little to no regard in the populations that enter into symbiosis with those natural environments.⁷² Instead, TOKİ buildings, multi-story concrete housing, became the easy answer to subdue those populations by way of forced evictions.

Akine village in Anamur is but a minor example to the TOKİ scheme under the AKP neoliberalizing regime, where a whole village was evicted and placed into TOKİ buildings. Without doing so conspicuously, the water supply project creates a network of livelihoods, people's expectations, and multiple meanings and affects. For some, the water infrastructure posited the gift of life, for others, it represented the impending danger of a flood and anticipation of being displaced. And for others, the anticipation became their reality, as they faced evictions, lost their homes, and live in financial debt to the state. With the case of Turkey-northern Cyprus water supply project, I argue that hydraulic infrastructures like dams and hydroelectric plants *do more* than organize spaces, expropriate private lands, render land and resources legible and controllable (Mitchell 2002), and become sites where AKP regime is legitimized, and "the new Turkey" is materially and environmentally constituted (Erensü 2017). Its pragmatist vision, economic dimensions, and material politics constitute how the affected people become entangled in the temporality and spatiality of the project, and in turn produce meanings, metaphors, and allusive discourses, and affects that are always attached to objects of technology and nature.

⁷² Sinan Erensü (2013; 2017; 2018) provides a thorough social analysis on the neoliberalization of nature, specifically taking hydroelectric plants (HES) as his object of inquiry.

Christina Schwenkel (2015; 2018) examines colonial infrastructural formations in Vietnam, their forms of monumentality, and their iconicity. Similarly, the water pipeline, visibilized and monumentalized with the two dams facing each other across the Mediterranean, are not simply technological successes that represent progress, modernity, and technical and economical efficiency. They are more than *active* icons, animating people, bringing forth various meanings of how they experience progress and modernity, rather than what is projected onto them. The iconic dams provoke “emotional responses and attachments” (2018, 114), galvanizing “collectivities to form (and at times dissolve) around technological objects” (115). The Geçitköy dam literally gathered people around it that year. Its form, function, and efficiency were co-constituted with the senses of time, belonging, and metaphors it gave rise to. Therefore, the built up effervescence, excitement coupled with anxiety and anticipation over the construction of the megaproject as manifested in the Geçitköy and Alaköprü dams render these technologies iconic and entangled with emergent structures of feeling that inform and are informed by identificatory processes of belonging, location, and authority.

Conclusion

Water as a component of the assemblage of the megaproject, is no longer *merely* a vital resource or one of the four elements in nature. Once nature becomes integrated into human-made technology, it is no longer just out there, in its natural state. Its meanings of service, life, civilization (normative as it may be), hegemonic tool, power, and progress render water very much a material “in here”, a human construct, which is made, knowable, and controllable. Once it is a scientific object to be reckoned with, it is also a political object that will magnetize a multiplicity of ideas, mental images, and meanings. And these ideas in turn will constitute spaces, places, peoples, and subjectivities.

The megaproject therefore is at once a civilizing mission, a hegemonic tool for the consolidation of Turkish state power, a catalyst for supposed peace, a source of life, “a gift”

and a promise taken seriously at last. Not limited to these, the pipeline, the dams, and the transferred water to be consumed by communities of northern Cyprus have all become significant not only in their materiality, but also in the way they constituted place, the relationship between states and people, and structures of feeling constituting belonging and the very conditions of social and political life in northern Cyprus.

The Turkish president Erdoğan's speech in Kyrenia that I analyzed at the beginning of this chapter points to critical and prevalent keywords in the 'New Turkey' narrative: efficiency, prestige, and legitimacy of power through material 'masterpieces.' The megaproject came forth in advertisements as the "project of the century." Claiming to be first of its kind, the pipeline defies sovereign borders, river basins, and geographical and geological obstacles. "Project of the century" is not just a technological feat; it is *the* New Turkey ethos. There are many projects of the century in Turkey and beyond, backed with foreign finance, enabled through expropriations, and other state mechanisms, each of them presented as "one of a kind." This could be a satellite, an all-green and sustainable municipal building in an industrial town, the Marmaray rail that connects the European side to the Asian one in the city of Istanbul, or the new Istanbul airport competing in the region as the new transit hub for travelers and import/export goods. Each project, on a multi-scale from small to mega, can be deemed one of a kind and of this century. Such rhetoric and ethos is not unfamiliar to the previous century when the Soviet Union made its mark to a vast region with "monumental projects of high socialism" (Schwenkel 2018, 106). From "the pioneering conquests of the atom and the cosmos" (Josephson 1995, 519), the USSR, with its leaders across decades of rule, had a vision of "gigantomania that grew out of the fascination and commitment to a technology of display" (520) and called these monuments of infrastructure and technology "projects of the century." Similarly, the contemporary Turkish government has shown grandiosity and efficient

manipulation of scant resources to be part of their *modus operandi*. The material and the spectacularity of it go hand in hand.

The projects of the century of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seem to offer “a benevolent state”, caring, responsible, efficient, and conspicuous. Whether it is high socialism or authoritarian neoliberalism, the rationality and ideology behind such megaprojects forge ties between state and its people insofar as they situate subjects within the power axes that the state creates. The pipeline is one of these projects that assembled technological objects, nature and its resources, people from separate lands, and old and new tropes between these two lands. The materials of the project constituted a multiplicity of mental images of futurity and the past, affective reactions to water and all that it could potentially bring, and sensibilities circling the strained relationship between the Turkish state and communities of northern Cyprus.

People like Aliye and Şerife as well as people in Anamur, water and its infrastructure, seen as an assemblage, become meaningful only when they consider it in terms of ownership, use, and right to access it. Its economic and material dimensions are coupled with the human thought process of rendering it a socio-cultural artifact. Infrastructure then, is the “imagined materialization” of economy (Appel 2018, 49). Having dwelled on these imagined temporalities and spatialities that my interlocutors pondered upon, I turn to the economy or material nuances and complications of the pipeline. I do this, keeping a genealogical logic and one that situates the project in a Turkish political economic conjuncture of neoliberalization. Keeping in mind Timothy Mitchell and his statement that “the economy always remained, tacitly, as a material ground out of which the cultural is shaped, or in relation to which it acquires its significance” (2002, 3), I approach in chapter 4, the entanglement of the economic rationality of (neo)liberalization and capitalist mode of production with the political rationality of domination by occupation.

Chapter 4 – “Rule by protocols”: Turkish domination and neoliberalizing dependence

Even before the inauguration of the water supply pipeline, debates at the parliament and on the news and social media about its rumoured privatization had already started in northern Cyprus. The big question had always been *who* would govern the transferred water and *how* for the Turkish Cypriot publics since before I arrived to the island. On September 26th, 2014, in an interview on *Kıbrıs Gazetesi* (Cyprus Gazette), then-Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Hamit Bakırcı, declared the de-facto TRNC state and its ministerial and municipal offices to be “defunct” and incapable to manage the newly built water infrastructure. This was a clear defence against those who staunchly opposed the private handling of water management. After this interview, Bakırcı became the public advocate of water privatization. He asserted that neither the State Hydraulics Authority, nor any of the 28 municipalities in the de-facto TRNC have the technical, infrastructural capacity and adequate and skilled personnel to manage such a vast infrastructural project: “...it is obvious that [the municipalities’] existing system of operations does not render them capable of managing this water. I do not want this transferred water to go to waste just to hold on to an ideology” (Orakcioğlu 2014).

At the time of this interview and as the construction of the pipeline infrastructure almost came to an end, municipalities, politicians, and other state actors in the de-facto TRNC initiated the conversation of what was to be one of the most controversial topics to discuss in the public sphere—who would manage the transferred water, how, and with what kind of terms and conditions would the Turkish state “bestow upon the gift of water”⁷³ to Turkish Cypriots? Just as any other Turkish aid—financial, infrastructural, or other—the question of which state body

⁷³ This is a frequently used expression by both Turkish actors as well as Turkish Cypriots. I will analyze it in Chapter 5.

would manage the transferred water was imbued with political ideology. A mundane infrastructural necessity became the front and centre in politics as a fundamental indication of Turkish Cypriot sociality, economic self-sufficiency, and TRNC politicians' leverage in domestic affairs vis-à-vis their so-called motherland Turkey.

Giving examples of several municipalities on their incapability to respond to infrastructural failure, Bakırcı later described the ideal scenario and resorted to a rhetorical question in the interview:

We should look at water management holistically. When you receive this water, your infrastructure should be in place, like the network pipes to households; there should be no seepage loss. Not only this, but your sewerage infrastructure should also be in place. We need to be able to treat the sewerage water and reuse it for agricultural production... There needs to be rainwater collection pipes and reservoirs. *Who will do all of these?* Is it going to be the [TRNC] state and its State Hydraulics Authority, which employs merely 4 engineers on temporary contracts? Or is it going to be the municipalities which clearly do not have the capacity in any way?" (ibid, translation and italics mine).

And it is precisely this rhetorical question that unsettled the Turkish Cypriot public, media, and the political arena in general; once the question emerged, Bakırcı was quickly accused of being "disrespectful to the intellect and skills of the Turkish Cypriot society" and "looking down upon his people" (Kahvecioğlu 2014).

Throughout my ethnographic field research in northern Cyprus, these words of the minister quoted above had become a prominent reference point for my Turkish Cypriot interlocutors. While some referred to it angrily, disagreeing and disparaging the minister's demeaning stance, others spoke to me in agreement with him, confirming in resignation that a private company would do a better job managing water than a state that is "not theirs" or "that does not work." Some asked, how could a TRNC Minister make such a sweeping judgment about the abilities of his people? The outrage followed by the breaking news of the forthcoming privatization of water infrastructure, exacerbated even further. Water, having become the protagonist of TRNC politics, was not just a "political material" (Knox and Huse 2015) and

non-human actor, but also became a source of political contention in regard to the long-questioned sovereignty of the de-facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Pipeline that would deliver this “water of life”⁷⁴ from the Mersin region of Turkey to the northern Cypriot territories, is not a mere success of technological system; it rendered the deep and sensitive connection between two spaces more contestable than ever. On the one hand, privatization equalled the greatest concession—it meant no sovereignty, no will for determination, being stripped of political agency. On the other hand, the term “privatization” became so overused during my time there that it became a floating, empty signifier of anything bad that might happen to Turkish Cypriots that year. In order to fully grasp what water privatization meant for north Cyprus, here I tackle this neoliberal concession first in its recent historical nuances in TRNC political economy, and then in its policy details and significance.

Bakırcı seemed to have hit a sore spot for Turkish Cypriots that year when he called the TRNC state “defunct”. In fact, the self-declared state has been many times deemed as defunct or inefficient in its recent political economic history. In this chapter, I tackle this notion of inefficiency; not just in its ‘neoliberal’ contours of what that meant in north Cyprus economic development, but also the way this so-called inefficient state—in both senses of the term ‘state’—has come to highlight deeply embedded political subjectivities of Turkish Cypriot communities. The term ‘neoliberal’ remains significant throughout the thesis because of two reasons: one is that water privatization of the Turkey-north Cyprus pipeline *is indeed* part and parcel of a neoliberalizing scheme that the AKP regime in Turkey has extended to the north of the island. Second, and more importantly, privatization became synonymous with dependence and again, inefficiency, both having become vernacular terms. Keeping the thread of this loaded term ‘neoliberal’, the chapter lays out the political economic context in which

⁷⁴ There are many other symbolic names given by the Turkish government to the transferred water such as “peace water” or “gift water” and to the pipeline as “river of peace” as I have analyzed in Chapter 3.

the Turkey-north Cyprus water supply project has come to fruition and the ways in which water infrastructure has played a role within the recent historical nexus of neoliberal governmentality, Turkish state ideology, and Turkish patronage in north Cyprus.

A political culture of intimidation and threat of withdrawing Turkish financial aid have prevailed for decades in TRNC and such consolidation of power over the inner workings of the Turkish Cypriot politics continue to impact how the TRNC government administers its people and implements certain policies and not others. This chapter traces the innerworkings and background of the declaration of “technical and infrastructural incapability”, while at the same time dig deeper in the intricacies of the oft mentioned “neoliberal nature” of the water supply project. To understand these two directly related nuances of “(in)efficiency” and “neoliberalism”, this chapter provides a political economic account of neoliberalizing policies in TRNC parallel to the liberalization of the Turkish economy under Turgut Özal. Such an intervention in this thesis is important because in order to understand the intricacies of the so-called *privatization* agreement for water infrastructure and its policy consequences, it is necessary to put it in the context of *other* interventionist and integrationist policies that the Turkish state has imposed on TRNC (and their neoliberal principles). These types of policies and institutionalization of economic integration are not special to the current AKP government in Turkey. Such economic intervention is embedded in the state ideology of Turkey—what I call here “*domination by occupation*”, resembling a colonial logic of extraction, exploitation, and integration.

In this chapter, I pinpoint the ways in which the deeply rooted story of protocols, agreements, and other documents of the privatization deal that show how a regime of dependence is maintained and rendered legitimate through policy work. I trace the bureaucratic processes through which high level state officials sign documents and protocols, while at the same time, Turkish and other international bodies, development agencies, and so on time and

again deem the north Cyprus polity to be a “cumbersome” one—inefficient, in need of aid, and to be “tamed” by political patronage and neoliberal reforms. After giving a historical account of such interventions through protocols and agreements, I then move on to how this occurs in the contemporary moment with water infrastructure and its privatization.

Between the “inefficient state” and a Turkish-integrated free market economy

Here, I first trace the political economic conditions and conjuncture that Turkey was situated in, especially in the 1980s and onwards. Specifically, the economic transformations in these years that occurred in Turkey have significant consequences for environmental governance and infrastructural provisioning, since the shift occurred from a state-led/public enterprises to neoliberal restructuring of the public services. Additionally, the ideological blueprint that the Turkish state was built upon have always highlighted modernity, development, and civilization to be key aspirations.

With the political economic shifts and the well-established modernity rhetoric within its state ideology, the Turkish state, adopting a developmentalist vision, put in practice a series of policies like reordering nature and natural resources and in turn, rendering populations in its sovereign borders organizable and regulatable. These practices, as I disentangle in this dissertation, are crucial in grasping the vicissitudes of Turkish Cypriot politics of dependence and the construction of Turkish Cypriot political subjectivities. In other words, the Turkish state is first and foremost an *internal* disciplining force; to understand how it *externalizes* discipline in northern Cyprus, with what political logic, and through which practices, the task is first to scrutinize the political economic conditions of how this force came about and how it transformed over the years of its changing governments, swinging from right to center and to left in the spectrum.

Liberalization of the Turkish economy: 1980s

The 1980s in Turkey is an era of multiple transformations, and social and political change recovering from multiple military coups, mass mobilizations and clashes in the political

spectrum from left to right, and severe economic stagnation. It is crucial to understand for the purposes of this thesis—studying water infrastructure privatization in north Cyprus—that Turkey’s transformation both economic and political constitutes the relationship between the state and business, and as well as between the Turkish-TRNC patron-client relations. The Turkey-north Cyprus water pipeline project illustrates these political economic dynamics, and, in this section, I will first trace the ways in which the environment and natural resources has always been a pivotal field in the Turkish state’s developmentalist and extractive drive. As the country entered into the global economy in the 1980s, privatizing state-run enterprises were in the top of the list of this economic restructuring scheme. Second, the political economic context of the pipeline also urges me to pursue the kind of changing relations the government had with private sector and the (transforming) business elite.

Scholars (e.g. Conker 2018) put forth Turkish nationalist ideology and sovereignty and its connection to the environment and natural resources (mainly water) to be constitutive of state building processes and infrastructural development in Turkey. While this is certainly a valid point, it is also important to dig deeper and understand the political economic transformation that the country has gone through and the changing power relations between government(s) and business actors that center around the development sector. Until 1980, Turkey’s main economic policy was state-led industrialization. The change to economic liberalization after the economic and financial crises of the 1970s was initiated with the January 24 1980 decisions during the ruling government of the Justice Party, led by the rising politician Turgut Özal. Economic policy restructuring from import-substituted industrialization—a protectionist economic system—to export-led economic development led the Turkish economy geared towards a market-driven system integrated with the world economy.

The neoliberal structuring, as with any other “developing” country, is never devoid of state intervention. In fact, it is the state that restructures itself; implementing new economic

policies, adopting political agendas, and reconfiguring the legal and institutional frameworks, so as to make way for such integration into the global economy through neoliberalizing tools. The IMF January 24 decisions, as known as *stabilization-cum-structural adjustment programme* (Öniş 2004a), was exactly that: the Turkish ruling party led by Turgut Özal kick-started what was to become a long period of ups and downs in the economic growth of the country. Even though neoliberalization would be mistaken with the idea of a roll-back of state interventions to stimulate private capital accumulation, in the case of Turkey and just as anywhere in the world, neoliberal restructuring also reordered state intervention, power, and institutions that made way for new landscapes of power exertion for the benefit of capital accumulation (D. Harvey 2007). Indeed, the liberalization of the economy in Turkey did not mean a retreat of the state, but rather a reorganization and reconstitution of it (Öniş 1991, 167).

Among the IMF January 24 decisions were liberalizing foreign trade, transitioning to an export-oriented industrialization model, and privatizing state-run enterprises, and so on and it was spearheaded by the then-undersecretary to prime minister Süleyman Demirel of the centre-right Justice Party, Turgut Özal. Having implemented these decisions, Özal became the first prime minister in 1983 after the military coup of 1980, re-establishing the multi-party regime. Characterized as both a technocrat and a reformist politician (Öniş 2004a, 113), Özal was the leader of the newly found Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*). Özal's strong Islamist leanings, according to Öniş (2004), did not matter as the country faced an authoritarian military regime post-coup and in dire need of a strong economic program. Beginning of the economic reforms, having occurred at the post-coup authoritarian regime, Özal utilized "rule by decree" so as to liberalize the economy by privatizing state economic enterprises in 1986 (120). Öniş characterizes Özal's political economic stance as the following:

At one level, he was critical of representative institutions such as the parliament and wished to by-pass such institutions for the sake of speedy implementation of the reform process. Yet, at same time, he was critical of

classical bureaucracy and what he wanted to accomplish was to reduce the excessive autonomy enjoyed by the predominantly étatiste bureaucratic elites and render them truly accountable to elected politicians, as the true representative of the public. (121, emphasis mine)

Due to such longstanding étatiste tradition in Turkish politics, of course liberalization of the economy during Özal's leadership was met with resistance from the bureaucratic elite and the established secularist business elite.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, privatization was part of Özal's agenda of integration into the market-economy and such a move also required a series of institutional and legal changes. As state economic enterprises such as THY (Turkish Airlines), YEMSAN (animal feed company), ÇİTOSAN (cement company), and so on were privatized, the liberalization of the economy through privatization also required boosting competition in these sectors so as to curtail monopolization. On top of this, institutional and legislative changes also occurred like setting up a central organization to oversee privatization schemes and establishing Public Participation Fund (*Kamu Ortaklığı Fonu*) and Privatization Administration (*Özelleştirme İdaresi*), adding new bureaucratic and legislative layers. Öniş also highlights that such reorganization of institutions led to a shift from traditional patrimonial to a managerial (and neoliberal) bureaucracy model (Öniş 2004b, 167).

The liberalization program that Özal spearheaded during his prime ministry made way for the Turkish economy to open up to foreign investment and for its integration into the global market-economy. Infrastructure, extraction, and construction under the developmentalist rationality, were the sectors where this integration and restructuring occurred. AKP rule took on this developmentalist thrust when the party came to power in 2002, “marked by the interdependent functioning of authoritarianism, populism and developmentalism—heavily reliant on extractive sectors such as mining, energy and construction—[the AKP government] worked and reworked to garner popular support, win legitimacy and co-opt or buffer

⁷⁵ For a detailed analysis of changing relationship between politics, religion, and business, see (Buğra and Savaşkan 2014).

opposition” (Adaman and Akbulut 2020, 1–2). Coming to power as “neoliberal economic policies began to falter within a climate of political instability, causing widespread discontent across society” (Adaman, Akbulut, and Arsel 2017, 2), the AKP and Erdoğan (then prime minister and president since 2014) took on this Turkish state ideology of developmentalism and the neoliberal economic policy and ventured to “do it better” (idem: 3). Activating clientelist networks, Erdoğan’s regime have generated an authoritarian, populist, and developmentalist neoliberal mechanism, whereby the environment has been sacrificed, the economy boosted through foreign finance, all by way of manipulation of laws and regulations especially regarding the environment and resources. Especially in the hydraulic and energy infrastructures, AKP rule made it possible for private participation into the sectors to easily tap into and profit from.

Privatization in northern Cyprus

Privatization in northern Cyprus has not just been a liberalizing tool for the economy, as it is elsewhere in the globe, but also one that enabled and legitimized the integration of the de-facto TRNC economy into the Turkish economy after the division of the island in 1974. Ever since, the economic growth in northern Cyprus has most often been measured in relation to that of Turkish Republic. For instance, the World Bank technical report on northern Cyprus economy in 2006 refers directly to the role of the government of Turkey in the formulation of budgets for northern Cyprus (The World Bank 2006). More recently, another World Bank report on the northern Cyprus economy in 2020 considers the GDP growth levels in direct comparison to that of Turkey. When talking about northern Cypriot economy, you also must talk about Turkish economy and the dependency it reinforces on northern Cyprus. This is due to a plethora of financial aid, credit packages, economic protocols signed, sealed, and enacted over decades.

Thus, before going into the privatization scheme enacted by the Turkish state for the transferred water and its management, I provide a brief political economic analysis of neoliberal transformation in de-facto TRNC. When my interlocutors talked about

“neoliberalization” in northern Cyprus as I will show further in the thesis, it is necessary to understand how this economic process occurred and what it entails regarding Turkish occupation over the north of the island. Emine Tahsin (2013) provides a detailed analysis of market-state relations in TRNC and states that “the evolution of neoliberal ideas within the Turkish economy is one way or another reflected in the formation of the economic policies in TRNC as well” (215). As I have discussed such transformation in the context of Turkey earlier in this chapter, especially Turgut Özal era reforms and its legacy and privatizing state enterprises in Turkey will be the backdrop of what I discuss here—how such neoliberal transformations in TRNC, especially privatizing schemes in the public sector, have also consolidated the colonizing order of the Turkish state through what I call “*a rule by protocols*”.

Since the inception of Turkish economic aid for northern Cyprus economy, privatization has always been one of the pillars of “integration policies” amidst “Europeanization” of the Cyprus problem, and several economic crises both in Turkey and de-facto TRNC. Besides privatization, financial aid in the name of integration of the TRNC economy also included social security reforms, public finance, banking sector regulations, and so on. With the liberalization of the Turkish economy as explained above, the Turkish economic aid packages gradually took the shape of structural adjustment plans, austerity measures that highly resembled the “IMF orthodoxy”.

The beginning of the “rule by protocols”

Recalling the remarks of Hamit Bakırcı, in the beginning of this chapter, the de-facto state of northern Cyprus deemed to be “defunct”, or “incapable” is not a new phenomenon specific to contemporary water politics. Where does this notion of inefficiency come from? How does it become known to the Turkish Cypriot politicians and even de-facto citizens of northern Cyprus? Besides northern Cyprus being an unrecognized and small island breakaway state, it is also important to understand the ways in which its origins are contingent upon an integrationist mission on the part of the Turkish Republic. Therefore, both questions of how

and why de-facto TRNC is the “cumbersome state”, or “inefficient state” will reveal a deeper understanding or analysis of Turkish Cypriot disenfranchised political subjectivities and their existential search for “normalcy”.

Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot polities⁷⁶ past and present (all were self-declared, de-facto, and “illegal” including the latest, TRNC) have been signing protocols, agreements, and contracts since 1976. Having started off as technical and infrastructural, these types of aid and cooperation protocols between the Turkish state and northern Cyprus also came with the institutionalization of such interventions. In 1975, Turkish diplomat Ziya Müezzinoğlu was appointed by the then-Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit as the first head of the Cyprus Coordination Board (*Kıbrıs Eşgüdüm Kurulu*). The Board “represent[ing] the bridge between Ankara and Nicosia” (Tahsin 2013, 216) took different forms, changes its roles, shifting its frameworks and official name over decades. As it got renamed in 1981 to “Organization of Cypriot Affairs”, then later in “Consultancy for Cypriot Affairs”, the board remains the institutional origins of the much more corporatized “Development and Economic Coordination Office” under the aegis of Turkish Republic Embassy in Nicosia.⁷⁷ As these changes occurred in the way the Turkish state institutionally handled its integration of and intervention for northern Cyprus, the de-facto polity took shape in accordance with a clear Turkish statist image and ideology. The Coordination Board and joint annual economic commissions met, laying out an economic path for the northern Cyprus communities.

Müezzinoğlu, as the first to spearhead an economic plan, however, was heavily criticized by other Turkish diplomats at the time for implementing a “bad Turkish model” and a socialist experiment. The first few years of Müezzinoğlu’s appointment, the office established

⁷⁶ As mentioned in the introduction chapter, Turkish Federated State of Cyprus (TFSC) was declared in 1975 following the occupation and partition and was superseded by Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983. Here, I am referring to these political structures.

⁷⁷ <http://www.kei.gov.tr/>

“an economic order that was *integrative (bütünleşen)* to that of the Turkish Republic” (Birand 1979, 106). Birand also adds importantly that “all of the ‘sicknesses’ of Turkish bureaucracy thereby entered the ‘babyland’ (*yavru vatan*) and this major tactical mistake led Turkish [Cypriots] to prolong their usual [economic] ‘poorness’ and lose the economic battle against Greek [Cypriot]s” (ibid, translation mine). What Birand refers to here with “sickness of Turkish bureaucracy” was the over-multiplicity of leadership and the consequent bureaucratic obstacles it created over the governance: “On one side, there was the Turkish Armed Forces, on the other, the office of the Turkish Cypriot fighters (*mücahit*), Turkish Embassy and finally the Turkish Cypriot Federated State (*TCFS - Kıbrıs Türk Federe Devleti -KTFD*)⁷⁸; they were conducting *a four-headed governance*” (1979, 105).

Müezzinoğlu’s goal was to “state-ify” (*devletleştirmek*) Turkish Cypriots. The integration of the north of Cyprus initially occurred by populating the occupied region. This was the first standing order that was signed between Turkish state and Turkish Cypriots. Villages from Mersin, in the south of Turkey, were wholly settled in former villages of Greek Cypriots. Economic integration, therefore, was started off by a Turkish population settlement as “needed workforce.” Regulations and many more back and forth directives and protocols were enacted for the efforts to “get Turkish Cypriots on their feet” economically and infrastructurally (1979, 107), especially regarding the tax system, its money, post service, media, and communications, etc. However, as mentioned above, Müezzinoğlu’s plan for economic activities to continue in the hands of Turkish Cypriots was countered with the idea of large private capital holders (like Sabancı and Koç) absorbing industrial plants and enterprises (Tahsin 2010, 139).

⁷⁸ KTFD or TCFS is the former governing body before the establishment of TRNC in 1983.

An abundance of public servants

The protocols and other organizing activities conducted by the Board, until the 1980s, decided on budgetary, administrative, institutionalizing, and other structural matters for northern Cyprus. The Turkish aid that was provided as part of the protocols throughout these years of post-partition mainly as committed to covering budget deficits and investing in infrastructure projects (Tahsin 2013, 216). Besides these, establishing public institutions and “public sector growth and employment have become the major engines of growth” for northern Cypriot economy (ibid). In fact, public sector growth from these years still picks up a lot of attention of the locals when I asked my interlocutors general questions regarding the economic conditions of the north. I repeatedly heard utterances of “almost everyone in this country is a public servant” or some even told me that if you were a *mücahit*, a fighter during the ethnic conflict, your years of fighting would count as public service. This statement would conclude with: “no wonder why there were so many 30 or 40-year-olds who are already retired and get retirement benefits.”

Besides the neoliberal shifts in many of the protocols over the years, Turkish Cypriots I spoke to were never hesitant about expressing their dismay with the public sector’s dependence on the economic protocols and aid packages. A politics of intimidation reigned over them when their de-facto government relied heavily on these aid packages. For one of the Turkish Cypriots that I had an ongoing conversation with throughout my time there, the equation was simple: “if you [TRNC state] do not sign the economic protocol of that period with a series of sanctions, directives, legal frameworks, then no public servants’ salaries and retirement payments that month or year. It is that simple; like carrot on a stick.”

Aid for the public sector has been a major issue in the economic protocols implemented by the Turkish state. The 1998 report authored by TÜSİAD⁷⁹ members, in fact, identify the

⁷⁹ Turkish Industry and Business Association – Türkiye Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği

dominant role of the public sector in TRNC economy to be one of the biggest detriments for its progress and development. It states that since the public sector is the biggest employer, the flexibility in the labor market and competition for the private sector is rendered weak (TÜSİAD 1998, 23). The report also adds that the public sector economy does not just include state services, but also industrial production and tourism development in TRNC. The authors of the report claim that “a social security system that covers all of the population and an almost guarantee of the public sector for employment can be seen as one of the major constraints for private sector employment” (ibid, translation mine). Resonating what my interlocutors told me about public sector employment, the report confirms that the state not only guarantees a state office appointment; it is also more desirable for people to be employed as such.

Turkish private capital involvement in Cyprus

Turkish private capital had been involved with granting financial assistance to the Turkish Cypriot economy as early as 1959, the first official assistance being a grant of 125,000 GBP “Cypriot Turks” (Tahsin 2012, 140). Fully in support of the political cause of partition (*taksim*) and “either division or death” motto of the TMT (Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı – Turkish Resistance Organization), the counter-guerilla group, Turkish private banks led a “From Turkish people to Turkish people” campaign, granting generous loans to the economic betterment of the Turkish Cypriot community. Since TMT members were assuming active roles in several major business sectors as well, it can be concluded that the ethnic conflict of 1963-1974 therefore have had financial involvement by Turkish private capital (141).

Another direct involvement of Turkish private enterprise into the military occupation of northern Cyprus came from Sabancı Holding.⁸⁰ The conglomerate donated 1.5 million Turkish Liras to the Turkish Armed Forces (Tahsin 2010, 138). Sabancı Holding is a member of TÜSİAD, one of the most influential associations for the direction of where the Turkish

⁸⁰ One of the biggest industrial and financial conglomerates in Turkey.

economic policies go. TÜSİAD also had an *integrative* approach to the economic development of northern Cyprus. Dedicating several reports to the economic inventory of northern Cyprus, TÜSİAD's assessments especially after the 1980s liberalization of the Turkish economy claimed a greater necessity for integrating the Turkish Cypriots' economy to deregulation. For this, new protocols and agreements were signed bilaterally. With the 1986 Turkey-TRNC Economic Cooperation Protocol, certain monetary regulations were enacted, especially for free money transfers in banking regulations, and also reducing customs tax by 30 percent to incentivize and free up trade across the sea. Tahsin (2014), claiming this protocol to be the initial phase of neoliberal transformation in northern Cyprus, says that economic investments especially on infrastructural development like highways, communications, and water systems were emphasized (217). Jumpstarting the economic liberalization in northern Cyprus, the 1986 protocol made way to a plethora of five-year plans, updates on economic cooperation between the two polities over the years. The 1986 Protocol therefore shows a major shift from the Bülent Ecevit-era⁸¹ “Keynesian welfare national state” type economic policy-making to that of Turgut Özal⁸² staunch free market economy ideals (Özkızan 2017, 16). This meant a transition from organizing the economy around state enterprises—under an umbrella conglomerate of *Sanayi Holding*—to privatizing and/or liquidating many state enterprises like industrial factories or formerly Greek Cypriot owned hotels and small businesses. The economic cooperation protocol of 1986, therefore, became the turning point where ‘motherland’ Turkey, the ‘saviour’ of Turkish Cypriots also became the “IMF figure” of their nascent yet de-facto economy.

The protocols and agreements between Turkey and northern Cyprus therefore had an integrationist logic that in time became morphed with a *neoliberal* one. The role of Turkish

⁸¹ Social democrat leader/prime minister of Turkey who spearheaded the military occupation of north Cyprus in 1974.

⁸² Centre-right leader, prime minister after Ecevit who led the liberalization of the Turkish economy with the January 24th, 1980 Decisions, which I explicate in Chapter 3.

capital holders, their priorities, and preferences, had a major role in the way the Coordination Board envisioned the economic structure and future of northern Cyprus as it is manifest from the get-go with the first economic cooperation protocol explained above. From then onwards, the protocols, five-year plans, and other ‘bilateral’ agreements focused on tourism and banking sectors, along with infrastructural investments as well as higher education and construction. The goal was to render northern Cyprus “an economic cooperation area” and a major transit trade hub in the eastern Mediterranean, which also led to the decline in agricultural production and a rise in the service sector (Tahsin 2013, 218). The integrationist-*cum*-neoliberal approach of IMF-like Turkish aids and economic protocols can also be demonstrated by looking at the major increase in trade between Turkey and northern Cyprus exclusively. Özkızan (2017) notes that while in 1977 the imports from and exports to Turkey were 37.7% and 27.6% respectively, in 2014 these numbers went up to %66.5 and 58.5% (21-22).

While TÜSİAD and the Turkish business groups in the ‘80s and ‘90s embraced the economic development of northern Cyprus as a “national cause” going in line with the state ideology of Turkish nationalism, they, namely TÜSİAD as the major influential business association, shifted their position drastically as the “Cyprus problem” became a “European” one also. Calling this the “Europeanization” of the Cyprus problem, scholars identify that this happened after the exclusion of Turkey from the European Union enlargement process at the Helsinki Summit in 1999. As Turkey ceased was no longer considered for the EU to accept as a member, it also became clear that “Cyprus problem”—in other words, the potential peace and reconciliation on the island—had to be solved in order for Turkey to go back to the good graces of the EU. Turkey’s political stance on partition (*taksim*) and material and ideological contribution to the foundations of a breakaway (and illegal) Turkish Cypriot state therefore became at odds with Turkish business groups’ liberal ideals of integration into the EU

economy. The Helsinki Summit of 1999 directly associated the Cyprus problem to the conditions of accession of Turkey into the EU.

TÜSİAD was once the association that subscribed to the nationalistic idea that economic development of TRNC was part of a “Turkish national cause”; the association fully supported liberalization and economic integration of the Turkish Cypriot economy to the Turkish one. However, as a divided Cyprus and the presence of an unrecognized state and unresolved geopolitical situation became a clear obstacle for the EU accession of Turkey, Turkish business leaders shifted to a critical stance on the two-state solution on the island. Two-state or otherwise however, any potential resolution to the Cyprus problem, therefore, became a fully Europeanized one, as RoC was accepted to the EU in 2004. Not only this, but northern Cyprus also started to become regarded as a *burden* in the capital groups and governing elites already (Tahsin 2013, 222).

Pushing for privatization in the protocols

The protocols of the ‘80s and ‘90s signed between Turkey and TRNC enacted trade, monetary, customs, etc. laws in TRNC to align with those of Turkey, allocated annual aid to TRNC economy, in defense expenditures, budget revenues, personnel expenditures, etc. They also imposed structural reforms related with “public finance, regulation in the banking sector, and privatization policies” (Tahsin 2013, 221). The 1997 protocol entailed the establishment of a privatization unit similar to the one in Turkey; the five-year development (1993-1997) also set targets “to achieve market economy principles on the basis of competition and institutional framework” (ibid).

Just as any economic development plan under the principles of free market economy, privatization became one of the central pillars for the integration and liberalization of the Turkish Cypriot economy. TÜSİAD, in the abovementioned 1988 report identifies several obstacles in implementing these structural reforms in the TRNC economy. One of these is the difficult of privatizing certain state enterprises—electricity being one of them. As explained in

Chapter 2, electricity infrastructure signified a convoluted impasse whereby the division of the island due to conflict resulted in a quiet cooperation between the two sides. As electricity plants remained in the south and water aquifers in the north, a tacit deal had to be made between the two polities that don't recognize each other so life on both sides could go on despite post-war partition. However, this tacit cooperation over the years were met with what I described in this chapter so far—the economic integration and development of the northern part of the island, including infrastructural investment. Through Turkish financial aid schemes and as Turkey made way to establish its “rule by protocols” over the occupied region, the electricity provisioning, its debt collection system, and finance budgeting entailed a complete control of the electricity networks in a centralized institution.

According to the TÜSİAD 1998 report, such tacit cooperation and difficulty in tracing debt collection and north-wide consumption of the electricity infrastructure have posed one of the difficulties in privatizing the services. Identifying the state-held industrial and infrastructural enterprises to be “too big”, making losses periodically, but still posing an “unfair competition” with the private enterprises, TÜSİAD report says that privatizing these enterprises will be not just “fiscally effective but will bring positive long-term economic effects” (İzmen and Candemir 1998, 50 translation mine). Furthermore, the TÜSİAD report suggests that the energy sector is one of the most important ones to be privatized with utmost pace and that electricity production capacity is limited and large investments for advancing the system and networks is needed. It says that “since any public investment will delay development, privatization seems to be *inevitable*” (ibid, translation and emphasis mine).

The authors report that between 1974 and 1994, only 10% of the electricity was provided by the limited plants in the northern part; the rest was being provided by the Greek Cypriot electricity department. KIB-TEK, the main Turkish Cypriot electricity authority, later, was responsible for building the Teknecik electricity plant in 1996 that barely provided

electricity to the whole of the northern territories. However, since adequate investments were not allocated for upgrading the networks and establishing a fully functioning system with no seepage or loss, the report adds that production will only be possible for another few years until 2000 (ibid, 50). The insufficiency and inefficiency of public investments to infrastructural provisioning rendered privatization even more a desirable option for many in northern Cyprus, as I have also observed regarding the privatization of water infrastructure.

Lastly, the report adds that once the aforementioned difficulties of debt collection and accurate information on consumption are overcome, Turkish private business groups will show more serious interest in investments. To sum up, TÜSİAD as an influential business association, despite their strong recommendations of privatization and neoliberal restructuring, showed some qualms about such obstacles for advancing a neoliberalizing economy in northern Cyprus.

The privatization of KIB-TEK came finally with the “2013-2015 Transition to a Sustainable Economy Program”, a protocol signed bilaterally once again that aimed at picking up the neoliberalizing pace for the Turkish Cypriot economy. The aims of the protocol were as follows:

Taming the ‘cumbersome’ state, transforming it into an apparatus based on ‘good governance’, transforming the state into a regulatory state, transforming a system based on patronage to a more institutionalised capitalism, improving efficiency in the public sector, creating an economic structure based on boosting the private sector and reducing the role of the public sector and public finance (Bozkurt 2013).

With a \$134 million debt of unpaid bills in 2011, to be collected from government offices, tourist facilities, universities, local governments, mosques, and the military (ibid.), KIB-TEK, with this economic program, was privatized. The protocol document also puts special emphasis on bringing electricity through undersea cables across the Mediterranean sea from Turkish mainland, “in order to cut costs of electricity” to be connected completely with the electricity

system in Turkey (Kalkınma ve Ekonomik İşbirliği Ofisi 2013, 29).⁸³ According to the interview done by Celal Özkızan with the former president of the Turkish Electricity Authority of Cyprus Workers' Trade Union, such integrative and neoliberalizing policies that go hand-in-hand, aims to preserve the existence of the Turkish state in case the Turkish armed forces is withdrawn from the north, calling it a “*capital[ist] and political colonization*” (Özkızan 2017, 33 emphasis mine).

Overall, electricity infrastructure, during the neoliberal re-structuring years of Turkish Cypriot economy, have been prominent in the efforts to privatize *and* integrate into the Turkish state's system of provisioning. The cables are yet to be laid in the already existent water pipes of the Turkey-northern Cyprus water pipeline. However, KIB-TEK is privatized; it outsources its operations and management from a Turkish private company currently. Most of my interlocutors, upon the arrival of the privatization agreement for the transferred water, referred this change in management— “that time when electricity was privatized, and everyone still suffer from hiked up energy prices.” The 2016-2018 Structural Adjustment Program warns that the already active service provisioning agreements from the private companies for all electricity plants are expiring in 2024-25. This, the document insists, will render the inter-connection of the Turkish Cypriot electricity network with the that of Turkey, all the more necessary. For that 2017 would be the year in which all legal frameworks are to be aligned between TRNC and the Turkish state to make the undersea inter-connection of electricity possible (Kalkınma ve Ekonomik İşbirliği Ofisi, n.d., 71). The economic integration by way of privatization, in the case of electricity, is then one of the central pillars of the “rule by protocols” that Turkish state has established along with its military occupation in northern Cyprus.

⁸³ This will be explained more fully when talking about materially connecting the mainland to the north of the island through pipes. Here, we see the neoliberal economic logic and justification of cable connections for electricity infrastructure.

Privatizing state-owned enterprises: a neoliberal remedy to ‘inefficiency’

As explicated above, privatization as part of the market rationality of Turkish integration went hand in hand with the ideological (nationalistic) blueprint of Turkish occupation in north Cyprus throughout the post-partition and de-facto state-building periods. Still ongoing even today, these two decades-long eras are when the so-called “inefficient” state—or the nascent yet illegal state—had to be “taken care of”. A plethora of reform packages, programs, protocols, and agreements aimed at not only (re)structuring the Turkish Cypriot economy, but also “establishing a level playing field for the private sector” (Güven-Lisaniler 2016) for the aforementioned public sector domination in the north’s economy.

Besides the case of electricity and its privatization, Cyprus Turkish Airlines was also one of the state-owned enterprises whose privatization brought massive opposition and controversy among the political factions in de-facto TRNC. The liquidation of CTA and the dismissal of its employees in 2010 created a strong opposition against the Turkish state reform packages that time and again imposed such privatizations and led to a disgruntled workforce across the north (Güven-Lisaniler 2016). Starting from 2008 therefore, privatization policies in northern Cyprus, parallel to neoliberalizing and corporatizing schemes of the AKP rule in Turkey, accelerated more systematically.⁸⁴

Opposing a “neoliberal” economy: Communal Existence Meetings

On the one hand, Özkızan points out how Turkish Cypriot business interest groups perceived privatization schemes favourably and that especially Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (TCCC) representatives interviewed found the protocols to be appropriate and themselves as a business interest groups to be satisfactorily influential (Özkızan 2017, 41). On the other hand,

⁸⁴ Specifically, Özkızan (2017) lists what was privatized in northern Cyprus: “Cyprus Turkish Petroleum, ETİ Enterprises, Ercan Airport, water management, pre- university education institutions of Eastern Mediterranean University were privatized. Moreover, Cyprus Turkish Airlines was liquidated. On the other hand, privatization of Cyprus Turkish Electricity Authority, Cyprus Turkish Shipping Company, Telecommunications Department and telecommunication services are on the agenda of privatizations within the framework of economic protocols.” (43).

these series of privatizing state-owned enterprises started a major opposition movement against “neoliberalization” of the northern Cypriot economy and Turkish state’s insistent reform packages.

Namely the “Communal Existence Meetings” (*Toplumsal Varoluş Mitingleri*), the mass protests had people from all walks of life—different socioeconomic backgrounds, age, and occupation—and stirred the publics in northern Cyprus in their opinions regarding the dependent relationship with the Turkish state. Spearheaded by trade unions, who have a strong position still in civil society, the Communal Existence Meetings became a reference point for people to remember “back when [they] cared about their economy and existence” as one of my Turkish Cypriot friends called it. The Communal Existence Meetings is remembered to this day, also because it led to one of the most memorable polemics that Turkish President Erdoğan entered in the Turkish Cypriot politics. Disgruntled by the mass protests, Erdoğan said the following:

There has been some provocative protests in northern Cyprus. They do it together with the south [Republic of Cyprus]. They say, “get out” to us [Turkish state]. They don’t have any right to do such a protest against Turkey... Who are you, man? I have veterans, I have martyrs there, I have interests strategically there. Whatever business Greece has [on the island], Turkey also has strategic matters there. It is meaningful that those who we foster (*beslenmek*) are taking such a road [to opposition]... we support them, should there not be a return?” (“Geçimsiz ilişki: AKP ile Kıbrıslı Türkler arasındaki krizler” 2020)

These words of Erdoğan led to a “diplomatic” crisis between Turkey and northern Cyprus in 2011. In a way (and to keep the metaphor going for the sake of argument), for the first time since this motherland-babyland relationship have ensued, the “nurturing state” of Turkey scolded the child and declared it to be of “non-kin”. And just like that, the relationship became one of interests (of Turkey) and obligations (of the fostered TRNC), no longer that of nurturance and care. What set off Turkish Cypriot publics into the streets, was a series of privatizations of their state-owned enterprises, especially transforming these economic

operations without local knowledge and/or assistance. Erdoğan’s words, however, were meaningful and became the defining shift in Turkey-northern Cyprus relations. Fostering and/or adopting children has a long history in the Ottoman Empire. The act of fostering someone (*beslemek*), according to Ferhunde Özbay, is a practice of Islamic culture as well as a tradition that related to mass migration between Ottoman provinces, dating back to 1864, “when over a million Caucasian migrants entered Ottoman territory and started to sell their girls and women as slaves” (Özbay 2004). Referring to slaves, servants, and foster children,



Figure 14. An image from the Communal Existence Meetings in 2011. Source: <https://gazeddakibris.com/gecimsiz-iliski-akp-ile-kibrisli-turkler-arasindaki-krizler/>

the word “*besleme*”⁸⁵, though no specific word in English exists, can be defined as “one who is fostered”, strictly describing a person of inferior status and of non-kin relations.

Reacting against the protesters’ placards with slogans that read “Ankara, get your hands off of our necks” (*Ankara, elini yakamızdan çek*) (see Figure 14), Erdoğan’s speech renders Turkish Cypriots of non-kin and simply “foster.” This becomes a breaking point in Turkey-

⁸⁵ There are other words for it like “*evlatlık*” or “*ahiretlik*”, neither of which can be directly translated to English. For a thorough genealogy of these concepts, see (Özbay 2004).

northern Cyprus relations and “*besleme krizi*” (a crisis of fostering) enters into the vocabulary of people in northern Cyprus.

A political rationality of military occupation and nationalist ideology of “Turkish” Cyprus permeated these decades long protocols and aid and reform packages. With the acceleration of privatizations, the economic rationality of integration, coordination, and neoliberalization, became one with that political ideology. Reinforcing each other, these rationalities were translated in the public sphere as co-constitutive and meant the same struggle—one of *communal existence*. Erdoğan’s speech in 2011 therefore, became the defining moment when the material—the economic struggle for self-sufficiency—and the meaning—the “existential” struggle for self-determination—became one of the same. “Neoliberal” came to mean concessions as well as obligations not just economically, but also politically and existentially.

Having detailed the political economic conjuncture of Turkey and its reverberations in northern Cyprus, I have shown that Turkish domination by occupation in northern Cyprus has over time, become entangled with the Turkish nationalistic project of TRNC state building and authoritarian and neoliberalizing economy marked by developmentalism and territorialization. The alliance between Turkish business and state structures in legitimizing control over the northern Cyprus territories have engendered a particular relation between state and society and have been locally translated into efforts of self-determination and economic autonomy. In fact Turkey has been many times, likened to the Troika of TRNC; Halil İbrahim Akça, the architect of austerity programmes in 2011 and the former head of the Turkish Technical Assistance Committee appointed that year (Sözen and Sonan 2019), explicitly called Turkey the IMF of northern Cyprus (Bozkurt 2014). I have shown so far that these material complications that TRNC state still grapple with, elucidate how the political economic dependency reflects on and co-constituted by the vicissitudes of the relationship between Turkish Cypriot and other

communities in northern Cyprus and the Turkish state as an externally imposing, disciplining, and ordering force under the guise of the nurturing “motherland.” It is with this backdrop that I turn to the contemporary water pipeline project and its heavily contested privatization deal, which unearthed the hierarchical and dependent relationship.

Privatizing the transferred water and its management

As part of an ongoing global trend of private-sector participation in the construction and management of water infrastructures, the pipeline between the southern Turkish coast and northern Cyprus is no different. Kate Bayliss explains that the trend of privatization could be traced by looking at how the roles of the state and private enterprise shift and transform (in Fine and Jomo 2006). Such transformation is, according to Aihwa Ong (2006), one of the primary components of neoliberal political philosophy. It is “both a claim that the market is better than the state at distributing public resources and the emergence of highly competitive individualism that often expresses itself in terms of consumption” (Mains 2012, 5). Some of my interlocutors deeply believed this; that the state was failing at managing their water resources along with others and a private company could do it better. As I dug deeper in this discourse of TRNC as a failure or an inefficient one, the motivation was not that simple. It was locally situated, historically nuanced, and the state vs. private company debate revealed different meanings for them.

As a policy shift, privatization entails a transfer of ownership of state enterprises to private operators. It is usually defended by its proponents by pointing at ‘state failure’. As the provision of basic utilities and services are taken over by private companies, “keeping economies competitive, become[s] the mantra of mainstream economists” (Swyngedouw 2005, 82). Eric Swyngedouw equates privatization with the term that David Harvey has coined (à la Marx), “accumulation by dispossession” (ibid). Privatization as a strategy for the purposes of rent-seeking private sector, is embedded in hegemonic, discursive, and ideological frames that render it not only legitimate, but normatively desirable. These discursive and ideological

frames are operationalized with policy work and political processes through which state/market alliance, having blamed wasteful state spending, inefficiency, and sub-optimal results (83), pursues profitability and control. Same trajectory of capital accumulation followed in the case of water and its commoditization across the Global South. Swyngedouw and others highlight that water infrastructure, once a key component of a state-led social and economic policy, became part of the capitalist processes of accumulation. Kate Bayliss agrees to this that water, “from a strategic abundant resource delivered as a public service, came to be treated as a private commodity with an economic value” (2014, 294). Privatization therefore allowed water resources to enter into the global circuits of capital (ibid).

Just as multilateral organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank or the EU have been imposing on the developing world certain regulatory practices, the Turkish state, in the case of privatizing the transferred water and its management pushes for changes in legal and institutional frameworks and regulations that permit privatization through. As explained in the first part of this chapter, the Turkish state in fact became an IMF-like force to impose such regulatory mechanisms and legal frameworks in TRNC, that made way for privatization schemes to be conducted smoothly. These newly established rules, laws, and institutional/regulatory bodies imposed by the patron state externalize command and control, which Swyngedouw calls a new scalar ‘gestalt’ of governance (Swyngedouw 2005). In the case of Turkey-northern Cyprus pipeline and its privatization go through a process with which new institutional bodies are established, agreements and legal frameworks enacted, and the neoliberal economic rationality of marketization and privatization reproduced and extended. The State Hydraulics Authority (*Devlet Su İşleri – DSI*) of the Turkish Republic set up its office and several diplomats were brought to northern Cyprus for setting up and managing the upgraded infrastructure. Along with this, a legal framework was enacted, and a series of protocols and documents were signed among which is the controversial 2016 privatization

agreement. These multiplicity of institutions, actors, and procedural shifts all feed into the articulation of Turkish dependence of northern Cyprus.

Keeping in mind these shifts and changes that privatization brings, water privatization does something much more complex than commoditization of water and the encroachment of state-run utilities by private enterprise in the case of Turkey-northern Cyprus water supply project. As policies change, frameworks put forward, and political process follows through, despite public contestation, privatization does something more than the grim yet neatly explicated picture, as a seemingly coherent neoliberal project, depicted by Swyngedouw. As the transferred water (along with the natural resources from the aquifers of the island) gets privatized, the same water becomes a matter of public concern. Nikhil Anand, in his work on water services in Mumbai, India, argues that “both publics and their states are brought into being *with* the discrete, partial, and compromised pipes and liquid materials of water infrastructures that form the city” (2018, 158 emphasis in original). Following his line of thought, Turkish state-imposed privatization of water resources, rather than simply subjecting Turkish Cypriot citizens as paying customers, also constitutes political subjectivities, pushing the effected people to rekindle their interrogations of communal existence once again. With a neoliberal agenda of the privatization of water resources and facilities, the project’s construction entails a furthering of patron-client relations not only within the financial networks in the Turkish ruling party elite, but also with the northern Cypriot political establishment.⁸⁶

The arrival of the privatization news created a loss of trust in the idea that the Turkish state, i.e. motherland, acts as a nurturing state for the de-facto TRNC. The marketization (for the sole benefit of the Turkish national market) and commodification of a natural resource has

⁸⁶ For a detailed historical analysis of patron-client relations in northern Cyprus, see (Sonan 2014).

become at odds with the historical and socio-cultural meanings with which the Turkish-northern Cyprus relations were built upon. For many Turkish Cypriots, the rent-seeking, neoliberal order that the Turkish government aspired to establish through privatization, did not seem compatible with the political rationality and its ethnic and historical ties. However, rather than seeing it as a “bundle of economic policies with inadvertent political and social consequences,” neoliberalism is also part and parcel of “the political rationality that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the market” (Brown 2005, 38). As such, the economic policies, and legal frameworks, however they may be neoliberal, also “[extend and disseminate] market values to all institutions and social action” (40) and shape the vicissitudes of the political rationality behind the very existence of TRNC polity.

As discussed above, the nurturance of the Turkish state, was once again, questioned as fear, anxiety, and unease resurfaced regarding their “existence” or as some refer to it as “self-determination.” Shifting yet again from fraternal discourse into neoliberal practice, “motherland” imposed upon Turkish Cypriots a stifling privatization deal under the garb of “bringing a river of life to Turkish Cypriot brothers and sisters,” recalling the inauguration speech by Erdoğan himself. In the rest of this chapter, I turn to analyzing the related protocols and “bilateral” agreements that made way for the privatization of the water resources of the island, the transferred (o imported) water from Dragon creek of Anamur, Mersin, and the management of the infrastructure.

Governing water through ambiguity and neutrality

As the pipeline’s construction came to an end in early 2016, activists and news media from various political factions started to take up on discussing and speculating what comes after inauguration ceremonies and all the “spectacularity” of ad campaigns of the Turkish government, which I have discussed in Chapter 3 extensively. The rumors of privatization emerged, and it was as if the Turkish Cypriot public had heard it for the first time, as if no other privatization occurred in recent years for which people protested and marched against. These

discussions coincided with my first few months of fieldwork in northern Cyprus; as I acclimatized to the everyday politics and looked for “gatekeepers” and interviewees, many people told me “This is different. This is a life and death issue. This is water.”

Upon my daily desktop research and informal chats, the frequently changing de-facto TRNC governments over the years of the pipeline construction had signed protocols with the Turkish state that all hinted at privatizing the transferred water and bringing forth a series of policy changes regarding water infrastructure in the north. Now I turn to how these policy changes carry with them seemingly neutral but deeply political meanings, which all point to the governance of dependence and reproduction of Turkish domination over the north. I detail the clauses in several protocols and agreements, to demonstrate how *ambiguity* and *neutrality* take shape discursively and become the central points of contestation for political actors who oppose the privatization.

Expropriating Cypriot lands

A *Framework Agreement* in 19th of July 2010 was already signed for the purposes of “ensuring necessary investment, protection and efficient development and management of the pipeline” and “considering the importance of constituting a uniform and non-discriminatory legal framework” (Çerçeve Andlaşması 2010). Specifically, the Clause 2 of the agreement caused a considerable political controversy and foreshadowed what kind of changes in the management and governance of hydraulic systems would be expected. It proclaims, “the ownership of the land, the pipeline that would be built under the sea, and all the facilities constructed within the scope of the project to be transferred to the Turkish Republic as soon as the construction begins” and that “the transferred water sourced from Turkey, to be delivered by the pipeline to the TRNC territories commercially is owned by the Turkish Republic until it arrives to the point of sale, namely Geçitköy Dam” (Çerçeve Andlaşması 2010). With this agreement in 2010 then, the TRNC government submits from the inception of the pipeline project to expropriate land if needed and transfer all ownership rights of the upgraded hydraulic utility system to its

patron state. The agreement further denotes that the Turkish Republic will hold the rights to sell the transferred water to third countries, which is also repeated in the bilateral privatization agreement in 2016. And some Turkish Cypriot news media picked up on this and pointed out that upon the sale of the transferred water to third countries, north Cyprus will not get any compensation for the water will be transferred via de-facto sovereign lands of the TRNC.⁸⁷

The document, besides laying out the terms and conditions and legal regulations regarding the pipeline project, also foreshadows the coming of the 2016 agreement. It states that “upon consent of all parties, there might be implemented *alternative models* for the construction, ownership, and management of the land and facilities in question” (Çerçeve Andlaşması 2010, emphasis added). As Richard Jenkins (2005) highlights, policy not only governs action to a directed end, which makes policy work goal-oriented; but also it is not apolitical. Policy frameworks, documents, and directives like this one revolve around and are surrounded by *political negotiation*. The ambiguity in the framing of the last quote above, shows the ways in which the Turkish state, with this framework agreement, consolidate Turkish domination and a leverage to steer the infrastructure project according its own political economic agenda. The phrasing of ‘alternative models’ therefore, in its ambiguity, claims a hegemony and holds a determinate role in the continuation of that authority. Sarah Green approximates that ambiguity can be “as hegemonic and subject to disciplinary regimes as clarity” (2005, 12). The ambiguity in this particular document that initiated the implementation of a technological upgrade is a key site where the Turkish state maintains its hold of power upon the regulatory framework with which the pipeline project is implemented.

The Clause 3 of the 2010 framework adds to the ambiguity and open-ended phrasing of the document. It states that “the pricing of the transferred water is determined with an

⁸⁷ http://www.kibrispostasi.com/c35-KIBRIS_HABERLERI/n58689-TCden-KKTCye-su-getirilmesi-protokolunde-gorulmemis-muafiyetler

appropriate pricing formulation to be assigned by a ‘Host government agreement’. The price formulation will take into account the investment, financing, management, and maintenance costs and will have an *appropriate profit margin*” (ibid, emphasis added). Just like the phrasing of the previous one, Clause 3 also leaves deeply political economic matters open-ended and subject to interpretation. Policy-making as Richard Jenkins (2005) says, is intentional and aspiring for regulating orderly action. Again, the document, given the ambiguity and its normative wording, opens the avenue for specific terms of negotiation, while at the same time, shuts down others. The use of the phrase ‘appropriate profit margin’ therefore, leaves the decision-making of the pricing of the transferred water as an open-ended one.

The abovementioned ‘Host government agreement’ to be signed, refers to what was later called the *bilateral privatization agreement*. Similar to the specific phrasings mentioned above, the naming of such an agreement falls short in explicating the precise nature of the upcoming agreement. Is it an agreement that the host government, namely the TRNC government puts forth a terms and conditions of the ways in which the Turkish state will conduct, construct, implement, and operate the pipeline infrastructure? Or does the ‘host government agreement’ simply expand on the 2010 framework agreement and remain a consolidation of the Turkish state’s economic agenda imposed upon the de-facto TRNC state?

The 2010 framework document also commits the TRNC state to a series of obligations and duties. Clause 4 and 5 are other cases in point. It states that the costs for expropriation and access to all project domains will be handled by the host government; and that all permissions and licenses needed for the construction and management of the project will be provided. While the framework agreement binds the host government to enable the operationalization of the project, it also obliges the government to waive all taxes (customs, etc.) for the import of the outsourced materials, shipment, and transportation of them and all the other services. The impositions of such obligations for the purposes of enabling the pipeline project were signed

and implemented by the TRNC government, just as any other “Economic and Financial Cooperation” agreement signed annually, which brings a set of economic sanctions and recommendations for the financial year. In fact, later in 2012, the Economic and Financial Cooperation between the Turkish Republic the de-facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was signed, a document authorized to re-set and prolong the terms and conditions of Turkish state’s financial aid and provide an economic regiment for the de-facto state. The cooperation document also mentions that the Turkish government pledges to grant 3 billion Turkish Liras in the years 2013, 2014, and 2015, “excluding the projects for the provision of water and electricity”. Thus, the water pipeline project enters into another state document, being mentioned along with financial aid, as another form of aid.

Imposition of terms and conditions

The *Economic and Financial Cooperation Protocol* document was issued in 2012 along with another one named “2013-2015 Transition to Sustainable Economic Growth Program”, which puts forth a three-year program of regiments and recommendations in order to “make way for a stable growth of a sustainable and competitive economy, increase employment, render the economic discipline sustainable and decrease foreign dependence, increase domestic savings, and enable their investment...” (2013-2015 Sürdürülebilir Ekonomiye Geçiş Programı 2013). The model, along with other sectors like culture and tourism, health services, education, and telecommunication, puts forth a list of action plan for what it calls the “environment sector”, which includes agriculture, husbandry production, and so on. The Goal 6 of the agriculture sector is subtitled “To ensure an agriculture sector focused on rural development and for the purposes of provisioning the needs of the country; one that produces observable products, providing opportunities for export”.

The 6.1 section of the economic program goes into detail about subsidies for the dairy producers, enacting a ‘seed law’ for producing certified seeds, and so on. The 6.2 on the other hand, is brief and the phrasing is not unfamiliar. It states, “For the purposes of distributing the

transferred water that is to be brought with the pipeline project, there will be established new institutions, networks for distribution, systems of waste water purification, and *appropriate* models of financing (Build-Operate-Transfer, Build-Operate, Transfer of Operating Rights, etc.)” (ibid, emphasis added). The phrasing once again, remains vague and ambiguity that comes with it, reinforces the terms of command and control imposed by the Turkish state.

Besides its ambiguity, the word ‘appropriate’ and its usage in both documents imply neutrality and underline an apolitical connotation, yet dependent on technical and economic expert knowledge. Shore and Wright (1997) say that “a key feature of modern power is the masking of the political under the cloak of neutrality” (9). With the transition economic program, the Turkish state’s hegemonic rule over the TRNC as the authority is consolidated; transition to a sustainable economy program remains to be a seemingly apolitical course of action that the Turkish state provides.

Not only this, the parenthesis of mentioning possible ways of financing the project, namely a Build-Operate-Transfer system adds to the wording of the Goal 6. BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) systems are widely implemented as part of privatization policies for utility systems across the developing world. In fact, according to Kumaraswamy and Zhang (2001), the BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) as a term was first coined by the former Prime Minister Turgut Özal of the Turkish Republic in 1984, when key state economic enterprises were privatized as part of the Turkish privatization programme (Öniş 2004a). Build-Operate-Transfer schemes, though widespread around the world, has inherent uncertainties and risks. Unless “the host government gives necessary support, prepares an adequate legal framework, ensures the right political and commercial environment...”, the BOT system could lead to underachievement or even complete failure (Kumaraswamy and Zhang 2001, 196). Even if the host government provides adequate legal and administrative support, they add, the host government “should play an active role in the whole process of the project circle to ensure

quality, efficiency, and customer satisfaction” (197). The TRNC as host government, as experts and officials have noted repeatedly in interviews, from the beginning of the implementation of a BOT policy for the pipeline, has been sidelined.

These documents mentioned above—the 2010 framework agreement, the 2012 Economic and Financial Cooperation agreement along with the 2013-2015 Transition to Sustainable Economic Growth Program—form the basis of the 2016 privatization agreement as the document itself states in Clause 3. The controversial document that leads to what many opponents of privatization called the “surrender of the honor of Turkish Cypriots”, denotes its scope as the management, distribution, accumulation, and purification of transferred water, and governing its allocation to household, industrial, and agricultural use (Özelleştirme Andlaşması 2016). The lack of consultation with the TRNC State Hydraulics Authority is speculated time and again, when asked about the ‘collaborative work’ that the 2016 Privatization agreement had directed both governmental bodies.

An “instruction manual” to privatizing water and management

The agreement document repeats most of the regulatory changes included in the previously mentioned documents above such as the transferal of ownership of facilities, expropriation of lands, the Turkish state holding the right to sell the transferred water to third parties and tax exemption. The agreement states that the Turkish Republic legally owns every facility, property, and all transferred and local water resources of the TRNC. The expropriation of lands, transferal of public property to the Turkish state and transferal of water ownership rights for not just the transferred water but also the local water resources were a few of the most contentious topics when the document surfaced on the Turkish Cypriot news media. From its inception, the infrastructural upgrade has been publicized as a much-needed material aid for the sole purposes of replenishing the natural water resources of the north of the island. However, when the Turkish Cypriot political actors finally had the chance to hold the document in their hands, many commented on it to be “submissive”, “scam-like” and a “big lie”.

One of the more contentious clauses in the agreement was regarding ‘the governance of water’ under Clause 7. The section takes as its premise that the TRNC State Hydraulics Authority is ought to treat the transferred water and the local water resources to be of one entity as a resource. It also assigns responsibility to the same office to supervise the management of the water to be done by the private company. The same clause also specifies that both parties—Turkish state and TRNC—are responsible to jointly decide where exactly the transferred water will be used for irrigation. Clause 7 then, instructs the TRNC State Hydraulics Authority to “pay attention to all the warnings from the Turkish State Hydraulics Authority (*Devlet Su İşleri* – DSİ) staff in relation to management, maintenance and repair and other technical matters” (Su Temini ve Yönetimine İlişkin Hükümetlerarası Andlaşma 2016). And lastly, it remarks that “DSİ will provide technical assistance to the local hydraulic authority *if need be*, for which the terms and conditions will be identified through a Protocol between two parties” (ibid, emphasis mine). The clause not only puts two hydraulic authorities into a hierarchical relationship, but also produces specific assignments for each governmental body, especially for the Turkish Cypriot office. It is interpreted by many Turkish Cypriots to be ambiguous, who would decide when the local office would need technical assistance.

Nevertheless, the clause is meant to render the upgraded system ordered and clear; as it notes in the beginning of the agreement, that the purpose of it is to establish an efficient and productive hydraulic management system. As policy work is never politically or ideologically neutral, “their political nature is disguised by the objective, neutral, legal-rational idiom” and that they are portrayed as instruments that promote efficiency and effectiveness (Shore and Wright 1997, 7). The direct and hierarchical relationship in terms of the two governmental bodies’ technical expertise is cloaked under a normative language with phrases such as “ought to pay attention to”, “ought to review”, or “if need be”.

Further looking at the agreement, Clause 10 mentions the pricing of the transferred water. It states that the tariff will be decided with an “implementation contract” signed with the operator, in other words, the private company through which it will establish a “tariff management system” (Su Temini ve Yönetimine İlişkin Hükümetlerarası Andlaşma 2016). In addition to Clause 10, Clause 12 also established terms for municipalities, described as “subscribers” (*abone*), for if they do not ‘subscribe’ to the new system and refuse to buy the transferred water, they will have to buy the local water resources with the same price as the transferred one from the south of Turkey.

The “Proposal for Water Politics” document issued in 2016 by the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Environmental Engineers agrees to such regulation, for the purposes of reducing the water extraction from the coastal aquifers of the north. Once the price is the same, the municipalities will be encouraged to subscribe to the system and aquifers will be replenished with minimal to no extraction. The technical and purposive nature of this section in particular was interpreted completely differently by many Turkish Cypriot officials and municipal council members. One Nicosia Municipality council member said that they are “condemning the municipalities to buy the transferred water” and that they are treating them as lab rats. The Proposal document however also adds that privatization of the water management along with municipalities losing their leverage over how much they can sell the water to the citizens, will result in an extreme increase of the prices.⁸⁸

The 2016 bilateral agreement, other documents comprising of protocols, proposals, and models that revolve around the pipeline infrastructure, all articulate the deeply rooted dependence of de-facto TRNC to the Turkish state. Policy work, according to TRNC officials, is a top-down imposition; documents, sanctions, and regulations come and go according to the

⁸⁸ <http://www.yeniduzen.com/cevre-muhendislerinden-su-politikasi-onerileri-64575h.htm>

political and economic interests of the Turkish state. Looking closely at the discursive devices that these documents utilize; they are at times ambiguous and at others use normative phrases and a language communicate a hierarchical relationship between Turkish state and de-facto TRNC and who is responsible for what. Seemingly neutral phrases, as it is lodged into context and the people around it, bring out the embedded political dissonances they reproduce.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I first laid out the political economic contours of liberalization period of the Turkish economy, its subsequent unfolding into neoliberal restructuring in the AKP era, and how these transformations have, over time, consolidated the Turkish authority over northern Cyprus, under what I call “rule by protocols.” Tracing this series of protocols, the economic connotations of what a “nurturing” state have entailed, and the political rationality with which such economic (re)structurations in northern Cyprus have all been necessary to understand how my interlocutors in northern Cyprus constructed their situated idea of “neoliberal,” efficiency, and dependency on Turkish aid.

The case of foreign finance-backed, Turkish-funded water infrastructure development in northern Cyprus, as I have shown so far, encapsulates *both* the far-reaching exertion of an extractivist, developmentalist, and neoliberal rationality of the contemporary Turkish government, and also such rationality’s potential to co-opt the ideological and nationalist project of occupying northern Cyprus, and vice versa. Patronage politics became one of the same with neoliberal politics in northern Cyprus. In this chapter, my aim has been to show this precisely, and understand the political economic roots of the “motherland” and “babyland” monikers, and how such kinship metaphors, along with others like foster child (*besleme*) and umbilical cord (*göbek bağı*) are directly constituted and retained through material—economic and infrastructural—politics of aid and dependency. In the following chapter, I will show, through my ethnographic research, how locally situated meanings of neoliberalism are articulated through contesting water privatization.

Chapter 5 – The will to be governed: contesting privatization, looking for “normalcy”



Figure 15. Protesters gather at the roundabout leading to the Ercan Airport on March 1st, 2016. Source: <http://www.ankaradegillefkosa.org/su-eylemine-polisten-dava/>

On 1st of March 2016, a group of Turkish Cypriots gathered at the roundabout leading to the entrance of *Ercan* airport, the only commercial, yet illegal airport, in northern Cyprus. They were waiting for then Prime Minister Ömer Kalyoncu, who was about to board the Turkish Airlines flight going to Ankara Esenboğa Airport scheduled at 21:30.⁸⁹ Kalyoncu was headed to the Turkish capital to sign the “bilateral agreement” for privatization of the water infrastructure⁹⁰ and its management in TRNC and that evening activists were getting ready to protest his departure and oppose what they deemed to be an utter concession.

As with any other protest in northern Cyprus, roundabouts (*çember*) have become political spaces where demands are voiced, banners raised, and where people gathered and made themselves visible to passersby. Activists from The Communal Democracy Party

⁸⁹ <http://www.kibris724.com/kalyoncunun-makam-aracina-pet-sise-firlatildi-76383h.htm>

⁹⁰ I unpacked the details of the bilateral agreement in Chapter 4.

(*Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi*), Path to Independence (*Bağımsızlık Yolu*), a political activist organization (which registered later as a political party), and Baraka Cultural Center put up their banners of “No to privatization”, “Do not sign”, “A drop of honor” and many other slogans with clever puns like “*susamayız*” which means both “we cannot shut up” and “we don’t get thirsty”.⁹¹ Banners ready, approximately a couple dozen of activists awaited Kalyoncu’s arrival with his official car accompanied by the police. As the convoy approached the roundabout, slogans of “This is our land, let us govern it” and “We want to leave an honorable future to our children, what about you?” started to erupt—activists were ready with their plastic bottles of water. Some of the protestors, throwing those plastic bottles filled with water, managed to hit a car or two. The convoy passed by quickly without stopping and momentarily, the protest was over. The slogans died down and police intervened. One activist taken under custody, was released the next day, and faced charges for throwing a water bottle to the Prime Minister’s official car.⁹²

This episode prior to the signing of the bilateral privatization deal remains one of the most significant moments for the wave of protests against the privatization of the Turkey-northern Cyprus water supply project in northern Cyprus. The “water bottle protest” also meant another sign of the lack of trust many people felt towards TRNC politicians and their general attitude towards their political positions vis-à-vis the Turkish state and leverage in the domestic affairs. Henceforth, water became a protagonist in the politics of the de facto state. It not just entered into politics as a material and non-human actor, but also became a source of political contention in regard to the long-questioned sovereignty of the de-facto TRNC. The “umbilical cord” that would deliver the “water of life”⁹³ from the Mersin region of Turkey to the Turkish

⁹¹ In Turkish language, to shut up is “sus-” and to be thirsty is “susa-”, which the activists playfully use as creative slogans for this protest and many others about water privatization.

⁹² <http://www.ankaradegillefkosa.org/su-eylemine-polisten-dava/>

⁹³ There are many other symbolic names given by the Turkish government to the transferred water such as “peace water” or “gift water” and to the pipeline as “river of peace”, which I explicate in Chapter 3.

occupied north of Cyprus, is not merely a successful technological system; it rendered the deep and sensitive connection between two spaces more contestable than ever.

The protest that I described above is part of a series of actions that were ignited as the water privatization became a point of critical debate among the publics of northern Cyprus. Other actions included letters to ministers, social media content creation, community awareness meetings, and protests in front of the Turkish embassy building. The “water bottle protest”, rendered the so-called neoliberalization of water infrastructure not only a point of political contestation, but also a *moral* issue in the eyes of Turkish Cypriots who gathered at the airport that evening. In the “exploration of forms of the political *outside* its conventional locations” (Von Schnitzler 2013, 672 emphasis mine), the simple object of a plastic water bottle becomes the locus through which the moralizing language of honor, understood here as the responsibility of voicing one’s demands, is performed as a political strategy to go against the grain of the long-established motherland-babyland relations.

In this chapter, I return to where I left off in Chapter 3 and explore the ways in which the co-constitution of materiality and multiplicity of meanings that the infrastructure project gave rise to, articulate communities’ will to govern or be governed, their ideas of what the state is and does, and what they are looking for when they talk about normalcy and exceptionality. Governing water or the supposed inability to do so led people to contemplate whether they could or would govern themselves in the first place. At the protest I described above, a random bottle of water embodied sentiments of anger, lack of trust, and ambiguity towards the ministers who were leaving the island to represent the people of northern Cyprus in Turkey that evening. Water bottle was no longer simply a mundane object. It made me wonder in fact, did the person who bought it and threw it on the ministers’ car think about it being a commodity, when he was chanting “water is a common good and a human right” at the protest? Water spilling on the car as the bottle burst open, lost its utilitarian function. It stood for fear, a moral panic of

losing dignity as the placards wrote, and the ambivalence of their states of being—dependent, unequal, and acquiescent.

Thus, departing from this clumsy protest of throwing water bottles, this chapter will look at how the materiality of water and its invisible and visible infrastructures of access and distribution gave rise to fundamental conditions of living with a de-facto state. The ambiguity that came with this de-facto state of living therefore, resonated with many as a question of existence and whether their existence was ostensibly normal. These emic concepts of exceptionality and normalcy that I heard repeatedly in my conversations with people, became clues as to how political subjectivities are constructed and what it means to be a collectivity in northern Cyprus.

Entering the field and arrival of water

When I first entered the field in January 2016, the arrival of water was imminent; farmers, city-dwellers, seasonal workers, and even weekender gambling tourists were waiting for Turkish state officials to declare when exactly the water would come. Construction had finalized in late 2015, and the Cyprus end of the pipelines, barely visible underneath the sea at the coast of Güzelyalı, became the talk of this “small town”⁹⁴ that is northern Cyprus, as most of my interlocutors called it. When I arrived to northern Cyprus, I first stayed at Cemil’s parents’ unused flat in Gönyeli, a newer neighborhood of *Lefkoşa* (Nicosia) for a week. Living in Güzelyurt, or Omorfo as most people called it,⁹⁵ Cemil’s parents kindly offered their newly acquired property to me, specifically bought as an investment for Cemil and his sister. I spent my first week getting to know Nicosia and its neighborhoods, walking everywhere, meeting

⁹⁴ A lot of people including Zeynep, Tülin, Emel, and others that I mention throughout the thesis frequently referred to northern Cyprus as a small town, *köy* or *kasaba* in Turkish. Mentioning this in a joking manner, they also said that everyone is the cousin of everyone else (*herkes birbiriyle yeğen burada*). The implication is that everyone is related and that you could find familial relations wherever you go in the north.

⁹⁵ Güzelyurt is one of the five regions of northern Cyprus. Morphou, being the Greek name for it, is referred less as Güzelyurt but more as Omorfo, written and spoken as it is written.

with potential landlords and landladies, and receiving care packages of *halloumi* and *bolibif*⁹⁶ from Cemil whenever he visited me from Omorfo. Afterwards, I found a flat to rent in Küçük Kaymaklı neighborhood of Lefkoşa. My landlady Emel, who was a public servant at the TRNC Customs office, warned me on the first day in my Nicosia flat that if the home appliances like the washing machine or the kitchen sink gets rusty, I should not worry, and that she would not cut the cost out of my deposit. I was initially startled at the specificity of her caution, but just as she anticipated, the metal sink, the sides of the newly bought washing machine, and even the cutlery became an orange-brown color at the end of the first month of my stay at the flat. With first-hand experience, I came to realize that rust and salt were commonplace in the north.

After decades of waiting, the promise of clean water that does not make all the appliances rusty, after decades of waiting, was about to become more than a promise with the water supply project. Emel, like many other Nicosians, was excited about the transferred water: “I don’t care how much more we will pay for this water, I am sure it is so clean and sweet, it is from the Toros mountains [of Turkey] after all”. The commonly felt reliance on the aid of the “motherland” resonated with the whole family of Emel Yılmaz. With their sensibilities of Turkish nationalism, secularism, and Kemalism, the Yılmaz family welcomed me to their four-unit house. Emel and her younger sister Aslı inherited the land, a formerly Greek Cypriot owned land⁹⁷, where our communal home stood today. That year, they had finally renovated the two flats on the ground floor and were ready to generate some revenue from them. As Emel pointed out, they required their tenants to be “reliable and honest people”; students were preferred. Emel’s husband had business in the Karpaz region of the island, where he commuted on a weekly basis. I mostly saw the two daughters, an elementary school age girl and her older sister, who had been working hard for university entrance examinations later that year. The

⁹⁶ Bolibif is a staple food sold in supermarkets in northern Cyprus. It is canned meat or corn beef, a food that most people told me, the British colonizers have brought to the island

⁹⁷ Explain here the property issues with Greek Cypriot lands

building we lived in along with Emel and Asli's families had water tanks on the roof, just like any other household in the area. They subscribed to the municipal network of water utility and paid the bills. Emel told me that most people in Nicosia get the municipal water, but there are now increasing numbers in people unsubscribing from it because of the quality of water and resorting to other ways. Buying water in bulk to put in water storage units from privately owned water tankers was common in Nicosia especially; Kyrenia and Omorfo for instance, got their water from different aquifers. The privately owned water tankers roamed the streets daily, going from one household to the other, filling people's tanks on demand. When I asked Emel where these water tankers would get the water from, she answered me, "what do you think all those well licenses are for? The government gives licenses to so many wells to be opened every year." They would then, use small-scale treatment systems to purify the water to minimize saline in the water. The privatization of water have already started for some.

Settling into my new flat, I kept in touch with Cemil and his friends whom he introduced me to at Khora Café, located on the edge of the old walled-city of Nicosia. With them, I ended up having endless conversations about water, self-determination, eco-socialism, and the Turkish Cypriots' dependence on the Turkish state. Mehmet was one of those people whom I had met at Khora. As he arrived and grabbed a chair at our table, he asked me what business I had in northern Cyprus. My accent giving away my passport, I told him that I was there to talk to people about water infrastructure. He leaned towards Cemil and said, without really disguising what he was about to say, "My friend, how do we know if she is not an agent [from Turkey]?" (*Bu kız ajan olmasın?*) Cemil laughed hysterically and looked to me whether I heard it and how I would react to such an accusation. From the get-go, Mehmet reminded me of a stereotypical socialist man from the 1980s. He wore a parka most of the time and I saw him frequently with the same t-shirt that had Marx, Lenin, and Stalin portraits; I was amazed at how unironically he fashioned this outfit. Mehmet, Cemil, and others who passed hours at Khora,

drinking Cypriot coffee and talking about local politics, were all members of political organizations behind the “water bottle protest” that I opened this chapter with. They were keen to go to a newly emerging collective too. The Water Platform was a collective of concerned citizens, trade unions, civil society organizations, and political parties, who came together to oppose to the privatization agreement. Political platforms were abundant in northern Cyprus; from local politics to matters that concerned all of northern Cyprus, platforms emerge and die out with subjects ranging from opposing new hotel constructions in Kyrenia, uneven development, quarries and its environmental effects in Kythrea (*Değirmenlik*), to rejecting a Turkish state-imposed policy that would reorganize and centralize sports activities and events in northern Cyprus.

Water Platform

On my first day at the Water Platform, I quickly understood that the representatives of every organization were ready to meet weekly and sometimes even twice or thrice a week. The clauses of the bilateral agreement were being discussed in detail; which clause was against human rights, which opposed basic constitutional rights of TRNC, and how would the Platform organize people to bring awareness to the rest of the public. Most members had already agreed and kept repeating throughout meetings that their aim was to “drum the good (*doğru*) ways into people’s heads” (*doğruyu insanların kafasına sokmak*). Mehmet, who frequented both Khora Cafe and the Platform gatherings, once uttered “We need to help people understand what is awaiting them [with this privatization deal]”. The Platform members, in the course of their short-lived mobilization, talked of a recurring self-appointment of telling others what was “right” and what people should understand. “Our people will not get it until they get the first water bill in their mailboxes,” another member answered. Such statements reveal that contesting water privatization seen within the Platform was not simply a political opposition; it further reflected the members’ didactic positioning in relation to “their people.” The “good”, I was told, was to say no to privatization of water in northern Cyprus, as the agreement entailed

massive concessions and violation of the TRNC constitution. With a deeply engrained moral obligation and self-perception of having a moral high ground, members of the Platform did not shy away from making these big claims and accusations.

Along with Mehmet, Cemil had also introduced me to other likeminded self-declared leftists every time I went to Khora or at the Water Platform meetings. Selim was one of those people. A Turkish Cypriot geologist, at the time, he worked at the Geology Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. One of the frequent attendees to the Water Platform meetings, he offered to take me on one of the village visits arranged by the Platform. Driving to one of the smaller villages of the Nicosia region of the north, Selim told me that naturally people would be happy to receive the water and that everyone across the north of the island have been complaining about the water quality for years, especially Morphou (*Omorfo*), Nicosia (*Lefkoşa*), and Famagusta (*Mağusa*) regions. The quality of natural water resources of northern Cyprus had become salty and bitter due to heavy extraction, salinization, and depletion of the Morphou coastal aquifer. As Selim talked about water scarcity and the geological structure of the island, he went on to explain to me the many things that the Water Platform was ready to undertake including village visits across the north of the island from Morphou to the Karpasia peninsula, social media campaigns, protests, letters to the Minister urging him not to sign the privatization deal, etc.

Selim, unlike other members, usually kept a reserved demeanor; he never spoke over others, which was a frequent behavior, and knowledge of geology always came prior to his political opinions. Most of the time, we sat next to each other during meetings, and he nodded when other Platform members called the agreement a ‘filthy’ deal, a major concession, or an obligation under the guise of aid. Nevin also came to the meetings diligently just like Selim. She was also a public servant and a representative of a theater collective in northern Cyprus. Having brought her middle school-age daughter to most of the meetings, she proudly said to

me that she is bringing her up like an activist. For her, the Platform was part of her daughter's education. Lawyers, architects, urban planners, geologists, hydrologists, public servants, and teachers, most people who attended the Platform during meetings and online through Facebook posts and in the comments sections, seemed to know what was at stake—that was always already a given—and how to oppose it. Later on however, it became more clear to me that the stakes were not mechanical, rationally motivated, or centered on individualistic self-interest. Rather, the voluntarism as a motivation to join the Water Platform was animated by what Andrea Muehlebach called "*homo relationalis*, not by self-interest but by fellow feeling, not by a rational entrepreneurial subject but by a compassionate one" (Muehlebach 2012, 6). It was the act of relating to "their people" one way or another or perceiving community as praxis and as didactic work with moral determination that motivated the Platform members to gather and oppose the state imposed agreement.

"The state does not exist"

Throughout its approximately three-month life course, the Water Platform became a venue in which moral language was repeated. The meetings, protests, and informal conversations before and after, became triggering events in which concerned de-facto citizens of TRNC discussed experiences of living under a "system of exploitation" (*sömürü düzeni*).⁹⁸ The political grievances of Turkish domination and dependence were projected on the latest policy imposition of the Turkish state, namely the bilateral agreement to privatize the water resources and its management. The privatization scheme gave them a concrete example to interrogate their "system of exploitation." As Didier Fassin says, "politics has always included moral arguments about good government and public good, fairness and trust, as well as moral condemnations of all sorts of evils" (Fassin 2012, 10). And articulating such moral arguments, Platform members looked for a state and a sense of normalcy in a "state of exception" (which

⁹⁸ This is a common reference uttered by the Platform members as well as others outside of the Platform setting.

I explicate further in this chapter) that multiplied and intensified with daily political experiences and social life. These moral arguments articulated in their political claims of normalcy, self-determination, and sovereignty, all come from the material and political dependencies that Turkish domination by occupation has established and legitimized through economic aid as well as a rhetoric of ethnic affinities embellished with metaphors of kin. As explicated in chapters 3 and 4, it is with this historical backdrop that these moral claims need to be thought of.

Yavuz, the self-declared representative of the Platform, spoke emphatically most of the evening at the village meeting that Selim and I drove to. At the time, he was also the head of the Olive Producers' Association and in a matter of a few days, Yavuz became the face of the Water Platform, giving interviews to major newspapers, writing status updates on Facebook, and talking about “the evils of Erdoğan’s neoliberal agenda” at village visits like this one.

The state as we know it, does not in fact exist today. No matter what kind of a solution there is [for Cyprus], we still need a state, and we need that state to be powerful, to defend public interests and provide resources and services. This is not the case at the moment. Just because it is not, it does not mean we should simply give the keys to the state to someone else. You may want to go back to the British colonial times, you may also want to hand it over to Turkey or to Anastasiades [President of RoC]; this is your choice. However, if you want to live with your honor, you have to lay claims to your state and your land. Only if we do that, the state becomes ours. This state right now, is not ours. It is one that receives orders from another; it has become a ‘colonial administration’.

Yavuz said these words with a sense of urgency at the consultation meeting. For him, “laying claims to their state” meant opposing the bilateral privatization agreement drafted by the Turkish government. During the village consultation meeting, other participants spoke of topics such as the consequences of privatizing water, responsibilities of the state and self-determination of a people having to linger between a conflictual past and its present political repercussions, and the domination of a nurturer/protector state that refuses to let go. Introducing the goals of the Platform to the villagers who gathered at the coffee house, Yavuz

claimed that privatization meant more than massive increases in water prices and having to deal with a rent-seeking company; the imposed agreement purported the concession of the people's honor and willpower (*irade*). The quote above reflects how Yavuz along with many other Turkish Cypriots perceived the privatization issue—as a call for reclaiming 'their state'. This utterance of laying claims to their state materially emerges through water infrastructure revealing the uneven power relations that people like Yavuz find themselves in and in turn, how they construct such relations through moral terms like honor and responsibility. The water infrastructure, as a development project that would ostensibly bring prosperity and progress, "works to shape the desires of its subjects, and the actions that stem from those desires. As such, the status of being developed becomes a 'moral horizon of a project of self-fashioning'" (Yeh 2013, 11). Such a search for a state that is theirs, therefore, is a moral endeavor.

For Yavuz, it is unthinkable not to have 'their own' state; in his own understanding, a moral and political personhood is contingent upon laying claims to an ambiguous entity that he calls 'our state'. As he calls for an obligation to lay claims to the state and territory, pointing out what a state has to do to be powerful, he declares the TRNC state to be non-existent. His repudiation also comes with an awareness of history, that dependence, legitimacy and sovereignty are questions of a colonial past, a postcolonial present enmeshed with a dependence on a patron state. He believes the state to be an organizing entity, exerting a political authority and holding power through its institutional, juridical, and administrative framework.

James Scott highlights statecraft as a series of techniques of typification, abstraction, and standardization that are indispensable to rendering the state's subjects and populations legible and governable (J. C. Scott 1998). Through simplifying populations' material surroundings—like producing maps, standard gridding, censuses, and other techniques of repetitive logic, states translate the complex reality into an abstraction for the sake of legibility.

He concludes that these “projects of legibility” (1998, 80) in “manipulating society, [are] undermined by intrastate rivalries, technical obstacles, and, above all, the resistance of its subjects” (ibid). Here, Scott assumes a particular distinction between the motives and ideals of the state and those of its subjects and that there will occur forms of resistance to these top-down imposed techniques of governing in one way or another. Going against the state, hoping to evade legibility may be central concerns for many populations that live under neoliberal configurations of governmentality.

However, the case of northern Cyprus and its water conundrum poses an alternative—one that anthropologist Stef Jansen (2014) would characterize as a case of hope for the state or yearning to be governed. Yavuz’s statement above reflects as an appeal to his fellow north-islanders that they are in dire need of a state, a state that is theirs. It implies that the de-facto TRNC state does not have the power to govern its people; that other power structures have claimed authority upon them. As Stef Jansen argues in the case of a besieged town in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the peak of violence in the 1990s, gridding—in Scott’s sense—has become something to be yearned for. The state in Yavuz’s imagination would also endow upon its people autonomy, the illusion of holding *willpower* and eventually shaping the image of a community and a sense of a collectivity. As such, he expresses not only hope for a kind of state which holds top-down authority to the imagined community and territory, but a responsibility to actively look for one and demand to be governed.

Furthermore, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta explicate that the imagined state supposedly standing above society, “produces spatial and scalar hierarchies” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 995) through “vertical encompassment”. Problematizing the state/society divide, they claim that the state as a site of cultural and social reproduction, encompasses the society through all scales, which in the end “produces a taken-for-granted spatial and scalar image of a state that both sits above and contains its localities, regions, and communities” (982).

Through symbolic devices, representations, and bureaucratic practices then, the state comes to encompass society not just through top-down actions of planning and governance, but also through a spatially widened encompassment of localized and more mundane practices. In relation to megaprojects like the Turkey-northern Cyprus pipeline, these mundane practices could posit fixing pipes, upgrading networks, and providing water resources throughout the north of the island. The de-facto TRNC state, as imagined and understood by Yavuz and many other Turkish Cypriots, fails to perform its state-ness through vertical encompassment. And for Yavuz, the normality of a state comes from the ability to perform such vertical encompassment, which TRNC, according to him, has lacked since its inception.

Yavuz articulates his expectation for a state that will provide public services efficiently for the public good, meanwhile showing a firm sense of disdain for the privatization of public utilities like water management. Bureaucratic engagements manifest a social contract between citizens and officials and practices, materials, and infrastructures permeating the bureaucratic field “provide the foundation for social relationships with the state” (Bear and Mathur 2015, 19). Indeed, water infrastructure and its provision and governance are the location where this social contract is instantiated through the production of urban citizens, but “they are also ongoing processes through which the social contact is violently betrayed or denied” (Anand 2017b). The engendered social entanglements along with the ethical and affective connotations of dealing with a new understanding of public goods—one that heavily prioritizes private interests, hinders efforts for the collective good, and intensifies already existent inequalities—point to larger questions about statehood and subjecthood. While Yavuz’s statement calls for a reclamation of that constitutional agreement, his yearning is much more than this. The issue of privatization for Turkish Cypriots, on the brink of the TRNC state officials signing the imposed agreement, mobilized dormant feelings of a historically (re)produced disenfranchisement and the urgent need for laying claims to their state. As I will show in later sections, most members

of the Platform, during meetings, revealed that the transferred water as a necessary resource represented the very dependence, their powerlessness and lack of sovereignty over their land and resources, and also their moral sentiments of dignity, civic duty, and responsibility over who gets to control and administer natural resources, who valorizes it and in what terms and conditions. Yavuz expresses his opinions about the de-facto state of TRNC in moral terms and relates it directly to privatization of a public utility system and a public good. He relates it precisely as a moral duty: conceding to a privatized water management meant giving up fully on sovereignty over the de-facto territory of TRNC and a surrender of the Turkish Cypriot people's willpower. The neoliberal rationality did not and could not go together with the political illusion of the de-facto TRNC state. Once the Turkish state-imposed privatization occurred, it was as if, that illusion would collapse altogether, already hanging on by a thin thread of non-recognition and dependence.

Yearning for normalcy

During the meeting (and many other meetings thereafter), Platform members continued giving examples of privatization and alternative water management systems from the Netherlands, Israel and resistance movements in Chile or France, as their job was said to be “to educate people”. After every short speech followed a commentary on the abnormalcy of TRNC—how “this geography” was not a normal place and that they do not live in normal conditions or under a normal state. In fact, “*this half island is an abnormal geography*” was a common utterance regardless of people's membership to the Platform or their political alliances. The language of geography it seemed, enabled their representation and articulation of politics. Where was “half island” located and what did this self-narration mean? And what did their geographical location and its supposed lack of normalcy have anything to do with water resources and its management?

For some of the Platform members, the transferred water represented the “biggest concession” to the Turkish state. For others, the opportunity represented by this resource could

deliver a better and abundant future. Despite these diverging opinions however, privatization of their natural water resources along with the transferred water showed them the importance of scale—*where* they are socially and spatially positioned, and from which perspective they see themselves. Questions about their “place” and hence existence in the world became even more salient when self-reliance and sovereignty was about equally accessing a material and vital necessity. Yearning for a “normal” state meant “their own state” as demonstrated by Yavuz above. But yearning for this “will to be governed” also constituted a sense of “place” for them. Where they are located, or a *scalar orientation* as I call it here, constituted who they are and to whom they are connected to and disconnected from.

The uncertainty of who would be the decision-makers and on what terms and conditions an equitable allocation of resources could be reached, led to how they could construct a sense of collectivity. Throughout the Water Platform meetings, informal chats with members in coffee shops, and other social occasions, I encountered a striking insistence to compare their self-proclaimed “half island” (*ada yarısı*) with *other* states in Europe and beyond. The oft heard statement ‘we are not Sweden’⁹⁹ directly meant their condition of ‘abnormality,’ as they called it, comparing it to a ‘normal’ and a supposedly functioning state. Moreover, when Water Platform members said repeatedly, ‘look at the case of Cochabamba in Bolivia and see how they won their battle against privatization,’¹⁰⁰ hope and an effervescent feeling of resistance ensued. These comparisons and scalar positioning imply “a point of view: a perspective from which scales (modes of comparison) are constructed and from which aspects of the world are evaluated with respect to [them]” (Gal 2016, 91). Comparison between their ‘abnormality’ and ‘other normal’ states become a mode in which scalar orientation is the driving force for them to reckon with their connection to, and dependence on, Turkey.

⁹⁹ At times, some members mixed up Sweden and Switzerland, which was a joking matter during meetings.

¹⁰⁰ For a detailed analysis on the case of Cochabamba, see (Assies 2003).

This connection to Turkey is not only materialized through the megaproject as demonstrated in Chapter 3, but also *scaled* in situated idioms, such as the half island and the umbilical cord. Platform members used the half island as a reference point to where they were—the term itself evaded its Turkish hegemonic meaning, etched in maps, songs, and other artefacts. Instead, it evoked the place-ness of northern Cyprus, culturally and historically specific discourses surround it. The location of northern Cyprus, for Platform members, was not simply in relation to “motherland” or the “south”—half-island could also be thought of in relation to the ‘west’, the ‘Mediterranean’ or the rest of the world that is supposedly normal. The megaproject, in its hypervisibility, accentuated northern Cyprus, *not* as part of an island on the Mediterranean, *but* as a ‘half island’ tied to the Turkish mainland.

Such scalar orientation is also evident in the way members articulated their opposition to water privatization and Yavuz was one of those people, as demonstrated above. In that same town meeting in Nicosia, he continued his pedantic declarations and said that privatization was a neoliberal trend in this globalizing world and that people all around the world have been robbed because of corrupt policies and private companies. Yavuz however, shied away from revealing whether he was pro or against Turkish state presence in Cyprus;¹⁰¹ for him, the place of the half island is *not* in relation to Turkey, but to the region and rest of the world. Two geographical frames of reference mattered to him: that of the half island and the Eastern Mediterranean region. The process in which he constructed certain scales also contributes to the production of ‘place’ in relation to the region. People like Yavuz scaled up their “place” to a regional level, in order to scale up the importance of their struggle against privatization. In order to govern the transferred water well, he believed, the TRNC as a state could get technical assistance from neighboring states like Israel: “Look at Israel; they have the technical and

¹⁰¹ Party politics in northern Cyprus revolves mostly around this topic and it is discussed throughout the political spectrum. For a detailed study on party politics and patronage in northern Cyprus, see (Sonan 2014).

scientific [knowledge] to turn the desert into irrigated land. Their geography and climate are similar to ours. And they govern water publicly.” In every meeting, Yavuz found another example like that of Israel (the Netherlands, Argentina, etc.) to compare with northern Cyprus, wondering “why can’t we be normal like other states and govern water ourselves?” The incompleteness of a *half* island—he used the term repeatedly in his speeches—it seemed, deepened his sense of abnormalcy. These utterances of Yavuz were either met with silence, a need to change the topic, or smirks around the room one member to another. It was clear that his points seemed naïve or optimistic at best to the other members. Every time he talked about normalcy or self-governance, I remembered what another Platform member Yiğit had said only a month ago when the Platform first got together: “We do not live in a normal democratic and bourgeois society. TRNC is not a place where there are normal laws and such. They [?] overlook you here. We cannot disregard this.” He looked for a turn to a western norm; one that could only be achieved by not being dominated by an external force. To be self-sufficient and to self-govern meant normalcy. Most Platform members were there with a clear awareness of this. I also wondered who *they* were, what Yiğit was referring to—TRNC officials or the Turkish state? Regardless, for Platform members, normalcy and self-reliance are constructed through this scalar orientation. Such comparisons and scaling up *where* they are construct situated ideas of place as a half island and the geographical region that are evasive to those created by the more powerful, i.e., Turkey.

The many states of exception

The abnormality (*anormallik*) that my Turkish Cypriot interlocutors frequently referred to stems from a deeply situated “state of exception.” The origins of this state of exception in Cyprus have their roots in the establishment of Republic of Cyprus when it successfully gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960 (Constantinou 2008). The majority population of the island, Greek Cypriots were not allowed to exercise self-determination and therefore, the nascent republic had already entered a state of exception for the “withdrawal of colonial

armies... independence from the ‘motherlands’” (Constantinou 2008, 145). All the functioning aspects of an idealized western norm were promised, yet never realized. This occurrence is precisely the *condition of possibility* for the pipeline megaproject; the existence of a de-facto TRNC state, the creation of *exceptional* spaces like Turkish military barracks, the ghost town of Varosha,¹⁰² the Green Line or Buffer Zone— a demilitarized, UNFICYP¹⁰³ patrolled strip of land, stretching from west to east for 180 kms, also known as the Green Line that was formed in 1964 during the civil war—, or the political conditions through which Turkish Cypriots’ materially become dependent, all hold each other up and multiply and become dependent on each other.

Throughout conversations, the exceptionality of TRNC had to be reminded to each other and more importantly the very ‘abnormality’ is precisely why “they discount [them] and see [them] as nothing (*hiçe sayılıyor*uz).” The abnormality of the TRNC state, for Platform members, is at the crux of a disenfranchised Turkish Cypriot society—a ‘meek’ society stripped of its agency and moral judgment. Costas Constantinou (2008) in his study of what he calls the double exceptionality of Cyprus, puts forth that, having been under conditions of violence and stripped from their rights, communities in Cyprus “have managed to negotiate ways of living that are often surprising, ways of living that empower them in their structural disempowerment” (2008, 146). Sporadic testimonials of Mehmet and monologues of Yavuz, during these meetings then, trace the surprising, paradoxical, or ironic effects on how collectivity is constructed, a “normal” structure of government is required by them, and political subjectivities highlighting morality and agency, are cultivated. Looking for a normal life is directly constituted by the exceptionality that permeated their collective experiences of the half island.

¹⁰² For the recent political developments on Varosha, see (Özdemir 2021).

¹⁰³ UNFICYP is the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

The exceptionality that I am talking about here is not just an ongoing state of exception whereby the northern territories are militarily occupied and causes a geopolitical deadlock on the island and beyond.¹⁰⁴ In Giorgio Agamben’s words, out of necessity, “the state of exception appears as an “illegal” but perfectly juridical and constitutional measure that is realized in the production of new norms (or a new juridical order)” (Agamben 2005, 28). A plethora of failed reunification talks between the two polities (RoC and de-facto TRNC) and their protectorates (Greece, Turkey, and Britain, along with the UN) and the unachieved goal of a federal solution for the reunification of the island are seen by many as attempts for normalcy among communities of northern Cyprus across the political spectrum. The assumption is that once there is a reunification of the island through a federal solution, normalization will occur, and the many states of exception will cease to exist. As a solution becomes less and less realizable, the idea of normalcy for some, also becomes less desirable and takes on a different meaning in itself.

For Agamben, the state of exception is formed through an exceptional form of administrative action and the suspension of juridical order. Further, he asserts that the state of exception becomes the norm, a set of practices, and the paradigm of government. In times of war or ‘crisis’, the state of exception engenders subjects who are exceptionalized, which Agamben characterizes as ‘bare life’ (ibid). Contrary to his characterization, the self-acclaimed “exceptionalized”, Turkish Cypriots I spoke to, have come to embrace that very state of exception and self-exceptionalization became a way for empowerment. For them, the moral horizons they contemplate, a yearning for *their* own state—which mean a “normal” one in their eyes,— and the evasive category of a location called half island, reveal not a sense of hopelessness, or an actual passivity. Instead, there is an embedded awareness in such discourses

¹⁰⁴ The occupation of the northern territories is a political contention also in the EU accession of Turkey. Unless Turkish armed forces leave northern Cyprus and de-facto TRNC regime dismantled, the European Union does not proceed with accession of Turkey.

of their conditions and self-acceptance of them and the awareness of ‘abnormality’ as they call it does not make them simple victims and bare life. On the contrary, materialization of their exceptional conditions—like the megaproject—motivates them to reckon with their location, political non-recognition (both geographical and political), and reflect on a will to self-govern.

The (in)ability to govern

The village consultation meeting went on for almost two hours, where the villagers found themselves perplexed when Yavuz and other representatives informed them about what privatization entailed for their means of production—they mainly did small-scale agriculture work and husbandry/dairy production—and livelihoods. A call for “laying claims to their state” was coupled with an attempt to convince the villagers that “they have been fooled/tricked”. After Yavuz’s monologue, Ömür who lived in the village jumped in when there was a brief pause. It was as if Yavuz’s long speech about examples from around world about resistance against water privatization had to be stopped and Ömür, in his disruption, wanted to talk about the fact of the matter: “It is better this way. What has the municipality done for us? This village sometimes does not even get water for a whole week!” After Yavuz’s intervention, it seemed that Ömür had set his mind on the idea that a private company managing water will be better than a municipal-run water. It was no surprise to the Platform members that he had a lot to complain about regarding water shortages and the crumbling pipes; it was a common hearsay and was repeated many times before and after this meeting that the pipes throughout the north were so old that they contained asbestos and were from the British colonial period (1914-1960).

Mehmet was sitting beside me and whispered to me that finally Yavuz had shut up and that we should let the people of the village talk. Mehmet started asking him about what kind of production the village mostly does, whether they have wet wells, and the villagers’ relationship with the municipality. Ömür told the room briefly about how the municipality cuts their water sporadically and that they cannot feed their animals for dairy production. But Yavuz intervened again and asked him about the price of the water per ton. It was 3 Turkish Liras per 10 tons, 4

if it exceeds 10, and 5 if it exceeds 20 tons, the man said. Yavuz in response to this dramatically said, “What if 10 tons were 6 Turkish Liras? Will you still be happy with that private company? Hm?” Having finally gotten his chance to wow the audience including Ömür, he continued his monologue:

If you are smart, you cannot say yes to a private company that will determine the price they want. If you do, then this means you have lost your minds! When the price goes up, you will say, ‘What have we done?’ I am not saying this to defend the municipality. Many people are upset with the municipalities. However, we cannot demonstrate any skills to govern our country and we do not aspire to willingly govern ourselves... If we cannot be organized to defend our own interests and show that we are capable of joining our forces... we will be fools!”

Yavuz’s previous interjections with moral notions of honor and responsibility of *owning* the state (*devletimize sahip çıkmak*), now turned into remarks bordering on insults. Looking around the coffee house, as the silence in between his sentences grew bigger, I observed perplexed faces searching for others’ to nonverbally confirm the clumsiness of his words about whether defending the public over private would make one ‘smart’ or not. But this remark seemed to not matter much in the end; he more importantly, raised once again something that most people in that room felt very strongly about—their state and how ‘they’ are both lacking the skills to and also are not willing to govern.

The contradictoriness of Yavuz’s statement points to a particular social and political imaginary that is conditioned mainly by dependency on the patron state and a self-ascribed inferiority. Yavuz and other Platform members’ conviction to strictly oppose a privatized water management system imposed by the Turkish state, though expressed in purely neoliberal economic terms at first, almost every time ended up with the same paradox of ‘we are not capable/skillful’ (*beceremiyoruz*) and ‘we are not willing’ (*uğraşmıyoruz*).

As this oscillation between self-ascribed qualities and conditions went on, another member of the Platform, Cemil, acknowledged that there is no trust anymore to either municipalities or politicians:

The municipality will have to take into account your complaints, they depend on your votes. But who knows when they will lower the prices, invest in upgrading the pipes. [The municipality] always says to us, ‘we cannot manage or govern, we are not capable!’... Those who sit in those posts for forty years, those who simply do not leave and get salaries to govern us are saying these to us. He does not have a right to say this. For that, we need to pressure these people. No private company will listen to you to lower water prices, but they have to!

When Cemil mentioned the local state officials’ inability to govern, most of the attendees started nodding their heads; some started whispering to each other, others chuckled sarcastically as a way to agree with this remark. There was a consensus in the room it seemed, that the need to be governed is omnipresent, but no-one is capable of governing or willing to do so. The transferred water, however, seemed to be less of a topic for them. What mattered most was what the water represented. It not only symbolized a meaningful, at times forceful tie to the ‘motherland’, but also stood for who they are as Turkish Cypriots. ‘Those in charge’ or ‘those who sit in those chairs’ were common reprehensions; if only politicians had the will to govern, then Turkish Cypriots would live honorable and productive lives as capable agents.

Throughout the village visit and many other Platform meetings, there were several contributing factors to the Platform members’ discontent, which seemed to digress from an infrastructural upgrade and private management. First, they explicitly expressed that the Turkish state has never seen them as equals, the years-long dependency has rendered them incapable and ‘wretched’ (*sefil*). Second, the de-facto TRNC state officials held their high positions mainly because of nepotism; they complied with the Turkish state’s interests and did not serve the Turkish Cypriot society. And third, as citizens they had to mobilize and lay claims to their water and country—the will to do so was an imperative. None of these points were directly related to how water resources were to be managed in northern Cyprus. And yet, the vicious cycle of blaming the ‘motherland’, blaming politicians, and in return, constructing a self-image of a people with no moral compass or agency stood at the center of their “exceptionality.”

What is privatized? Water or its management?

The Platform meetings quickly became venues where clauses of the agreement were discussed in detail and whether Build-Operate-Transfer was a full privatization scheme or not. When experts from different fields like law and economics were invited to one of the meetings, the attendees steered the debate to how this particular scheme privatized the water resources and what this says about the constitution clause on the water resources having the status of “property of the state”. After all, one of the biggest issues for the Platform members was the changing of this status of water from public property to commodity. After a few back-and-forth between members and the constitutional law expert, what came out was that there were many ways for water to have become a commodity in the history of northern Cyprus and that even today, municipalities utilize such privatization schemes to render their services efficient and accessible. The example for this was Famagusta municipality, having utilized the Build-Operate-Transfer scheme to construct a seawater desalination plant for domestic and agricultural use, they entered into an agreement with a private company to invest, build, operate, and later on transfer the operations back to the municipality.

The expert reminded the crowd of this scheme and then continued on to jog their memories; it was as if he felt the need to bring these overexcited opponents of privatization back to reality. And the reality, according to him, was this; that even if there is no privatization agreement or water pipeline project, the local governments i.e. municipalities, as well as the central government of TRNC have already been entering into such transactions of receiving investments, BOT schemes with the formerly known Turkish Aid Committee (*TC Yardım Heyeti*), with its new name Development and Economic Cooperation Office (*TC Kalkınma ve Ekonomik İşbirliği Ofisi*). It was as if the privatization of water management was being done out of the blue and that no other Turkish imposition was in place, already established, and fully in force for decades. He was adamant to inform the audience that this was not the case and that

this privatization deal was “business as usual” as part of the Turkish state’s impositions, what I called in chapter 4, its “rule by protocols”.

The Turkish Cypriot constitutional law expert reminded us at the meeting that day of this prime condition of how TRNC has been functioning since its inception and then felt the need to come clean: “Look I am not telling you these because I am not against this agreement. If someone asked me to write such a protocol, I would not do it this way of course. I can also safely say that this [agreement] text was clearly not written by legal experts. In its [Turkish legal] language, systematically, and its consistency of content, it is written pretty badly. But I am here to understand with you what is what at least.” As the meeting went on for more than 1.5 hours, the attendees were keen to ask the two experts questions repeatedly about the status of “their” water—not the transferred water. Ownership of water mattered in two ways: does it originate from the island or from Turkey? and is it public property or private? Whereas some argue that the water from Anatolia is connected to springs of Cyprus island (as explicated in the first two chapters of this thesis), Platform members made sure to distinguish between “our own water” (*bizim suyumuz*) and “transferred water” (*Türkiye’den gelen su*). The ownership of water, for Platform members, did not mean a formal or institutional possession of the resources; rather, it was a ownership in the collective or customary sense, upon which their constitution and sense of community was contingent. Despite the qualities of salination and scarcity, their own water and its loss through the privatization meant a more fundamental loss of their communal connection to the island’s environment. Water therefore was not simply the elemental source that kept life going. Its agentive capacity laid precisely in the way people who came to these gatherings, discussed willpower, honor, and their own subjective capacities to act upon their environment.

As attendees continued asking questions, the experts kept their “expert” positions, trying not to say anything provocative or political, which they both stated at the beginning of

their speeches.¹⁰⁵ Towards the end, an attendee wanted to clarify what exactly was getting privatized then? The water resources or simply the management of the transferred water and its new infrastructural components of dams, transferal points, pumping stations, and purification plants? Regardless of whether both was the case or either, he said that it was the *relationship* between water and people that was being privatized and that meant something to him—as he called it, “the ways in which people related to their water is now privatized.” The pipeline infrastructure *re-formulated* the relation between people and their environment (Strang 2016). He added further that, it was true that municipalities could opt out of this privatized system of selling the transferred water to its end-users. But why would they, he wondered. The transferred water was better, abundant, and the constituents of these municipalities would oppose such opting out. Deeming such an alternative to be non-option, the Turkish state, according to him, is obliging every single municipality to subscribe to this new system: “And if you [the municipality] sign the deal, then they are bound to a privatization only dictated by the Turkish state and the private company to be chosen through a tender.” Again, the disagreement stemmed from *not* whether one is for or against privatization. It was whether privatization would be done in their *own* terms or in their own volition, or through the imposition of this deal. He continued that like Famagusta municipality with its desalination plant, a municipality could govern the water issue by choosing to open a tender for a BOT system for any public utility. But by subscribing to this particular deal, they were then bound to the private company—the sole decision maker of which municipality would get how much water and what kind of investment was worth putting forward.

“Then let’s talk about our reality in this country... you [as a municipality] can either do your investment in water infrastructure by getting aid from the Turkish Aid Committee (*TC*

¹⁰⁵ This also speaks to what I talk about in Chapter 6 on experts and engineers and their deliberate need to detach from politics as a way to construct their Professional subjectivities.

Yardımlı Heyeti), getting funding from the EU, which is minimal, or do what Famagusta did—BOT system of giving the investment, construction, operation, etc. to a private company” said the legal expert in response to what was said above. The options were limited, reality starkly stood in their faces that day, and the coming days when Platform members decided to write letters to the ministers of TRNC. The conversation no longer was whether water was a human right or a commodity but rather, whether they were *capable* of doing such investments for water infrastructural upgrade *on their own* or not.

While people like Yavuz, Mehmet, and others who subscribed to a similar idea of voluntarism and moral duty to oppose water privatization, other people similar to Ömür expressed more mundane concerns much less emphatically than the Platform members. Most people looked for that idea of “normal”, but the state of exception they lived alongside a “make believe state” loomed over them.

Jessica Greenberg (2011), in her study on post-socialist Serbia, explores the ways in which normalcy is discursively constructed and how ‘normal’ thus “points to the gap between how people *see themselves* and how they must conform to conditions and realities not of their choosing” (89 emphasis added). Further, she argues how “citizens understand and experience changing configurations of state power as enabling conditions for their own moral and agentive capacities” (ibid). This entangled relationship between a state’s capacity to hold power and autonomy over its citizens and in turn, the citizens’ capability for moral and political action is evident in what Yavuz expresses about the de-facto TRNC state and their lack of sovereignty or willpower. Yavuz’s views are indicative of how people of northern Cyprus feel today regarding their non-recognition as subjects to a “fake state”; they question whether the TRNC state has the capacity “to order and regulate people and things” (Dunn 2008, 244). The coming of water and its privatization to northern Cyprus then, not only complicates the already entangled relationship with Turkey, but also raises political questions brushed off under the

garb of ethnic nationalism that are of fundamental concern to their existence as a collectivity in the north of the island.

These questions of willpower, sovereignty, and autonomy all point to a need to be governed by “a state that works” (Greenberg 2011, 90). Not only one that works, but a state that is ‘theirs’ is what is missing; this not only would mean having a place in the region, but also it would exert a kind of intimate sovereign agency. The de-facto state’s authority and contested sovereignty as a distinguishable one from extra-state power of the Turkish republic, is at stake for the Platform members. And they attempt at claiming back their moral personhood and agentive capacities while at the same time reiterating the incapacities and exceptionality in terms of governance, moral judgment, and having “a place in the world” (Jansen 2009).

“These are ideological people”

My landlady Emel’s brother-in-law, Kerem was a successful lawyer and greeted me every time he passed by my door with his car daily, sometimes even stopped to have a quick chat asking me if I needed anything. Kerem, his wife Asli, and their then 5-year-old son lived on the second floor of the building. First floor was occupied by my landlady, Emel, her two daughters, and husband. And ground floor was split into two; I lived on the southern part and a Palestinian university student on the other end, whom I often saw going in and out of the house with his rental bright red Alfa Romeo car.

As the pipeline and the controversial privatization of water management became headlines in the early months of 2016, many Turkish Cypriots (not just Water Platform members) have found themselves in their time-honored tradition of questioning their sovereignty, political agency as a people, and a state in/of unrecognition. But Kerem had different ideas about the matter than people like Yavuz or Cemil. As the beginning of my fieldwork in northern Cyprus coincided with the height of these interrogations in the public, news and social media, I have come to learn that such concepts had frequently sprouted and died down especially when the political matter at hand involved “motherland” Turkey. And

my neighbors/landowners confirmed me that this was yet another one of those moments; “people will forget it ever happened in a few months.”

Time to time, Emel would invite me for dinner or a coffee upstairs, after she picked up her children from school. Our conversations spanned from what her older daughter would study at the university, whether they were going to be able to go on a summer vacation in southern Turkey—they preferred Antalya—or how I ended up in northern Cyprus. While getting to know the Yılmaz family during my first few months in Nicosia, I also attended every single meeting of the Water Platform, which I described earlier in this chapter. My conversations with the Yılmaz family proved to be a great contrast to how the Water Platform members viewed the Turkish state and its efforts to bring water from Turkey and privatize it. On a July evening, after the Platform activities long ceased to exist, Kerem and Aslı invited me to have a coffee and asked me about the meetings I had attended. I ended up telling them about a day when the representatives of a couple of trade unions had a major fight at one of the Platform meetings about whether they should go on strike or not. Was the issue of water privatization strike-worthy? Would it even be effective? These questions were no longer relevant of course; by June, the agreement was signed by the two states and fully in effect with the transition from public to private. Kerem said in response to my anecdote, “these are *ideological* people. They are not against privatization; they are against Turkey. How can you be against something that would be good for us?” Kerem kept the issue of water out of politics and ideology. Water, for him, could not be discussed in political terms, simply because it is “a necessity.” Yet, having trust in the Turkish aid and the policies came with it, he believed that privatization of these necessary services is needed in northern Cyprus. Water needed to be separated from politics; it was not something that politicians and unionists to be dealing with. Kerem said that the provision of water, its management, its governance, all were matters not to be meddled with, in the realm of politics and ideology.

With this declaration of “these are ideological people,” Kerem also distinguished himself and his views on water to be *outside* of the realm of ideology. According to him, the objective truth was that water was needed and that was a technical, ecological fact. The non-human entity of water “out there” was *no longer there* or in scarce quantity; bringing in ideology to oppose this “truth” was a mistake. In this conversation, Kerem did what Bruno Latour calls “purification”: “partition between a natural world that has always been there, a society with predictable and stable interests and stakes, and a discourse that is independent of both reference and society” (Latour 1993, 11). The naturalness of water stood outside the dimension of politics. At the same time however, Latour says that the mental process of purification cannot happen without the simultaneous process of “translation,” the creation of hybrids and networks that go between and entangle separated dimensions of technical, social, and political. Kerem’s purification is separating water from the realm of politics on the one hand, by calling *those people* ideological. And on the other, he takes the *status quo* of Turkish state providing financial and material aid, granted, *another* ideological viewpoint in itself. Any policy implementation that Turkish government provides, for Kerem, was correct and should be appreciated.

Further in our conversation, he claimed that privatization of such necessary services are “the correct way” mainly because the de-facto TRNC state is incapable of providing such services. Efficiency would only be achieved if capable and technical experts took the work in their own hands. Once again, the de-facto state rose to the occasion with its inefficiency. Kerem’s interjection further shows Latour’s double process of translation and purification. Taking a critical approach against what he called “ideological people,” Kerem situates water and its management outside the realm of politics. At the same time, he enacts his own ideological stance of being pro-Turkish involvement and poses his political claims as to why water management should be privatized.

For Kerem and many other like-minded people I spoke to in northern Cyprus, what Navaro (2012) aptly described as the *make-believe* process of fabricating northern Cyprus as a space and territory and also modes of governance and administration, is already done, in place, and taken for granted. The imagination and the material came together and people like Kerem both believe and make this nation-state project daily discursively and in social action. What I am talking about here is a few steps further, when the phantasmatic and material morphed together for decades, holding up the de-facto TRNC state, starts to have cracks and ruptures open showing the fragility and make-believe-ness of it all. With the coming of the transferred water and its infrastructure, a promise taken seriously, a more abundant future, the pipeline does precisely this, visibilizing those cracks, which lead people like both Platform members and people like Kerem, despite their different political stances and radically different positions on water privatization, to evaluate these cracks through the lens of ineptitude and inefficiency.

Power and powerlessness

With my time at the Platform gatherings, later on recurring conversations with some of the members, and others whom I acquainted during my time in northern Cyprus, did not have much in common. Politically, some identified as socialist, eco-socialist, or leftist, others were nationalist, Kemalist, and so on. The spectrum was wide and resembled that of Turkish politics immensely. But the only difference was, whichever way one went within the spectrum, their affinity and support of the Turkish state and its presence also oscillated. One common denominator, stemming from these diverging political affiliations and sentiments, I found out, was their sense of agency—calling oneself lazy (*tembel*), incapable (*aciz*), or unskillful (*beceriksiz*) were a frequent act, when talking about every day or political affairs. While Platform members emphatically looked for their willpower (*irade*) and their own state “to act upon the world” and participate and become decision makers in its citizens’ livelihoods, people like Kerem thought such a desire was futile and that “motherland” as a “patron state” could continue doing the decision making *for* them. Where did this incapacitation and sense of futility

came from? Was it powerlessness or disenfranchisement, was the equation simple as, “Turkish occupation rendered the communities marginalized and disenfranchised?” How did this particularly situated sense of *agency*, seemingly bounded and contingent upon the *structure* of occupation and encompassment, shape social action in northern Cyprus? *And what does this have anything to do with water, infrastructure, and neoliberalization?* Having been preoccupied with the obvious effects of the water pipeline project, it seemed easy and quick to come to the conclusion that Turkish Cypriots lacked agency and Turkish state actions and ideology was the culprit.

These statements of agentic capacities and especially the lack thereof ranged from feeling lethargic and apathetic, to self-flagellation and feeling inferior. Regardless of its variations, material “dispossession” came simultaneously with a dispossession of the capacity to act (Muehlebach 2018). For instance, when Zeynep, whom I introduced in Chapter 3, and I went to villages and towns in the surroundings of Kyrenia, I repeatedly heard the idiom of “an order of disarray” (*düzensizlik düzeni*) when they referred to their de-facto state and the general state of affairs. Resonating with what I have discussed previously in this chapter, water infrastructure became for many, a venue to discuss that “disarray” and what to do and what they *could not* do. When we went to Hisarköy (*Kampyli* is its Turkish Cypriot name) to speak to Zeynep’s uncle, the former *muhtar* (village representative) and the *muhtar* at the time, both told me that Turkish Cypriots are a “meek society (*ezik toplum*)”; always under domination, never ready to self-govern, let alone govern water. Further, they both echoed the questions that Platform members asked recurrently: “But why can’t we govern this water ourselves? Why are we always bound to the Turkish state?” Their self-sufficiency and quest to achieve it was contingent upon their so-called *order of disarray*.

The village of *Kampyli* at the time got its water from *Vasilya* (Karşıyaka in Turkish); just like Zeynep’s mother they were content with the quality and quantity of water, unlike

people who lived in the Nicosia region. Aware of the details of the privatization agreement through news and social media, Kamyli residents I spoke to that day at the village coffee house treated me as a state official. Finally, they thought, someone was there to listen to their grievances, losses, and demands. The conversation about water was like a thread that I had to keep holding on to and at the end of that thread was the anchor, through which I had to remind them that I was there as a researcher and not a policy maker or state official.

Having asked the *muhtar* about what aspects he thought negatively about the agreement with Turkey, he referred to the “guarantee of purchase clause and the lack of “guarantee of supply”. He feared price increases and the potential effects of that to the agricultural and dairy producers of his village. “They are condemning us to this water” (*bizi bu suya mahkum ediyorlar*) was his conclusive remarks. Others in the village also confirmed the *muhtar*'s conclusion and a patron in the coffee house said to the group that the Turkish state was “seeking a politics of obligating us to itself” (*bizi kendine mecbur etme politikası*). The feeling of “being obliged” meant that the terms and conditions of living and acting for the subject are set by the obliger. It not only incapacitated the subject, but also bound the subject to a forced contract with the dominant force. It was not water or its infrastructure that animated these testimonies; rather, it was a state of dispossession, both material and agentive, that their “nurturing state” has supposedly caused. The impermanence and uncertainty, just like for people in Geçitköy (Chapter 3), was the cherry on top for Kamyli residents: The on/off switch is on the other side of the pipeline, it is in Turkey.” Imminence of an unproductive future, without water, reinforced their loss of trust as well as their feeling of quiescence.

The “non-choice”: to subscribe or to opt-out

The Water Platform slowly came to a halt when people stopped responding to messages on the private Facebook group around the beginning of May 2016. After a few public awareness visits in provincial towns, a couple of letters to demand resignation from the prime minister, and a few Facebook posts of slogans like “Water is a human right”, the Platform ceased to exist,

leaving behind the idle Facebook group with 38 members. The north Nicosia municipality council meetings which I attended weekly became the main forum that I followed how the agreement for subscribing to the new system would play out.

When I spoke to the mayor of Nicosia Turkish municipality (*Lefkoşa Türk Belediyesi*) around six months after the arrival and consequent privatization of water from Turkey, Mehmet Harmancı told me that he observed that his constituents were content with the new water: “When you turn on your taps, you now get water that you can drink. This is normal in a lot of countries, but we are not in a normal place, as you know.” The transferred water took northern Cyprus a bit closer to that “normal” spoken of so frequently.

In the beginning of July 2016, Nicosia municipal council had voted *against* subscribing to the transition period as part of the BOT system, namely the privatization of the water and its infrastructure. With 11 votes of No and 8 Yes, the biggest municipal region of northern Cyprus was about to opt out of receiving the transferred water. The council meetings prior to the vote and in its aftermath, north Nicosians tweeted angrily, wrote Facebook posts about the controversy, igniting heated debates in the comments section. A few days after the No vote, the mayor Harmancı decided to do a “re-vote” and annulled the first vote. With the second vote, the council decided to subscribe to the new system in the end. For him, he told me, it was not a matter of choice to subscribe or to opt out of this system: “we are faced with the citizens on a daily basis and it was not a choice to *not* provide them with water.” Not subscribing to the new system meant leaving the citizens without water and the process of the two different votes were a difficult time for him and that they lost a lot of time throughout that period. Harmancı, throughout the council meetings repeatedly said that Nicosia, prior to the new system, was already suffering from 40% seepage loss and the infrastructural malfunctions of the region—which pipes needed upgrading and where exactly—could only be detected with

the new BOT system through which the private company could do feasibility and development studies and invest in upgrading the pipes.

Local government has the driving force of elections. They need to always look to the future elections and make political decisions accordingly. A private company on the other hand, has a single goal. And that is profitability of the present. We have to bring solutions to socioeconomic problems and develop projects. A company would not be concerned with the social issues and imagining solutions as long as it does not entail a profit for them.

Calling the period of back-and-forth meetings between Turkish diplomats and Turkish Cypriot officials in Ankara a “circus”, Harmancı was worried about what the new system would look like after the transition period ended. Harmancı is a member of Social Democracy Party (*Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi*), a center-left opposition party advocating for a federal united Cyprus. A strong opposer to privatization of state-run enterprises like electricity and water, he seemed like recalling that time for him was like being in between a rock and a hard place. He concluded his remarks regarding the municipal subscription vote with these words: “They did not give us a choice. If we had opted out, this would be like punishing the people of Nicosia and condemning them to *no* water.” Once again, condemnation (*mahkum etmek*) became the key word, this time for a political actor, one of the central figures in the political domain. Evading the blame, he pointed to “the responsible politicians who disregarded the interests of the people and brought us to this moment.”

This pipeline project documents three things: first, it proves that Turkish Cypriots *cannot* produce anything by themselves. Second, the project entails the message of ‘if I¹⁰⁶ give you the water, you live, if I don’t, you don’t exist (*yoksunuz*)’. Third, it’s got a political message; the project actually has nothing to do with Cyprus or Turkish Cypriots. They [Turkish state] want to be a hub for energy and create infrastructural networks through Cyprus to bring natural gas to the Middle East. They say precisely this: ‘this [northern Cyprus] is our land and we are strategically using it.’

¹⁰⁶ Here, he means the Turkish state.

Harmancı ended his analysis of the water pipeline project reciting what Sırrı Süreyya Önder had said, which I mentioned in Chapter 3; that northern Cyprus is the large intestine of Turkey. For him, it was a project “with no economic rationality” (*ekonomik akıl yoksunu*) and privatizing it clearly had the motive of having Turkish Cypriots pay for the expenses.

Having the conversation in the aftermath of the heated discussions of soaring water prices, municipal subscriptions, and responsibility (or lack thereof) of Turkish Cypriot ministers, Harmancı ended our conversation that day with the following remarks:

As long as Turkish Cypriots remain in this passivity (*edilgen*) and unquestioning attitude, we will see many more examples of this. You either choose to live honorably but with challenges, or you put aside honor and seek the easy way out... you cannot have power while being de-facto at the same time. If you [TRNC state] want to realistically hold power over things, then you need an economic road map. But I cannot even say we are far from it. I can only say we will never be able to get there.”

Harmancı, like others I showed throughout this chapter, declared the Turkish Cypriots passive agents, incapable of imagining a road map to move ahead and to take responsibility of “their own state” to have power over the decision making. Water and infrastructure becomes sites where a collectivity gets branded as “passive” and ready to resort to the easy option. Deeming this to be a clear choice—and a moral one at that—Harmancı, as a key figure of the municipal subscription controversy, rid himself of his failure of following the democratic process of voting, by resorting to being part of the de-facto system.

Conclusion

The Water Platform demonstrated a civil society move to contest a governmental action—one that, from the face of it, prioritized profitability and the market values and alliances of the TRNC state regarding the privatization of the water infrastructure. Platform members, as it stated also in their manifesto, were *not* against the newly built water infrastructure per se. Rather, they believed that the privatization and hence “neoliberalization” of a state-run utility system was a significant concession to give up on the principle that water was a human right and not a commodity. In this chapter, I go beyond these explanations of the privatization

phenomenon as “accumulation by dispossession” in the purely materialist sense and demonstrate that the political economic conjuncture of TRNC reveals much more embedded, historically constituted and strained power structure and struggles between TRNC and the Turkish state—the “half island” and the “system of exploitation” from the perspective of Turkish Cypriots, and the “cumbersome state” or “foster child” and the “nurturing state” from the perspective of the Turkish state elite networks (i.e. Erdoğanists).

The period that I describe throughout this chapter evoked and visibilized the structures of feeling of Turkish Cypriots from all walks of life and political affiliations. Platform members, residents of the “half island” alike were caught between “normative values of modernity and the moral assertion of popular demands” (Chatterjee 2004, 41). Similar to what Partha Chatterjee described for the case of India, civil society was “restricted to a small section of culturally equipped citizens” and represented the “high ground of modernity” (ibid). For Platform members, as civil society representatives together under one umbrella structure, choosing not to contest the water privatization meant something more than subscribing to the dominant economic neoliberal agenda. It also meant a moral collapse of Turkish Cypriot collective self and fulfilling a prophecy of quiescence and inadequacy.

Furthermore, the water and the pipeline infrastructure as material objects have proved to hold “the capacity as a jumping-off point for human freedom of reflection (Humphrey 2005, 43). The megaproject, in all its visible and invisible, ‘mega’ and small components, became an ‘object’ to reflect on their conditions of possibility of Turkish Cypriots’ state(s) of living. As both a practice of social positioning and geographical perspective to perceive the world, scale, for Turkish Cypriots, took on this double meaning and constitutes a way of orienting themselves. Similar to Aihwa Ong’s analysis of biopolitical assemblages in Southeast Asia, I think of this as “scales of exception,” that is, “where the dynamic play of strategies resolve challenges by constantly situating and resituating populations in particular scales of regulation”

(2008: 118). The Turkish state, through decades long military occupation, ordered northern Cyprus' geographical location and scale, regulated its peoples under the façade of nationalistic affinities, and added another layer of exception to the way Turkish Cypriots imagined and knew their place in the world. At the intersection of neoliberal governance and territorialization, the water infrastructure articulates the many exceptions of Turkish Cypriot lives in scalar terms, as demonstrated throughout the chapter. My interlocutors, in the face of such scalar and political economic regulation and control, navigated themselves between various scales as they made sense of how water pipeline infrastructure and its privatization would impact their sociopolitical lives. Half-island being one of most central ones, idioms of scale, space, and materiality emerged, as they simultaneously expressed reflections of self, inequality, and their location at a crossing point of power dynamics. Here I am reminded of Sarah Green's concept of "locating regime": "a knowledge system and/or structure that calibrates the relative value, significance and meaning of locations" (Green n.d.). Half island became a scalar category constitutive of political subjectivities in northern Cyprus, as well as their relations with and values they endow upon the space, its resources, and the (dis)connections they hold in the region. When they compare themselves to Israel, Switzerland, or any other place, as demonstrated in the chapter, they also simultaneously attach value and meaning to what they call the half island. A measured, scaled, value, and differentiated place then is made evading a place under Turkish "domination by occupation".

As I have demonstrated here, the discursive engagements that Turkish Cypriots had with their de-facto state point to emergent and diverging ambivalences of their experiences of the half island, and where their structures of feeling—their political subjectivities—are situated in an axis of power that they lack power *over* their political futures yet yearn to hold power *to* act. On the one hand, they equate livelihoods and moral and political personhood with an obligation to lay claims to "their" state, lay claims to an entity that is normatively constructed

in their mental maps, with a westernized conceptualization of the “normal”; and on the other hand, the awareness of the futility of realizing such responsibility and moral position is deeply embedded in the non-existence of that very state.

The question of the existence of the TRNC state, I argue in this dissertation, is encapsulated in, and magnified by, the politics of water infrastructure and governance. Following Antina von Schnitzler here, “infrastructures became mundane sites for the cultivation of political subjectivities, not merely in the form of ideology, but also in the production of oppositional habits and affective investments as well as embodied stances against the state” (2016, 141) as well as, in the case of Turkish Cypriots *for* the state.

Chapter 6 – “A fool’s errand”: water works, expertise, and detachment

In this chapter, I turn to communities of practice, technical expertise, and construction of professional subjectivities in relation to water works, its infrastructure, management, governance, as well as technical, scientific, and productive work that revolve around water consumption. Having looked at the ways in which Turkish Cypriots understood the newly upgraded water infrastructure through the lenses of the state and society at large in Chapter 5—and as a continuation of this—I now unpack my conversations with actors from the various fields of expertise and practice who prioritize their professions of hydrology, geology, and engineering—those who operate the systems and produce technical knowledge and practice regarding the infrastructural system of water provisioning. Just as Platform members talked about responsibility and honor when they contested the neoliberalization and commodification of water, actors from various expert fields that I introduce here also express what a responsible technical worker would look like, their self-ascribed incapacities, and historically situated acquiescence as technical workers.

With the arrival of transferred water and along with its infrastructural re-arrangements and upgrade, water management and investment in northern Cyprus have come to reveal how governmental actors especially those in the State Hydraulics Authority of the TRNC (*Su İşleri Dairesi – SİD*), navigate their perceptions of dependence and hierarchy through their understandings of themselves as neglected experts as incapable of governing the transferred water. In order to understand the ways in which such navigations occurred, it is important to look at the Turkish State Hydraulics Authority (*Devlet Su İşleri - DSİ*) which has established an office since the inception of the pipeline’s construction in 2010. While the components of the project were being constructed, such as the treatment plants, pumping facilities, etc., DSİ acted as the responsible office that was accountable to the Embassy of the Turkish Republic.

As Turkish Cypriot hydraulic experts expressed during our conversations, the infrastructure of the north was crumbling and technical assistance, an upgrade of the existent hydraulic mechanisms were needed.

As explained throughout the thesis, natural water resources of the northern territories have been depleted due to evaporation, over-extraction for agricultural and other use, salt water invasion, and also infiltration of hazardous sewage water into the aquifers (Gozen Elkiran and Ongul 2009). Not only this, the network of pipes has 40% of leakage across the north of the island, which rendered the distribution of the water resources inefficient and unsustainable (Ergil 2000, 1213).¹⁰⁷ In this chapter, I turn to how these actors within these fields of practice translate water pressure, seepage loss, and water depletion, salinization, and scarcity in unexpected ways that oscillate from a deliberate discourse of detachment from politics through an inevitable imbrication of the political conditions of the water problem to the possibility and necessity of the building of the pipeline infrastructure.

This chapter therefore, will explicate the co-constitution of structural hierarchies among different governing bodies like DSI and SID (or TRNC and the Turkish state), professional subjectivities of communities of experts and practice, and their reckoning with politics of dependence, technicalization and abstraction of water, and “scientific” work that they perform daily for their jobs.

Political pressure and politics of water pressure

I left off Chapter 5 with Mehmet Harmancı, the then-mayor of Nicosia Turkish municipality, who, as part of a particular community of practice—that of governance—deemed Turkish

¹⁰⁷ Even though the reference used for this percentage is from 1999, most technical experts interviewed in this research confirmed that leakage from the pipes remains today, to be one of the most significant problems for efficient water use and distribution.

Cypriots to be passive and “waiting for things to be done around them in full acceptance and without questioning.” He recalled how unexpected work had to be done when the transferred water arrived to the Geçitköy dam and pumped through stations and plants into the water storage facilities of municipal regions.

It took us around three months to regulate the water pressure problem. After getting connected to the transferred water, we had around twenty pipe bursts daily around the city. We had to install pressure breaker valves on four different sites around the city from our own budget.

Water scarcity was supposed to be a problem of the past as soon as the transferred water reached end-users regardless of its massive price increase and the political controversies it stirred. Instead, pressure became the new problem to tackle. Harmancı had to deal with the pressure of water, the pressure of providing the long-promised vital resource to end-users, as well as political pressure of council members’ strong opinions regarding the subscription to the new system. For him, water, its quantity, and quality as well as its pressure regulation, *trumped* political affiliations and animosities (both at the micro level of local politics and at the macro level of relations with the Turkish state). He admitted that with the new system, in the long run, a new regime of management was going to come into place. What he cared more about however, was the simple binary of “will we be able to provide water to city-dwellers or not?” The corporality or materiality of water exceeded where political formations are situated in this dilemma (Anand 2011). Rather than a passive object managed by politics, in this instance water along with its physical characteristics, was what *drove* politics. Its pressure, the regulation of its flow and seepage loss, became determinant factors through which political decision makers like the mayor and the council members were driven to make particular choices about the

budget of a municipality¹⁰⁸ as well as whether their decisions would keep them in the good books of their constituents.

Throughout my conversation with Harmancı, along with the other “experts” that I introduce in this chapter, water as a resource and how to *deal* with water, produce it, and operationalize it in delivering it to end-users, were frequently characterized as “non-political” issues, or outside of ideological knowledge and practice. What does an environmental engineer and a municipal worker, or the mayor of a city have in common? The actors whom I present throughout this chapter all self-identify as experts of their own field mainly through putting into practice the various kinds of knowledge they hold and reproduce. An expert, as Dominic Boyer contends, is one “who has developed skills in, semiotic-epistemic competence for, and attentional concern with, some sphere of practical activity” (Boyer 2008, 39). The skilled knowing and doing that these actors put forth revolve around how water is made knowable and known, produced and put into production, as well as how the pipeline infrastructure effects the ways they put that situated knowledge into practice and their discursive reflections of such work.

Technical expertise of Kemal

After a few failed attempts at visiting the pumping stations and treatment plants specifically built for the pipeline project, I was finally able to get an appointment at the State Hydraulic Authority (*Devlet Su İşleri* – DSİ hereafter) of the Turkish state, which had opened its headquarters office only a few kilometers away from my flat in Nicosia. Not knowing whom I would meet or speak to that day, I arrived at the office, which looked more like the branch of a bank than a state office. Furniture, light fixtures, and all the decorative components were minimalist and pristine. The secretary told me to wait as the person who was appointed to speak

¹⁰⁸ As the price for municipality to buy water went from 0.25 TL to 2.30 TL with the arrival of the transferred water, most of the council members voiced concerns as to how the municipality could afford such a cost in the annual budget.

to me was running late. A man named Halil in a business casual outfit offered me to sit next to his desk. Having immediately asked me where I was from, Halil wanted to bond over the fact that I was also *from* Turkey, doing *something* in “babyland”. He interrogated me on where my parents were from, what they did for a living, if I was there alone, whether I was married or soon to be married, and if I was going to return “home” for the Eid al-Fitr (*Ramazan bayrami*) holiday. On the face of it, these questions were simple, innocent at best. But I knew instantly what he thought: “what is this young single woman doing away from her family and what is the level of her religiosity, hence her political affiliation?” Uncomfortable with the connotations of his questions, I gave short answers while at the same time worried that my unwillingness to make conversation would affect the kind of answers I would receive regarding my research. Halil told me he was from Ankara and went back and forth between Ankara and Nicosia for work frequently as he left his family back in Turkey. He showed me around the office and pointed to me the posters of the pipeline maps, photos of the construction, and a 3D miniature mockup inside a glass box of the pipeline hanging on the seabed between the island and the mainland.

To my relief, Kemal whom I had been waiting for, finally arrived and showed the way to the upstairs office, and I left Halil and his curiosities downstairs. Kemal is a “control engineer” from Turkey. He emphasized that he would strictly speak to me as an expert; he was an engineer who perceived his occupation as scientific, and as he said a few times, purely technical. He made sure that I understood that he was not in a position to make any political commentary precisely because he was a technical expert. Instead, he explained to me in detail the “tech specs” of the Turkey-northern Cyprus pipeline project. He told me about the length and circumference of the high density polyethylene pipes, the concrete blocks situated on the seabed holding the special fork-like parts attached to the pipes submerged in the sea, and all

the cutting-edge technology designed and constructed to transfer 75 million m³ of water annually.

We are a technical department at DSI. We had a difficult time understanding the situation here [in northern Cyprus]. Normally, we develop projects for irrigation or potable water pipelines, etc. in Turkey...We do not have to communicate [our operations] with media or public. We could not foresee that we needed serious public relations skills for this particular project [...] We also cannot really comprehend the positive reactions. People go to the dam and stare at it or even try to swim in it. I should not say it is a mistake but, DSI should have handled these reactions better with some public relations skills. But then again, we are not experts in that. We would say something somewhere and then that would be twisted around, there is danger in that.

Kemal was startled by the political controversy that the water pipeline caused. Referring to the admiration, excitement, as well as the contestations against the introduction of the BOT system, he did not expect any of the communal reactions over the new pipeline, whether positive or negative. Throughout our conversation, looking at his phone every ten minutes, he neither wanted to be there, nor did he want to talk about the controversy. He went on to say, “we are all engineers here; we will not get involved with something we are not experts of.” Expertise then, had to be a clear-cut notion for him. Political matters ostensibly remained outside of his scope of attention, or at least he tried to keep them at arm’s length from his work.

As a foreign technical expert who contributed to the operations of this infrastructure project, Kemal chose to detach his positionality from the political effects and discussions that arose from it. The detachment that he expressed concerned both about his own positionality and also the institution that he represented. His way of framing the project, the appreciation, and in contrast, the political controversy stemming from strong disapproval, were not matters that an engineer would have to deal with. His statement that “we could not comprehend” the consumers’ reactions kept repeating. He witnessed these positive and negative reactions as if from afar, detached yet keeping a higher ground comfortable in his occupational position.

Hannah Knox and Penny Harvey identify “virtuous detachment” in engineering practice in the context of a road construction in Peru, where they tackle the question of responsibility among experts, who value first and foremost rationality and scientific procedures so as not to be “*unswayed* by volatile circumstances on the ground such as local protests, floods, or landslides” (Knox and Harvey 2015, 68 emphasis mine). For Kemal, indeed the local politics around an infrastructure project, the public reception, and anything “subjective” remained outside of the realm of his technical field and expertise. He was an engineer with a *virtuous detachment*, in Knox and Harvey’s terms. Taking into account any positive or negative reactions toward their operations was not within the purview of his job expertise, he believed. However, as he admitted to me repeatedly, DSİ as a technical department fell short in responding to the pipeline project’s political effects in northern Cyprus. He added that this was mainly because the project is *in* northern Cyprus and reached beyond their usual involvement of a technological intervention that they usually conducted within the Turkish borders. On the one hand, his technical detachment was finalized, perfected, and defined his expressed state of mind. On the other hand, however, he still could not escape from reflecting on the politics of space and the political attachments of northern Cyprus to the Turkish state’s ideological blueprint.

Speculation and rumor as knowledge

After expressing his astonishment regarding Turkish Cypriots’ positive and negative reactions, he went on to say that the pipeline gave rise to a flurry of unfounded claims: “So many rumors went around that we could not even imagine, like the new pipes having asbestos, being unhealthy, or even that we had brought salvaged scrap pipes from China...We put all these brand-new steel pipes everywhere and they say that there is asbestos [in them]!” In a newly emerging infrastructure project, the technical and managerial activities performed by actors from the relevant state departments are never short of speculation, competition between diverging claims, and a production of suspicion. Harvey and Knox point out that “a

construction project is a complex social field, where rumor and gossip, speculation and secrecy swirl around the calculations and mappings of engineering science, planning and management” (P. Harvey and Knox 2010, 124). The speculations that circled the pipeline infrastructure were thanks to the politically ambivalent circumstances of the project as well as the obscure technical knowledge that Kemal and experts alike have taken pride over knowing.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, discussions of doubt and mistrust dominated the public either on the success or functionality of the infrastructure or motivations behind its construction in the first place. Even though Kemal remained insistent on keeping his positionality strictly as a technical worker at DSİ, his commentary about Turkish Cypriot reactions and rumor was not free of judgment. His expressed disdain towards such rumors about the quality of the pipes and their operative powers urged him to perform another kind of distinction—one of Turkish citizens to Turkish Cypriots. He claimed that such collective effervescence had not occurred in Turkey when they conducted and constructed infrastructure projects there. By confronting such rumors and mistrust regarding the pipeline infrastructure, Kemal came across a way of knowing that differed from his. Not only this, he came to a realization that he failed to detach himself from these falsehoods and politically charged speculative knowledge.

Not only experts’ infrastructural work gets impacted by such rumor and speculation, but so does the publics’ understanding of whether the application of technology is reliable and consistent with how it has been advertised. Especially when the promotions of the water pipeline carried a set of symbolisms that promised not only a cutting-edge technology for water provisioning, but also “a piece of motherland”.¹⁰⁹ Rumor operated in convoluted ways in fact. While some Turkish Cypriot state officials claimed their already existing pipes from British

¹⁰⁹ I unpack these symbolisms and historically situated meanings of the pipeline in Chapter 3.

colonial period to be containing asbestos, others believed it was the new pipes that the Turkish state funded either contained asbestos or were simply low quality. The trope of asbestos lingered in these gossip circles throughout my time there, encapsulating mistrust and doubt. The mistrust of Turkish Cypriots in northern Cyprus was directed not at the speculative presence of asbestos or retrofitted “Chinese” pipes; rather it distanced them from the very core of their identity and belonging—the motherland-babyland relationship. The preconceived judgments of what the pipeline infrastructure should be like—brand new, highly functional, bringing economic wellbeing and efficient resource provisioning—were challenged frequently with such rumors about the quality of infrastructural components.

According to Kemal, DSI had clear goals in their operation; that was to develop hydraulic technologies within Turkey and beyond. He had not deemed it necessary to have a “public relations” or “communications” division at DSI in the beginning. However, as he admitted, the reactions that Turkish Cypriot publics have manifested following the privatization of the water infrastructure proved him wrong. He desired his objectivity and rationality to be perfect and not eclipsed by local speculations, mistrust, or any other subjective occurrences. The clear causality of “fixing it materially in order to get direct results for the betterment of circumstances” made sense to him. What he “could not comprehend” however, collapsed that clarity. The detachment he desired to maintain therefore, was in a constant tension with the political conditions of what rendered DSI’s presence there possible. *His* presence, along with the presence of the Turkish state in north Cyprus, *was* political. For him, there is a hierarchy between technical and political fields. Technology, science, and rational thinking are prioritized, while the political connotations and rationalities that are ideologically embedded in a technological artifact or system are secondary or in a hierarchically lower position.

When I specifically asked Kemal about the Water Platform social media campaigns and protests on the streets, he brushed it off by saying that he simply does not have anything to say in this matter as he was “not an expert in politics”. Then, politics is also a formalized realm, just as engineering practice; one has to be an expert in understanding politics. Kemal extracted himself from the political equation while at the same time putting his engineering work in a morally higher position than the politics around it. Repeating a few times that his work was serious, and it should not be muddled with neither the locally generated political claims nor the politicians’ deals regarding the governance and management of water and the pipeline. Boyer addresses this type of knowledge making and expert positioning and contends that “even the most elaborate and technically precise modes of rationality possess a halo of sentiments, affects, intentions and aspirations, none of which should be reduced to secondary status in expert knowledge-making” (Boyer 2008, 45). Kemal’s hierarchical understanding of engineering practice, contrary to his statement, does in fact come with sentiments of disdain and contempt.

Astrid Andersen (2018) employs Bruno Latour’s concept of “purification” to explain the ways in which water engineers in Peru separated categories of “technical” and “political” or “social” whereby they rendered engineering practice a superior one that legitimized their ways of knowing and producing knowledge about water. She argues that social and political processes “trickle into engineering” (7)—in other words, seep into the field of technical work. In the case of Kemal specifically, the process of purification was reached and reproduced through a deliberate discourse and stance of detachment; it was also simultaneously undermined through the mere fact that acts and claims of responsibility, decision-making, and policy-making processes in northern Cyprus could not be decoupled from their local and regional politics or from the knowledge produced in the political realm regarding the island’s geopolitics. As I will explicate in the remainder of this chapter, both Turkish Cypriot and

Turkish engineers, hydrologists, and geologists have become deeply entwined in this very tension between detachment and political decision-making and power hierarchies. The multiple ways of knowing *multiple* water(s) and water management systems come to the forefront in their professional work, for which they at times expressed their disgruntlement and sought a “more scientific” approach, and at others, did not shy away from making ideological statements regarding the hierarchical positions they found themselves in.

The anti-“antipolitics machine” and Behçet

Carey and Pedersen highlight that “infrastructures... can be described as the ultimate ‘anti-politics machines’ (Ferguson 1994), for they not only have the capacity to hide asymmetrical social and political relations beneath a garb of ostensibly technical solutions, but they also define what can be seen and known, and what cannot” (Carey and Pedersen 2017, 22). Engineers and experts often take this task upon themselves to perform purely technical work etched in their ethos of efficiency and rational solutions to technical problems. In contrast to this, Kemal as a Turkish engineer approached his hydrological work differently. This shows that these political processes of rumor, speculation, and diverging knowledges, rather than being concealed under the technical work, become most visible when handled *technically*. The techniques of management, allocating technical responsibilities to specific institutions, and the Turkish officers’ positions regarding their Turkish Cypriot counterparts, who were supposedly there to provide technical and local knowledge to them prove the opposite: that infrastructures can also be sites through which the political is most visible. The transferred water, the pipeline, and all the policy work around the upgrade bring to the fore, rather than hide, the *asymmetry* between two governing bodies from the beginning of the project.

Besides the Water Platform gatherings that I have discussed in Chapter 5, there were other public awareness meetings organized by oppositional parties like United Cyprus Party (*Birleşik Kıbrıs Partisi – BKP*) and New Cyprus Party (*Yeni Kıbrıs Partisi – YKP*). Behçet, the then-head of the Union of the Chambers of Turkish Cypriot Engineers and Architects

(KTMMOB) and a retired civil engineer , was often invited to these meetings to provide *expert* knowledge. In his speech he summarized how KTMMOB attempted to intervene in the process prior to the signing of the privatization document:

A Minister a few years ago said that Turkish Cypriots neither have the capability nor the expert knowledge to govern this water. They do not have skills, he said.¹¹⁰ At that point, [KTMMOB] said ‘no, we, the Turkish Cypriots can govern it’. What is more important is that if that minister who sits in that office cannot come up with a solution, then he must immediately leave that office... KTMMOB and the government at the time, we started an action study, protocols were signed. We established a unit, a committee. We even prepared a bill to go through the parliament. That bill proposed an autonomous unit to govern the water, independent from the inspection of the political parties. The members of that unit would be appointed by and accountable to the people’s parliament. It would be called a “water committee”. The bill never went to the parliament. There was a very long process between the Turkish diplomats and our officials. Then comes the privatization agreement.

Behçet not only questioned the political system of TRNC and its politicians’ trust in their own institutions, but also claimed that KTMMOB as a union of technical experts did everything they could in order to have authority over the governance of the transferred water. Behçet’s understanding of TRNC politics was replicated by Kemal. His remarks on Turkish Cypriot authorities and their lack of involvement or action regarding the transition period went parallel with how Behçet perceived the ministerial authority and its lack of taking up responsibilities for advocating for the proposed water bill.

In a later interview with me, Behçet told me a brief history of water resources in northern Cyprus. When I asked whether KTMMOB held any historical data, maps, or statistics from the pre-1974 period, Behçet blamed DSİ:

We do not have such documents. There was a book that included extensive research from the British colonial period from 1959. It was taken from the Ministry of Energy library, it is lost. DSİ took it when they opened their

¹¹⁰ Here, he was referring to Hamit Bakırcı, then-minister of environment and natural resources, whom I mentioned in the beginning of Chapter 4.

office [in Nicosia]. As you know, foreign powers, when they come, they take all the sources away. We looked for that book, it is gone.

During both interviews, rather than talking about geological structures, hydrological processes like salinization, or other technical matters, Behçet wanted to talk about hegemony, civilization and colonization and more extensively, Turkish Cypriot identity and self-determination. In direct contrast with Kemal's expert position and purification, Behçet refused any technicalization of the water issue of Cyprus. His views were deeply political, yet lacked any political force. He spoke to me with resignation and a deep sense of despair. On the one hand, he noted that transferring water from one place to another was a sign of civilization and on the other, that water could not be utilized to consolidate a state's hegemony. For him, the Turkish state's privatized and monopolized scheme of transferred water management was "worse than colonial rule or how once the Ottomans ruled its provinces." His position during both interviews was not of an engineer, but a union organizer and representative—a political actor.

Asymmetrical governance of water infrastructure

With the leadership of Behçet, KTMMOB initiated a committee that would form a team of experts for the management of treatment and storage facilities and pumping station. Upon their training, the team of experts that comprised of environmental engineers, technicians, etc. were allocated to several facilities as part of the pipeline project. Ayfer is one of those environmental engineers from Turkey who joined the KTMMOB-appointed team in 2015 and started working on a "service provision" contract at the Çamlıbel Water Treatment Facility. Since the beginning of the project, DSİ had become the main office, which oversaw the facilities' construction and the administrative and managerial setup. It was also DSİ's staff to provide expert knowledge to the local team at the facilities, but they also became the 'bosses' at the end of the day. Ayfer's biggest concern was that neither did she have a job description, nor her contract affiliated her to any TRNC governing body like the Ministry of Natural Resources or State Hydraulics Authority (*Su İşleri Dairesi – SİD*) of TRNC.

I was never part of the setting up of the treatment facility; we never really saw the equipment until the first day of our jobs. They took us a couple of times to the pumping station as the pipes were being fixed into place, just for us to see, but that was it.

Her implication was that her and the rest of the locally employed¹¹¹ team members felt out of place: “What if one day the DSİ manager decided that he did not like my work and took my name out of the staff list, what would happen? I simply could not enter the facility—that is it. I have no affiliation to the [Turkish] Cypriot government.”

Ayfer’s lack of job description and security is indicative of how DSİ and the Turkish state handled their questionable presence in northern Cyprus. It was DSİ who decided what and who went in and out of the complex, which was in the middle of the Çamlıbel forest behind barbed wires and cement walls. Her job represented KTMMOB, a Turkish Cypriot union, yet no Cypriot office was responsible for her. She explained that it was as if DSİ was making the KTMMOB a favor for letting the local team of experts in on the job. Her boss was DSİ, an external State Hydraulics Authority that was only accountable to the Turkish state. Not only this, Ayfer also revealed that at the beginning of her job post, she realized the State Hydraulics Authority of TRNC (*Su İşleri Dairesi - SID*) had no clue about the technical work that was being conducted at the facility: “They simply looked at us and DSİ from a distance, did not move their fingers. I swear, they did not have a single document in their hands, it was not of their interest.” Not only SID, but the Ministry of Natural Resources also did not attempt any input in the setting up of the facility. Ayfer claimed that they “simply allocated the funds and did not ask about what exactly our jobs entailed, what we did daily, or what they were responsible for. The coordination and management were in the sole hands of DSİ, even though the bilateral agreement stated DSİ and SID to be equal partners/shareholders. With Ayfer’s comments along with the way Behçet expressing discontent regarding changes in the water

¹¹¹ This is only a matter of technicality according to Ayfer. Her explanation suggested that they were technically employed by the TRNC, but practically paid and contracted by the Turkish state.

management throughout the north, DSİ, as a representative of the Turkish state rendered itself a higher authority and was also perceived by officials as such. Behçet added during the interview that “they said [in that document] that we can inspect who manages the water. But in actuality, the case was that they were supposed to inspect us.”

Privatization as cop-out

The presumption of engineering practice is that water can be controlled through material and scientific intervention (Anand 2017a, iv). Upon Kemal and other engineers’ daily efforts at their jobs, the pipeline orders the course, quality, and quantity of water, regulating it, and rendering it possible to read and knowable as a perpetual resource all with the help of technical work. For Kemal, unlike the people I mentioned in previous chapters, there was no multiplicity of waters—ownership, water from Turkey versus water of Cyprus did not matter for him. Rationalizing the DSİ’s negligence of the pipeline’s effects in local politics, the value regimes it brought about, and the emergent collective identity it visibilized and mobilized, Kemal told me that water required scientific and expert knowledge to manipulate. However, Kemal’s prioritizing of scientific details and rational consideration of the technological artifact was in fact not so tidy and neat. The world of politics still existed, even if he denied its involvement in his own work of engineering. And this world of politics that he so emphatically tried to distance himself from stemmed from two things: one was the rumor and speculative commentary around the pipeline project as I have discussed above; second was the regulatory—both legal and managerial—practices that inevitably politicized the infrastructure project, namely the privatization process of the transferred water and its management.

As the privatization deal came into place, the new managerial scheme meant the transfer of operations from DSİ and the Turkish Cypriot State Hydraulics Authority to a private enterprise, after a year of transition period. The privatization deal, written and imposed to the TRNC officials by the Turkish Prime Ministry, posited that these two state entities were to operate “in collaboration with each other” as the ‘transition year’ passed and afterwards the

collaborative management was to transfer their operations to a private company to be tendered and appointed. While the regulatory language and the prescriptive framework of the deal evinces the top-down rationalized ordering of the infrastructure project according to the prerequisites of the Turkish state, the agreement document became somewhat of a taboo through my second conversation with Kemal. He again refrained from commenting on privatizing water resources and its political implications. He described how DSI ended up conducting a tender *for* the transition year (from public to private), and gave the management operations to a private company:

It was quite controversial you know... Who will govern this water? They [TRNC] wanted the tender process to be in northern Cyprus. If it was in Turkey it would create the wrong impression, they said. Until that process was finalized, the [DSI] director told us to run the operations ourselves... We don't have the infrastructure for it. It is a very difficult thing to do! So, we did a tender [in Turkey] for this transition period.

While Kemal recognized the discourses on power and authority that revolved around the privatization agreement and the subsequent regulations like where the tender process would be, he nonetheless did not dwell on how their operations in northern Cyprus was enmeshed in the intricacies of a politics of dependency. What mattered to him here was assessing whether they were technically equipped to run a country's water provisioning or not. Since the answer was the latter, he found it unproblematic to go ahead and put in a tender for TRNC's water utility management in a foreign country. In fact, the tender process politicized the pipeline project and transferal of water to northern Cyprus even further. Kemal did not perceive a responsibility to engage with local political sentiments or took them under any consideration in talking about *why* DSI took control and then gave it to a private company with their own discretion. On the flip side of the coin, such regulatory changes and, what one Turkish Cypriot state official called in the interview with me, discretionary/gratuitous decisions (*keyfi kararlar*), stirred up the public discussions, political actors' commentary, and the social media.

Agricultural use of the transferred water

As the then-transferred, now-imported water flowed through the new pipes throughout the half island, the question of whether this resource was to be used for agriculture was yet another politicized issue for a while. At the time of my conversation with Kemal in early 2017, household use was operational, and a series of feasibility studies, alternative proposals, and Master Plan for Agriculture were being drafted by both ministries of agriculture of Turkey and TRNC. He explained to me that there were two options for agricultural water provisioning; the Mesaoria plains (*Mesarya ovası*) and the Morphou/Güzelyurt (*Omorfo*) region. While Mesaoria plains are dominated by dairy production, other animal husbandry, olive and carob production, and other crops that are suitable for what is characterized as *terra rossa* type of soil, the Morphou region—the north west of the island—produced more water-demanding crops and trees such as citrus, berries, potatoes, and so on. The Mediterranean climate, the soil characterization, and aquifer salination were all factors that both Turkish and Turkish Cypriot experts take into consideration when discussing for which region it would be more feasible and required to provide the imported water. There is however one factor that was undeniable, one that pointed to the “Cyprus problem”. That involved the partition of the island in 1974 and the peace negotiations between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, which happened every couple of years with no conclusive results. Kemal told me he felt that he had to mention this:

Güzelyurt¹¹² is a region that is to be given back to the Greek side (*Rum kesimi*) in case of a reconciliation between the two sides. Then why would we put in all this brand-new technology to a region where you [TRNC] will just simply give it away? If we put in those pipes [for agricultural water use] there, then that means you will not give it away. This situation has to be governed well.

¹¹² Turkish citizens tend not to recognize the Turkish Cypriot transliteration of names of places and other vernacular words. One of the most common ones is Güzelyurt, which would be interchangeable with Omorfo. But Omorfo is almost never used by a Turkish citizen either due to lack of knowledge of vernacular, or as a political stance of rejecting a Greek-origin name. The politics of identity and difference also trickle into linguistic distinctions therefore.

Kemal speculated on the future geopolitical circumstances for Cyprus. Here, I use the concept of detachment in the way Yarrow et al. (2015) approach it. First, I observed detachment as a stance—refusing to relate to other people’s political concerns and attempting an “objective stance” towards the political situation. Second, Kemal showed his detachment as a process—distinguishing one’s group from another, remaining unresponsive in times of necessary collaboration. The detached technical stance was clearly observable in our conversation as I previously explicated. But here, the politics of infrastructural development in the island started to dominate our conversation. Yet, the detachment process, in other words, the act of detaching groups of people (Greek side, Turkish government, TRNC) from each other, constituted and revealed how his detached stance was indeed not possible. His detachment process was threefold. First, he talked about the Morphou region in terms of a political scale that the Turkish state reproduced to this day by its ongoing occupation of the north; therefore, *Rum kesimi*/Greek side is detached from the Turkish occupied region. Second, he distinguished *we* and *you* as he talked to me about “giving away the Morphou region”¹¹³ and put the responsibility of political decision-making to TRNC, a de-facto state whose existence was contingent upon financial, political, and material dependence on the Turkish state. He then perpetuated this and went back to saying, “we [DSİ] are not experts in this, *they* [politicians] need to figure this out”, claiming no responsibility as to where the imported water was to be used for agriculture: “They tell us to do it and we go ahead”. Kemal then, along with his colleagues “extract themselves from the complex web of connections that are required to get the job done” (Knox and Harvey 2015, 64). Politics of partition nonetheless, trickles into the technical work of engineering, something that Kemal tried so hard to avoid throughout our conversation that day.

¹¹³ Omorfo usually was mentioned in passing by many people in northern Cyprus; every time a negotiation process occurred in another town of Switzerland, Omorfo was the primary contestant to “be given away to the other side.” Omorfo is also the region where the largest aquifer is located in the island.

Planning for future in an uncertain present

The politics of partition was more central for local experts in contrast to Kemal and Ayfer in a conspicuous manner. Detachment from politics was not an option for technical experts like Selim, for instance. Selim was a geologist who worked at the Geology and Mining Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. He and I sat next to each other almost every Platform gathering, giving each other silent glances whenever an outrageous comment was being made by a member. He kindly picked me up with his car to go to public awareness meetings outside Nicosia, which were occasions for us to exchange ideas about water politics and northern Cyprus. He was also a member of a leftist political organization that “struggles for the existence of Turkish Cypriots.” I had heard during random conversations with Turkish Cypriots in Nicosia that their water problems stemmed from the geographical positioning of the island in the Mediterranean and the fact that it was a relatively small island, which would entail that water resources would never be enough as the population rose throughout the island. Selim confirmed this hearsay and gave me the rough geological explanation for water scarcity:

Water resources are collected in aquifers—subsoil freshwater basins. We are an island, so we do not have ongoing water flow from any springs, especially in the northern parts of the island. The south is better in this sense. Because they have the Troodos mountain, which has considerable elevation and is spread in a wide area. It snows up there and that turns into sources of water. They have rivers flowing year-round. We are not lucky like them. The Pentadaktylos mountain ranges do not have that much elevation. It snows up there every five or six years. The snow stays for a day and then melts and evaporates away. It does not feed into the subsoil water basins. It remains as a pretty sight only.

Selim explained the geological structure of the northern territories in direct relation to the geopolitical and uncertain political structure of the island. His expert position about water scarcity and geological explanations to it, for him, could not be decoupled from who was fortunate enough to end up on which side of the mass of land in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Selim’s expert knowledge, regardless of soil structure and characteristics of the aquifers, is contingent upon the political history and its consequences for the island communities.

He continued to tell me about the varieties of soil structures and rock formations that differentiate these aquifers and their impacts on permeability and retainability of water in these aquifers.

We have two main aquifers. First is the one below Pentadaktylos mountain ranges, this has limestone. The other is Morphou aquifer, below the Troodos mountain. Morphou aquifer is made up of alluvial stone, gravelled silt. One third of the Morphou aquifer is on the southern part and the aquifer gets fed from that side. In a way, we are using the south's water. Just like any reserve, aquifers have a balancing relationship of catchment and exhaustion. If you put three tons of water and try to extract five tons, the resource will be exhausted quickly. This is what is happening for us; we are almost out especially in the Pentadaktylos aquifer. Differently, because Morphou is alluvial in its structure and also its bedrock is below sea level, as you draw the water resources more, the sea water will start to seep into the aquifer. The more you extract, the greater the salt contamination will be for the freshwater resources. This reduces the quality of the aquifer. The water you used to drink from the same aquifer is no longer drinkable or useable.

Later in this particular conversation, I came to realize that the geological knowledge about the island of Cyprus that he introduced me to—the changing geological structures and character of the island's terrain—seemed secondary or even unimportant matters to him. He told me these as a side note, because what dominated his thinking was the conditions through which they became desperate (*muhtaç*) for an importation of water.

This became certain to me when he exclaimed, “What does engineering mean? To me, it is a practice of enabling the allocation and distribution of resources in the most optimal way.” Selim emphasized not only the technicalities that go into understanding and alleviating water scarcity and salinity, but also the ways in which governing structures economized and managed the consumption of vital resources. For him, planning was most crucial. He went on to say that if TRNC ever had formal and consistent state planning of water use and economization policies, there would be enough water for them and that Turkish Cypriots would not have to rely upon “someone else's water”. Planning for water provision, or in this case, lack thereof according to Selim and other technical experts I spoke to, is why Cyprus aquifers ended up replete with useable resources. Planning as “an inherently optimistic and future-oriented

activity” (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011, 3) was lacking in northern Cyprus according to Selim. Besides the optimism involved, however, planning also is an “elusive promise”; managing resources, governing their distribution, economization, and organization requires “uncovering the different notions of temporality implicit in the promise that planning seems to offer” (4). On the one hand, the uncertainty of Morphou and the rest of the partitioned island lingered as experts like both Kemal and Selim contemplated on how to manage water resources, extract, allocate, and distribute in efficient and equitable ways. On the other hand, planning seemed a necessary course of action, yet expert knowledges of how to navigate water for agricultural use and how to replenish aquifers with different soil and geological structures both fell short in understanding the full scale of things. Soil, alluvial stones, salinized water, clean water all have come to animate politics of partition and the so-called Cyprus problem, and visibilized its fragility and uncertainty of an ongoing “exceptional” structure that divided the island for decades.

Drafting the Master Plan of Agriculture

Selim and I agreed that going to the State Hydraulics Authority of TRNC (*Su İşleri Dairesi - SİD* hereafter) and meeting Turgut there was a good idea. After a few failed attempts (they either told us to come later or cancelled our visit), Selim finally managed to get me there. In contrast to the DSİ headquarters office, which looked pristine with new furniture with latest models of computers, SİD office building was just another old state office building, with long, cold, and dark corridors. When I entered the building, all the secretaries were having their morning coffee chat in the kitchen amidst laughter. Wondering where I should go and inquire about our meeting with Turgut, I happily saw Selim, a familiar face, approaching me from the gate. He told me to wait and spoke to a few people. Finally, we entered Turgut’s office and greeted the man sitting at a large desk with an old desktop computer, shut off and collecting dust on its sides. He greeted Selim and joked around about a few things, they had a few laughs as I stood there.

Selim introduced me to Turgut by saying that I am a doctoral student studying the sociological effects of the transferred water and the pipeline project. “Sociological? You mean like, opinions and stuff? No. You need to study scientific facts about this. You need numbers, statistics. Just email me and I will send you some numbers, ok?” He did not even want to talk about the possibility of me asking him a few questions. Selim immediately vouched for me by saying that “she just wants to write her term report, she attended to all the Platform meetings with me.” This prompted Turgut to start talking about the privatization deal and from that moment on, there was a silent agreement that I was there to stay that day with Selim to observe, listen, and participate into whatever discussion there would have been. I sat down in an uncomfortable chair at the corner of the room next to Selim and listened in on what slowly became an impromptu meeting about the planning for irrigation.

The potential irrigation plans for Mesarya plains and Omorfo region that Kemal told me about were in the making during this meeting at the SİD. Turgut’s room started to be filled with other people along with Selim and me. Mustafa, an officer from the agriculture department arrived and later Nejat, an almost-retired hydrologist, whom I had met earlier that month, also came. The meeting was not planned, in its entirety seemed quite rushed. The draft document for the two-year master plan for agriculture was to be discussed and revised. Turgut described the task to be a “a fool’s errand” (*abesle iştigal*), and Mustafa kept repeating “this is like ‘mission impossible’” (directly in English). Referring to the statistics, data and expert knowledge that SİD presumably included in the Master Plan, Turgut said, “A person who has no clue about what we [write], holds that minister seat!” With no objections to his statement from anyone in the room, Turgut complained about many other things during the three and a half hours of this casual meeting. Their views and concerns did not point to which project was more feasible or not, as Kemal had stressed to me before. For Turgut, the deputy manager of SİD at the time, the story was different. The TRNC Ministry of Agriculture was not satisfied

with the numbers they were providing in the document, regarding the water potential of the TRNC.

The conversation heightened as people came in and out of the room. Turgut yelled, hit the large desk emphatically, and complained about different departments in the ministry including the geology and mining department: “There is no information, no document! The man [officials of the geology department] does not know how much water is drawn from the aquifers... they don’t know what ‘water potential’ means. Do they expect us to first teach them what it means by providing them this information? How can they not know?” Turgut, Mustafa, Selim, Nejat, and everyone else who participated in the discussions disagreed on the numbers, who (or which department) should provide which information, and whether each department understood the assignment or not. Random numbers flew across the room: “How did you get to that statistics? What is your calculation process for that?” Despite all the commentary and arguments that created somewhat of a kerfuffle in the room for a while, I could gather three things that they could all agree on: First, there was no scientific approach on behalf of the ministry employees. Second, one simply could not draft a “master plan” in three days and that

on the contrary, one would need months of work to prepare “properly”. And third, the reserve water resources of most of the large aquifers (Omorfo being the biggest) is depleted.

While Turgut demanded the correct agricultural statistics from Mustafa, the representative of the agriculture department, Mustafa responded that this is not in his department’s jurisdiction: “Why are you yelling at me for? This is not my area, ask this from the agricultural research institute [another state office], that is *their* business.” The expert knowledge had to be divided, according to Turgut, every division was expected to provide their fair share of such information in order to get to accurate and scientifically verified conclusions. “Everyone is confused at the ministry, this much is true,” said Nejat in resignation. Meanwhile

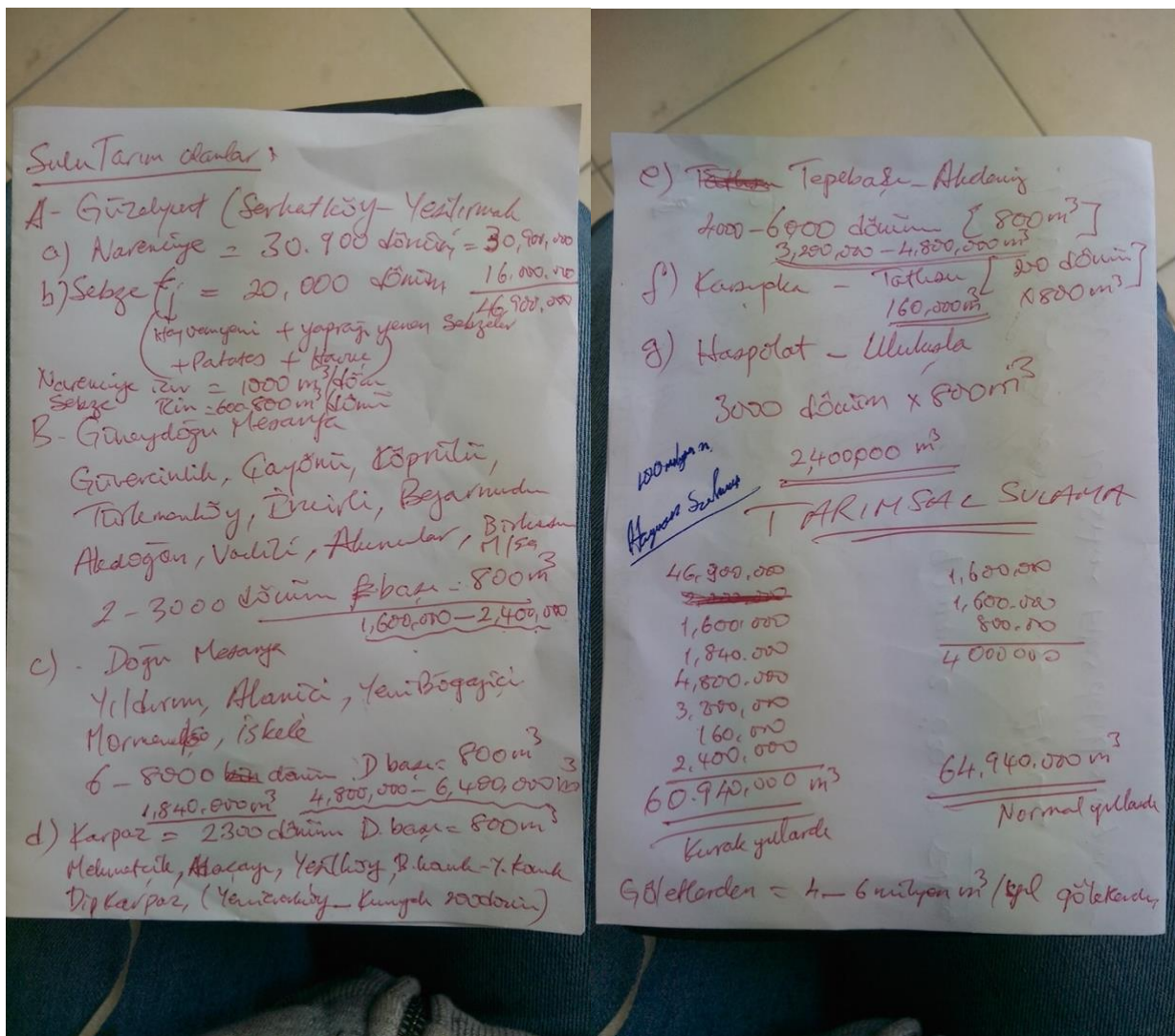


Figure 16-17. I got permission to take photos of the pieces of paper that Nejat was jotting down numbers for the agricultural water usage of northern Cyprus.

Turgut kept complaining that nobody consults them and “how could [he] calculate the water potential when the geology department does not provide the accurate information on water feed and water withdrawal (*su beslenmesi ve boşalması*) from the aquifer?” Turgut talked about how his work over the years did not see any appreciation and that his office’s drafting of water law and other plans were even hijacked by other departments. If the aquifers are under the responsibility of the geology department or the environmental department, he said, then how could he intervene in the betterment and maintenance of irrigation and groundwater feeding reserves as the State Hydraulic Authority (SİD)?

The “2017 Master Plan for Agriculture” document had a deadline and the numbers were not adding up regarding how much water was needed for production in the two major agricultural regions of the north. Turgut jokingly said, “if we are doing the statistical calculations for this plan today, which is to be published tomorrow, poor us (*vay halimize*).” He, along with Mustafa both agreed that without determining how much people consumed for irrigation, they could not know what the water potential is for the north. After discussing the difficulty of obtaining the numbers for irrigation—since as they said, it all depended on the type of produce or plant, rainfall during different seasons—they decided to “get on with it” (*olsun bitsin*), as Selim said. Having known that Nejat was “sick of this state [TRNC]” and counting the days until his retirement, I watched him take a piece of paper to write down numbers that indicated the agricultural water consumption region by region (see Figure 16-17). Later, Mustafa took the piece of paper with numbers jotted down, and dictated to Turgut what to write in the draft: “Right, when it is an arid year, agricultural water usage is... 60.940.000 m³, and when it is rainy—or should we say ‘normal’?—yes, when it is normal precipitation, it is 64.940.000 m³. Did you get all that?” Later, when I finally got the digital copy of the final draft of master plan through the website of the ministry (KKTC Tarım ve Doğal Kaynaklar

Bakanlığı 2017), I was ready to find those exact numbers in the section named under “agricultural water usage” or “water potential.”

Having rummaged through the approximately 500-page document, which included year by year statistics of every single crop produced in northern Cyprus, I could not see the numbers approximated and handwritten by Nejat, uttered by Mustafa, and carefully edited into the Word document by Turgut. Instead, the document states that until 26th of June 2016, water usage including irrigation, household use, was 107.000.000 m³, 70% of which (approximating to 72 million) was just for agricultural use (KKTC Tarım ve Doğal Kaynaklar Bakanlığı 2017, 49). The date stated above indicates the day the transferred water entered into the de-facto borders of TRNC. The master plan did not include any of the calculations that Turgut, Nejat, and Mustafa made on those pieces of paper.

They ballparked how much each region used water for agricultural production, how much each crop needed annually and so on. Turgut in a joking manner had said, “the irrigation water usage for TRNC annually is... 107 million m³. I said it, and so it is!” Speculative numbers and ballparked percentages were then neatly inserted in the Master Plan document. Nejat was overly confident that his estimations were spot on. He said that he knew this island like the “palm of his hand”. Lack of scientific accuracy, for these men, meant one thing only: that the TRNC as a whole system was broken. Turgut said to the whole room, “There needs to be a long-term government policy, a water legislation, but there isn’t. This needs to be scientifically handled, statistics need to be collected”. The obvious irony here in what they were doing and simultaneously what he said did not seem to bother any of them. However, their complaints were not directed much at neither DSİ nor the Turkish state. Especially Turgut repeated many times that it is the TRNC state’s responsibility to implement a long-term plan for water management, and yet what the government officials did was they “force[d] us to lie to their faces for years”, referring to hydraulic governance in general. Turgut was perfectly aware that

their tinkering with numbers to please TRNC officials and minister was outright lying. And it was also clear that SİD had been getting by with such maneuvering and dodging of responsibility even before the coming of the transferred water. The main culprit was the TRNC state, “getting itself in a situation where another state [Turkey] will profit off of you,” said Mustafa referring to the privatization agreement. Both Kemal and Turgut and his company that day emphasized their own truths. While Kemal and Ayfer, as mentioned above, stressed that SİD “simply looked from afar and did not want to get involved [with the transition procedure],” Turgut, as the deputy manager of SİD, kept repeating how no one asked them anything and that it was the ministers’ who signed this privatization deal who were to blame.

The meeting came to an end as they expressed their discontent with the clauses of the privatization, the price of the transferred and locally sourced water, the problem with seepage loss rates, and so on. In drafting the agriculture master plan document, as a series of policies and directives for the agriculture sector, based on these numbers and “statistical data”, was available to these actors for them to influence, only to a certain extent. Looking at the content of the draft plan, Turgut asked many times, “Why did they put the north Cyprus-Turkey water pipeline under the subheading of ‘bio-physical characteristics of TRNC’?” Turgut interprets this as a major mistake and yet he is also aware that the draft arrived to the Ministry of Agriculture of TRNC from their Turkish counterparts and their job was merely to fill in the blanks with accurate numbers.

“We just want willpower”

As explained previously, Selim strongly believed that this water was not *theirs* to be used by them in the first place. The water was meant to be used by the communities of Anamur, Mersin in Turkey who depended on this water for their livelihoods, as he said to me. Selim’s expert position of being a geologist was therefore directly contingent upon his political awareness of how water was to be allocated, to whom, and whether this was morally acceptable. Unlike that of Kemal, who took a stance away from political intricacies of water management, Selim’s

expertise is deeply embedded in his political struggle “for existence” on the island. Having brought me to the meeting at SİD, before all the discussions got heated up, he nodded at me indicating that he would quietly leave and not participate in the debate.

In early 2017, around the time that the agricultural master plan was being drafted, Cemil came back to northern Cyprus from Turkey, having finished his master’s degree in political science. I paid him a visit in Omorfo, at his family’s house where I was greeted by his mother. After a small chat and a Cypriot coffee, he told me he had a whole day planned for us to visit the agricultural producers he knew in the region. After stopping by at a few dairy farms (*mandıra*), he told me that Umut in Güneşköy, a small town near Omorfo, was expecting us. Umut’s field was not so big, located near a small barn-like structure where he kept his tea, coffee, and stacks of wood for the wood oven to heat the one-room unit. “I am 43 years old, worked my whole life; whatever I earned, I put it back to this land to make a living. Am I a nationalist?” Cemil laughed and said, “no let’s just say you love your country (*vatansever*), nationalist is different.” Before we went inside the barn to get warmed up, as the sun was setting, I asked him about the large pool of water in the middle of his field. There was a constant stream trickling down a tap. He told me that the pool was filled with rain water which he caught with utmost care.

Look, I put some little fish in there. You wanna know why? We use this chemical component called göztaşı, copper sulphate. We put it in the water and it kills all the bacteria, algae, and other unwanted stuff, it also prevents odor. I never liked this, it stayed in there. So I did some research and if you put some fish in there, they eat it and clean it. Isn’t it amazing?

Having told me in an excited manner about his discovery, he said that rain water is a blessing (*nimet*) and that you should not waste it. Cemil, in response, reminds us of a film about Bolivia called *Even the Rain*.¹¹⁴ Umut interrupted Cemil and said, “yes! Didn’t they do that here too?”

¹¹⁴ REF the film

They say even rain water is *theirs*.” Just like that, we delved into a long discussion of all the clauses of the bilateral agreement that privatized the water resources of northern Cyprus, including the rain water that falls annually as part of surface water. “Water is not anybody’s. They say it is theirs. It is also not mine! But of course, if the state does their job right, with labor, investment, calculation, and distribution, with no rent seeking, then yes, the state needs to handle it.” For Umut, water was part of the commons, but still a desire for a governing structure was resonant with the rest of the people I have presented in this thesis. Umut was insistent that what he was telling us about water that day was *not* political. These were facts. And according to him, people—most probably he meant his compatriots—did not care about facts and scientific method. He told us about the intricacies of irrigation, how much water each crop needed, in what degree and pace the water should be given.

Umut had very clear explanations as to why water was a problem in northern Cyprus. I expected the usual “decrease in precipitation, increase in temperatures, increase in water being drawn from the aquifers, salinization, exponential increase in population, and hence climate change” explanation. But he was more specific.

People don’t know how to irrigate their lands. They have this thought, ‘I can let the water run on the field for an hour and that will be that’. They think whatever is not absorbed goes back to groundwater sources. No! It evaporates, this is Cyprus. They don’t know where they live, they don’t know the climate. No one knows how to do it right.

Here was his first reasoning as to why there is no efficient or sustainable use of water and therefore water was scarce. He blamed the lack of knowledge and technology and an urgent need to bring awareness and education to the producers. He even found the production of citrus, which makes up a considerable part of exported products in northern Cyprus, to be simply *wrong*: “The Portuguese experts came here [in northern Cyprus] apparently and said don’t grow citrus here, there aren’t the right conditions. But they just went ahead and did it anyway.” Besides these, he also told us that it is because of the Turkish state that the Omorfo aquifer is

so salinized. Cemil and I were again, not expecting what was to come as the second explanation for the water problem.

The Mineral Research and Exploration Institute of Turkey (*Maden ve Tetkik Enstitüsü* – MTA), a state office, came here decades ago and did research. They dug so much and so many times all around the aquifer in search of mineral exploration, that's what they said. They warned them not to dig that much, that this would salinize the water even more. But they did not listen. Didn't we have researchers, educated people (*aydınlarımız*)? We did but they did not let them get to high places.

Umut talked to us as a practitioner of agriculture production and irrigation. He was keen to do research, learn new techniques, and endeavored to apply the principles of sustainability to his daily practice. And he felt disdain and disappointment towards those practitioners who do not pursue their work in a similar fashion. “The technical work” of agriculture water usage, as he called it, was not being “properly” dealt with due to a lack of knowledge among practitioners and because of the sycophants (*yalaka*) who held state offices.

Finding clear-cut reasons for why water was a problem in the first place, Umut declared, “this pipeline was not built for us. Turkey wants to sell natural gas through this pipeline into the Middle East.” And there it was, the cherry on top of the layered reasoning and externalization of problems. The equation was that if the TRNC state and Turkish Cypriots were able to sustain an efficient usage of their own water, then there would be no need for the transferred water. Cemil, nodding to what Umut said with a bleak face, said “we just want willpower (*irade*).” For Umut, technical knowledge, rational thinking were valuable and necessary; he stated from the get-go that he was not interested in politics, nor was he saying anything political. The material world fell outside of politics, nature divided from culture. It is not just engineers and technical experts then, who participate in the process of purification that Latour (1993) talked about.

Conclusion

Turgut, Nejat, and Mustafa's expert positions as technical staff came to clash as they blamed each other and the state for “not being scientific enough.” And their political positions as state

officers translated into their subjectivities as *hybrids*, borrowing from Bruno Latour. The experts' desire for abstraction, modern scientific method, and *purification* of technical expertise from politics, intersect with their moral and political positions regarding the responsibilities of their de-facto state and its supposed failure to act upon the technical and infrastructural system and its management. Calling this "the paradox of the moderns" (Latour 1993, 12), Latour proposes that hybrids proliferate as nature and politics, as the non-human materials get inevitably enmeshed with ideology, subjectification, and opinion. The emphatic desire for science, its separation from political arrangements and the simultaneous resort to the entwinement of the two constitutes the hybrid works that these experts found themselves in. The pipeline, the transferred water, and its bureaucratic work of planning and management all become a web of hybrids, assembled as a network of pipes, people, water, a meeting at a dinghy state office, precipitation, reports, master plan documents, and numbers. This proliferation of hybrids through the simultaneous processes of purification (the separation of nature from culture) and translation (creation of networks), therefore, constitute how the techno-political actors I presented throughout this chapter, their multiple ways knowing and reckoning with not just their professional work, but also the world they exist in, namely the "half island."

Out of discourses of abstraction and purification, then networks of local knowledge, practices, and subjectivities emerge. Collective notions of self-sufficiency, willpower, and productivity are translated for people like Umut and Cemil as the morally and politically "good" way to act as agents. And it is the pipeline and the water, a convergence of nature, science, and technology, through which techno-political actors "purify" politics out of the material world of efficiency and production, while at the same time reflect upon their collective selves imbued with feelings of quiescence and resignation. The acquiescence and resignation, however, were deeply attached to the oft heard statement of "we want willpower." The willingness to self-govern as part of the structures of feeling for Turkish Cypriots is co-

constituted with resignation, declarations of lack of agentive powers, and copping out of responsibilities that they assign themselves.

This chapter therefore presented Turkish Cypriot techno-political actors who are experts and practitioners of their occupation that relate to water infrastructure. Dominic Boyer understands the expert to occupy or perform a ‘social role’ as a particular kind of ‘modern subject’, but foremost s/he is enmeshed in all the complexities anthropology recognizes human life to entail... the anthropology of experts needs to push harder in every direction to make experts not solely the creatures of expertise that the ideologies and institutions of intellectual professionalism encourage us to recognize and to make visible (Boyer 2008, 45).

Indeed, I have tried to not delimit expertise to the formalized domains of occupation, fields, and institutions. Rather, my goal here is to show how these members of “communities of practice” hold expert knowledge, through either discourse or practice, and construct their professionalisms and values that revolve around their work in ways that point to the very conditions of their search for modernity, scientific method, and rationality. Talking about the pipes, different notions and bodies of water, documents, numbers, and so on, point to many ways that this seemingly self-actualized modernity imbued in their professional subjectivities, are incomplete, processual, and everchanging. The politics trickles in when they want it least or it is precisely politics that is emphatically deliberately there in both discourse and practice of Turkish Cypriot experiences of water infrastructural work.

Conclusion

This dissertation put water infrastructure and its management to the center stage of anthropologically studying the constitution of community in the midst of infrastructural change, economic transformations, and political non-recognition. The case of northern Cyprus, as a territory under ongoing Turkish military occupation with diverse communities who grapple with political patronage, poses an example of how water resources, both in their materiality and multiple meanings, drive politics and inform human reflection about space, place, temporal horizons, as well as their considerations of what constitutes a community.

In the past few years, both hydrological and energy infrastructure became central topics in the international relations and geopolitical arena in and around the island of Cyprus. Scarcity and abundance of resources amid climate crisis add another layer to the geopolitical questions for this networked region of the peripheries of Europe. The Turkey-northern Cyprus water supply project built and operational since 2016, attracted regional attention in the eastern Mediterranean. Around the same time, natural gas explorations in the eastern Mediterranean, the discovery of large pockets of natural gas, and an ongoing geopolitical dispute between Turkey and other regional players brought the so-called “Cyprus problem” back to the political agendas of regional states. Conspiracy theories proliferated locally and regionally. Why did Turkey build the pipeline? Was Turkey solely motivated to provide clean water to northern Cyprus? Or was there an ulterior motive? Can these pipes carry natural gas too? These political questions became prevalent both locally for communities of northern Cyprus, and also for the rest of the region’s political actors.

While these questions informed my interlocutors’ political views on the Turkish state and specifically their own de-facto state of TRNC, my concern throughout this study has been how these interrogations are materialized through water and infrastructure, and more generally, how artifacts of nature and technology are intermingled and take an active role both in the

formation of subjectivities and in what it means to be a collective. Since the beginning of my research project in 2014, I have seen a “proliferation of hybrids” (Latour 1993); water that runs in nature takes us to spaces across seas, interacting with steel pipes, then transports us to state offices, ministers’ meetings with signing protocol documents, transfers or thoughts back to aquifers, wells, and back in time, galvanize old expressions and stories, engender new ones, and all while things, artifacts, people, institutions, and environments entwine in assemblages of nature and culture. Water and its infrastructure becomes known and knowable in various ways that inform and animate people to act upon the world that they live in. The pipeline infrastructure allows me to anthropologically probe into both the multiple powerful and competing entities *over* Cyprus in general and the supposedly inferior actors who lack power *in* acting upon their lives in northern Cyprus specifically.

In **chapter 1**, I introduced these assemblages of hybrids in the modern history of the island, its water resources, and shifting management practices as powerholders over the territories exchange the island for geopolitical strategies. My guiding research question in this chapter was, how has water, its management, and its scarcity become a *matter of concern* for shifting power holders over the island? Taking a genealogical approach, I went over these shifts and transformations between political regimes, in order to understand how water became known today the way it is. The administration of water resources of the island has a long history of shifts in power structures in which practices of ownership, access, and management from different eras are co-existent and continual. The present situation of water scarcity as publicly discussed came to be *known* as such through shifts in governing mechanisms, and the transformative center-periphery power dynamics. Through the lens of water as something that is co-constituted with society at large, we can look at a few instances in history that was transformative for the island (and the region), such as the British take over from Ottoman rule—the colonial shift; the independence from the British colonial rule; the civil war period;

post-partition era; and post-Annan Plan era. The genealogical approach therefore, allowed me to relate water myths of Cyprus that tell stories of spatial attachments, inform present political ideologies of connection and affinity. Relatedly, through a genealogy of water management, different expert knowledge making practices of water as an abstraction, a technical object to be controlled or tamed, also have come to inform prejudices of orient-occident and what productivity and civilization mean for colonial or imperial powers that have had (and still do in a way) over the island.

In **chapter 2**, I continued this genealogical interrogation of the past but through shifting the lens with the notions of space and scale. My guiding research questions were, what kind of political and developmentalist rationalities appear as water is enrolled into multiple power structures' projects of hegemony over the island; and how is water *scaled* across the island by different political actors? Focusing on material and environmental connections and their juxtapositions with political disconnections and conflicts, this chapter shows that water scarcity is a political and diplomatic matter of concern directly related to *where* Cyprus is located and how it is scaled in the region. I contend that water is an object of government and politics *not in spite* of its naturality and materiality, but *precisely because* of these attributes. In arguing so, I looked at competing scales and rationalities that dictate cartographic representations and practices of water management. These cartographic representations I contend, inform how people have come to perceive themselves as a community in northern Cyprus. In other words, cartographic reason and scalar practices imposed upon a given space directly reflects on mental maps of the people who live in these spaces and their scalar orientations of where they are in the world.

After setting the stage with a genealogy of water and its management and how power operated in scalar and spatial reconfigurations over the island, in **chapter 3**, I turn to the present day and the water pipeline infrastructure that this dissertation deals with. As explained in the

first two chapters, the conditions of the possibility of this infrastructure project that came into being as well as came to be known, were set even before the Turkish military occupation in 1974. Chapter 3 turns to dissecting the material and symbolic components of the water pipeline. I asked, what kind of materials, people, ideas, and meanings are assembled around the pipeline and how are they entangled and reinforce each other to constitute the materials and knowledge around the megaproject? What made it “mega”? And how does the materiality of the pipeline animate old and new locally situated narratives regarding water, authority, and community? The megaproject’s materiality, monumentality, and “spectacularity” therefore, is only possible with the co-production of multiple and diverging metaphors, tropes, and narrations that renders the water infrastructure more than simply sum of its material parts. The chapter shows how once water is imagined to be scientific object to be reckoned with, it also becomes a political object that constitute places, people, and subjectivities.

In **chapter 4**, I again shift gears and take a step back in time as well as space. In order to understand the political backlash against the water infrastructural upgrade and its privatization in northern Cyprus, I argued that the megaproject needs to be situated within the political economic conjuncture of contemporary Turkey, specifically the Erdoğan-led transformations during the AKP-rule. This however, still needed to be linked back to a longer process of economic liberalization and developmentalist ideology specifically in relation to space and natural resources. These processes of continuity and rupture that led to political and economic transformations in Turkey are directly impacted upon the status of northern Cyprus and its patron-client relations with the Turkish state. The guiding questions for this chapter were what are the political economic contours of the dependent relationship between “motherland” Turkey and “babyland” TRNC? In what ways have the integrationist agenda of the Turkish state morph with a neoliberalizing agenda in northern Cyprus? By probing into the recent political economic history of Turkey, I trace the inception of a “rule by protocols” and

Turkey's "domination by occupation" over northern Cyprus. These, I argue, are crucial to understand the vicissitudes and contours of the water privatization and the local dynamics that ensued after the bilateral privatization agreement was signed. As will be seen, chapter 4 takes the economic reconfigurations in Turkey and simultaneously in northern Cyprus as focal points in order to understand actually existing neoliberalisms and how economy is where social and political materializes in protocols, agreements, and structural adjustment programs.

Moving on to **chapter 5**, I demonstrate how the actually existing neoliberalism in northern Cyprus is dealt with across different groups of people and how water pipeline infrastructure and its privatization animates a fundamental reflection site for my interlocutors to reckon with Turkish state dependency and yearning for self-governance. In this chapter, I asked how do Turkish Cypriot political actors construct political subjectivities in relation to the Turkish state as well as the de-facto TRNC state; what kind of emic terms come about through discussions on self-determination and self-governance; and how do these terms fit within an analysis of structure, agency, and power? By attending to an ethnographic moment following the water privatization news came out in northern Cyprus, I present how political actors who contest water privatization construct their political arguments for as well as against the state simultaneously, demand "a normal" way of living, and constitute their political subjectivities directly in relation to the state, geography, and willpower as an emic translation of everyday sovereignty. Therefore, a *moral* politics in opposition to "neoliberal" becomes synonymous with manifesting an effervescent will to self-govern. The dependence and impermanence of a de-facto political system is also the condition in which Turkish Cypriots become acquiescent and construct subjectivities marked by self-ascribed ineptitude and disenfranchisement. Calling such disenfranchisement "internalized dispossession," I show how dispossession occurs materially as well as in action or inaction at the same time.

Finally, in **chapter 6**, I steer my attention to infrastructural and hydrological expertise and present how expert knowledge on the water pipeline infrastructure also imbued in historically established categories and values regarding water and people. Here, having talked to both Turkish experts and diplomats and local experts of northern Cyprus, I looked at how diverging knowledges are produced while at the same time different viewpoints are constructed through technicalizing water infrastructure and detachment from politics at times, and politicizing and historicizing as a condition for local expert knowledges at others. I asked, how do experts and engineers produce technical knowledge, mark their views on science, technology, and water infrastructure through repeated maneuvering of detachment from politics and back into it? Probing into professional subjectivities, water infrastructure in northern Cyprus becomes a site where not only political actors and citizens make claims and articulate value about water, pipeline, the state, and politics, but also where experts and engineers also reckon with a moral economy of water and infrastructure, having to navigate values, political views, and rights surrounding their natural resources, their own local expert knowledge, and Turkish state impositions.

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