

WORKING WITH THE SUFFERING OF THE OTHER  
THROUGH UMMAH ACTIVISM: PERFORMATIVE HUMANITARIANISM  
IN THE *MAHALLE*

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Esma Güney Aksoy, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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## ABSTRACT

Working with the Suffering of the Other through Ummah Activism:

Performative Humanitarianism in the *Mahalle*

This thesis is an ethnographic attempt to ask “what happens when the world is represented through suffering of the Other” to the milieu of Ummah activism on the sufferings within Palestine and Syria based in Fatih. Throughout the study I address the affective conundrums of places such as protest sites, such as how the Ummah is sensed and performed throughout emoscapes of Islamic humanitarianism; as well as discursive inquiries, such as the kind of metanarratives that link these affects to define and describe the imaginary and the embodied existence of the Ummah.

After discussing humanitarianism thoroughly in the beginning, I employ a redefinition of the Ummah as a virtual community of the post-Islamist times in order to present a backdrop analysis for understanding practices that expresses the imaginaries of the Ummah through suffering.

As an ethnographic field, I take *mahalle* (neighborhood), the politico-spatial metaphor for the ideological resemblance and affective kinship as an imaginary unit (of the larger Ummah) for analysis. Within the mahalle, I take fragments of some pre-field encounters with Islamic humanitarianism as a starting point. Then, I follow the activists as they move to perform care in the name of the Other’s suffering; moving to mourn, to inform, to protest. By using participant observation in protests, seminars and a conference, and conducting in-depth interviews with five activists; I try to show how Muslim activists incorporate sites, narratives, objects and images to “feel” the Ummah when mobilizing for Syria and Palestine.

## ÖZET

Öteki'nin Acısını Ümmet Aktivizmi İle İşlemek:

Mahalle'de Performatif İnsancılık

Bu tez Fatih'teki Filistin ve Suriye'deki acılar üzerine olan Ümmet aktivizmi ortamına “dünya Öteki'nin acısı üstünden temsil edildiğinde ne olur” sorusunu etnografik bir sorma biçimidir. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmada, hem protesto alanları gibi yerlerin afektif açmazlarını, örneğin İslami insancılığın duygu-manzaralarında Ümmetin nasıl duyulanıp icra edildiğini; hem de Ümmetin bedenlenmiş varlığını ve tahayyülünü tasvir etmede üstanlatılarla afektlerin arasında nasıl bağlantılar kurulduğu gibi söylemsel sorgulamalardan bahsetmekteyim. Bu bahsin başlangıcında insancılık kavramını detaylı bir şekilde ele aldıktan sonra, Ümmet'in post-İslamcı dönemlerde bir sanal camia olarak yeniden tanımlanmasını, Ümmet tahayyüllerini acı üzerinden ifade etme pratiklerini analiz etmek için kullandım.

İdeolojik benzerlik ve afektif hısımlık ifade eden siyasi ve mekansal bir metafor olarak mahalleyi, Ümmetin muhayyel bir birimi ve etnografik bir saha olarak ele aldım. Mahallenin içinde, İslami insancılıkla saha-öncesi karşılaşmalarından parçaları ile araştırmama başladım. Daha sonra, aktivistleri Öteki'nin acısı ile ilgilenmek adına hareket ettiklerinde; yas tutmak, bilgilendirmek ve protesto etmek için hareket ettiklerinde takip ettim. Protestolarda, seminerlerde ve bir de konferansta katılımcı gözlemci olarak; ve de beş aktivistle derinlemesine mülakatlar yaparak Müslüman aktivistlerin Filistin ve Suriye için seferber olduklarında mekanları, anlatıları, nesnelere ve görüntüleri Ümmeti “hissetmek” için nasıl birleştirdiğini göstermeye çalıştım.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis has started at the moments of my disenchantment with attending to suffering within the milieu of Islamic humanitarianism in Istanbul. Disenchantment, in the sense that the more I participated in humanitarian events that are for the Ummah, the more I became interested in how the suffering is represented through various emotionalities and imaginaries across the space- in some cases, more than the suffering itself. Receiving calls for action for when there is an emergent suffering in what was defined as the Islamic geography, I got acquainted with the kind of activism that performs care for the Ummah in specific ways. In those momentary gatherings in solidarity with those who are oppressed, I realized that the Ummah is reimagined through the representations of suffering via moral sentiments. As the Ummah stands for the collective unity of Muslims in general and has positive associations for the believers, I wondered why it is deemed the most alive when there is a suffering of a distant fellow Muslim. Shortly after I delved into the process of trying to observe and define this field of Ummah activism within the larger scheme of Islamic humanitarianism; I have realized that the semantic configurations of pain from past to present, from the Self to the Other, do tell a story of becoming.

Deleuze (1995) defines this becoming as a potential to achieve the utmost existential stage that is receptive to fellowship, intimacy and movement (p.171). Inspired by Biehl and Locke's take on the anthropology of becoming through Deleuze's premises, I have attempted to take a layered analysis of the desire of becoming the Ummah while working the suffering (Biehl & Locke, 2010, p.317).

The hurdle to become the Ummah is expressed in the everyday lives of Muslim humanitarians in mosques, organizations, workplaces, in social media, so on and so forth. When there is an emergent suffering, specifically taking place in Palestine and in Syria these expressions take a form that is beyond organizational identities; incorporating images, sticky objects, soundscapes and emoscapes of care and compassion for the sufferer and rage against the oppressor.

In the wake of this ethnography, before the process of “fielding” any space or milieu, I asked some basic questions that determined the theoretical background of the research: How can we pin down the representations of suffering in a way that translates itself to the social reality of those who react to suffering? How can we think of the universalistic notions of humanism and humanitarianism from within the rather niche culture of Islamic humanitarianism centered around Fatih? How can we rearticulate the notion of the Ummah through the performances of solidarity and activism that serves to show care and spread knowledge about the suffering? How do spatial and temporal discourses influence the affective experience of Ummah activism? How activism has ranged in their mobilization regarding the suffering of the Ummah while working the emotive language as a performance in producing objects, repeating past configurations and reinventing the self in different spaces (Ahmed, 2013, p.194)? What kind of imaginaries of the self and of the state are articulated through the semantic configurations of suffering, as the *mahalle* (neighborhood) in a sense, hosts, spreads, and widens its embodied identity through gatherings and technology?

I use the mahalle as the politico-spatial metaphor that is used to describe the bit of Ummah that is politically active in Turkey. As an expression from within the field, “the mahalle” denotes once counter-hegemonic groups of Muslims who

maintain their protest-culture-as-a-form-of-charity, and creative politics of compassion, while being ruled by a pro-Islamic government and handle their Ummah identity when stuck between the talk of reel-politik and the talk of the politics of compassion on the everyday basis. It also carries a social memory on the past struggles with the Kemalist state, especially with the 28<sup>th</sup> February protests, that is reflected as one the ultimate social sufferings of the Ummah in this geography. Thus, I have also pursued to observe how the mahalle is extended affectively and discursively as mobilizes for the suffering of the Other.

To overcome the complexity of conceptual and practical matters, I decided to follow George Marcus' (1998) guidelines for doing a multi-sited ethnography strategically situated in Fatih. Most of the time within the mahalle, the largest gatherings are about Palestine and Syria among humanitarian events. That is why I focused on the events in which a specific care is performed for the suffering in these places.

In order to explore the questions above, I have tried to incorporate an analysis of imagined spaces, spatial imaginaries and political affects simultaneously in multiple settings. Accordingly, the methodology consists of participant observation and in-depth interviews of which I apply narrative and, at times, visual analysis. However before situating this ethnographic field as the Ummah activism, I combine the literature review of humanitarianism, affects and post-Islamism as way to set the scene and provide a basis for the arguments of this research.

It is important to note that the ethnographic scope and the spatial inquiries of this research have come with its limits. While becoming the Ummah is through certain grievances, this exploration of mahalle does not claim to address all cares and ignorances of suffering that concern the mahalle. I chose focusing on performative

humanitarianism on Palestine and Syria, mainly because these issues have more capacity to trigger performativity in the circles of Islamic humanitarianism in Turkey. This, itself shows the boundaries of Islamic humanitarianism solely when it comes to performing care for certain sufferings and maybe differentiating styles of grief from one suffering to another. However, I do not claim to address all the tensions that create those boundaries; nor do I take a position on power relations that mostly stem from moving within a secular sphere that is regulated by the state - with a big S- and nationalism. I rather put the scope of thesis in a way that opens up possibilities of addressing such tensions and relation by first depicting the affective, spatial and virtual constitution of a community in a way of becoming.

The structure of this thesis is thus styled as follows: In Chapter 2, I try to draw a background from within the literature of humanitarianism by scrutinizing the link between sentimentality and power; emotionality and representation of suffering across different spaces and temporalities. These links, I argue, contribute to understanding a metanarrative, a mythological constitution of the Ummah through suffering. Chapter 3 follows up to explore the notion of charity, religion and suffering with a twist of focusing on the relationship between the imaginary of the Ummah and Islamic humanitarianism.

In Chapter 4, I make a case for my methodology, at length, inviting the reader to join me into the process of constructing and imagining the field. By this way I venture on to clarify both the intangible and embodied takes on affects; while describing the transition of cityscapes into “emoscapes” of Ummah activism, hence into the mahalle (Appadurai, 2010). This also where I discuss what I mean by doing a strategically situated ethnography, its challenges and my researcher identity.

The first part of Chapter 5 is a Benjaminian attempt to give fragments of my pre-field experiences that show how the imaginaries and tensions of the everyday/ordinary of attending to suffering through performance unfold. After working these fragments in the making of the field, I then go on to discuss the theoretical challenges of settling a space for affects and discourses that are at play among the communities of representation of suffering. The second part of Chapter 5 consists of the very fieldwork, three in-depth interviews and visual analyses on performing, or even becoming the Ummah through the Other's suffering.

Chapter 6 is a shorter continuation of the notes on the field, however, those I gathered during my visit to Özgür-der, a self-proclaimed cultural, social and political group who are active in the spheres of Islamic humanitarianism more locally with the exception of performing rage towards the sufferings in Palestine and Syria. While still focused on the relation between affects and becomings through the care for Other, I also discuss how the activist subjectivities manage with the shift between the idealized Ummah identity and the reality that they are part of a State which has its own agenda. While Chapter 5 represents more on the precognitive attachments, intimacies and imaginaries; Chapter 6 speaks for the times of tension between rationalizations and affective becomings.

## CHAPTER 2

### TOWARDS A CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF HUMANITARIANISM

It would be unjust to say that humanitarianism in the Islamicate has not been an object of interest in the social scientific realm. However, although the politicalness and charitableness of Muslim communities were examined thoroughly by various studies from political science books to anthropological theses, the body of literature on the doings of representation of pain tends to the pearls and pitfalls of disciplinary boundaries.

In this section, I will be first try to lay out what particular studies gave way to the understanding in the strategies and analyses of my research, specifically the ones that set the tone of humanitarianism in the general scope of the academic sphere. Secondly, I will attempt to critically engage with the junction points of assorted readings on humanitarianism, in a way that I can multiply the meanings of humanitarianism in order to operate the conceptual framework effectively. I think that such methodologising and critical engagement with literature review will resonate with the further exploration on Imaginary of the Ummah that is conveyed through the suffering of the Other in the following chapters.

I am concerned by the conceptual and phenomenological vastness of humanitarianism and the obvious struggle to link geographies that is created by the fact that humanitarianism that is theorized is the one is either leaning to or ‘descending from’ the West to the Rest (as in Hall’s description) (Gieben & Hall, 1992). Motivated by this productive concern, I also endeavor to address the ways in which we can depart from the mainstream discussions on the politics of compassion to the sensory world of activism by incorporating space and spatial and temporal

practices of the activists. This requires me to deliberately divert the reader's attention from time to time from one course to another.

To make more of a close read, this chapter will consist of four parts. The first part will tackle the concept of humanitarianism, its historicity and its traces and discussions that are transported into the modern world. In the second part I will attempt to pave the way and set the ambiance for my fieldwork by looking deeper into the recent ethnographic studies on the politics of compassion in the Islamicate. The third section will be an effort to understand the political affective conversations in Turkey, the ones we have and the ones we do not have. Finally, I will try to reconstruct the question of Muslim humanitarianism through the question of the imaginary of the Ummah in spatialized practices.

## 2.1 Humanitarianism, humanity, empathy

For the most part research on humanitarianism on the theoretical level has focused on the question on whether or not humanitarianism is inherently good. What made it a phenomenon in the history and what is the human aspect of it in the contemporary politics? One of the guiding inquiries on humanitarianism as Michael Barnett (2011) mentions is that whether the problem is it the fact that it affects politics or that politics affect it.

Humanitarianism, has been argued to be an empire, a reasoning, and I argue that recent studies can lead the way in which it can be considered as an affective economy (see Barnett, 2012, Fassin, 2011, Ahmed, 2004). I want to take it as an affective economy, to show the results of imagining the world through circulating narratives and the visibility of pain. Yet, in this part of the literature review I would like to discuss what humanitarianism has been called out for –and what concepts

have been historically and, in my understanding, geographically favorable for analytical purposes.

Before any in depth deliberation, humanitarianism has been approached as a historical emergence, a macro and micro political outcome of histories of wars. These approaches themselves have been interactive with the milieus they were describing therefore proven themselves to be worth paying attention to before any ethnographic consideration.

There has been an expanding interest in the international community of multiple sorts – i.e. states, relief agencies, non-governmental organizations and the academia- towards how suffering is taken care of as it has become increasingly public, institutionalized form of global governance while delineating its illustration of the humane and the good (Barnett, 2011, p.19, Fassin 2012). The characteristics of social suffering have notably altered and the techniques of attending and relating to suffering followed the lead. In the last decade, we see that humanitarianism has increasingly been described as an affective movement, a political force, a way of managing and governing the world of care-givers and receivers, a sector, a language, a configuration of care and ignorance (Barnett, 2011, Fassin, 2012). It has also been called out for regulating violence, by reproducing universal claims on the sanctity of humanity as a new, organized and secularized way of relating to modern warfare through interventions (Asad, 2015).

We are at an era in which not only the state governments regulate, restrict or pitch in for humanitarian action but also the humanitarian governments can regulate the states' practices of care for humanity. However, the effects of humanitarianism or, as Fassin notes, the humanitarian government, transcend the state. It is “the translation of social reality” and the moral sentiments at play that call public bodies

and private groups for a specific action and making a decision of who needs and deserves what (Fassin, 2012, p.40-41). Theoretical debates on humanitarianism has traditionally opted to understand the reflective dynamics of such translation (Fassin, 2012, p.40). In the course of this thesis, I will be following the contemporary attempts of researchers to escape the binaries that the narratives about humanitarianism tend to form around, such as ethics versus politics, and good versus evil. However, I must note that these dual notions do appear in the fieldwork as they remain relevant to the decision making processes of “active” subjects as they become humanitarian agents.

As I was composing the bases of this thesis one struggle was to try and circumnavigate the over-arching arguments that are made for policy oriented aspirations about the relations of humanitarianism. While probably useful for the day-to-day hustle of NGOs, they disallowed me to convey a realistic understanding of everyday politics of a system in which a seemingly non-profit exchange of goods, services and emotions are taking place.

Yet, it is no surprise that traditional approaches to humanitarianism in the field have been mainly revolved around the concerns and practicalities of emergency relief and maintaining the discourse of unity and purity in order to reclaim its assumed universality (Barnett, 2008, p.5). Such a discourse allows the humanitarian landscape to riot against the destruction, violence and injustice in the world. It also restores immaculateness and righteousness through establishing an appropriate relationship with the humane and the political (Barnett, 2008, p.5-6). Both purists and questioners on the humanitarianism’s relation to politics have multiplied due to the conditions of during what Barnett (2011) calls the age of neo-humanitarianism from the end of World War II to the end of the Cold War, and an age of liberal

humanitarianism from the end of the Cold War to the present (p.19). However, despite the fact that the practitioners of humanitarianism would rather be deemed apolitical in order to maintain the international community's self- image as "civilized, humane, and good"; there has been little to no doubt in the scholarly debates that humanitarianism is ingrained in discussions of certain virtues, ethics and global and local politics (see Barnett, M., & Weiss, T. G., 2008, Barnett 2011, Fassin 2012). The spreading international ethics of care brought about both periodic politics and scope of humanitarian action as well as its consideration as a form of governmentality. In fact, what is discerning about humanitarianism from earlier deeds of compassion is that it is now a part of governance and organization linking the intrinsic to transcendent and it concerns the Other in the distant lands (Barnett, 2011, p.37). Barnett (2011), historically classifies the organization, according to what he calls "a global context defined by the relationship between the forces of destruction (violence), production (economy), and protection (compassion)." Each of these timelines, he claims, shaped the limits and paradoxes encountered by humanitarian practitioners. These limits have been critically studied by scholars especially focusing on the trajectories of the Western liberal democracies, seeking a way to theorize the "standards of a universal concern" (Asad, 2015, p.390).

As I began my study of Muslim humanitarians in Turkey I also began to question this too liberal use of the term "universal", though pain is universal the ways in which it is managed, or concerned about seemed diverse. For sure, most authors, when they refer to the universality of concern they refer to the universality of suffering. Still, I argue that nuancing as we speak of universality can come in handy as we might progress to find out our distress towards suffering is managed by both the conditions of suffering itself, and the techniques of relating to it. Moreover,

the term universality is prone to creating geographically sweeping assumptions, especially when a subject such as suffering has an abundance of colonial connotations in its socio-linguistic memory. As presented in Chapter 5, putting something as “global” or “universal” carries the association with the West or the Western, the suspected oppressor, for rather niche humanitarianisms specifically in the Middle East.

Although I have focused on the modern/post-modern ways of it, care for human life and its sacredness is not claimed to be entirely new. However, the relation between the of Enlightenment ideas and the narrative of the nativity of universal benevolence have come useful in order to unpack the moral and social imperatives and consequences of reducing human suffering. Since humanitarianism, above anything, is a mission to keep people alive, its ascriptions to destruction, production and protection of life have altered the meaning when faced with the restraints, and dilemmas of humanitarian action (Asad, 2015; Barnett, 2018; Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Fassin, 2012). The main concession in humanitarian decision making is between liberation and domination ( Barnett, 2011, p.24).

In his book, *Empire of Humanity*, Barnett (2011) designs his taxonomy of humanitarian eras onto three distinctive ages: Imperial Humanitarianism which destroyed through colonialism, produced through commerce and aimed to protect through civilizing missions; Neo-Humanitarianism during the Cold War that derived its destructive power from nationalist discourses, produced through developments and vowed to protect through sovereignty; and Liberal Humanitarianism, ironically, violence was brought about by liberal peace missions, abundance came through globalization and protection is expected from human rights (p. 21).

Needless to say, these timelines are characterized neither homogeneously nor globally. Yet, since the effects of creative destruction that was implemented by both states and humanitarians of the international community especially starting from 1990s, these timestamps can be applied as “universal but circumstantial” by overarching local and cultural attributions to suffering by political domination (Asad, 2015; Barnett, 2011). Many of the trade-offs of the Western humanitarian decision making processes have been notably explained by its roots of Medieval Christian sacred humanism and then to nineteenth century upper-class humanism. In his work *Reflections on Violence, Law, and Humanitarianism*, Talal Asad (2015), notes that humanity, humanism and humanitarianism is part of a muddled, changing history in which avoiding anachronism means accepting that historically the term humanity, which is associated with behaving humanely, was not always seen as being nonviolent (p.397-8). This allows to further the argument and say that humanity is a potential, waiting to be actualized through charity and punishment. Humanity thus becomes the bilateral adoption of compassion and violence, creating the base for post-Christian military humanitarianism (Ibid., p.398).

Such intertwining of sentimentality and power, and rights and responsibilities have become a determinant in what is human and what is the limit of humanity that is imagined by communities and organizations. Asad moves on to say that this affective compound frames relations of subjection and that humanitarian projects always involve such a merger of emotions and rights and duties (Asad, 2015, p.400). Thus acknowledging humanity is complex; it calls for structures of power at the point where the expression of longing and affect about humans and political analysis is used to request their freedom and development.

One of the best examples to this is the emergence of the concept and exercise of humanitarianism. In the nineteenth century, with the fortification of nation-states in Europe as colonial empires and the global expansion of modern capitalism gave way to abandonment of unreliability of emotions and feelings of amiability in the European ethical theory and flourished Kantian ideas that presuppose the impartiality of law and the autonomy of subject (Ibid.). The rights talk based on such Kantianism has become the basis for modern humanitarianism. Samuel Moyn (2006) depicts the history of this transformation following the changes in the concept of empathy. In his review of historians Carolyn Dean and Dominick La Capra's works, Moyn aims to point out the relation between the earlier forms and conditions of pity and compassion in the context of Post-enlightenment sympathy and the new creeds of "humanity" in the light of the present rise of empathy (Moyn, 2006, p.397). He points out that while Dean concentrates on empathy by looking at its annihilation and perversion; and LaCapra understands it through the events following the Holocaust, they both miss to reflect on the origins of empathy. In these historical accounts, empathy can only be perceived as a replacement of Enlightenment sympathy (Ibid., p.398). Both concepts are usually collapsed into each other, yet, in the contemporary humanitarian discourses, they slightly vary in the meaning. Sympathy indicates compassion – which is to suffer along with the Other-, whereas empathy refers to a more embodied awareness of people's pain as if one is "in their shoes". I would like to suggest that tracing such concepts back to the Enlightenment presents an interesting case, since, despite its reputation as "the age of reason", it was also the break of sentimentalism, which, as Moyn notes, was demurred in the seventeenth century (Ibid., p.399). Accordingly, Moyn disagrees the idea that the contemporary concerns about the "compassion fatigue", dramatic views on the "exhaustion of

empathy” and the “numbed philanthropist” in this era of new media are novice. He rather regards these as the undertones of the historical tensions between the question of embedding morality in the sentiment of a subject who might feel the others’ pain (Moyn, 2006, p.400-401).

Such etymological/historical exploration of empathy suggests a few takeaways for designing an ethnography of humanitarian cultures. The present day critiques and concerns of either the presence or the lack of empathy, thus on the bases of humanitarianism, can actually be seen as repeated objections of modern moral philosophy. I would like to argue that while historically accurate, this statement can be considered within its spatial boundaries. Both examples are exploring the linguistic effects in theorizing empathy in a Western setting, either in favor or against Kantianism and an early modern style of sentimentalism which, again, is responsive to its European landscape of suffering and empathy.

Of course, there is more to humanitarianism than its concern for empathy. Yet, as Moyn suggests, empathy linked to sympathy, i.e. that feeling the Other’s suffering, is deemed unavoidable for humanity as a value system in this day and age, which makes the critique of humanitarian idealism and a sound analysis of the consumption of catastrophic images a hard task. Throughout the literature, empathy repeatedly appears to be a normative framework in order to understand how humanitarian concern works, how it is performed. Slowly on my way to the fieldwork I suggest that in order to overcome the boundaries of previous works on humanitarianism, and the verges of empathy, we need to find more than one way to describe the ways in which we attend to suffering.

## 2.2 Humanitarianism as a new emotionality

Although it is mostly accounted as the by-product of the Enlightenment, and the Western ethos that was bound to it, humanitarianism is as old as history (Barnett, 2011). It is not that compassion or the suffering is a novelty to the global and local affairs, but the expanding properties of and expectations from the multitude of humanitarians sharpen the wonder at the structural and affective performance of this (post)humanitarian world we live in. As I mentioned before, one way to look at humanitarianism is to identify its imprints of modernity and trace its institutionalization processes. However, when we say humanitarianism is a new form of governmentality, the argument exceeds the scope of institutions. It is also the emotionality and the spectatorship that is now ingrained in humanitarian practices as a necessary component that defines the new ways of being a part of this exchange of compassion both in material and affective ways. Humanitarianism is performed. It is not only negotiating “rational” needs of those in pain, it is communicating that pain of the Other in effective ways that enable the motion that what humanitarianism actually refers to. It is also a constant reminder to “humanity” about its universal and circumstantial needs, its fault lines, therefore, the pain it reflects and calls action upon must be managed. In order for humanitarian action to be justified, it must be justified by the right bearing emotions of the compassionate subjects.

I argue that this is important for two main reasons. First, the circulation of the suffering of the Other creates new forms of intimacies that turn the wheels for the institutionalized humanitarianism, that, borrowing the term from Sara Ahmad (2004), creates an affective economy in which compassion is not only an asset to the giver and to the receiver. Compassion, then, becomes an industry making, a

“rightful” emotion that is justified to regulate humanitarian relations. While it is an arena for global governance it is also an aesthetic challenge that is priced through different currencies than money. Although, there is a twist, which brings me to my second point. Humanitarianism is, as Lilie Chouliaraki suggests, a new form of emotionality, and I will be explaining in the next section, it is new form of spectatorship. I argue that humanitarianism, starts at the first encounter of suffering that creates more than one subject positions for the sufferer and the spectator, that are conveyed through an emotive language, yet, expressive of a social memory of the self, the state and the fellow feeling of suffering. It is the embodied moments of feeling for the Other, that bears the forms objection to the suffering and those forms are a reflection of what the compassionate subjects make of humanity in their everyday lives. With every individual humanitarian positioning the active/activist subject subtly answers in what ways the fellow feelings of suffering come about, what are the values that are shattered through that specific form of suffering, what is the new social contract that the suffering subject, whose information has been spread to a distance, and the spectator formed between each other so on and so forth. It sets out the hierarchies of pain, the problem of intervention and the problem of the “bystander apathy”. Different humanitarian identities emerge by the variety of answers that a humanitarian crisis creates.

I argue that these are the moments of contact, the sort of emotionalities that can capture a more realistic take on communities’ values and worldviews and the political implications of their morale. It is the motion that starts from the instance of encountering the pain of the Other and reacting to it that can be an indicator of the shifting identities when they are to be “active” in the face of a problematic

human. I argue that it is this tension of deciding on the tone and social memory of humanity that is ascribed to the subject in pain that creates the main political dilemmas and ironies of humanitarianism, such as its colonial premises in most of the Western interventionist forms.

This is where I move away from the useful historical description of Barnett's humanitarianism as a shifting empire of humanity, a global governance, towards Fassin's use of semantic configurations to understand the subject positions that the moral sentiments toward suffering creates. In his work in which he aims to capture the positioning of humanitarian reason in the contemporary public space, Fassin defines moral sentiments in terms of their capacity to link affects with values, such as connecting sensitivity and compassion with altruism in a philosophical tradition that glorifies the experience of empathy (Fassin, 2012, p.31). Accordingly, two paradoxes come about: The one that comes from the manifestation of compassion and the one of moral sentiments. Compassion, is the perplexing expression of both mind and soul as the sympathy that is felt for the adversities of the Other triggers the moral fury that can remedy those misfortunes (Ibid.).

The paradox of the moral sentiments is rather complicated. As Fassin explains, on the one hand moral sentiments are intensified on the most vulnerable people which creates a politics of compassion that is unavoidably a politics of inequality. Yet, the experience of moral sentiments usually prerequisites acknowledging of Others as fellows which creates a politics of compassion that is one of solidarity.

This paradox has been argued to be the main forces of contemporary politics, regardless of a terminological stance in defining humanitarianism as a

language that shapes the public sphere or as a form of government. Indeed, the two takes on humanitarianism are not mutually exclusive but complimentary. That is why among other things, I consider this thesis as an ethnographic exploration of these tensions between politics of inequality and solidarity, of hierarchies and fellowships.

By this regard, I turn to Sara Ahmed in order to understand the complex relations created by the moments of contact with suffering in which there is more than one line of power and stratification that effects the materiality of the humanitarian world. Ahmed (2014) brings about the connection between emotions and metaphors in terms of their effect in structuring hierarchies into the picture. Emotions are understood as “beneath” the aptitude of reason and they are fuelled by cravings and demands of the body that will cloud the reason, will and judgement. She cites the culmination of evidence that the feminist philosophers provide in which the subordination of emotions is associated with the subjection of the feminine and of the body. Emotionality is thus ascribed to be a condition of a less evolved human, a primal form of sociality (Ahmed, 2014, p.3). What is striking is that the pecking order between emotion and reason is applicable between emotions as some are narrated as signs of sophistication or the proper versions according to the spatial and temporal conditions (see Ahmed, 2014; Elias, 1978). This partly aligns with Fassin’s more practical question on the consequences of actions based on moral sentiments; that is, while for Fassin emotions effect the public life as they acquire moral associations, Ahmed’s focus on the embodied situations is also affiliated to the scaling of emotions from higher to lower humanity/civility and thus of aestheticism in morality. As moral sentiments and the emotive language shape the world, the systems and structures

of relating to the Other in the broadest sense, emotions configure the surface of bodies in action, and as Spinoza suggests, they shape the ability of bodies as ‘the modifications of the body by which the power of action on the body is increased or diminished’ (Ibid., p.4, Spinoza 1959, p.85).

I would like to urge the reader here to reflect on the bodies involved in the scope of humanitarian action, reaction and communication as the ethnographic field can be thought of bodies in space in the widest sense. Ahmed points that paying attention to the emotions can demonstrate us that every action is in fact a reaction in the recognition that our actions are shaped by our moments of contact with the Others. I argue that in order to understand the depths of how the humanitarian government works we need to include layers of analysis moving from agencies, macro analyses towards the language towards the surfaces and movements of bodies in a connected manner. In this day and age, in which technology creates spectacles of suffering scenes and creates different surfaces to act and react upon suffering the question of “what emotions do” or what are the consequences of representing the world through pain’ should include these new surfaces of narrative production on the idealized notions of empathy, on humanness and on the suffering body. So, keeping in mind that humanitarianism can refer to many things, from aid services to corporate projects to alleviate suffering, for the purposes of this research, I would like to delve into what I consider as the basis of contemporary humanitarianism, as a new emotionality, as a culmination of choices made in the representation of suffering, as an affective marker on what we consider as humanity –and on what scale.

### 2.3 Humanitarianism as representation of suffering

A pivot point for me during this research was when I learned that a conversation on humanitarianism as the politics of care and compassion is bound to be characterized by the self-image and the social imaginary of both the givers and recipients in the humanitarian encounter. I have mentioned before that humanitarianism is traditionally been regarded as a selection of binaries for moral versus immoral categories. On the attempt to overcome the limits of such binaries, there is little critical work on one of the main elements of humanitarianism, that is, the humanitarian spectatorship (Chouliaraki, 2013).

For the purposes of this thesis I have based my fieldwork on what Barnett (2011) calls “alchemical humanitarianism” and most of my analysis in this section will involve interpretations of its performativity as it implicitly serves to define identities and subject positions while calling for action. Alchemical humanitarianism is basically addressing the root causes of suffering in the hope for eliminating them, which inevitably induces an involvement with politics as a necessary component (Barnett, 2011; Redfield, 2012).

I chose to study alchemical humanitarians over emergency humanitarians – who appoint themselves to save endangered lives- for several reasons. First was a feasibility problem. People who work for emergency relief tend to move a lot, and mostly unannounced, thus making unavailable subjects to explore. Secondly, according to my prior explorations in the field, people who are constantly on the call, do tend to employ the neutrality discourses of a more universalistic humanitarianism, thus creating more layers to their approach towards politics. On the other hand, the “alchemy”, depending on the site of political circulation, tends to have an intricate

relationship with politics and a more open or articulate in their experiences of converting knowledge into power.

On that note, distance to the suffering is a defining component as well: The lines between the humanitarian practitioner and the spectator is blurred since they can mean the same thing at the events that reach for alchemical humanitarianism.

Nevertheless, I must admit that these lines are almost always blurred; those who go and witness and those who mimic that witnessing through forms of representation work more and more together. Barnett connects this merger of emergency and alchemical paths in humanitarianism to the unsettlement of nineties, which Peter Redfield (2012) notes as a period of “soul-searching” (p.603).

I suggest that these archetypes, while they do come handy in the raw sense of everyday politics, are more important for an ethnographic investigation in terms of their consolidation and relationships to different forms of power. The simplification of “soul-searching” connotes to an era of re-defining the activist identities, creating a collaboration of universalistic and particularistic discourses, how the increasing technocratic ethos and the pledge to development ideals in humanitarian interventions is perceived so on and so forth (Barnett 2012). On the macro level, the humanitarian practitioner in these questions are less significant compared to the gravity of the transnational relations and that of realpolitik. However, more and more, politics dwell on spectatorship, to the audio-visual engagement and formation of the citizens, of the propriety of sights, sounds, and values that are represented through them (hence, moral sentiments), of the “care” of their masses that is now articulated and circulated through media and the mediated settings.

Consequently, I suggest to relate to humanitarianism as a representation of suffering in order to understand the communications between this universal and

particular attributions to what passes as “human”, “humane”, “humanitarian” or properly ‘active’ and what judgements and affectivities are at play when it comes to handling, managing, working with, witnessing, intimating or distancing from the Other’s suffering and vulnerability per se. I attempt to also use the analysis of humanitarianism as representation as an opportunity to add to the dialogue between affects, discourses and signification. Affects and emotionalities are conveyed through movements and symbolism that are virtually encompassing the humanitarian world. By this regard, before moving on to the ethnographic specifiers of Ummah activism and Islamic humanitarianism, this section will be dedicated to the discussion on the possible ways of showing the theoretical relationship between the discursive, affective and, arguably, spatial elements of the representation of suffering.

### 2.3.1 Humanitarianism, temporality and space

As I will be exploring later in detail in Chapter 4, I take the moments of representation of the pain as a fragmented reality or rather truths. However, “moments”, although indicating the initiation of the communication between the ideally compassionate subject and the Other in pain, are temporalities. There is a space to where those moments take place, not just the site of suffering but the frames and angles in which the suffering is recreated for the eye to catch and for the affects to be invoked. I would like to argue that we can think of the “alchemical” humanitarianism in terms of these frames they create for the suffering and its root causes to be known and felt in a certain way by managing the temporal and spatial captioning of those moments. Building on that, I think we can trace the political discourses as they make myths and to the extent that they motivate subjects into

becoming activist subjectivities. Similarly, we can trace images and representations, in order to understand imaginaries.

There are multiple routes that can legitimize and deepen these arguments. Keeping in mind the risk of being trapped into eclecticism, in this section, I would like to explore these routes in terms of their contribution to the theorization of the representation of suffering.

Most of the work done in the field of alchemical humanitarianism can be associated with the circulation of images and imaginaries of suffering. I would like to first use Foucauldian concepts of Heterotopology and Heterochronology to argue that the images of the suffering bodies and spaces can be considered as sites that are heterotopic, that are the “other” sites. The next step would be to try to understand these images in terms of their performance, through what they do. This inquiry leads to two questions: What the framing of any image of suffering does and what the image signifies.

For starters, I find Foucault’s complex depiction of heterotopias helpful in terms of associating the problem of sites and Otherness to the ways in which alchemical humanitarians witness suffering from a distance.

In his work *Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias* (1967), Foucault introduces a new approach to the space and time which he defines by six principles. First, he touches upon the importance of site as a problem in contemporary technology, such as the memory of a machine, the description of coded bits inside a port that might be allocated randomly or conforming to a type of a classification (Foucault, 1967, p.2). The site as a problem does not mean not having enough space for settling of objects or peoples; this era, as Foucault claims, is characterized by the anxiety around space in terms of the relations among sites.

To him, despite the know-how that we have developed to confiscate space, and the attempts to formalize it, the contemporary space is still not entirely desanctified. The fact that we speak of binaries such as public space versus private space implies the existence of the sacred.

Besides the direct value of the theory of space, this is important in terms of reading the history of the past and the present with regards to the sacrality of pain and its purifying and simultaneously humanizing and dehumanizing effect. Such purification is usually associated with more archaic practices in Christianity in the form of asceticism and the suffering of Jesus. While modern humanitarian crises call for more secularized forms of compassion and humanity –thus desacralizing humanitarian action to some level- representation of suffering is still formed through other forms of sacredness.

Whether suffering, as well as the suffering body is considered private or public is another issue that arises at the moments of representation. Any signification that relates to suffering as private or public allows differing affective moments to rise; or at least leading the same affectivities to have effect with different intensities.

These varying sites of representation in alchemical humanitarianism are not separate; they are usually intertwined. So, the forms of proximity among them in and of itself becomes part of the representation. I employ Foucault's "utopias versus heterotopias" as a vantage point that can allow us to see these relations between the sites as they reflect/ circulate/ re-spatialize suffering.

Foucault defines utopias as "sites with no real place" (p.3). To the humanitarian subject, to the activist, one can say it is the ultimate place of no suffering. Building on the existence of utopias, Foucault talks about other real spaces that he refers as counter-sites, that involves mythic and real conflict of space at the

same time (p.4). Non-sites that have reality but its space is almost inexplicable; such as the mirror image of ourselves, the “honey moon trip” in which the place of for the “deflowering” of a newlywed that should essentially be known as nowhere, or the ship as a floating piece of place are some of the examples to heterotopias.

I suggest to think of the imagery of suffering in the terms of Heterotopology as those images usually are regarded as proof or the dystopic and the ugly side of humanity; or as they serve as the reminder of the destructibility of monuments, places and bodies. The places might be known, but the image itself constitutes a non-site, a virtual reality that speaks to a different temporality than the time and place the suffering took place. Also, in cases of “inhumane” violence, the conditions of humanity and peace, as simple as the integrity of the body or a building, is monetarily violated, the site of suffering depicts a confrontation with the norm.

Although Foucault talks about heterotopias as a universal phenomenon, he classifies two main types of them. Crisis heterotopias are those for the forbidden, the sacred or the privileged places reserved for certain individuals such as menstruating women. Another type is heterotopias of deviation that is for people who are in discordance with the existing cultural norm.

Refugee camps can be thought as in the midst of crisis heterotopias and the deviation heterotopias, as they contain and restrict citizens of another country who suffer from statelessness, whose passing outside the camp is unwanted, and who is usually associated with displacement and stigmatized by being a non-citizen; thus as a deviancy to the nation state. Refugees are critical in terms of the calibration of humanitarian affectivity, since their existence in the camps, or “unspeakable” places similar to camps can motivate or hinder the compassionate subject, as (s)he has to manage the identity of a citizen of a nation state.

Likewise, if the ship's floating makes it function as heterotopia, I ask, what does the image of a boat full of refugees in the middle of the sea mean as a site. I regard particularly to the visual representations and where they take place as heterotopias because they serve as virtual sites that are in accordance with Foucault's claim:

“The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space, but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites is the garden.” (p.6)

Most of the good deeds of alchemical humanitarianism depend on convincing fellow compassionate subjects on the severity of the suffering. Accurate images of destroyed cities, dust, women, men and children who are apparently in deep pain are displayed not only to create an appropriate affectivity in order to receive aid, it also functions to assure believability of the events, while labelling most of the suffering as unbelievable, dystopic, almost as an inhuman experience. In most of the modern settings, presentations are done with the utilization of visual aid, such as projections on stages, that reminds us the theatre Foucault talks about, that the virtual gathering of the faces of victims such as in the rectangular room with the projection on to the rectangular screen, almost like a momentary anthology of particular pains.

This gathering is similar to which was epitomized by museums and libraries in the nineteenth century and it is the gathering of time in a motionless space. After a point, depending on the phantasmagorical function of the image of suffering, it becomes a slice of time (heterochronia) that is now a non-time and is a site of mythological signification.

As a further note, one cannot help but notice that the images of suffering is usually presented alongside with the sources of hope, considering that humanitarianism is based on the assumption that empathizing with the human is bound to lead the alleviation of the pain. Both images of hope and suffering indicate a virtual site functioning as a mirror- as a mirror, the photographic image used in humanitarianism becomes a site that is real but in no place, but more than that it speaks to the all the space that remains, that performs between two extremities: Either to create a space of illustrating suffering in a way that exposes the power dynamics in the real space, in which humans are at constant risk; or to generate a space that is real, but deemed perfect as it promotes the hope for a space in which there is no suffering (see Foucault's Sixth Principle, p.8).

### 2.3.2 Fragmented suffering: Politics of emotions via photographs

Of course, most of the concerns within the humanitarian literature when it comes to representation far exceed the problem of site to its function and its performative capacity. Sontag (2002) argues that recognition of suffering that piles up during wars that take place elsewhere is constructed (p.86). This "constructedness" of such awareness intensifies at the photograph. In addition to the probability of reaching to a larger audience, the fact that life goes on after the shot is taken leaves even more room for imaginary and affectivity than the written accounts. Increasingly, to understand "what has happened" we depend on the photographic image. As Benjamin (1972) says: "The illiterate of the future", it has been said, "will not be the man who cannot read the alphabet, but the one who cannot take a photograph."

This might be particularly true for photographs that serve for humanitarian purposes, forasmuch as they aim to move and motivate people towards the

alleviation of suffering. In this day and age, suffering must be documented by images. Yet, we must note that war photography is used in numerous ways other than humanitarianism such as war propaganda, journalism, and art. Yet, one might also argue that, increasingly in the last decades, all other uses of photography of suffering openly or intricately legitimize their existence and circulation by the means and language of the humanitarian government which has simplified to become the norm in the lives of the everyday spectator.

Accordingly, there are two lines of arguments that I would like to focus on in terms of interpretation of the images of suffering by their performativity. First, is that of Sontag's. I think it is fair to say that Sontag arrives to a moralistic stance on the use of images of suffering after analyzing the "literacy" of photography on various grounds in detail.

She looks at photography as memory freeze-frames through which we might develop conflicting responses such as an urge for revenge or a call for peace, or the stillness within the constant stocking of photographic information that dreadful things happen (Sontag, 2002, p.13). She claims that photography derives its effectiveness over the nonstop imagery- i.e. the televised images that we are surrounded by- through its easy-to-consume, easy-to-recall qualities as a bite of information (Ibid., p.20).

Sontag's skepticism towards literacy of photography begins at the distinction between the "image as a shock" and the "image as cliché". To her, knowledge mediated by camera is bound to be familiar and celebrated at the same time, especially when it comes to the knowledge of the agonies of war (Ibid., p.21). Distance from the suffering subject, in this case, almost always causes the "reader" of the photography to read what the photograph *should* be telling (Ibid., p.25).

However, Sontag's main concern isn't what might be imposed to the photographic image of suffering since she then attempts to show that the rudimentary satisfactions that the pictures of the bodies in pain offer are similar to those that show nudity (Sontag, 2002, p.33). The practice of representing becomes problematic as it is an inevitably aesthetic affair. Historically, representation of suffering becoming an object for artists dates back to the emergence of secularism in the seventeenth century, when heinous suffering turned into something to be abhorred or prevented following the events in which a civilian population suffer because of an army of destruction (Ibid., p.35). This is also a benchmark in the history of ethical feeling (or as Fassin says, moral sentiments) that is fading: That war is the norm and peace is the exception. Modern anticipation is, in contrast, war becoming the exception and peace becoming the norm even if it is deemed elusive (Ibid., p.59).

The problem is, that even linguistically we tend to find beauty in the "exceptional". This is more striking when it comes to battlescapes. Even though it is condemned to find destruction sublime, Sontag argues, that the "landscape of devastation is still a landscape. There is beauty in ruins." (Ibid., p.60)

I find this argument particularly intriguing for alchemical humanitarians and activists considering that mostly the images of suffering that are high definition quality and/or "artistic" surround the scapes of fellow-feeling; whether it is a protest, a fund-raising event, a seminar or a wall. If we take Sontag's point of view, what does it mean for the activist who shows the suffering through art in order to sell it to raise funds for the cause? It is the mixed signals that the photography of suffering that steals the role of the photograph-as-a-document makes their consumption troubling (Ibid., p.61). Something to be stopped, but also something to be watched. Of course, watching is not the morally corrupt act here. Going back to the ultimate

reasons for production and consumption of these representations, it is possible to say that the exchange is to serve for affective proximity to the horrid reality, increase responsibility towards those in pain and to feel more.

Yet again, it has become a concern of trade-off between the exploitation of sentiments such as frustration and compassion and creating the urge to stop the suffering. For Sontag (2002), the attempt of attentive photographers to make the spectacle unspectacular is an attempt in vain. Suffering in Western history has been understood by religious narratives that are fuelled by the Christian iconography of disasters which is not created to provoke in a humanitarian way (p.64).

Even though beautifying of an event or a person via capturing suffering can be escaped by simply uglifying it under a didactic tone by showing the worst, objectification cannot be avoided. Photographs turn suffering into something to be possessed. Hence, this bears the most important argument that Sontag makes, that regardless of their motivation photographs do not make us understand like narratives, they haunt us at their best (p.64-70). In an earlier work, she suggests that photographs show the vulnerability of lives on the way to their own devastation and this relationship between death and photography haunts all photographs of people (Sontag, 1977, p.64). Therefore, “looking” at war, becomes counterintuitive to properly reacting to it, the collective memory that is created by the accumulation of war-photographs is not remembering but designating what is essential to the story of what happened. This, again, brings us back to the question of what is being “ethically responsive” to the Other’s suffering, what are the proper feelings and motions when one faces a glimpse of destruction of bodies and scapes and how representation can be perceived to perform in deciding the propriety of affects.

In her *Frames of War*, Judith Butler (2009) explores this question in reaction to Sontag's premises on haunting images. On a similar vein with Sontag, Butler also looks at how the suffering is presented to our attention in a way that affects our responsiveness (p.63). Presentation, in this case, is the frames in which the broader norm on being considered as a human, as a *grievable* life, is recognized or denied (p.64). In the end, most of our moral criticisms and politics is dependent on our criteria to what Butler calls the "recognizable human".

For example, "embedded journalism" appears as a case that embodies the problem of war photography, as they are only allowed to take certain pictures, and travel to only permitted places that limit the images and narratives of kinds of sufferings and of cruelties. The paradox of embedded reporting came into being during the Iraq war, in the 2003, as the reporting of the military, government and journalist were decidedly aligned. Yet, the content is not the only thing that is regulated. Perspective is also what makes the framing of an image and adds to its content as well as its interpretation. Whose lives are more grievable shows wherein the power lies and power can effect multiple directions of content. For example, photographs that trigger negative or demotivating sentiments of coffins covered with American flags were considered an undermining of the war effort and thus were not published.

A second example Butler gives is the images of Abu Ghraib. She suggests that the posing in the photographs, the perspective and the angle all tell a story of justifying a particular viewpoint (Butler, 2009, p.65). Hence, Butler opposes Sontag in the idea that the photograph itself does not leave room for interpretation and that we are dependent on writing to capture the narrative of what happened. For Sontag, taken out of the context of appropriate political consciousness, photographs serve as

disconnected impressions of reality. Continuity of the narrative appears to be the criterion here for Sontag's understanding of representation, whereas Butler argues that the very framing of reality is itself a narrative by determining what is shown within the frame and what is left out (Butler, 2009, p.67).

Ultimately, the question is on the relation between emotionality and the performativity of a certain representation. For Sontag, the "crystallization of sentiments" towards an atrocity is where the much needed photographic evidence fails to function as an interpretative element and prevents thinking. This is not the case for Butler's approach to representation. In fact, she chooses to focus on representability, instead of representation, since in the delimited scenes of war, it can become a privilege to be seen even as a suffering subject in order to be designated as a grievable life. Of course, Butler does not denounce the fact that photographs can tell a different story than the reality. However, it is a larger problem of the media in which what we call the mediation of grand narratives that are mostly racializing and bound by civilizational phenomena as "reality". It is government on what can be perceptible and an admission to be represented as a precarious life (p.74-5). As in the case of Abu Ghraib photographs, she suggests that the fact that they reside in no single time and in no specific space makes them neither numbing nor imposing a precise response to suffering. Therefore, what I suggest is a heterotopic site here, is a small bit of evidence that does not exactly explain what the human is but tells that a breach of the norm –something called humanity- took place affecting the right bearing subject. This visual trace is not capable of reparation of the humanity of the sufferer but the framing and circulating of the photograph initiates the feelings of outrage and thus the political stance that is to manage that outrage (p.78).

### 2.3.3 Circulating representations of suffering

Another theoretical contribution to the debates on the visual representation of pain was made by Elizabeth Dauphinée (2007) who problematized the mobilization of violent imagery. She points out the paradoxical relationship between the imperative to make the other's pain visible and the Cartesian paradigm of subjectivity that would simultaneously take that pain interior and impossible to access. Dauphinée also suggests that we must consider the necessity of the use of such imagery, be attentive and reflecting to whether it is needed in order to engage in political resistance against oppression and torture in the name of ethics. In opposing violence through visual presentation we must take into account the visual economies involved and its own logics as well as its performative capacities (p.153). Thus, thinking with Butler, the legitimacy of such a circulation “depends” on the framing and the context in which sentiments are governed.

The changing ethico-political scene in war photojournalism has been a prominent concern in most of the fields relating to the humanitarian government. Chouliaraki (2013) observes this change by a review of paradigms of war communication studies, propaganda and media studies. By looking at the iconic images in the of the First World War, Second World War as well as the War on Terror through the depiction of the battlefield she points to the progressively accurate visualization of war which is more affective and emotional than it is physical. Such a shift, she argues, echoes the political framework of humanitarian wars which is contrary to those fought for national sovereignty (Chouliaraki, 2013, p.315). War photojournalism can be considered as an application of visual representation that confronts us with the truth produced in the battlefield (p.316). Though, not all studies of war are identical. Chouliaraki distinguishes between war as propaganda and war

as cultural memory. While war as propaganda is a form of strategic communication that is used to examine the opaque relations with the governments, the military and the media; war as cultural memory emerged out of trauma studies in which the collective memory through war images are examined.

Chouliaraki suggests a third approach that focuses on the “war imaginary” that is informed primarily by Charles Taylor’s more spatialized (compared to Lacanian psychoanalysis and Castoriadis’ political theory) perception of social imaginary. Taylor (2002) relates to social imaginaries as spaces in which people imagine their social existence, incorporating a sense of what is normal, presenting itself as implicit knowledge while providing a popular communication that consists of “images, narrations and legends” (Chouliaraki, 2013, p.318; Taylor, 2002, p.106). It is therefore the virtue-oriented, prescriptive feature of social imaginary that mobilise image and language – as in the performativity of humanitarianism- that forms the recurring constitution of publics as moral subjects through routine uses of the graphic performances of war in order to call for ethical and “humane” action (Chouliaraki, 2013, p.319). Following these premises on social imaginary, Chouliaraki’s (2013) methodology involve the categorization of the aesthetic quality of war photography in relation to the organization of human bodies and the technologies within specific spatial zones of movement, landscapes and the moral agency. This brings up the question of whether war images can offer a particular understanding of humanity and collective moralization (Chouliaraki, 2013, p.320). The 21st-century photojournalism presents a critical example. Although the expression of the mechanical with the bodily is intensified compared to the 20th century photojournalism, the celebration of the prosthetic imagination and the technology proceeds in the twenty-first century (Ibid., p.328). The new kind of body,

the cyborg soldier is now the embodiment of war. On the other hand, the landscapes of war become less spaces of battle and more spaces of humanitarian action. While doing so, the imagery of the twenty-first century landscapes obscured the boundaries between the battlefield and the civilian settlements. In fact, the battlefield is redefined by the terror attacks taking place in the cities and replaced the aerial warfare. Moreover, the images of “ordinary witnessing” as opposed to the plenary view of the after-combat landscapes became more prominent in the circulation of perception of war, seeking for authenticity and immediacy in the intimate display of human suffering.

Chouliaraki (2013) calls the abandonment of the objectivity of the “total gaze” in favor of the intensification of affective expressivity as the “triumph of the modernist culture of sympathy” (p.333). This, she concludes, is a turn to subjectivist aesthetic in which the war imaginary is considered chiefly humanitarian and thus results into the psychologizing the power relations in the war itself. Deriving her analysis on such an aesthetic shift in war photojournalism, Chouliaraki concludes that in the twenty-first century, “war is becoming more humanitarian but less humane” (p.336).

Then again, there is a strong tension between aestheticism and the desired academic, journalistic, and political performativities of the representation of suffering. Considering that the humanitarian action and sentiments are fed by the infliction of these desires and by this way affecting and being affected by the humanitarian government in which emotionalities, locations and decisions for actions and reactions are arranged; this tension almost presents itself as unsolvable.

#### 2.3.4 Heterotopic spaces and suffering

In this ethnographic attempt, although I chose to structure the entrance of my field in accordance with Sontag's Benjaminian understanding of fragmented reality in order to accommodate a multidimensional affective analysis of sites of humanitarianism; I also tried to incorporate the narrative of the frames as forms of representing the pain of the Other. I think there is use in both the ways images "flash" and relate to an accumulation of collective memory of suffering; and the ways in which we observe what constitutes the grievable and ungrivable lives. However, my choices of analysis on the performance of depictions of suffering does not solely depend on the disagreement between Butler and Sontag.

Coming back to Foucault's heterotopias as a form of signification and even a mythological construction that speaks to the phantasmagorical relations between the affective subjects and their discourses regarding to their self-image, the "common sense" on suffering and to the state; I would like to argue that by tracing the disruptions in order of space, and in the order of language we can work by some of the complexities in understanding the consequences of representation of suffering. Here, inspired by Foucault's Order of Things, I suggest that humanitarianism involves an implicit imaginary of a utopic consolation; an order of the untroubled region, that has no locality but that can afford comfort and compassion. Heterotopias, that is the sights and sites of suffering- which can be thought of sites, visual and sound images of suffering- are disturbing to that order. Foucault claims that the disturbance of heterotopic sites come from their disruption of language, of "syntax", as they "desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences." (Foucault, 2005, p.xix). In a culture that is devoted to the ordering of

space, distributing things into categories, grouping, isolating, matching things in a way that enables us to name, speak and think; but also setting up an order among things that indices the normativity of being in a certain way, giving things their inner law (Ibid., p.xxi)

Having laid out the question of whether images of suffering renders knowledge and reflection, I find it useful to highlight the epistemic discontinuities in these which Foucault refers as an archaeological inquiry. It is not the effects of knowledge that is solely on the objective forms or grounds of positivity that I am interested, but the order and the space of knowledge of suffering that speaks to an anthropology of its representation (Ibid., p.xxiv). In other words, both for affective and discursive analytical concerns, I am interested in the spaces in which, similar to the representation in the Classical painting by Velàzquez *Las Meninas*, representation that attempts to represent itself in detail, with images and the eyes and faces it makes visible and the gestures that pass on the mythological signification (Ibid., p.18). I believe this approach can be particularly fruitful when, say, in the humanitarian protest sites the audience becomes the event, the thing to be related and felt, the spectacle itself.

### 2.3.5 Representation of suffering and mythical speech

Finally, I would like to expand on the idea that which I have been referring as the mythical signification. Here I make use of Roland Barthes' conceptualization of myth. This is how I incorporate semiology and also point to its necessity and insufficiency as a science into the analysis of humanitarianism as a language and as the representation of suffering.

Barthes (1972) defines myth as a type of speech that is defined by its formal limits rather than its content that has a historical foundation –that is, it is not the nature of things that creates mythology but the kind of speech that is chosen by history. So, when I refer to a mythological reading of any representation of pain, it does not imply that the pain is not real, but the mode of representation signifies more than the pain that is represented.

Mythical speech can appear in all types of discourse, written or visual; and in this day and age “the image” exceeds the theoretical forms of representation (Barthes, 1972, p.1). It is made of parts that have already been processed to be suitable for communication and those parts presume a signifying consciousness. Barthes suggests that this consciousness causes the audience to partly disregard the substance of this speech, as the image serves similar to a writing the moment it becomes meaningful.

Thus, considering the problem of meaning and the limits of semiology as a formal science as in Saussurian structuralism, Barthes establishes mythology to be part of both semiology (the form) and ideology (history), saying that it is a study of ideas-in-form.

In semiology there is the signifier and the signified, the signified is the concept and the signifier is the acoustic/mental image. The relation between the signifier and the signified is created by the sign which is a tangible item. In myth, there are two semiological systems that is ingrained in each other: A linguistic system, a language and the myth itself. Barthes refers to myth in this system as a metalanguage in which the meaning has its own value that belongs to a history, a memory and a comparative order of facts.

Besides the semiological discussions, already we can see why mythology can be a choice of reading when it comes to representation of suffering, as the mythological signification is one that the signifier, the frame, the representation represents itself.

It will be demonstrated in the ethnographic part of this thesis that images of suffering mostly take part from being merely linguistic sign into being mythical signifiers: The suffering body or the destructed landscape speaks to a hi/stories not only of of that specific suffering; but also of being human, being a body, being grievable, being a space to be interrupted in a certain way (Ibid., p.5).

One of the most critical aspects in mythical signification is that myths are to be appropriated; as in myths a signified can have multiple signifiers (similar to linguistics and psycho analysis) that can appear, change and disappear (Ibid., p.6). It bears a value that does not promise the truth (p.8). In my analysis, I would like to focus on these values as subject-forming sentiments that are signified in the scapes of humanitarian speech and action as metalanguages (myths).

I believe mythology comes intertwined with the analysis of political affects. I understand that the word “myth” does carry the possibility to undermine both the severity of suffering and the performativity of humanitarian acts. However, my aim is to simply understand the arbitrations of signs and symbols that create the ambiance for activists or compassionate subjects as they encounter or orchestrate the representation of a certain suffering. Language (and the metalanguage) creates the discourse, and the style of speech creates the affective capacity of that discourse.

This, I think, arrives to a line of argument that is similar to Sarah Ahmed’s work as I consider this thesis as a distant but minded part of what is called as the “affective turn”. Ahmed (2004) refers to “sticky signs” as those that demonstrate

how language operates as power and regulate bodies and emotionalities in such cases of metonymic approximation but also as in the stickiness of the objects in terms of their capacity to move us in a certain way (Ahmed, 2004, p.195).

Thus, I have looked at the spatial representations, the registers of speaking, audio-visual framings, the images as well as the imaginaries of people whom I spoke to as a means to understand the affective-discursive world that is created by the practicing Muslim alchemical humanitarians in Turkey.

So far, I have tried to thoroughly discuss the theoretical bases of what I talk about when I talk about humanitarianism, compassion and the representation of suffering by a selection of contributions of esteemed scholars. It is particularly important for me to apprehend these conceptual frameworks first, and then to move on to the ethnographic part, as there are many positions that one can take when studying humanitarian work. Human suffering arises questions of justice, of the international law, of economy, of which NGO circulates money how, and of civil society and its strengths, challenges and relations to the State so on and so forth. By focusing on humanitarianism as a form of emotionality and representation I hope not only to offer an alternate canvas to the debates on these questions, but also to explore the depth of our understanding of what we do when we deal with the Other's suffering.

On a step closer to the ethnographic part of this thesis, in the next section I will be concentrating on a thematic discussion of the contemporary studies of Muslim/ Islamic humanitarianism and its resonance in Turkey.

## CHAPTER 3

### HUMANITARIANISM AND THE ISLAMICATE

#### 3.1 Religion, charity and suffering

The relation between religion and the suffering Other has been explored in different ways in the growing literature on the contemporary landscape of humanitarianism (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Rosen, 2008; Sawalha 2009; Petersen, 2016). We have already discussed various ways to approach humanitarianism; as a discourse, as a government, as emotionality, as representation and a spectatorship. As the scope of humanitarianism develops with both semantics, praxis and technological advances, the meanings attached to it multiply. Though, one thing that has proven itself almost timeless – since humanitarianism is as old as the humanity- is describing it within the “forces of salvation”. In a collection of scholarly pursuits on humanitarianism, Barnett defines these forces as a concern for moral discourses, religious beliefs and a commitment to ethical and international norms to create an imperative to help the Other (Barnett & Weiss, 2008, p.19). Of course, the internationalization part came later in the nineteenth century by the institutionalization of both to the Enlightenment and to Christian movements and of liberalism. While the human rights discourse has developed from within a secularized institutionalization of the aforementioned values, the notion of charity and the care and compassion preceded these endeavors.

The emphasis on love and compassion towards the Other and the obligation to give charity, and voluntarism as a good deed has been present both in Christian and Islamic humanitarian ethic. Of course, there are historical and cross-cultural differences in which compassion is performed in these religions (and their factions

within), the religious obligation to take care of the Other in the form of charity is an anchor to religious identity (politics) (Barnett & Weiss, 2008, p.19).

In this chapter, I delve into the ways in which Muslim humanitarianism can be located in these differences and the conceptual trajectories from which an ethnography of humanitarian ummah activism can be derived.

### 3.2 Islam and charity

The most well-known Islamic voluntary charity is Zakat. Zakat can be broadly defined as a combination of alms giving, expression of kindness, generosity that is performed to obtain Allah-consciousness. The word Zakat comes from another Arabic (Quranic) word Tazkiyah which means, purification and sanctification as well as material or spiritual growth (See The National Zakat Foundation Guide). For the Quranic tradition, alongside attaining for socio-economic justice, Zakat also functions as a means to obtain the mercy of Allah, a prerequisite to victory, a sign of kinship in religion, a distinctive quality of the believers and the community.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam. While there is a condition to have a certain amount of wealth for giving Zakat to be obligatory; charity is a defining must for the believer to seek opportunities to pass along Godly mercy. As we can see in the Quranic tradition of Zakat as a means to an end, we can say that, for Muslims charity is considered in general is an other-worldly ascetic form of worshipping in the Weberian sense.

Though, the famous hadith, i.e. the saying of Prophet Muhammad, expands the meaning of the material forms of charity into the affective ones: “Every good

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<sup>1</sup> For Quranic references for each point, see Surah Al-Araf 7:156; Surah Al-Hajj 22:40-41; Surah Al-Taubah 9:11, 9:18 9:71; Surah Al- Mu'minun 23:4

deed is charity. Verily, it is a good deed to meet your brother with a cheerful face, and to pour what is left from your bucket into the vessel of your brother.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhī, 1970). One can thus consider dedicating time for the Other, or by spreading caring emotions as a form of charity.

While the aphorism “Even a smile is a form of charity” is one of the main motivators of Islamic (alchemical) humanitarianism; the word “zakat” also refers to a form of tax that is collected to distribute to the poor in the ideal Islamic State. Whether or not there is an “Islamic State” per se is another debate; a considerable amount of the Islamic humanitarianism is carried out by non-governmental -or in some cases non-institutional- assemblies. In a way, Muslim humanitarianism is filling the shoes of the void of the imagined Islamic state par excellence. Thus there is a strong link that has been inefficiently put between everyday politics of Muslims and the functions of the humanitarian action. In order to contribute to this effort, I go on to operationally define Islamism, the Ummah in relation to the internationalization of Islamic humanitarianism.

### 3.3 Re-thinking Islamism for re-thinking Islamic humanitarianism

Similar to the history of contemporary humanitarianism, Islamism dates back to the nineteenth century. Although it roughly translates to “political or politicized Islam”, there are several ways to approach Islamism.

The discussions on Islamism is divided by two main focuses. First is the emphasis on a more essentialising interpretation of historical sociology of Islamism; that is the political thought that have emerged as a response to the consequences of the dissolution of the Ottoman empire. In these accounts, Islamism is a by-product of modernity, while strictly opposing it. The second approach is formed mostly around

Islamism as a discourse that has become more popular with the Iranian Revolution in 1978-9, and that has become a re-visited interest both in the media and the academia with events such as the rise of so-called Arab Spring and that of authoritarian regimes that have pro-Islamic politics.

In 2000, Sami Zubaida wrote that the time of Iranian revolution was the “charismatic” period of political and revolutionary Islam, that has become routinized in the later decades in the Weberian sense by an accumulation of failures of Islamist politics (p.60). He then introduces three ideal types of political Islam: Conservative, radical and political. Conservative Islam, in Zubaida’s terms, is embodied by the Saudi state, which has coupled a very particular understanding and implementation of Sharia law with moral and social control of the state. Radical Islam is what has been preached by Sayyid Qutb and his followers in Egypt, a thought that is primarily on action for *al-amr bil-ma ‘ruf wal-nahy ‘anil-munkar* (calling for the good and forbidding the evil). Radical Islam is a protest movement which directs the elimination of the evil-doing leader. Finally, he defines political Islam as a more ideational socio-political transformation that is based on and inspired from Islam. These ideal types are somewhat blurred in the last decade, due to what we might call a post- modern approach to the Islamic history. Yet, the fact that all types of Islamism are described by reactionary and/or reparatory politics in one way or another have shaped the contemporary debates on Islamism.

A third and less popular analysis of Islamism -especially when it comes to thinking it in terms of mundane politics and civil society- focuses on the impactful ideas, personas and Islamic social imaginaries (Jung & Sinclair, 2015, p.24). Jung and Sinclair (2015) have proposed that the modern subjectivity formation of Islamic societies can also be interpreted through a more heuristic framework of modernity

including the theories of multiple, successive and post-structuralist approaches to modernity. To a similar logic, my analysis will be focusing on the idea of multiple Islamisms. I purposefully avoid using descriptions such as “radical” or “fundamentalist” because they tend to undermine the multiple trajectories of Islamism and the up-to-date imaginaries of Muslim selfhoods that are articulated by paradigmatic historical figures such as Muhammad Abduh, Hasan Al-Banna, Amr Khaled, Sayyid Qutb. The effect of these figures have exceeded the national boundaries of Egypt, simultaneously creating competitions against Islamic modernities in forms of secular Arab nationalism, socialist and fascist ideologies, as well as local nationalisms such as Kemalism in Turkey (Jung & Sinclair, 2015). Consequently, most of the Islamist rhetoric revolves around the victories and defeats that is constructed by these both practical and imagined competitions.

During my fieldwork I have encountered the frequent use of images of these Muslim thinkers and other historical figures who essentially have different world-views but are bound by the canopy of Islam. If there is a mythological constitution and maintenance of contemporary Islamism, the imagery of these figures contribute to it in the way they create an affective bind through stories of historical glories, sacrifice and/or Islamic knowledge.

My initial questions in this research was designed by the interplay between Muslim humanitarianism and and the subject formations dependent of the narratives of defeat from within the Islamist rhetoric. Representation of suffering coupled with this discourse of the failure of political Islam has been one of the constituents of how Islamism can be imagined to the extent that it can become an empty signifier (Ibid., p.37). In their study, Jung and Sinclair (2015) enhance this argument by discussing the consolidation of religious civilizational legacies and modern imaginaries in terms

of their capacity to adopt a hegemonic role in understanding the day-to-day world of the modern Muslim. So, Islamism can be thought as a culturally hegemonic movement that has expanded by both inner changes but also by the effects of the Western stigmatic imaginaries of Islam. Thus, inspired by Laclau and Mouffe (2001), they argue that these “empty signifiers” of Islam and the West have a function to form identities as discursive gradients that represent a timeless imagined unity of the Self and the Other (Jung and Sinclair, 2015, p.3).

During my research I have repeatedly encountered the use of these discursive structures of the Islamic self and the Western Other that have defined the political choices and the use of emotive languages in a certain way. This did not necessarily entail an identification with Islamism, yet, the fact that being a Muslim humanitarian is strongly associated with the politics of the Muslim world, or that of political Islam; what Islamism means and excludes have become an important factor before handling questions on Muslims’ representation of suffering.

While I have no aim to address all the complexities of theorizing Islamism in this thesis, I still would like to address the ways in which we have positioned Islamism as a Self and as the Other in the literature, that have shaped the research on Islamic humanitarianism.

In the beginning, as an initial reaction to the concepts I tackled with, I have avoided even to think of Muslim humanitarians as “Islamists”. I had several reasons for that. First was the pejorative meaning of Islamism that contained in some of the previous academic work on Islamic NGOs and their “shady” relations with “terrorism” (Rosen, 2008, Petersen, 2011). Not only did I not have the material means and the motivation to seek for such relations in the political landscape of Turkey for a Master’s thesis, but also I was not interested to start out an ethnographic

inquiry by labelling people and their work by a tacit use of “war on terror” discourse. Let us face it: Islamism is implicitly if not explicitly associated with moral denunciations such as extremism, fundamentalism, anti-modernism, so on and so forth. As I have no intention to white-wash any part of my work or any group of people, I did not want such connotations to misguide my analyses on politico-affective impacts of representation of suffering Muslims and repeat reductive descriptions on terrorism.

The second reason I avoided the concept is that the fact that my fieldwork was focused on activists who live in Turkey. Here came the analytical dilemma: On the one hand, the ruling party in Turkey –the Justice and Development Party (AKP)- and its leader R.T. Erdoğan has been strongly associated with the Islamist ideology. The AKP’s profile has shifted over the years from being a pro-Western, pro-American party that was encapsulated under the name of “moderate Islam” to a pro-Islamic authoritarianism.

Indeed, Islamism pre-existed AKP and, indeed, its politics have affected the Islamist imaginaries since it was elected, if not shaped and dominated them. However, it is important to note that self-acclaimed Islamists have differing definitions and attributions of Islamism in such cases as the women’s role in private and public. From eighties to nineties, the discourses that make the political imaginary of practicing Muslims in Turkey have shifted (Çayır, 1997). Though there was a common sentiment that was shaped by both defeat by the Kemalist state and the political survival. The main discussion of the century for political Muslims was whether they lived in *dar-al-Islam* –which literally translates to the “house of Islam” but signifies the Islamic state. The anti-modernism during that era was united with anti-colonial sentiments that was generated by the news from the Other Muslims,

such as imported debates in Pakistan against “their form of Kemalism” (Sayyid, 2013). Terms such as *mustekbir* (oppressor) and *mustazaf* (oppressed) became the vertical-political binaries of reactionary Islamist politics (Ibid., p.46). Before and during nineties, the secularist and nationalist state policies created a political environment in which only a certain Kemalist elite, who were the minority amassing the cultural capital of their time, had access to the benefits of “appropriate citizenship”, whereas others, such as Kurds, Islamists, Leftists or Armenians were excluded from political visibility. In a way, these groups have experienced various levels of statelessness- since they became the Other to the Turkish state- in order to hold on to their identity politics.

In the case of Islamists, the idea of the state was conjoined with the imaginary of the Ummah and its gloomy situation as a stateless/affective/religious unity scattered all over the world. The absence of the leader, i.e. the image of the Caliphate and having to function in the political stiffness of nation states solidified this sense of defeat.

Following the election of AKP, one can say that the ideal to have the ultimate Islamic State have dissolved into the mixture of new imaginaries of Turkish identity and the more globalized as well as embodied notions of the Ummah. Although the once *mustekbir* State was now including the former *mustazafs* of the nineties; the language of suffering did not erode but was channeled into a creative politics of compassion, following the administrative transformation of heterogeneous Muslim communities.

For the reasons I have listed at length I hesitate to use Islamists and Muslim NGOs interchangeably, since Islamism has been traditionally defined by the desire of living in an Islamic State. We could possibly name this time period, as the era of

Post- Islamism (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2016). Yet, I suggest to refer to the contemporary Muslim activism I will be discussing as Ummah activism. Certainly, Ummah politics, Ummah activism and Muslim humanitarianism are ingrained in Islamism and are mostly carved by Islamist imaginaries. Yet, Islamism as a concept falls short to describe the affective language that ignites contemporary politics for the everyday Muslim as well as spatial encounters and embodiments. While Islamist ideology and its image of the ideal civil society have anchored most of the Muslim humanitarians' motivations, its theorization does not capture why the language of loss, defeat and suffering did not disappear when a pro-Islamic government has been in power over a decade. One common sensical answer to that can be the fact that the AKP government did not adopt a complete Islamic economic model that is interest free, and prospered over neo-liberal policies that does not meet the moral code of a more egalitarian versions of Islamism. However, this would remain as an argument (on loss) that is relevant within the boundaries of Turkey.

Moreover, we can ask, if the “charismatic” era of Islamic revival was during 1970s to 1990s, how the integration of Islamic movements into the politics have “routinized” and what it meant for the representation of suffering of the Other Muslims in the respective context of Turkey (Zubaida, 2000, p.75). Following the latest theoretical approaches, I take this problem as a dilemma of the post-Islamist era that can be approached beyond party platforms (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2016, p.4). The model of having an Islamic society and a secular state is at the core of the role of religion in the everyday “public” life of the Muslim world. The ideal, then, shifted from securing an Islamic state par excellence to managing, configuring and negotiating Islamisation of society in a way that operates through spaces and everyday lives (Mandaville, 2011; Bayat, 2013; Gökarıksel and Secor, 2016).

I suggest to study the practices of “public piety” (Deeb, 2006) in the form of humanitarianism in these terms; in which the interrelations between religious spaces and categories are laid out in a way to surpass traditional dichotomies such as the state/society and move onto new (and mostly feminist) geographies, in which we can re-think Islamism. By employing such geopolitical approach, I hope to contribute to the literature of Muslim humanitarianism in a Post- Islamist era that is beyond the intact idea of “Islamic state/Islamic society” dualism but instead considers how the Islamic-ness of everyday life takes place through a multiplicity of embodied practices that may variously reinforce or dissolve distinctions between state, society, religion and politics (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2016, p.5).

In order to do so, I will attempt to enhance on the notion of the Ummah as an analytical category; as a virtual geography, as a geopolitical imaginary, along with the other traditional approaches to the Muslims’ unity.

#### 3.4 The imaginary of the Ummah in the times of post- Islamism

When a Muslim humanitarian says “I work for the Ummah”, which was mostly the motto of my informants, there are both social and spatial connotations to the idea of the Ummah. In the next section, I will be explaining how I relate to different conceptualizations of the Ummah in this research.

Historically the notion of the Ummah refers to the possessive construction in the Islamic tradition, that is Ummah Muhammad. It was first known to be used by Prophet Muhammad himself to define his community of believers, also implying that other prophets preceded him had their own “ummah”s as well. There are both Quranic and prophetic attributions to the Ummah that has affected the ideological implications of the concept in a certain way. The word shares an Arabic root of a

similar word “imam”, *emm*, which has meanings such as to lead and to manage (Öztürk, 2005). Muslim scholars have defined an array of meanings for the Ummah, both according to its use in the Arabic language and the Quranic use. According to Raghīb al-Isfahani (1986), it means a community that was brought about by factors such as time and place; as well as a religion or an ideal (p.27). A narrower and a more relevant use have been defined as simply a group of believers that follows a prophet. Yet, Ebu’l Beka Al- Kafavi classified these believers as “umma-t- al-icabat” (the ummah that answers the call), and those who are yet to receive the prophetic call “ummah al-da’wah” (i.e. non-believers) (Öztürk, 2005, p.12; Ebu'l-Beka el-Kefevi, el-Kulliyat, 1993, p.176).

The notion of da’wah (the calling to the message of God) is an important element of Muslim humanitarianism and Ummah activism, especially when they address or help to those who are non-believers. Yet, da’wah can be made towards a Muslim as well. Calling for justice, for example can be a form of da’wah from one Muslim to another.

Building on these, in his conceptual and historical review Mustafa Öztürk have identified two main aspects of what characterizes the Ummah from within the Islamic perspective. In the second and longest surah of the Quran, Surah Al-Baqara, there is a verse that both glorifies and instructs the Ummah:

Thus, have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves; and We appointed the Qibla to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn on their heels (From the Faith). Indeed, it was (a change) momentous, except to those guided by Allah. And never would Allah Make your faith of no effect. For Allah is to all people Most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful. (Qur’an, Surah Al-Baqara, 2:143)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ali, A. Y. (2001). English translation of the Holy Quran. Lushena Books.

The word that is used for “justly balanced” in both Arabic and Turkish is “*vasat*” which then later was then created a condition to define what is “balanced, away from extremism, temperate” so on and so forth. In the verse, being *ummah vasat* is coupled with being a “witness” that also needs unpacking to understand the imaginary of the Ummah. “Being a witness” in this world is one of the common themes in Islam that has politico-affective connotations for the Muslim (humanitarian) identity. To be the witness to the peoples and to the creation of Allah –and thus to the sacred- is a precondition to what we have talked about before: *Al-amr bil-ma 'ruf wal-nahy `anil-munkar* (calling for the good and forbidding the evil) (Öztürk, 2005, p.19). Moreover, the Arabic word for martyrdom (*shahada*) comes from the same root with being a witness. So, witnessing appears as a form of seeing that is beyond the sight of eyes and includes the sight of the Muslim imaginary of the martyr, who has possibly suffered and died for the sake of Allah.

While contemporary definitions of the Ummah simply refer to it as the Muslim community; I suggest to revisit these intermingled concepts as they arguably constitute the bases of particularism in Muslim humanitarianism and Islamic philanthropy.

Of course, one of the ideas that challenges the notion of Ummah is its relation to the State. Whether it passes as a nation (but different) or a civil society have raised questions in terms of its reconciliation with the modern ideas of citizenship (Latief, 2016). In some cases, such as in Indonesia, voluntarism of the Muslim community was regarded as a counterbalance to excessive state bureaucracy (Villadsen 2011, p.1059; Latief, 2016, p.271). As a result of questioning whether or not voluntarism in philanthropic organizations is a part of grassroots social security through individual or collective benevolent deeds that promotes an active citizenship while filling the

vacuum that was created by the state; the discussion of charity and humanitarianism in a nation state has adopted the framework of citizenship (See Finlayson 1994, Stokes 2008, Latief 2005).

There is an inclusive and exclusive side to the Ummah and that has been likened to that of the nation. The inclusive side is correlated with the earliest forms of the Islamic state, the Constitution of Madina, that encompasses different religious groups and tribes. According to Hashim Kamali (2009), the Constitution of Madina did not define a religious prerequisite of citizenship. Moreover, Jews were declared as part of the Ummah. Not only there is no requirement to be Muslim to be considered as a citizen in the mainstream interpretations of the Sharia, but also there are prophetic sayings that assure this inclusive nature of the Ummah such as: “People are equal as are the teeth of a comb. There is no merit for an Arab over a non-Arab; merit is by piety” (Salam, 1997; Latief 2016).

Yet, the exclusive side of the Ummah conceived as a citizenship in Muslim society is through the above-mentioned notion of dar-al-Islam. After Prophet Muhammad died, classical forms of the Islamic states did distinguish according to religious affiliation and cultural approximation (Benthall, 2003; Latief, 2016, p.273).

However, since the spread of Islamic belief to different geographies, even before citizenship was thoroughly defined by the nation states, the ummah represented a form of global or a transnational citizenship.

Coming back to my research, I propose that seeing the Ummah as an alternate form of transnational citizenship does relate to a set of interesting relations between the political affects, intimacies that are created through the combined and collaborated imaginaries of the State and that of the Ummah. When there is a representation of suffering, there is always a distance. I ask, then, how does the

imaginary of the Ummah as a form of citizenship and as an embodiment of current and historicized suffering, affect the intimacies, loyalties as well as fallouts, denunciations and management of imaginary of the State?

In a nation state context, there is the Ummah that is “us” and there is the Ummah that is “them”. So how does the Ummah as “us” represents the Ummah as “them” in the world of Muslim humanitarianism in Turkey?

As they struggled with their own identity politics, Muslim NGOs in Turkey were also concerned with the Muslims’ situation. They have got excitable about the regained charisma of the revolution in Iran during eighties, organized marches and events to protest the massacre in Bosnia during nineties and actively protested government policies that support the war in Iraq and the Israeli occupation in Palestine. However, the fact that Ummah identity is transnational does not mean that it is not temporal and territorial. There are intricacies to the definitions of Islamicized spatial metaphors that feeds from the post-colonial topographic imaginations and protest sites that are filled with rage towards the oppressors.

One problem I have while trying to include these spatial layer to my analysis is that the citizenship/civil society approach to Ummah fails to include what Uriya Shavit (2016) calls the “post-modern constitution of the Islamic memory”, that suggests an understanding of the “virtual ummah”. As I have discussed the relation between the representation of suffering and the problem of sites, I intend my analysis of the fieldwork to incorporate the virtualized sites and constitutions of the Ummah imaginary.

Shavit (2016) explains the virtual ummah through the trajectory of the Egyptian scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi’s academic prominence in the Muslim world, in relation to his membership with the Muslim Brotherhood, especially his use of the

advanced media in terms of popularizing the restoration of a “universal Muslim nation”. With a similar use of Barthes’ mythology, Shavit alternatively describes these efforts as an attempt to realize the myth of the Ummah (Shavit, 2016, p.164). Myth, here, is regarded as “ideology in narrative form”. The myth of Ummah is entangled with Islamist political vision, and the response to modernity that has challenged the Islamic cultural hegemony since the eighteenth century.

On the one hand, Hasan Al-Banna, the initiator of the Muslim Brotherhood, did not reject modernity at its entirety, yet calling for religious-political Muslim unity (i.e. advocated the *Islah* tradition). On the other hand, Qaradawi disputes modernity by reinterpreting post-modern novelties (Shavit, 2016; Yenigün, 2016).

There are multiple tiers to Shavit’s study on suggestion the idea of the “virtual ummah”. First is a focus on Qaradawi’s ideology for actualizing the myth of the Ummah. There is a distinction between a virulent and a virtuous form of domination in the world. While the Western globalization is forced by the United States that has deviant political, economic and cultural consequences; Islamic universalism under the influence of the *wasati* (the *vasat ummah*) distinguishes people only with regards to their piety (p.167).

The second layer involves the theoretical implications of televising the Ummah identity. Following the developments in mid-nineties, Qaradawi has become a world-famous religious authority. Including the use of television and the internet into his analysis, Shavit reminds us of Benedict Anderson’s take on nation states as imagined communities that explains the affective link between territories and the media that is consumed simultaneously (Ibid., p. 172). Anderson (1983), famously defines nations as imagined communities because of their disregard for inequality and exploitation that is bound by a horizontal camaraderie as well as compressed

imaginings of recent history (p.7). The social memory and forgetting that is combined with social, demographic and topographic imaginaries of such fraternity is spread via mass media, that was until eighties broadcasted within national boundaries (Anderson, 1983; Shavit, 2016, p.172). Thus, the usefulness of global media technologies coincided with the idea of the universal Ummah and perceived as Allah's blessing.

This ignited the question of whether the ummah can be resurrected now that the boundaries of the nations were crossed. Shavit argues that, while the Islamic message has found global platforms through the media, and linked Muslims all over the world as scholars could speak to a larger audience; (the myth of the) Ummah that is mediated is neither a modern national community nor an elongated new form of imagined community. Hence, he defines the ummah as a virtual community. The fact that there is no government of the Ummah with a financial center, a military, even a sports team that can give some territorial basis to the abstract expression of politico-religious identity, the ummah does not pass as an imagined community at all (Shavit, 2016, p.183).

What does Ummah as a virtual community means in terms of representation of suffering in Muslim humanitarianism? Not only scholarly vocations but also the call for justice and action is broadcasted and shared via different mediums and they create sites in which such the myth of Ummah both as a "ideology as a narrative" and as a speech, language and as a spatial metaphor (Ibid., Barthes,1984). The point that the Ummah lacks a government does actually create an axis for narratives of loss and suffering in the representations of suffering of both past and the present. In the next chapters, I will be ethnographically discussing the Ummah activism in Turkey by the use of these conceptual frameworks.

## CHAPTER 4

### ETHNOGRAPHIC DECISIONS: ENTERING THE FIELD

#### 4.1 Designing the ethnography

There are two temporalities to my research: First is before my moment of realization of Islamic humanitarian events and protest sites as a “field”. Back then, I had simply assigned myself as a respondent to the “call”, the “da’wah”, who had to “be there” and “speak for” for justice and alleviation of suffering for the Ummah.

The second one is after my initial unintentional break up with my uneducated gaze towards these gatherings. I remember thinking “so many things are happening here” after I spent one year of repeatedly joining protests following the sorrows lead by the so-called Arab Spring. By “so many things” I was reflecting on my sense of the shifting uses of space, the emotions, the language of both rage and celebration of a reactionary “being there” so on and so forth. These sites and sights had their own narrative and the more I have become a story-teller in the academia, the more the narrative revealed its complexity through various repeating practices. In the later sections, I will be describing through narratives, spatial politics and affects in relation to social imaginaries. One of these conceptual frameworks could have sufficed in terms of formulating the research field. Yet, highly influenced by the Deleuzian emphasis on the “flux of social fields” and his approach to subjectivity and “becoming”, I wanted to start from the ordinary openness of these events that can be roughly defined as Ummah activism and tried to employ this fragmented yet cartographic imagination of the subjects and the field (Biehl & Locke, 2010, p.317).

First and foremost to this narrative, I faced a disturbing affective encounter that there are dimensions to human suffering (coupled with identity) that could

almost be defined as “mesmerizing”. Say, there was an attack on civilians with phosphor bombs in Syria, a horrific event. Following that there would be a protest in rage, another event. The latter would be telling details of horror and cruelty of the former event, yet, in the second event would almost always tell other stories and making other connections through words and action. At times, relevance of multiple sufferings – and, not less interestingly, glories- in these emergent settings were defined through performing spatial and political imaginaries.

Of course, this remained solely as an observation for some time. Yet, the observation dichotomized my gaze as a researcher, and the temporalities of this research; thus created a chain reaction towards constructing the “field”. The style of narrating this field is thus influenced by the in-betweenness that resides in the powers and potentials of the affects that repeat and disrupt the idea and the imaginaries of becoming the Ummah through the Other’s suffering (Biehl & Locke, 2010, p.318). My biggest struggle was to acknowledge this “unfinishedness” of the everyday life, the dynamism that people such as Deleuze (1995), Stewart (2007) and Foucault (2005) exerted to show, while trying not to lose track of a positioning as a researcher in the abstractions.

In a way, this ethnography is intended to be a humble addition to the “anthropology of becoming” as I have tried to work concepts in a multi- method construct in which I can lay out the imaginaries that allow the mobility of political affects in ways specific to Ummah activism. I tried to explain this categorical becoming by looking at the intersections of concepts that brought about those events of attending to the suffering of the Ummah.

In an attempt to simplify that first reaction “so many things are happening here”, I have made a conceptual map, as showed in Figure 1, for the research

methodology that can represent the connectedness of concepts and methods I attempt to utilize.

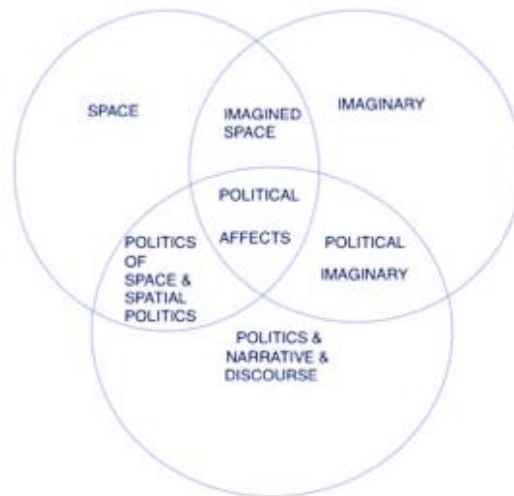


Figure 1. Conceptual map of this thesis

This map, of course, roughly reflects the conceptualization I have made with the use of my initial encounters in the field, by which the suffering of the Ummah is mourned and handled. Then, I have made a map of the applications of these vast concepts to the probable field as indicated in Figure 2.

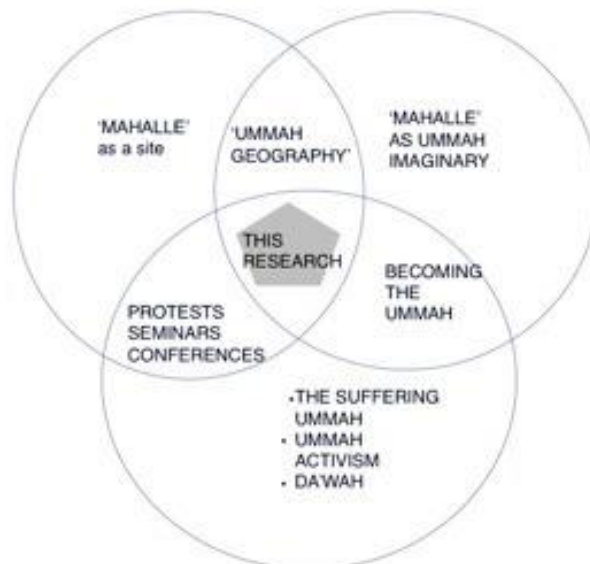


Figure 2. The application of basic concepts applied to the field

It is not new to critical and postcolonial theories to call for plural methods in order to escape coarse universalism while representing people's everyday

experiences (Biehl, 2013, p.574; Berlant, 2011, Stewart, 2011). In order to achieve a combined analysis, I have also decided to combine methods depicted as follows in Figure 3:

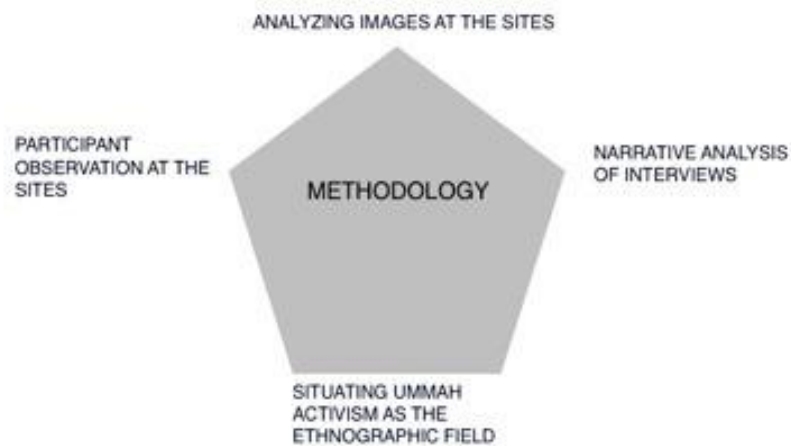


Figure 3. Research methodology derived from the applied conceptual map

These visual renderings allowed me to decide on the practicalities of this thesis as an affective research on “becoming” can be obscured and the “develop a distinct perceptual capacity out of what is in flux, to become part and parcel not of Life or the Void but of “live forms.”” (Stewart, 2011; Biehl, 2013, p.574).

I have identified four main sites that the suffering of the Ummah can be attended, and I have made participant observation in these sites, which at times, have become heterotopic sites of representing the pain of the Other. Secondly, I have made use of images that were handed to me or that set the “scenes” for emoscapes in these sites. Finally, I talked to sixteen participants of Ummah activism with a variation. I spoke with eight women and eight men through snowball sampling. These people are usually described to me as either “active” or “activist” in the matters that concern the political matters of the Ummah, especially those about Syria and Palestine.

The narrative analysis part will be focusing on five of them as they have proved to be more “active” in the sites as nodal points and they have been open to me about their experiences. Moreover, the meetings I chose to share are the ones that allowed me to carry out thinking in terms of a combined methodology. The rest of the participants will still be a part of the narrative, a fragmented narrative of the emoscape I am trying to describe. This is how the ethnographic part unfolds: Following this section in Chapter 4, I will be describing the emoscapes of this research in order to explore the collaboration of space and affects. Then I will be going on to the intersection of space and imaginary, in which I describe and discuss the mahalle. On that note, I will then explain my position as a researcher in this particular field. Finally, in the last section I will clarify how I decided on the settings and the scenes that made this research possible.

#### 4.2 Emoscapes of Ummah activism for a multi-sited ethnography

Although emoscapes can materialize in different ways, I argue that the concept of mahalle can properly signify the fragmented moments of contact with the Other and the political emoscapes of Muslim selves in the everyday life of Muslim humanitarian activists.

Bringing on the literature of Islamic humanitarianism as the performative construction of the Muslim mahalle and its political affects requires a special attention to the relation between culture and space in order to work an efficient methodology. That is why, in this section, I will be first trying to clarify the ways in which I will take Muslim humanitarian culture in spatialized ways and which “scapes” I will be taking into account in locating the affective-discursive practices,

and then I will be explaining why I chose to conduct a multi-sited ethnography in Fatih to encapsulate the political affects of the mahalle.

First let me operationally define mahalle. Besides the literal meaning as the spatial entity of a neighborhood, mahalle has been traditionally used as a metaphor referring to the abstraction of a certain ideological unity of people. Thus, the Muslim or Islamist –which can be only broadly defined in this research- mahalle can be thought as a term that is a configuration of the self from within the local political imagination embedded in “implosion to capture the way in which pressures and ripples from increasingly wider political arenas are folded into local politics” (Appadurai 1996, p.156; Jacobsen & Andersson 2012, p.826). This spatial metaphor for ideological affiliations constitutes the backbone of this ethnographic attempt. Since the Muslim mahalle practically points out the local ummah as a politicized identity, the literal mahalle gives away the proper locales of initiating ethnography and deciding on the style of sampling and this is why I will be strategically situating this research in the mahalle of Fatih.

The district of Fatih has hosted many demonstrations, voicing the demands and protests of ummah activism in its squares and in the backyards of its historical mosques. Being a part of the Old Istanbul, Fatih has politico-cultural significance for various reasons. Fatih can be described as one of the last representatives of an urban space belonging to an Islamic city in Istanbul, that ‘must have a congregational Friday mosque and it must have a market/chief bazaar; associated with the mosque-market complex there must be public bath nearby for preparing believers for the Friday prayer (Abu-Lughod, 1987, p.156). In Fatih, not only there are historical mosques that fulfill the aforementioned criteria but also there are 305 mosques in total. Fatih’s conservative identity does not only appear in the number of mosques, it

is also characterized by the abundance of voluntary associations. It also has a record of 103 humanitarian relief organizations, 24 human rights associations and 80 other foundations for carrying out religious services.<sup>3</sup>

As an old district, Fatih has manifold identities. It is touristic, for those who visit the Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia, Suleymaniye Mosque for and the Grand Bazaar. It is a host, in the sense that it has been the center for some of the most the most powerful Sufi *tarikats* such as İsmailağa and İskenderpaşa, and a center for the waqfs that were once devoted to the Islamist struggle against the oppressions of the Kemalist state. Recently, since 2011, Fatih has also been hosting Syrian refugees who have many identities in the eyes of the locals; residents in overpriced apartments, beggars in the streets, struggling neighbors and shoppers.

As an Istanbulite, I have known Fatih as a cultural hub, a shopping center for people who would pursue a conservative lifestyle and a gathering place for protests, conferences and seminars regarding micro and macro political causes. The main streets market the products of both global and local brands in clothing and food. Most women's clothing shops include long-sleeved tops, abayas, coats, covered evening gowns and hijabs at their display windows in the front. In addition to the mosques, some coffee shops and restaurants have their own prayer rooms for the customers who want to fulfill the Islamic obligation to pray five times a day. There are also many shops that sell wedding dresses, bridal accessories, and coiffeurs that has signs stating that they have a section for veiled women where the entrance of men is forbidden.

Although I have enjoyed the amenities of Fatih before on different occasions, the times I have purposefully been in Fatih were caused by invitations for political

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<sup>3</sup> According to Dernekler Dairesi Başkanlığı.

gatherings that invoked participation to forms of Islamic humanitarianism. Through these encounters, I have come to see that suffering produces political bodies in addition to those who do not experience it. I was raised in an environment where I was always placed as a member of the Islamicate. I use the word Islamicate on purpose, not only to avoid essentialising the Muslim experience but also to underscore the capacity of this term to unfold the postcolonial character of the aforementioned problems of the Ummah. Sayyid (2013) notes that Islamicate societies have episodes in common such as colonization, unequal exchanges, institutionalization of cultural inferiority, anti-colonial struggles and ostensible independence that make them identify with the so-called Third World (p.1-2). Although Turkey had not been officially colonized, I argue that the Ummah imaginary was developed from within postcolonial conditions and sentiments.

In designing this research, I have realized that representations of the suffering (of the Other) in the context of the Islamicate and the Islamist protest culture influenced by the local conflicts and issues of identity politics in Turkey are linked at different levels. As a somewhat “native” researcher, I have had a chance to see how this link is constructed, imagined, historicized and performed in the political milieu of Ummah activists.

When I was eight, in 2003, the Iraq war broke out. I remember watching the Iraqi women’s faces crying, and children in bloodshed, on channel 7, which was considered as one of the few TV channels that broadcasted news with a visible pro-Islamic/conservative voice. The video clips that were shown were meant to be performative, calling for state of emergency. I heard of people who were running aid campaigns, and calling people into the streets for protesting the violence inflicted by the U.S. and urging the Turkish government to take action. In 2008, the everyday

conflicts in Palestine, intensified in Gaza and resulted in the 22-days-long Gaza War, that not only pulled back the important figures of the Second Intifada (2000), to the public gaze but also triggered the revitalization of humanitarian concerns and images. In 2010, a Freedom Flotilla sailing towards Gaza to deliver aid took off from a dock in Istanbul with thousands of Muslim activists who gathered to support the cause and bade farewell. When the Israeli Navy took hold of the leading ship Mavi Marmara, that became the iconic figure of the event, and the rest of the flotilla and killed 10 civilians while doing so rallies in the streets of Fatih and Taksim and funeral prayers (in absentia). In 2011, when it became accurate that the Arab Spring was in fact misnamed, and ended up as a civil war in Syria, while all these demonstrations and performative circulation of images were taking place the, the Bosnian genocide in Srebrenica (1995) was murmured about on the side, and each and every event with such condensed atrocities were associated with the massacre there. The fear of “X becoming Srebrenica” in terms of the suffering that was endured, the stigmatized “silence” and the ineffectiveness of the human rights talk in the international arena were expressed as an evidence of the severity of the pain of the Other.

After 2010, I became active myself, in participating demonstrations and tried to pay special attention to people who organized crowds to the squares, channeled information from outside the border, opened and followed law suits regarding what was considered to be the “major problems of the umma”. These initial encounters have provided me with an outlook of discourses and narratives that constitutes complex subjectivities and turns “bearing witness” to the other’s suffering into political overtones (Bennacer, 2008, p.74). To my yet uneducated gaze, these political overtones were twofold that lead to further questions. First was the

comparison between the perceived severities of injustices. Although there were aid campaigns regarding the relief of other parts of the Ummah who were suffering from injustices and political conflicts such as those in Arakan, Myanmar or Africa, the emotive language encapsulating Palestine and Syria seemed to mobilise more people and was potentially abler to trigger protests.

Secondly, I could see that the language of suffering served to express and bridge the past and the present in terms of the pain endured, and the pain awaits that itself establishes the subjectivation of the activists of the Muslim quarters (mahalle) and constantly contributes to the political imaginary. Here I am referring to a specific take on the subjectivation that in which the subject is a process, not a person (Tucker, 2005, p.55). I became intrigued by the fact that, in these mobilizations, activists had a “contingent and experiential approach to politics” (Tucker, 2005, p.48) and yet their language of suffering and its performativity did not seem to change when their most fervent confrontations with the secular state in the public sphere was alleviated if not disappeared under the rule of AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)<sup>4</sup> government.

Building on these observations and interactions with the phenomenology of umma activism on the everyday basis, I explored the activist subjectivities and their mobilization regarding the suffering of the umma while working the emotive language as a performative in producing objects, repeating past configurations and reinventing the self (Ahmed, 2013, p.194).

The question is, how the subjectivities of the activists that are conveyed by the political affects of reacting to these “sufferings” in Palestine and Syria interacted in a provincial setting, Fatih, and mobilized the physical mahalle into a metaphorical one that strategically appropriates and abandons the language and motion of

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<sup>4</sup> Justice and Development Party

humanitarianism. A further question arising from within that question is what kind of imaginaries of the self and of the state are articulated through the semantic configurations of suffering, as the mahalle in a sense, hosts, spreads and widens technology. During the fieldwork I also felt the need to take step further and ask how these once counter-hegemonic groups of Muslims maintain their protest-culture-as-a-form-of-charity, and creative politics of compassion, while being ruled by a pro-Islamic government and handle their ummah identity when stuck between the talk of reel-politik and the talk of the politics of compassion on the everyday basis.

Some concepts and assumptions that I employ in these primary research questions require elucidation. To begin with, the idea of spotlighting semantic configurations of suffering stems from two assumptions borrowed from both the critique of humanitarianism in general, and Fassin's (2012) theoretical foundation in describing the operationalization of moral sentiments in what he calls the "humanitarian government" in particular (p. 81-82). Two main presumptions that are historically explained and showed by case studies in Fassin's work made me center this research on the effects and extensions of this emotive language and how these moral sentiments have recently reconfigured political subjectivities. First is the depiction of recent history and contemporary politics from which "a specular dynamic has developed whereby public bodies and private groups produce representations of the world" (Fassin, 2012, p.39). The second presumption is that, either portrayed by words or by images, moral sentiments and their semantic configurations do not appear out of nowhere. It is generated from "a specific social world which at a given moment becomes to some extent recognized as an authorized describer of social facts and a competent provider of social responses" (Ibid., p.82).

### 4.3 Defining The Mahalle: Mobility in a fuzzy field

The activist subject of *the* mahalle cannot be reduced to identity acquired the institutionalized non-governmental organizations; though this identity should be done justice in the course of the research, since there is a transitory commitment to social movements that exist side by side with new sense of politics, leading to new intersections of performance and politics (Tucker, 2005, p. 47-48).

One great obstacle that I encountered during the course of my research was to discover the spatial and social boundaries that apply to my research question and not to lose the heart of it. Multi-sited ethnography is a complex method that causes practical problems and might jeopardize the accuracy of an ethnographic agenda. There have been other works after Marcus' suggestion of the use of multi-sited ethnography and opening up to the re-definition of the "field" in the traditional sense, showing that research in fuzzy fields can be of significant input to the qualitative sociology in general (Nadai and Madaer, 2005, p.2-5). In this chapter, I will be explaining the steps I followed in the "modes of construction" (Marcus, 1998) in working and describing the fuzzy field of my strategically situated ethnography.

As I was looking at activists' reactions to the sufferings in Palestine and Syria, I was also seeking to understand how they imagined the Ummah while including themselves to this holistic perception of the Muslims presence in the scattered world of inflicted suffering. How do I pursue an emoscape that is inherently fragmented?

First of all, let me briefly address the definition of emoscapes and the problem of settling a space for political affects at play. Kenway and Fahey (2010) created this concept inspired from Arjun Appadurai's work on the global cultural economy to "involve the movement and mobilization of emotion on intersecting,

global, national and personal scales” (p.187). As I have witnessed the notion of mahalle to dematerialize and become a metaphor for a unit of Ummah that bears the specific historicity of Turkish Islamism I came in to terms to see it as an emoscape. The Ummah activism that I observed before and during my fieldwork can be accounted as part of the global cultural and affective economy. Marcus’ (1998) suggestion to explore multiple sites to understand chains, paths, conjunctions and juxtapositions of locations that the ethnographer comes handy in this manner: it allows the vision for seeking the “scapes” and when we do, it allows the enhancement in the conceptualization of scapes through the prism of emotions. The imaginary of the Ummah conveyed through Ummah activism has indeed its translocal significance that aspires to the sense of globality of Islam. I argue that the moments of contact with the Other- which, depending on the situation, can be the state, the non- (practicing) Muslim white-men, and the subaltern Muslim in pain have been defining the moments of particularity in such global imaginary. To discover such moments, I depended on mainly two of the modes of constructions (of the field) that were theorized by Marcus. I followed the people, and I followed the metaphor.

#### 4.3.1 Following the people

The versatility of multi-sited ethnography in which its appeal lies enabled me to adapt my research project on the way by allowing the room for new translocal, transvirtual, and transtemporal situations (Espinoza, 2015). However, my main source was the people who created these situations and who play the role of representors and objectors of collective pains in their lives. I share my pre-field encounters not only to reclaim the fuzziness of the activist field but also to show in

what kind of situations these personas arise. As a rule, if one of my informants told me that they were going to attend a seminar or a conference that was -in their words- important for the “da’wah” or the matter of the Ummah I followed them. If an informant told me to meet someone more “active” or “the real activist” than themselves, I would contact or follow these people as well. Even though I do not do social media analysis for the sake of this thesis, in some specific cases, I followed them via social media as well. This, for me, was more than the classic ethnographer’s networking – it was how the field structured itself and led me to see that different settings cultivated different representations of pain, different attitudes toward the self and towards the Others of the Ummah.

Moreover, the time I formerly spent with activists showed me that there are not only points of intensification with the metaphors that reveal a collective subjectivity but that there are also people, “*abi*”s and “*abla*”s that are deemed “important” for the cause of ummah activism for various reasons, who can be defined as the nodal point of these activisms. Eventually, I decided to base this mobile research in Fatih -since when I followed people who were organizing events and starting campaigns repeatedly going back there for residence, for work or for the sake of being active- starting with keen (participant) observation of the political landscape and then strategically tracing these “nodal points” for conducting in-depth interviews will be an effective collection of qualitative data in understanding such a complex cultural setting.

#### 4.3.2 Following the metaphor

There is a saying in Turkish which literally translates to: “To sell snails in the Muslim neighborhood (mahalle)”. It refers to the fact that some main sects in Islam

do not accept eating snails as acceptable, thus implying that initiative of selling it is simply unwise. As an idiom, it means pushing something in somewhere in which it is deemed either unnecessary or unacceptable. Yet, sometimes this idiom is used in cases where the idea of mahalle exceeds its spatial meaning and becomes a spatial metaphor. It is a good example of how the space and the spatial metaphor for a particular culture is used interchangeably.

“*Bizim mahalle*”. Our neighborhood. I remember countless times of hearing complaints about the subculture of practicing and political Muslims in Turkey by starting “our neighborhood”. Once a notion of similarity caused primarily by living close by, I presume that mahalle now refers to more complex intimacies that is not only caused by spatial “neighborliness”, but also through affective indicators of togetherness (Cavdar, 2014). By following the metaphor, I had the chance to pin down this now mobile Muslim mahalle in cases that the intimacies are constructed by the fellow feeling to denounce unjust suffering, that is humanitarianism for the Ummah.

Marcus (1998) describes multi-sited imaginary as an adjustment to the over theorization of ethnography and as a mapping of complex spaces in which the field is in motion. By following the people and the metaphor I aim to reflect such an imaginary in the field which is a collaboration of settings that move with the humanitarian subjects, the affective situation as well as the discursive field. In its simplest sense, I use mahalle in this thesis as the spatial metaphor to reflect the Ummah in Turkey that is somewhat politicized.

Combining the prior observations in Fatih as a mahalle that is the embodiment of the metaphorical mahalle, I understand Fatih to be the sum of a few things. First, it is a “contested space” in the sense that in daily life, it becomes a

geographical location where “fundamental and recurring unexamined, ideological, and social frameworks that structure practice” is concretized ((Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2002, p.15). Secondly it is a translocal space that contains multivocality and multilocality as it connects with the virtual community of the ummah (Ibid., p.28).

Finally, I settled on Fatih based on the contemporary research on other studies on the concept of mahalle in Turkey, such as Kuzguncuk (Mills, 2004) and Başakşehir (Cavdar, 2014). The former research is focused more on the relation between social memory, identity and space while the latter is focused on Başakşehir’s cultural segregation as a gated community. Both researches have inspired me to see mahalle through its capacity to practicing either identity or religiosity. Also, both research talk about the dissolution of mahalle and places that are using their means to be the exception to the rule (Cavdar, 2014).

From a within the field perspective, Fatih is “the mahalle”, that is, it is performed as the purest possible connotation to the original/traditional Muslim mahalle that can have both physical and metaphorical togetherness in the midst of the Turkish secularized urban space.

Therefore, I constructed this study as a “strategically situated ethnography” that is a foreshortened multi-sited project. Marcus (1998), defines the strategically situated ethnography as an attempt to grasp something extensively about the system in ethnographic terms as much as it does its local subjects, that is, it is only local circumstantially, thus positioning itself in a field differently than the single-site ethnography (p.95).

In a way, this research would be impossible to do without embracing and addressing the mobility of its subjects and the move from and towards squares,

conference halls, seminar rooms, embassies as they become the public spheres for making the pain of the Ummah known.

#### 4.3.3 Following the thing

Another diverging aspect of this ethnography is that I limited it to the humanitarian sites that are specifically on Syria and Palestine. This was not because the people I spoke to are primarily focused on these issues. There is a vivid activist flow of money, energy and time on other issues concerning non-Syrian and non-Palestinian Others in the Ummah as well. Besides for practical reasons this limitation is primarily derived from the field.

First of all, these two issues, despite their differences historically and geopolitically, are usually coupled during the humanitarian events. Secondly, these are the two main issues that cause people to leave work or take an afternoon in the weekend to go for a protest, take time and chant. In my experience, one devout Muslim activist might donate a considerable amount of money for the famine in Africa or post on Facebook about the injustice in Kashmir, yet, they would only gather for Syria and Palestine. Or, there would be protests on Egypt, but they would hardly follow up. I found this intriguing, in the sense that it presented both “why” and “how” questions of this research in a way these specific Others of the mahalle.

When I followed the “thing”, i.e. the call for solidarity for Palestinians and Syrians, I could almost access to the political hub of Muslim humanitarianism that is not necessarily very strong in Turkish politics (as in the example of Mavi Marmara) but, that could be considered as the vanguard of Ummah activism in Turkey.

In a way, I chose these two issues to determine the sites that can work as a litmus paper for understanding how suffering is processed in the wake of becoming

the Ummah. Nonetheless, the first part of the ethnographic narrative includes the other Others, as those early fragments of the field are an essential part of the scenes, the myths and the becoming in question.

#### 4.4 A discussion on being native

In the last years, I have developed a “messy identity” of an ambassador, carrying particularities of Muslims who are specifically involved in the sort of activism through charity and demonstrations that I mentioned above while I have been communicating the rationale of the more secular moral economies of the “outside”, of other neighborhoods of Istanbul because of my access as well as distance to each group who have different everyday encounters of politics in the circumstantially politicized squares of Istanbul.

There are at least two problems that would arise from taking my account as a purely native one. Narayan (1993) makes a valid use of Arjun Appadurai’s teasing out of the assumptions behind the term native and the question of authenticity. As Appadurai puts out, “Proper natives are somehow assumed to represent their selves and their history, without distortion or residue” and authenticity could thus be achieved (Narayan, 1993, p.676). One problematic here is that even though I was a sincere participant of the sort of activism that I attempt to represent here, how is it possible to claim my researcher self to be without a residue when it inevitably conveys a multiplex identity containing a particular kind of Muslimness, womanhood that is ingrained with a Western (and even elite) and a secular social science education for more than four years? Would my incapacious yet irreversible alienation and anthropological motivations that I gained “inside” make me an outsider? In accepting the native and non-native dichotomy there is no valid sphere

of researcher subjectivity that acknowledges the multiple levels of identity and power relations within most of the fields.

I argue that specifically in terms of my field, a distortionless perception of the self is even more problematic than of a modern(ist) setting. One of my major findings suggest that most of the natives in the field who I would have assumed to be the true representors of themselves have developed a reflexive and a dialogic subjectivity that always assumes to be constantly misrepresented by the Other. Of course, it is no surprise to the sociological thinking that the Self is constructed through the relation to the Other. My point here, is not to suggest this useful presumption as a new focus that will shift the methodology of this research. I would like to rather pinpoint the fact that there is no such a thing as pure and the most righteous representation that can capture the reality of a group and thus “authenticity” cannot truly be achieved. There is always something lost in translation. It is, then useful to convey the position of the researcher and the researched within the shifting identifications in the course of reading communities and power relations (Narayan, 1993, p.671).

Although, from a traditional anthropological perspective in which the - Western- researcher derives its data from his complete Other in the Third world, my *nativeness* resides in not only my Turkishness but also in my religiosity as a Muslim in performance and political practice. Thinking of my research as a study from within a culture, i.e. the cultures of Muslim activism, I find it helpful to pose the questions that are posed by Kirin Narayan when she argues against the clear distinction between native and non-native anthropology. Recognizing the multiplex identity and subjectivity of our researcher selves as suggested by Narayan (1993) enables us to work through the “situated knowledges that are the result of the threads

of a culturally tangled identity” that may be forced into the open or pulled away from sight (p.673). Insisting on a dichotomy between outsider/insider or observer/observed would trouble a fieldwork like mine, in which the outsiders are considered as potential spies, intimacies are obscured and outed for complex political reasons and womanhoods are relatively enclosed in the performances of the private.

#### 4.5 Settings and the politics of emotions

There are four settings that make up the emoscapes that I will be describing in this thesis. These settings in and of itself have become data themselves as they have major effects on the politics of emotions that determine the (discursive and affective) tone of an event for the ultimate care for the Ummah. By following the people, the thing and the metaphor I have identified these four spaces of circulating affects and discourses. One-on-one dialogic settings, i.e. private conversations; seminar settings, conference settings, and protests settings.

To explore private conversations, I simply conducted in-depth interviews in rooms or office spaces of Islamic humanitarianism, in places such as IHH The Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Özgür-der or an informant’s home. Majority of these conversations had room for more detail, for explaining associations and making sense of politics of emotions as well as current and historical events of suffering through rationalizations and reel politik.

Seminar rooms on the other hand, was more focused on the circulation of information – hence, discourse- than of affects regarding the Ummah. Yet, with more analytical use of photography and maps, these spaces provided how the mahalle is reimagined when it mobilizes to inform as a reaction to suffering. Since, seminars take place in more enclosed atmospheres with relatively limited access to outsiders;

they allow a way of framing knowledge around the suffering Ummah that is specific to a certain group. They are also the spaces in which emotion words such as anger or hope would not appear as much as the other spaces of care and compassion. In these rooms, though implicitly, intimacy is regarded as less important and knowledge and education is regarded more important for the becoming of the Ummah.

I did not initially pay attention to conference settings, as they can be the least associated with a “humanitarian space”. Yet, I have come to realize that conferences constitute a larger array of organizers and audiences that employ both speech and technology in order to convey both knowledge and the “feel” of the Ummah through suffering. Both the stage and the audience space becomes part of such affective circulation as the audience is moved by the arguments, bodies, images and sounds that is on the stage. While conferences make more use of emotionalities, there is a constant shift between guilt of not enough care and power to fight suffering, celebration of coming together, celebration of the resisting past and finally a merger of anger and hope.

The final and maybe the “anchor” space of Ummah activism is protest sites. These are the sites that are recreated as spaces just “to be there” for the Ummah. The bodies, the mutters, the intimacies and emotion words are more important than what is said, since only a minority can actually understand long speeches. Slogans however, usually speak of rage and prayers. It is the roughest and the least scripted environments for alchemical humanitarianism to call for care and action; while being together as such gives a momentary body (the crowd) for the virtual Ummah. Among all the settings, protests sites invoke the most empathy, the sense of suffering along with the oppressed.

If there is a screen, protest sites can become heterotopic sites as well; considering that they provide a mirror image of “us”, those who care and chant, a glimpse of suffering and how it made “us” for the day.

For this thesis, I have made participant observation in five private rooms, at least five protest sites, two seminars and a conference. However, the parts I could include to the scale of this research in writing is only the most representative parts of emoscape of Islamic humanitarianism in general.

## CHAPTER 5

### AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF REPRESENTING THE PAIN OF THE OTHER

#### 5.1 Fragments of the field: Before the following

It really takes more than a thick description or an analysis of structure of events when the question is about an Other that is not always the Other, when the There is not always There, and the voice of loss, anger and mourning is not always registered as a complete loss but a call and a potential of politics: manifold, abrupt, loud and looking. A protest, whether it is a man sitting on a cobble or hundreds of people rallying, is hardly about a single place or a single matter and rather burdened with imagined histories, encounters of representations, comparisons, a dispute of truth-events, a mingling of mental maps about political matters. A square, when it becomes a contested space, it becomes the telltale of what grasps and escapes attention in the social experience. It is that social experience which form and convey the networks, narratives, know-hows, intimations and subjectivities. A square, or a city-scape of political activity carry things that simply happen – “they happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like something.” (Stewart, 2007, p.1). That is why a protest, a humanitarian awareness-raising talk, a political motivational conference is always part of a constant state of a flux and never a freeze-frame of social reality. This means two acknowledgments for the terms of this research and its audience. First, the fieldwork only consists of the fragments of a political landscape and a textual representation of what are in reality an audio-visual

flow of embodied narratives. The field, was not “there” for me to enter and neither was I out of the field, out of the spatial and discursive realm of this flux of representations, modes of knowing, relating and attending to things are already somehow present in them in a “state of potentiality and resonance” (Stewart, 2007, p.3). The selection of the events, the conditions, mappings and images that is presented in this research are half the arguments and the politics of this thesis, since the political is animate, fuzzy, intricate yet representational. My emphasis here, is that my inability as a researcher to “enter” the field, because of its fictitious and fuzzy quality (Nadai and Maeder, 2005) is what gave life to the field and its writing in fragments in the first place. How do I, a researcher in search for pinning down a movement of discourse, a discursive movement of a particular Muslim protest culture, and its affectivity, get to enter a field that is constructed by its own mobility and denies a specific location? When it comes to the exploration of the Ummah activism and the political imaginary conveyed within, how do I assign a place when the moments of gathering are shaped by moments of displacement, of loss, of being beyond geographies? As I was callously reminded by some of my informants during the research, there is something almost colonial about taking a look at a social memory and sharing its materiality by contextualizing it within a field. This Bourdieusian sort of symbolic violence requires some justification for the politics and arguments of this study to be in situ.

In this chapter, I will humbly attempt to include the reader in the construction of the field, by opening up the layers of the encounters and the fragments that enabled the composition of the research questions and passed as the “pre-field”. While doing so, I will try to articulate the limits of being “native” and “not-so-

native” in an anthropological outset to a fuzzy field (Narayan, 1993; Nadai and Maeder, 2005).

### 5.1.1 Saraçhane

It is 2013. Someone told someone that a general called Abdel Fattah el-Sisi staged a coup against the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) government and massacred hundreds of demonstrators at the Rabaa Al- Adawiyya square in Cairo. Someone texted me a generic message. We are meeting to support our siblings in Egypt in their resistance against to coup at Saraçhane. After salaah.<sup>5</sup> As usual. But this time we will be praying at the square in congregation not in the Fatih mosque. We will spend the third of the night. I scroll down the Facebook timeline. Coup is bad, coup is good. We decide to spend the night at Saraçhane. It is crowded enough, loud enough. There is a big screen in the midst of neatly tailored trees. Some people move forward to pick a spot. Nasheeds and scattered chants fill the air. It will take time for people to align. The screen shows a square filled with people. They *look* Muslim. At the first gaze, one could think it is us, being filmed by the huge Jimmy Jib. The loudspeaker informs us that we are live on the screen that is on the other end, in Egypt that we are online with the other protest. That our siblings are happy to see us being in solidarity with them. That our motion picture at that point is more than it is. With this information, people start waving flags with more passion for the camera to catch the vivid movement and its harmony: Egyptian flags, Syrian – Free Syrian Army- flags, “Islam” flags, the “Rabaa” flags, the Palestinian flags, Turkish flags. Posters risen up, they speak different languages. There is a big one, amongst men that I can only see through the reflection on the screen. It is a rectangle red banner saying “We want

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<sup>5</sup> Ritual prayer that is performed at least five adjusted times a day according to the daily solar movements.

the Islamic unity”. Next to the writing there is a half globe, showing the side of Asia and Africa and there is a blurry image of the Turkish flag touching the globe. After the Quran recitation- there is always a Quran recitation- Burhan, a middle-aged journalist stands on the huge stage that was decorated with the Rabaa sign on the background to make a speech. There is a famous Arabic nasheed playing on the speakers. “*Akhi anta hurrun varaa assudud...*”. “My brother you are free even if you are clabbed in irons”. It is the musical version of Sayyid Qutb’s poem. The music is turned down. Burhan starts his speech. The crowd murmurs “*Allahu Aqbar*” as the flags go up and down. “We have been shaded in by the shade of the Qur’an like Fi Zilal al-Quran<sup>6</sup> that Martyr Sayyid Qutb wrote by the sweat of his brow and watered with his blood, proved with his sincerity, and crowned with his martyrdom. We have studied at this school at our elbow, and we have learned Islam by heart on this matter. We...Being here is fidelity. We say being here is fidelity. Because being here is fidelity... It is the expression of duty of loyalty of being nourished by Ustāth Hassan Al-Banna.” His voice shakes due to his pitch. “It is important to be here.” Continues by pointing slightly to the skies. “Being here is the crowning of the emotion of fidelity there, one’s pact to Allah is to be fulfilled and having parts of the earth witness this. That is why being here is not an ordinary thing. It is *indeed* of no small matter to beg with open hands until a certain time at night, to take a stand, wanting from Allah as we lean, to feel proximity at heart to the *mazlūm* (aggrieved), to beg for and whine for them, to lean towards Allah with a broken heart.” He stops for impact and the music turns up again as he gulps singing the same nasheed “Akhi anta hurrun...”. He allows the crowd to finish their slogans: “*Labbayk labbayk labbayka ya Allah*”. “I respond to Your call, O Allah I respond to Your call.”

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<sup>6</sup> The Shade of the Qur’an. A socio-religious commentary of the Qur’an that was written by Sayyid Qutb.

On the screen there is Adawiyya. They see us, we see them. Our bodies stand there to be the testimony of the witness of the truth- the truth is the suffering, the injustice.

#### 5.1.2 Omran

It is April, 2017. I am waiting for Belal to meet me. He is late because of the paperwork for his residency permit. I saw his art on the subway television. “Gazan calligrapher and a graffiti artist in Istanbul” it said. He paints walls, he paints bodies. He transforms the vision of the smoky haze that rises after the bombardments into depictions of tigers, horses, families and faces looking to the skies for the war to be over. We meet past the Saraçhane Park. I ask him if he spends time in Fatih. He shows me a photograph on his phone through Google images. It is a photograph of a painting he has recently made. The painting depicts Omran Daqneesh in the middle of Saraçhane Park as shown in Figure 4. The 5-year-old boy who survived an attack in Syria, and whose video went viral on the Internet, sitting on the ambulance chair as he looks at the camera, traumatized, without shedding one single tear he tries to wipe away the blood on him. The painting is on a big canvas that is the half the height of trees around, ensconced in the middle of the Park. On the photograph, Istanbulites would take pictures of the painting. I ask him what is the biggest problem of the Ummah. Unity, he says. We lack unity.



Figure 4. The painting of Omran Daqneesh

### 5.1.3 Dine compassionately

It is July, 2015. It is Ramadan. I attend an iftar -the quasi-ceremonious dinner to break the fast- at Beykoz Woods Recreational Facilities which was organized by one of the biggest humanitarian aid organizations, IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation. It is organized by the women's branch. "The aim" is to inform the volunteers about the humanitarian activities the organization has been carrying out in Arakan and to collect donation for Muslims in Arakan and in Bangladesh who have been systematically subjected to ethnic and religious discrimination, violence and displacement by the Burmese government. There is a ticket fee to attend the iftar in lieu of donation. The building is decorated in light colors and in moderately fancy way, has an entrance with a parking lot and a security implicitly excluding random guests. The handicrafts have cartoons or flags about Palestine or Syria on them, and the badges next to them challenge Islamophobia. Close to the breaking-fast time,

waiting for the evening prayer call, almost all tables are full of approximately 300 guests. There is a projection screen in the middle of tables. Shortly after the dining starts, following the Quran recitation and the explanation of it, there is greeting speech explaining “the cause”. The projection starts running a video, showing Muslims in Arakan fleeing at night on boats, crying men and women. People are hesitant to continue eating or leaving their forks on the tables. They know that they cannot help this horrid images calling from the recent past, that their presence there should be helpful somehow. They also know that eating while feeling sorry for hunger and misery pointed out something shattering, something unspeakable, something that can only be muttered. And they mutter. Right after that, the presenter announces that Bülent Yıldırım the president of IHH to make his speech. He has a serious aggrieved expression on his face, makes gestures that he is about to address the gist of what needs to be said. He says : “I am not going to pat you in the back for coming here tonight. (...) Everyone does the benevolence (khayr) for their own sake...”

Then he continues to describe the violence in Arakan, his witness of suffering. However, he is rather discrete in the word selection. The way he makes use of words constantly implied that there is always so much more to speak of, that the unrepresentability of the suffering he is talking about is tiresome and for us to understand the pain we needed to “go see the orphans in the borders.” He pauses or swallows - not necessarily out of sentimentality- but his pause implied the limitedness and inadequacy of the “compassion”.

He tells us his encounter with a 4-year-old-boy, an orphan who had witnessed his family being raped and tortured and the killed. He describes his gaze as haunting and reproving.

Arakan's people turned their gaze to the Islamic world, he continues, yet the sky is iron and the ground is copper. The consciences<sup>7</sup> are hardened. The leaders of the Muslim world<sup>8</sup> are unfortunately not sensitive enough to this issue, the ones who are; they are left alone. (...) Allah gave Muslims a test on this earth. He gave us the test of wealth. The test of tranquility. The test of abundance. If you give aid your exam might continue on this path. Caress the heads of the orphans. Go to the border zones. See the situation of orphans.

At the end of the event a draw takes place in order to decide the 6 people who will be rewarded by going to Hatay and Kilis to see IHH's work regarding Syria.

#### 5.1.4 To be an activist or not to be an activist

On August 2017, I speak to Buket, a writer whom I knew from IHH and Mazlumder, two organizations centered in Fatih. We meet at Taksim, because she now works for an association for Imam Hatip students and alumni. She still has strong attachments to IHH and to the street protests. She was also on the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza, on the Mavi Marmara ship. She starts our conversation with suggestions of people who are "active". The first person she talks about is Gülay, a thirty-something director. She is an activist, she says. "Gülay is our director friend, and frankly, besides one or two works in private she did not do things for the television or stuff, she hadn't spent years directing. But she had the gift of directing. May Allah be pleased with her, and she channeled that knowledge and talent entirely to Syria. She made the Haykırış (Outcry) documentary. Erm...And from there she spoke to women who came with the migration, who became refugees. Some lost their family, some of them lost their husbands. Then she made Suriye Zindanlarında 24 saat (24 hours in Syrian Prisons). She made Savaş ve Çocuk (War and Child). After that, well, she made İslam Coğrafyasının Direnen Kadınları (The Resisting Women of the Muslim Geography). You know, she went to Bangladesh for interviews...she went to Quds etc."

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<sup>7</sup> vicdanlar

<sup>8</sup> İslam dünyası

As she drops names in our conversation, she refers to them as activists. I ask her if I should be describing her in association with “Islamic activism” or does she have other suggestions. She hesitates: “Frankly I...erm...since I have done a lot of things, carried out some work within the group who can be defined as activists, when they introduce me as an activist, I oppose. For instance, my publisher also told me to write “activist” in my biography. I said no, it is a Western literature, a Western concept, I don’t accept the concept of activist. And I am a human who is aspiring to be a da’i (inviter).<sup>9</sup> If I will be remembered one day, I want to be remembered as an inviter. I have endeavors for this cause. Am I an inviter? I am not. It is something very different to be able to win this (title).”

Sometime later I call Gülay, the director, to schedule a meeting with her. After briefly introducing myself, I tell her that Buket suggested her and somewhere in the explanation, with a slip of a tongue, I tell her I am trying to reach to Muslim activists. I regret it as I say it, but it is too late. The voice on the other side of the phone is a doubtful pause. “Oh well, my dear sister...mm”, she says, “I am actually not an activist. I don’t define myself that way. I do not direct or do things for activism I do it because I am Muslim. I am doing what I do only to please Allah.” After I correct my mistake, she agrees to an interview and invites me to a “reading group about Quds with young sisters” that will take place in Fatih, at Insamer, that is an IHH-related “Humanitarian and Social Research Center”.

#### 5.1.5 Beyazıt

It is January, 2009. Smoke. There are many images of smoke on TV. Another massacre takes place in the Gaza strip. In total, around 1400 Gazans are killed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A da’i is someone who performs da’wah.

<sup>10</sup> According to Human Rights Watch report

“Think of Palestinian kids”. This is the buzz in our ears, as if it is in the air. Of course, it is not in the air. It is on TV, in the streets, in the text messages we receive. There will be a protest in Beyazıt, Fatih. This is of many responses to the 22-day battle. It will start after the congregational Friday Prayer, at the square next to the Beyazıt Mosque. Who is calling, we ask each other. IHH, OzgurDer, Mazlumder and a dozen other organizations.<sup>11</sup> Meaning it will be massive. Before we join the protest we decide to download a boycott list that displays brands that support Israeli military economically and distribute it on our way to Beyazıt, on the touristic streets of Sultanahmet. Following the lead of the noise, we arrive to the square, joining the thousands and anger is all over the place. Angry to the “authorities”, angry to the media, angry to ourselves, angry to the history, angry to the United Nations and our inability to protect. *Bir-ruh bid-dem nafdika ya Aqsa. With spirit! With blood! We’d die for you O Aqsa!* Should remember Gaza. Should remember Bosnia.

It is March, 2012. The anniversary of the Syrian revolution as we speak it. Beyazıt Square is filled with thousands after the prayer. Syrian Flags, but different. Palestinian flags, “Islam” Flag. Arabs, Syrians and Palestinians mostly are in the front. *Ya Allah manna ghayrak ya Allah.* O Allah there is no one (for us) but You, O Allah. There are Syrian representatives, they speak in between the slogans and takbeers<sup>12</sup> after the Turkish speakers. Frustration accumulates with each proceeding. However, then again, there are promises made to God, to the mazlüm, to the enemy,

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<sup>11</sup> According to news at <http://www.habername.com/haber/gazze-katliami-yarin-protesto-edilecek-14207.htm>

Akder, Asder, Barış Meclisi, Bayrampasa Yeşil Camii İlme Hizmet Vakfı, Dayanisma Vakfı, Dünya Dilleri Vakfı, Doğu Türkistan Maarif ve Dayanışma Derneği, Eczader, Eminönü İş Adamları Derneği, Fıdder Filistin Dayanışma Derneği, Fırıncılar Derneği, Gönül kuşağı Derneği, Güngören Yeşilay Derneği, Hakyol Derneği, IHD İnsan Hakları Derneği, IHH İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri Vakfı, İnsan Vakfı, İSEGEV (İstanbul Eğitim ve Gençliğe Hizmet Vakfı), İstanbul Mali Müşavirler ve Muhasebeciler Derneği, İstanbul Kasaplar Odası, Kobider, Mazlumder, ÖNDER (İmam Hatip Liseleri Mezunları ve Mensupları Derneği), Özgürder, Sade Yaşam Grubu, Siyasal Vakfı, Sosyal Doku Derneği, Tüketiciler Birliği, Tüm Hukukçular Birliği, Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekküller Vakfı

<sup>12</sup> The Arabic phrase “Allahu aqbar” meaning “God is the Greatest”

i.e. the “cruel ones”.<sup>13</sup> Towards the end Grup Yürüyüş, a religious music band that I came to know in these sorts of protests that care for the Muslim Others. The singer announces that he added a new song to his repertory and that they will be singing that for today. The song he sings, “*Yalla Erhal Ya Bashar*”,<sup>14</sup> is written by Ibrahim Qashoush, a Syrian musician who was beheaded soon after singing it publicly. As the protest dissolves the Syrian crowd in the front starts chanting Arabic songs and slogans as they dance, voicing the joy coming from the idea of resistance coined with anger for their lost ones.

#### 5.1.6. The consulates

It is 2012. On several “occasions” – such as the news about the use of chemical weapons, or a meeting in either in Turkey or in the United Nations about the “fate of Syria”- I have been texted that there will be a protest in front of the consulate “in concern”. Russia, for the alliance with the Assad regime; Syria for representing the Assad regime and the amateur cameras are prepared to shoot and spread the message to the Turkish government: “Send them (the ambassadors) back!” to “Stop the massacre in Syria”. Most of the crowd consists of Syrians who have been living in Turkey for some time, and some are female Turkish university students. The more I go to these events, I get used to the fact that noon protests do not attract many people: “the call” is usually made by the Syrian associations and youth organizations (who are by majority student or free-lancers) alone, and the Turkish men are busy with their work and daily affairs.

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<sup>13</sup> zalimler

<sup>14</sup> It's time to leave, Bashar

## 5.2 Working the fragments in the search for a field

This research is an attempt to work these fragments of cityscapes and political landscapes as they become political, and the imaginary of this particular becoming, in a way that conveys the affective discursive politics within Ummah activism in Fatih. It is an attempt moving from the idea of “ordinary affects” as modes of scenes, events, subjectivities, socialities ingrained in representation of public feelings that are echoing in material things in a rather Benjaminian way while working these fragments towards a multi-sited ethnography of a political imaginary (Stewart, 2007, p.10-11). I chose these fragments as pre-field encounters, that is, as scenes of political events and affects that are in the constant of becoming political imaginaries of a particular Muslim subjectivity, a particular humanitarian self, and of a particular State.

Fragments in this case, I argue, can serve as magnets that locate and settle scattered political questions. They can be the strategic link between the space and the political event that narrates the social construct. They can also lead us to capture a circulation of images, sounds, bodily states that mark and become the political simultaneously. Moreover, they can work in the anthropological writing of the “history of the present” (Fassin, 2012), unfolding the moral, political discourses of the “imagined worlds” (Appadurai, 2010, p.296), and myths as forms of signification (Barthes, 2006).

Through working the fragments, the field becomes more than a geographical space, it becomes a collection of “scapes” that are part of a “complex, overlapping, disjunctive order” of the new global cultural economy (Appadurai, 2010, p.296). It transcends the physical space of the field and gives focus to a certain situatedness, the Foucauldian “order of the things” in the spectacle of *the* everyday life (Foucault,

2005). Still, fragments of social events and representations do not float; they rather take landscapes, soundscapes and technoscapes to convey imagined worlds. It then requires us to historicize and locate these imagined worlds as they are captured in fragments of a political situation and then construct the field by folding the fragments in the field by using the semiotics of this *becoming* and the analysis of the field. I use the suffix “scape” in concordance with Arjun Appadurai’s (2010) work in which he proposes to look at the relations between five elements of global cultural flow - i.e. ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, finanscapescapes, ideoscapescapes- to delve into such disjunctures (p.296). Thus, the addition “scape” indicates the possibility of regarding these as results of relations of subjectivities that are modulated by the historical, linguistic and political positionalities of various agents, from individual to the institutional, creating room for the consideration of “perspectival set of landscapes” (Appadurai, 2010, p.296).

Building on these pre-field encounters I approached the fieldwork as a few things in collaboration: settling a space of the affective-discursive becoming of Ummah activism, bringing in fragments as communicators of the image, the imagined and the imaginary of the Muslim subject and its multiple others when engaging in the politics of representation of the pain of the Other, and finally, unfolding the significations (myths) of the Muslim mahalle in its dealings with humanitarianism.

### 5.3 Locating affects and discourses

Bringing on the literature of Islamic humanitarianism as a flexible accelerator in the performative construction of the Muslim mahalle and its political affects requires a special attention to the relation between culture and space to obtain methodological

coherence. Moreover, it requires briefly revisiting the controversial gaps and links between affect and discourse.

For starters, I approach affect very broadly as the capacity of social and political events that invite participation, mediate captivating embodied immersion, and that signify the turbulence of identification (Wetherell, 2013, p.350, see also Connolly 2002, Berlant, 2005, 2008; Walkerdine, 2007; Protevi, 2009; Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012). Traditionally, affect is regarded as an “extra-discursive” event, transcending discourse, even though its emphasis is on the compound of the material, the relational, the social, the biological and the social (Wetherell, 2013, p.350-1). Wetherell (2013) argues that there is a lack of constructive communication between affect and discourse research, despite the fact that most research is focuses on the spheres of emotion as recruitments of affect and meaning making (p.351). The argument is that discursive research highlights representational thinking and scrutiny to the extent that seeing and listening, as audiovisual encounters, as embodied experiences become narratives. Affect scholars, on the other hand, emphasize the somatic, the sensual, the corporeal as they attend to the memories, feelings and movements; leading towards a more comprehensive approach towards the emergent and open-ended character of social action (Wetherell, 2013, Blackman and Cromby, 2007). Assemblage, relationality and articulation – they are all built in the flux of social subjects who are between embodied states, embodied grounds of talk, and the semiotic (Wetherell, 2013; Latour, 2004; Thrift, 2008; Blackman, 2012; Brown et al., 2008).

Ultimately, the question is whether there is the possibility of a productive dialogue between the non-representational and the representational realm and

whether there is a legitimate way of connecting the two in interpreting the interfaces of social phenomenon.

I argue that in order to assess social encounters in cases such as representations of certain affective/embodied states – as in the representation of pain in the sites of humanitarian gatherings- and their making of identification we need to focus on the practical and theoretical possibilities of merging semiosis and embodied affect (Wetherell et al., 2015). Thus, in the course of this research I took mahalle not only as a spatial and discursive construct, but also as a site for various affective economies, productive of emotive languages and a flux of political and embodied states. There is quite a literature on the representations of suffering that link images, narratives, positionalities and their political consequences across texts and mediascapes (Feldman, 1994; Ahmed, 2004; Dauphinée, 2007; Campbell, 2009; Butler, 2009; Fassin, 2012; Chouliaraki 2013). When put in an imaginary dialogue, these works mark the political significance of captured and intensified moments of the social; right before and right after they transform into narratives and discourses. This brings me back to the making of the field itself through approaching fragments of life and the narratives within as political events and settling the space of this unorthodox affective-discursive research.

One obstacle that comes along with this conjunction is that affects are usually featured in conundrum, almost characterizing them as indescribable, in this way complicating the methodology. There is the side of the talk of affects as intensifications that bypasses cognition (Wetherell, 2012, 2013, Anderson, 2009), as things that can be only “sensed” and “evoked”, which can escape structures and the narratives in which affect form and circulate.

Thus, before focusing on any spatial considerations in methodologising this research, I propose this research as an examination of 1) positioning of discourses in non-representational accounts in ummah activism and 2) of the ‘doings’ of emotions when they materialize in signs, in the semiological. In her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed (2013) suggests that there is a sticky relation between signs and bodies and that emotions work through signs, texts and bodies not only to display the effects of a situation such as (in)justice, but also to prompt the possibility of restoration and healing (p.191). These sticky signs she refers to are useful to explore when we consider forms of contact with the Other, and these “moments of contact” are developed by past histories of contact which allows emotions to be experienced as both “inside out” and also “outside in”. Emotions, emotion-words and affects are thus performative in the sense that they both produce their objects, and rerun past associations (Ahmed, 2013, p.195). Accordingly, one can look at the moments of contact (with the Other) that are expressed in the emotive language when trying to look at the affective discursive implications of both representing the Other through her pain and the constitution of imaginaries of political selves through affective performance.

Building on this theoretical background on affects and discourses, I took the field as a collection of “emoscapes” - borrowing Kenway and Fahey’s (2009) coined term-, a collection of moments of contact located in fragments of “relational flows, fluxes or currents, in between people and places” (Davidson et al., 2005, p.3), since emotions are formed with regards to specific historical, political, social and cultural landscapes (Ahmed, 2004).

#### 5.4 Imagining the Ummah through the suffering of the Other

The moment I started talking to people about their experiences as part of my “field”, I knew that I was right to not limit this study to a single NGO. First of all, although people worked or volunteered for certain “Muslim” NGOs, they do not necessarily identify with them. Secondly, there are many intersections of peoples, projects and milieus that just does not fit the category of a rationalized form of networking. Finally, above everything else, even the biggest groups do not represent the political affectivity and subjectivity that reflects the representations of suffering entirely by itself.

Of course, there are differences from institution to institution, from one group to another. However, instead of reaching out to organizations first, using my prior experience I asked myself who is more “active” in terms of being vocal about the war in Syria and the occupation in Palestine. Who has more voice, and effect to gather people? Basically, who enlivens these emoscapes of activism when there is suffering? IHH Humanitarian Relief Organization was an obvious choice, as they have more power and money flow than any other Muslim humanitarian groups in Turkey.<sup>15</sup> They not only gather and distribute zakat and charity in and out of Turkey, they have also been famous for protesting attacks in what they call Muslim geographies. In 2011, they have also pioneered a Freedom Flotilla with a ship called Mavi Marmara which was then seized by the Israeli Navy with a death toll of ten activists.

Besides IHH, another institutionalized group I encountered in the streets is a more a domestic focused one. Özgür-der, an association based on Fatih, has forty-three branches scattered all over Turkey. It also has an online news source called Haksöz Haber (Trueword News). While IHH abides to identify as a humanitarian

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<sup>15</sup> According to Dernekler Dairesi başkanlığı

relief organization, Özgür-der's activity definition is more blurred. Along with their work on human rights violations in Turkey, their main concern is to orchestrate a cultural union that is also 'in the streets' when there is an injustice particularly in Turkey, Özgür-der also is one of the primary groups that usually call for protests when it comes to Palestine and Syria. As a commonality, almost in all the settings I have explored, these groups would be identifying with a concern for the Ummah.

#### 5.4.1 Buket the gatekeeper

Even though I have been attending most of events such as protests, I do not want to assume rapport. Instead, I first meet with Buket, whom I already knew for years as a friendly acquaintance. Reflecting back, although I was already "in" she did have a part in my research as a gatekeeper.

Buket had years of organizational experience in various humanitarian groups such as IHH, the former Mazlumder, was also one of the passengers in Mavi Marmara. She lived in a more conservative part of Fatih, yet, I visited her in her new workplace, ÖNDER Imam Hatipliler Derneği (Association of Imam Hatip Students and Alumni) which is located in Fatih's more touristic side.

I knew her from her days she worked for IHH and that she authored a book about the biography of Şule Yüksel Şenler, the author of Huzur Sokağı. Şenler is also famous amongst pro-hijab activists by the way contributed to the visual imaginary of the "resisting hijabi girl" especially during nineties and two-thousands.

I ask Buket about her life story, the journey that made it to all the associations and foundations she had worked, as well as the streets and finally on Mavi Marmara.

Buket: I got married at sixteen. (Smiling) By the way I am now a sociology student too. Because I married too young I did not have the opportunity to study. But my reason to get married is my hijab. I veiled when I was fourteen. Erm, my parents are teachers who were trained in the village

institutes. To them it is abhorrent that their child got veiled, like “are you still wearing hijab at this day and age”. I mean you live in a village but your father is in shock because you wear the hijab. Leave the father, the villagers are in shock. (...) So we came into conflict when I got covered. I always say this: I followed my mother-in-law’s hijab and my father-in-law’s beard and came here. “Oh it is a religious family, no one will interfere with my veil or my prayers, yeay!”. It is a child’s mentality, I got married with a child’s mentality.

Immediately after her account on her religiosity that brought her to marriage and then to Istanbul, she remembers her first days of becoming active in the “mahalle” by joining the youth section at the Milli Gençlik Vakfı (MGV), the former section of the Refah Parti (RP), which is now known as Anadolu Gençlik Derneği (AGD). It is where she met with Şule Yüksel Şenler at the age of 20, and then started writing.

Buket: I wrote in Akit (Pact), and Vakit (Time). I was the columnist at Milat (The Birth) newspaper and at Özgün Duruş (Genuine Stance). (...) I have six published books. I became the president of the women’s branch at MGV. I was then a board member at Mazlum-der Istanbul and then branch coordinating duties. At different times. I also became the president of the women’s branch at IHH for five years. Between 2007 and 2011.

The hijab story she describes at length to me is something I am familiar with Muslim women’s politicization. It reflects visibility, differentiability and vulnerability at the times Buket grew up to become actively political. In such accounts, women who talk about their choice to make an interest in the Other’s suffering first recall their experience of creating conflict, or in Buket’s case, “shock” either in their family, in their community or later on in the school. Obviously, wearing the hijab and being a visible Muslim woman is not the same thing as visibly suffering. Yet, the fact that the “the hijab story” immediately turns into a story of becoming a visible member of the mahalle creating a narrative of becoming an Other and following through it.

#### 5.4.2 The order of the extra-ordinary: Being scattered and having a stance

Noting that institutions she has worked with such as Mazlum-der and IHH are also based in Fatih, the physical mahalle that has transformed itself to an affective network for the solidarity with the Muslim Other, I ask her what was her most striking experiences working at these different institutions that have similar themes.

Buket: Now...in both of them, for example if I were to compare IHH and Mazlum-der, you are always in extra ordinary circumstances. For example, it was the time, in 97, when even Mazlum-der was raided down by the police. (...) The time I was in Mazlum- der, it was the times of an extra ordinary era; 28 Şubat, the occupation of Iraq. I mean you are resisting against an enormous occupation as a handful of activists. And you are making a culture of gathering together with whomever you can gather with. With the most marginal leftist, whoever says no to the occupation you come together and meet at the common ground. You live through this culture, this togetherness there. (...) Once you find yourself you have to support the Saturday Mothers. She is looking for her child, her spouse, her father who was missed during the unidentified murders in the nineties. We experienced things like this. Scattered from one from one end to another.

Me: I am interested in how you said “we were scattered, with different people”—

Buket: Maybe I have used “scattered” wrong, not scattered, we stood knowing where we stood. Knowing why we needed to come together with those people, believing that it is necessary for that day.

An extra-ordinary era. An era while the military and bureaucracy allied to fight “reactionism” (irtica), which made political Muslims a susceptible to State induced violence and the occupation of Iraq by the military which has filled evening news with horrific pictures of Iraqis in pain. The coupling of these two cases fit to the narrative of no borders when it comes to the greater imaginary of the Ummah. The extra ordinary condition of suffering is also an extra ordinary condition for changeably proud solidarity such as “resisting as a handful” and making a culture of gathering with people who are different, meaning, secular and/or leftist. However, there is a routinization of these extra ordinary events, in the sense that when the suffering is affecting the Ummah, then regardless of temporality it becomes the

ordinary of the Muslim humanitarian as they narrate the times of suffering as the Ummah.

Although “being scattered” and “knowing where to stand at a particular time” Buket talks about, might seem contradictory, this double faced theme actually summarizes most of the affective jumps as one is managing their identity as a Muslim humanitarian. Following the suffering and injustice to oppose it makes humanitarianism a “scattered” business, in the sense that it might be hosted in different physical and metaphorical mahalles that either represent different world views, or mess with the care for the image of national borders. Theoretically, this aligns with the universalist claims and struggles of caring and having empathy for Others in a form of professional voluntarism that was depicted in Chapter 2. On a deeper level these embodied moments of being scattered and having a stance might affirm an existence of “non-sites” or heterotopias when it comes to memories of the Other’s suffering. Not only the image of suffering that urges one to react creates an in-betweenness and crisis, but also the spatial metaphor for being at multiple places (scattered) and knowing exactly where to be has become heterotopic when the suffering is involved. Buket, while she is “scattered” to “stand”, at the moment of her care, neither there nor here in terms of the which mahalle she is part of at that moment, yet, her place exists.

#### 5.4.3 Caring for Palestine

After we discuss more on her experiences, knowing that she would go to protests when there is a strike against Palestine and to move on with her account on Mavi Marmara and the flotilla to Gaza, I ask her when did the Palestinian issue became a part of her life.

Buket: You see, since Palestinian issue is an old issue, it is like this- You find yourself in the ancient issues actually, the do not enter your life. I mean it is usually like this even though there might be exceptions. You know you are in a Muslim environment (meaning herself). You are person who has concerns. You are a person who has worries, who has dreams and expectations for the Muslim geography, who thinks for and like them in the name of them. So, maybe you know it might be like this- I don't really remember when Palestine entered my life but there may be times when it most affected or when we most concentrated on them. Honestly, I don't remember, Palestine was always our cause (da'wah). Well, but we can say that Mavi Marmara was the milestone, I mean we embarked for Palestine, we embarked for Gaza.

I notice that her discourse on the “normalcy” and almost timelessness of caring for Palestine is ingrained with emotion words that add to the tone of naturalizing the issue. Even though there is a long political history behind the Israeli violence in Palestine, it first and foremost represents itself as an expected personal journey of being a part of what Buket describes as the Muslim geography. As she speaks describing the archaism of Palestinian issue almost as an affective flow that she found herself in, while shifting her narrative between the precognitive (worries, and dreams) and cognitive (concerns and expectations) processes of coping with the suffering in the Muslim geography.

I have discussed at length about humanitarianism as spectatorship. The fact that Buket has “graduated” from witnessing the suffering to be on the road to ‘be there on the ground’ to help suffering, and lost friends has made the existence on Mavi Marmara as a milestone, even though the suffering on the ship did not physically overlap with the suffering in Gaza at that very moment. Thus, moving from the kind of spectatorship that the alchemical humanitarians adopt, towards an embodied experience of “embarking for Gaza”, as a now emergency humanitarian becomes the epitome of the Palestinian issue entering Buket’s life.

#### 5.4.4 Muslimness: The predominant emotion

As a principle, I tried to be mostly open about my motives during my questions, letting the informants know that I want to know their stories of caring for these sufferings, in addition to their everyday lives and what they make out of the Ummah. One of my challenges to do so was the fact that usually whenever I brought about both the Palestinian issue or the war in Syria, people tended to directly talk about more macro political issues, bigger projects, or rather simply about other people. Although I did not strictly structure interviews to disallow those moments of distraction towards macro issues – which became quite valuable for analysis as well- I did rarely intervene to encourage my informants to talk about their own experiences and opinions. At one of those moments Buket asks me:

Buket: Is it roughly how our activists see, like why do they do what they do, what you are trying to find?

Me: Yes, roughly.

Buket: But it will turn out, like, some will say that they do this for the spirit of jihad and some...I think here the common thing is Muslimness. The predominant emotion. Like, (they) encountered a mass of Muhajir, regardless of the international legal literature, international agreements which talk about these people as “refugees”; we, for example, during my conferences my interpretation is like this: these have a status and this status is designated by the Quran. What is it? “The status of the Muhajir”. A very important and serious status and its borders and reach are drawn by Allah, a status that is determined by the verses (of the Quran). A status that its model is drawn by the example of the Prophet and companions. (...) That is why we cannot have any luxury of pick and choose between the good and the bad. Regardless of their state, we have to embrace them. If their status is being a Muhajir, then, ours is to be the Ensar, this the duty, the responsibility that Allah has burdened us with. (...) So, that is why we cannot look from where Europe looks, like “this number, this quality and then let them integrate this and that”, we do not have that luxury. So, people who do these aid work in and out of Turkey, who run for each kind of work, who die should the case occur- not necessarily in a fight, people have died while distributing aid. (...) It is not something other than the Muslim identity here, however you express it – either you say “upper-identity” or basis or dough- whatever you make of it, that yeast, is Muslimness. The thing that moves us- with our errors and flaws, we do it with the reflex, the belief that is brought by being a Muslim.

Even though I have not mentioned the refugee crisis, Buket's first example when she clearly mentions "what any humanitarian work is about", in a way, sets criteria to what she defines as a "Muslim emotion" that outweighs the neutral association of humanitarianism. Although before she has suggested me other names of activists that I might take an interest to, and their work, this was the first moment when her personalized opinion drifted her to what she attributes to Islamic humanitarianism. A duty inflicted upon us by God, and a difference from other European humanitarians who have the luxury to avoid taking "bad refugees" because of their morals. In a way the word muhajir gives the common word of refugee an emphasis to be taken seriously by Muslim humanitarians as well as an advantage to be taken care of regardless of their qualifications.

Coupled with this duty, this "must" Buket talks about is the banality. Banality of their motives in her eyes that makes her say with almost a shrug "but it will turn out like, some will say that they do this for the spirit of jihad". That is why she is critical of my motives to explore their motives. Yet, when she talks about people who die, who go out there "because they have Muslim identity", it is a kind of one's own suffering that was caused by the attempt to end the Other's suffering and there is a proud sadness that sets the tone of the rest of our interview.

After this moment, I realize whatever we talk about, Buket's memory bounces from those proud and sad moments to another as we speak. For instance, since we had just left behind the infamous 15<sup>th</sup> of July coup attempt in Turkey a couple of months before, she tended to connect some other political suffering and resistance to the resistance she had against the coup attempt:

Buket: Look, becoming Syria was like a one-night thing, you know. If the military carried on, if it continues, we would be going on to die and they would continue to kill. To this day, there would be conflicts in the right and the left, constantly. Because people like us would never accept going back.

We would resist to death. The more we die, the more we would whet. There they saw people falling dead and walked further onto them (to the soldiers). Because that makes you furious. (...) You know; Mavi Marmara was like that. I went back and forth to Mavi Marmara in my mind at that moment. When the sixty people got injured in Mavi Marmara, women who would scream when they see blood, when they heard the bullets not a single woman had fear. Everyone was bringing bandages, or cushioning, everyone became a first-aider. No one had, a dread or fear. Everyone had a weird strength. This is a God-given thing. You know our Lord says “Verily, with hardship there is relief”. He gives you the ease to resist.

The fear of becoming Syria, the resisting Muslim body to the attacking militia or to the Israeli soldiers, as one can see these shifts emoscapes and imaginaries happen in a snap. The nerve to cope with not only suffering but also with injustice is also a sacred moment. Then and there again, there is celebratory tone to the pertinacity at times of oppression. Her body moving against the coup attempt has become the same with the time she and other women moving against the Israeli soldier’s both attack and oppression.

After her account on these resisting moments, she abruptly assumes back the role of the gatekeeper and asks me whether I am going to include the beginning of the events, as in, the beginning of the war in Syria. I tell her I am more interested in them, and their oral histories or narratives of those events.

Buket: I mean, me for example, as I talk about this, there is an international dimension to this, and Turkey is not independent from it. Erm, there is the part of humanitarian aid. There is a part of supporting to resistance. I mean, whatever you make of it, this support to resistance part (...)

Me: I actually want to explore the resistance part, in relation to humanitarianism.

Buket: But look, for example that thing is important now the refugees at the Europe’s door- Look, for example yesterday I got really angry. This Omran baby, I did not even send a single tweet, because I get sad. I wish we - maybe you should look at that side of the story-. Erm, we consume drama. We consume agenda. We consume suffering. Baby Aylan, he was a good object, that is why he became was on the front burner or else there were many children who had washed ashore there before Aylan; but, Aylan’s image, his form, his red T-shirt washed in the blue waters, it is now seen as a thing, and object. Aylan was very contestable and we consumed it with cartoons. We

consumed him with sadness things and drama. With photographs and so- we used so many methods, we tweeted and stuff. And now comes baby Omran- what about numerous babies that die after Omran. There are hundreds of children that die after Omran but we objectify one, and we consume and consume it. In his persona, the other children are consumed as well- because at that moment there are hundreds of children continue to die. What I was going to say...Aha! Last night on TV, they were advertising to me how the CNN International correspondent got emotional as she presented baby Omran. And our television (channels) do this and I go mad...I tell my kids "No, this is nothing but Europe's renovating its image. They shut out so many refugees, they watch them die, they don't move their hand; they don't move their hand for any humanitarian help. They don't do anything while they can stop the war". (...) Now to me they are like "how sad is CNN's correspondent". So what, there is your cameraman tripping (a refugee) up in my mind so how are you going to set these things in place?

Clearly as we speak, my interest in how they resist becomes less important to her than how she feels about Europe's image in the humanitarian scheme when it comes to the circulation and objectification of such images of suffering bodies as shown in Figure 5. Her anger towards the television broadcast on the news about the CNN International correspondent is a matter of insincerity. The correspondent's sadness is unworthy of coverage because she represents a system that is part of the problem that produces the objectified suffering.

As much as the "Europe" is problematic, "us" is problematic as we consume suffering as well. Similar to Sontag's haunting images, us utilizing being struck by these two babies dreadful photographs is deemed partly immoral in their capacity to keep us reflecting on similar sufferings that goes on.

For Buket, then, there is a right to be sad sincerely and there is also a right way to convey sadness. Her claim that "we" consume the looks of those babies implies that, in a way, there is also a way to suffer fashionably that as a Muslim humanitarian she must not fall into the trap of reacting to it and add to the collective act of objectification.



Figure 5. Omran Daqneesh (left) and Aylan Kurdi (right)

Suffering is not left alone. It is objectified. There is the photograph of Omran (and Aylan), there is the footage of the CNN correspondent, and the physical and affective circulation of these create imaginaries of each party involved. Omran, the kid who has just survived an attack, seemingly in shock. The emotional CNN correspondent whose unscripted – and, say unprofessional, thus sincere moment of reacting to suffering, abrupt. Buket’s reaction involves both sadness and pity towards the baby and and anger towards that emotional moment, those affects that bend the truth- the truth that other children continue to suffer as we speak.

So, her reaction not only derives from a place of identity politics that demonizes Europe, but also from the kind of temporalities that the humanitarians have to cope with; that the suffering persists and how we react to one suffering, what kind of imaginary and temporality we adhere to that specific suffering affects Others.

As a result, there is not only the suffering Other that is involved in the emoscape, but also the Other humanitarian and Other oppressor - which in this case is Europe- is always directly or indirectly part of the pinning emotive language as well.

## 5.5. Mapping the Islamic Geography

After Buket, I go on to contact Zeynep who works at IHH Women's Branch in Fatih. Zeynep welcomes me to the headquarters, and suggests that I come an hour and a half early for a seminar on Islamic Geography. Apparently, it is regular event that takes place every other week. Although the term Islamic Geography is beyond the scope of my research, I apply Marcus' rule to "Follow the People", I am interested. I go a little bit early. The head office building is very closely located the iconic Fatih Mosque. It takes a little bit of going up from the main street on which shops for wedding dresses, dowry stores, shoe places, kebab shops are like beads on a string.

As I go in, I take my way to downstairs as directed towards the big seminar room that is called "Quds hall".<sup>16</sup>

### 5.5.1 At the Quds hall

Two women are talking about an aid work in the front one of them is a hijabi with a long religious attire the other isn't. Behind the two tables in the scene area there is a screen for the presentation. There is an IHH flag in the corner along with the Palestinian flag. There is a murmur about the loss of attendance from Başakşehir. Someone says "our traditional nuisance". Zeynep enters the room saying that "We will finish the Middle East today". "Today" she adds, "We will be emphasizing maps a lot". And the seminar starts with a group of ten women.

I jot down some headlines: "New Maps in the Middle East". Maps that were published since 2006, that look alike, that are part of the "perception operation". Then there is a shower of information linked together about Iraq, Syria, Libya, Saudi

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<sup>16</sup> Kudüs Salonu

Arabia, Yemen. The Middle East is schemed. “This is the larger picture. The borders are being redrawn”. Local, regional and global forces. Iran. Jordan whose father is England and whose children is the European Union and the United States. Sectarian dynamics, local dynamics. ISIS and the infamous “superior mind” (üst akıl) behind it. The greater middle east initiative.

### 5.5.2 What do we do?

“It is a war that is political at the top”, Zeynep says, “but economic in essence”. She goes on to explain the multidimensional layout of each and every conflict material involving the Middle East. “What do we do?” she asks. “The turn never comes to these” another answers. “We still cannot even find maps in our curriculum” she adds.

We need to have squads who are following these matters. The imperialists and missionaries have been doing a research. They are done with the research now, they are practicing. Look we have so many things to follow. We need to set goals. Our children must learn the history; their eyes need to be open.

### 5.5.3 Suffering and the mastermind behind the cartographic imagination

These seminar rooms are where these problematic events that affect the “Islamic geography” might appear the least associated with suffering as they provide a setting for more cognitive reactions to injustice. In such places I had encountered the narratives around the map that is beyond a technical representation. On the one hand it makes sense that maps appear as part of a larger scheme that causes political suffering as Philip Muehrcke notes “the irony of cartography is that it often promotes understanding through deliberate distortion” (Earle et al., 1996, p.277). The seminar room is a space for knowledge that needs to be spread to tackle and end the suffering, to understand what happens and why and how they are connected with each other and the maps show the cartographic imagination. By gathering these maps

together, these maps themselves become unimportant they are now part of a greater narrative a mythical representation; that of two cartographic imaginaries: one, that is orchestrated by a master mind and the other, that is in a fight with the former.

At a face value, this narrative is in lines with AKP's focus on the "foreign forces" that is posed either as a constant threat that can dissolve into any issue that is against the government's agenda or its hegemonic practices or as a constant reason for when there is an insufficient policy outcome. However, in this settings "foreign forces" or even Turkey are not the focus, because it is not presented as a national security/identity problem. It is rather a matter of the scattered Ummah that is being defeated at multiple fronts not only by conflicts but also by being fed with ignorance, carelessness and sectarianism.

Accordingly, the term Islamic geography actually stands for problem areas of the Ummah, almost, what makes the Ummah geographically. Later on, I learned that this seminar that is designed as sixteen courses is mainly separated two themes, Middle East and Africa. Considering that Muslims populate other parts of the world as well, it is easy to tell that the focus is derived from humanitarian concerns over the Ummah in a way that remaps and reimagines the Ummah beyond cartographic images. If for these alchemical humanitarians, knowledge of history and critical geography is the treatment for the overall sufferings of the Ummah, then it is possible to say that the Islamic geography refers to the ache in the body of the Ummah. The maps are gathered for those places that needs to have an x-ray. As this process helps frame the collectivity of innumerable and unspeakable news and images of the pain of the Ummah, such seminars also allow formalizing the diagnosis of the causes of suffering as well as serving to legitimize the ways in which sufferings are attended.

In end of all the complex political situations, connections and conflicts, the message is clear: The Ummah is being objected to suffering strategically by the Western Other. Moreover, the parts of the Ummah that inflict suffering are managed by the same evil superior mind proving their inability and idiocy. By learning and opening our eyes, we help ourselves –as the Ummah- not to surrender to this colonial project.

#### 5.5.4 The guilt

Regardless of the routinized, lecture like performance of Zeynep in the room, in the end, the guilt peaks through. The dilemma of the alchemical humanitarians seizes the room: Knowing and representing is not enough. “What do we do?” is a critical question that is part of all the settings of humanitarianism. First of all, it assumes responsibility, an active identity and an agency. Secondly, it is usually mentioned to focus on “what we do not do”, thus constantly repeating the subjectivity of the “active” humanitarian as an inadequate one. The performance of being an active member of the Ummah and caring for suffering also takes to embrace oneself as an insufficient actor in this emospace. “The lack” is always there and so is the need for enlaced political and historical information; and national, cultural and political symbolism that come together to make the suffering of the Ummah more manageable. This lack and the question of “what do we do” is also binding the past and the present through our action or inaction towards caring to eradicate suffering.

#### 5.5.5 When we got hurt, we woke up

After the seminar I go up to interview Zeynep in her office which she shares with three other people. The walls are surrounded by two maps of the world, a Palestinian

flag, the script of Surah al-Fatiha, the basmala in a calligraphy, a photograph of a charity event, Rabaa stickers and the vests of IHH.

Zeynep is a former history teacher in one of the Imam Hatip schools in Istanbul. Pushed out from the school she worked because she refused to take the hijab off during after February 28<sup>th</sup> process, her identity as a teacher dominates most of her reflections on her life's trajectory. I kindly ask her to talk about herself and she starts her story by how she became a teacher. After her gleeful expressions about how much she had loved her profession she speaks about her resignation. I empathize that it must have been hard for her. She agrees:

Zeynep: Of course it was hard for us, I mean besides it is something you love. I mean it is not like this, how should I exemplify- you know I do not like to make agitation, so I like to give examples from life to my friends. If I left something because I wanted to, it would have been my choice. But while you are doing something you love very much, very much willingly, suddenly there is a ban that says you will not do this anymore. That ban, of course destroyed all of us. I am one of those who chose to resign. Also I was pregnant with my middle daughter, I had a valid reason (...) Because you cannot do the work you loved very much, because you cannot turn back to the students you love, as a matter of fact, you cannot do anything else, what have we done? —I think, if we evaluate February 28<sup>th</sup> operation in terms of its consequences, there is a beneficial consequence for Turkey. It had a lot of contributions for the development of civil society consciousness in us. So, unavoidably, we have become part of this civil society. There, like me some pharmacist, some teacher, some doctor, some architect, somehow we came together as the victims of the February 28<sup>th</sup> process. Until when, ok, we have cried now it is over. There is no going back as well. What will we do, just wait like this? After that we have established associations. I mean whoever we could reach, regarding our field, we must serve. And lots of--- who we call the community, who we call the mahalle, today's hundreds of associations, women's associations, NGOs that are in service in the field of education, culture and solidarity, see, they are all established in this period. I mean friends like us. That is why I think it was an important step for the society to become aware. Because we didn't have a suffering before. We were just going back and forth to work. Doing our jobs. Whenever they hurt us, then we were hurt and we woke up, so to speak. I mean one who doesn't have suffering, does not have a cause (da'wah) dear sister. They made us troubled, and we with that trouble, with the fire of our own, alhamdulillah, we did not stay there. Oh, my adventure to meet IHH starts from there. We have formed an association with the friends who had to leave their jobs during February 28<sup>th</sup> where we were, and then in the course of our action with that association we have met IHH. At the end of nineties. Erm, at the

end of 99 – beginning of 2000– when the Chechen war was coming through, we have met IHH at that period.

She then goes on to describe how she got involved with IHH as a volunteer.

Zeynep: In the meantime, we are learning about the outland works. But I mean I was only an active volunteer until Israel's operation cast lead in 2008-2009. Meanwhile we are carrying on our work, as educators, with the associations but when it comes to solidarity actions we become partners with IHH. I mean to Chechens via IHH. We trust it. Like, we say, going by ourselves to a Chechen or someone how can we trust them. (...) Then I started to relate IHH institutionally (...) Now only IHH remained in my life (as an association) but in IHH's work I am trying to contribute with regards to my own field.

Then, she explains how she felt uncomfortable not being beneficial and preying her mind that she had been seeking for something; expressing not feeling comfortable at the very comfort of her home as a matter of consciousness that does not let go of "a cause". This "a cause" is vague, but leaving home and reassuming her identity as an educator in the mahalle is described as the main struggle of her life. The process of becoming an active humanitarian, in Zeynep's case, was not as natural. It was a hassle that was initiated by her conscience. I can sense that she is slightly proud or at least glad about her journey. Yet, the guilt comes back.

Zeynep: I do not think we died away. But you know from the closest to the farthest- with IHH we have been trying to do something with an awareness of fraternity including the "far geographies". Well, how sufficient we are or how insufficient we are it is controversial. I mean what we do is a drop in the ocean. But we are trying to act consciously.

I ask if there is an active conversation within IHH of self-criticism like the one she just expressed.

Zeynep: Sure, sure I mean the things we do is very little. It is never enough. It is not even a drop in the ocean. You look at the geography, what is lived in the geography. I- some with the occasion of both political and economic and of our comings and goings and of what we read and follow. There are so many troubles, poverties...erm...when we look from here we think we are doing something. When we look from there it is a drop in the ocean I mean it is too little. And our trouble is always to make more friends' hands, hearts and minds to be troubled, let me say. To share grief with. Whatever we do one who does not share grief with the next person's trouble, does not share grief with the one who is far away. I mean someone who does not notice the

poverty of their neighbor or does not have bother or effort, when you tell them “this is happening in Syria, that is happening in Arakan, this is happening in the Balkans” –You know when they say at the earthquake thing “Does anybody hear me?”. I mean, too few people hear us. And that makes you sad. As a matter of fact, the point of making all these seminars is that they are consciousness raising seminars. These are not fundraising efforts, they are not aid work. But we want to perpetuate the consciousness that there is a fire in such a big geography and that in fact we have such an amount of moral and material means that we can put in place as individuals. Otherwise, not everything is aid.

I pay attention to how she now equalizes geography with what she had called as the Islamic geography in pain. All these seminars are very much educational in the sense that they formalize, categorize, historicize, link and explain these suffering events in the conscious level. However, their main objective is affective: to make the Other care for the suffering Other, to make people become a humanitarian, to make them troubled with the Other’s trouble. Hands, hearts and minds to be troubled for the Other does sum up the totality of the humanitarian lack: hands that give to the sufferer, hearts that feel for the sufferer and minds that understand the suffering by becoming “aware” and pays it forward by making other people care as well. Thus, care and consciousness is interchangeably used when “not everything is aid” in the course of humanitarian action. This awareness raising aspect of seminars also makes them functionally similar to the protests. Making suffering known is the central theme of both settings. Further into our conversation Zeynep remarks on how they did not have means to properly protest back in the nineties, and how they have all the means of life and it is not how she hoped; that personal education is not used properly and protests are not crowded enough: “You know we have just talked about February 28<sup>th</sup>, (laughing sarcastically) I feel like we are being scattered from end to end.”

### 5.5.6 Making sounds in the past and in the present

When I change the course of the interview to talk more about the protests, she exemplifies this scatteredness in the behavior of the mahalle comparing now and the aftermath of February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Zeynep: It was done (protests) from time to time but I know that it was very hard to get a permission. For us, for example, it was very grueling to make things at the squares; you would be immediately battered or taken into custody. (...) For example the Taksim square could be used by only a certain fraction of people. The leftist fraction and the unions' things were allowed controlledly. But other than that, when we attempted to do something in the Beyazıt square it raised hell. The sit-in protests etcetera. Now there is nothing. Now there is these opportunities but people do not have the fervor. (...) We do it every year for Mavi Marmara for instance. Mavi Marmara, you know, at 31<sup>st</sup> of May, also there we cannot reach the numbers we would like. Yes, it happened in Taksim. Yes, it happened in Beyazıt. Walked to Edirnekapı, or at Taksim, at İstiklal street but the hundred thousand people we expect we desire do not attend. You know when we talk, we talk big but when it comes to cases that require you to get up and contribute and require such bodily, physical or spiritual effort...it is very limited, I mean, very little. I can say very few of our people is sensitive. Because we, as the institution, are one of those that call to streets most – not streets, let me say meetings, I mean protests. And that is one cannot stay at home so to say. Like while the children are being killed in Aleppo, like during December we were saying let's do something. You know, you cannot go and declare war but something, something needs to be done. Well, the things you can do is limited but you know, you can get up and react. We think that millions of people may think like this – actually maybe they do, it might be true. But people who take action, who make an act out of it is very few, very few.

I tell her it seems that these meetings matter to her very much. She gets excited:

Zeynep: Of course! I mean why is it done? We are making our voice heard. And in fact for whatever reason it is done, at the same time, “we are standing by you, hear us” is also said to the sufferers. You know they express this as being a side of something too. But you can say this is, being a side of justice, being a side of humanity, you can name it in large numbers. I mean you are not staying silent. Because when you stay silent it is accounted as what, you know what they say, “silence gives consent”. You appear as if you have accepted. And we, with the crowds, you only say I do not accept this injustice this oppression but even for saying that very few people support that. And this is the proof that we are consuming everything verbally as such. You know there is being a side verbally and being a side actively, right? You cannot be an active side for every issue, that is right. It like, the Syrian war is happening. People are being killed and oppressed there. Well, we—I as Zeynep I cannot go and fight them there, I mean I cannot be an active side. But I can call where I am, I can utter: “This injustice mustn't happen, you are

in the wrong, you are repressing.” I can make this sound. And this is being able to say look my Lord, I can, you know, do the responsibility for being a human. I mean also as while we are living, I think it is man’s duty to man.

Creating a soundscape for solidarity against injustice is what gives or steals hope from Islamic humanitarianism. “The least she can do” draws the physical and imaginary boundaries of her benevolent or empathetic actions as she performs to be the part of Ummah through suffering. On the one hand, the Ummah expands throughout geographies; becoming “the” geography signifying the metanarrative of Islamic geography that depicts grievable lives for the Ummah. On the other hand, protests, the least they can do is not fulfilled; which puts the affective positioning of Islamic humanitarians in sort of an outcast in the larger imaginary of the Ummah, as they are those who call for action, and blame those who do not attend and who point to the void.

Similar to Buket, Zeynep talks about being scattered. This scatteredness can be thought as a constituent of becoming the Ummah: The unplanned routes of attending to different Others’ suffering; such as standing up for the Saturday Mothers for Buket or; for Zeynep not doing enough for the oppressed when presented with the means to a possibly humanitarian end. Scatteredness is spatial, implying being unintentionally at multiple places. It is also affective; it is a complaint of not being wholesome, together, attached, en route on track as anticipated.

#### 5.5.7 The three audiences

As we progress deeper in the conversation, I observe that Zeynep goes back and forth to assuming an institutional identity and an activist subjectivity just as herself and what she describes as her duty. Even though the numbers of participation are not as expected which begets frustration, her excitement towards “being a voice” is what

initiates a chain reaction in filling the streets and squares and making a sound which is outlined as the sweet spot between being just a verbal side of an issue and being a physically active participant of opposing injustice. This voice has two audiences: the oppressor and the oppressed. Also it has discursively two purposes: Deterring and supporting. However, in Zeynep's and other Ummah activists account there is a third audience: Allah.

This third audience brings about the third purpose and that is paying one's debt. Duty and debt are interchangeably used in these scenarios as seen in Zeynep's story, while, in fact they have slight differences. The third audience, although represents a vertical relationship with God and a simple expression of other-worldliness and asceticism; also implies that when people move to become a vocal side of something, they make an affective identity out of it. In other words, "being there" and "being a voice" is saying that "I am someone who has accepted this as my duty". In such settings, being there and watching oneself making a crowd is part of making one's body part of an embodied voice against a certain injustice. Thus, at that very moment it has the meaning to perform the Ummah as it is "felt". Ummah in the sense that the unity of Muslims, but also Ummah in the sense of that particular emoscape of Muslims making sounds for Muslim Others who are suffering for the intention of speaking to these three audiences.

At this very moment, I decide to become very lightly provocative, just to see whether her frustration towards the Ummah's lack of participation in this performance of being active stretches out about other aspects of her peers' sensibilities.

I tell her that even though there is not enough participation, there are protests for Syria, Palestine and even for Egypt- and even then Syria and Palestine appear – at

least visually- as a concern. I say I cannot imagine a protest against Boko Haram, the violent and oppressive group based in Nigeria, who do things such as kidnap girls. I ask her why does she think this is:

Zeynep: I mean, here, some of it is geography, I mean geographic proximity, but some, maybe even more than some, in Turkey there are geographies that Muslims show sensitivity about. I mean in Turkey, Palestine, but we think in all of the Islamic world it is like this. But for example when you go to Asia and mention “Palestine” the things you feel when you say Palestine in Turkey is not felt the same. Maybe, like you just said, Boko Haram, maybe it can have more correspondence in Southern Asia. But this is also historical. It is about our historical identity, the Palestinian cause. And because we are part of this geography, the sensitivities about the happenings in the Middle East is higher. The interest is also higher. We can exemplify this from our work.

The surprise that “Asian Muslims don’t feel the same about Palestine as Turkish Muslims do” is one the things that encapsulate the mahalle, detailing emotive/affective boundaries. Again, it is explained through a sense of identity that is wrapped under historical attachment, spatial proximity that naturalizes the feelings that are felt. It is also an example of how discourse dissolves into affects, when affects fail to reflect the identity, the discourse saves its reputation. When the affective premise that Palestine kindles specific emotions for the Ummah fails, the discursive categories of identity come into play to explain this “abnormality”. This not to say that Zeynep’s interpretation is an excuse or wrong. It is rather a reflection of a certain dynamism that give depth to the interplay of the politics of emotions. This dynamism that goes back and forth between feelings and rationalizations, between the precognitive and the cognitive, between the religious and political affects and the realpolitik is again what is defining the metaphorical mahalle when it is marked by Ummah activism.

This brings me back to the fact that a big determinant of success or sustainability for alchemical humanitarianism, for the “voice” is how moved we are.

This voice, of course, is not robbed from its visuals and thus not independent from its settings. In my experience, there are similar faces and similar visuals that repeat itself as a form of discourse and as a form of myth that denotes “us, the mahalle”. However, it is not an easy task to point fingers and say “this, this man symbolically expresses who I am, how I feel and what I stand for at the moment”. Also, there is not de facto personalities who would fit that category. Still, there are people who give character and emotion to a certain scene, at those moments of watching themselves in action. Luckily, I have had the chance to exemplify these in two distinct cases as I went along with my fieldwork. First, is another activist I contacted through Zeynep. After our meeting, I ask Zeynep if she knows someone who is in almost every meeting and protest there is, who is known as very “active”. Before I finish describing who I am looking for, she tells me that I must speak with Uncle Mehmet, a sixty something activist. The way she smilingly refers to me about him suggests that he was a lively character among people who knew him. She says that I would see him in every protest that he is always somewhere up with a flag. When I do see Uncle Mehmet in person, I recognize that I did see him actually, somewhere up in a protest usually with a Palestinian flag.

## 5.6 The image of the Ummah

I call Uncle Mehmet and arrange a meeting. He wants to meet me at IHH headquarters. This time, I go up to a different part which function as the youth office. It a day in the weekend so the desks are only partly full in the office. He invites me to a room that is furnished with ottoman, that seems for more casual meetings or for guests. The office I go through has walls cluttered with portraits of people such as the Ottoman ruler Sultan Abdulhamid, the late leader of Refah Party Necmettin

Erbakan, Sayyid Qutb so on and so forth. There are also Palestinian flags, Rabia symbols and photographs of the Dome of Rock and the al Aqsa mosque scattered in the room.

When we started to converse, I understand why Zeynep suggested that I talk to Mehmet. His enthusiastic, quick talking and emotional attitude towards whatever we talk about is compelling to listen as he lives his narratives. Even though we meet at IHH, Mehmet's relation to groups is not institutional but rather organic. In fact, in our eight-hour-long meeting (in two sittings), as he spirals down to the memory lane, his stories are characterized by how avid he had been to seek religious knowledge and inspiration to be righteous and active by bouncing from one group to another, because, in his words, he had been questioning. By this way, he does not really identify with a group; embodying a big network centered around his life in Fatih as a tradesman in textile.

#### 5.6.1 "Mujahid Erbakan"

In the beginning I ask him if he could tell me about himself and what does he do. After telling me his job and that he has four children and six grandchildren in a couple of sentences, he then goes on to tells me about how he was introduced to Islam as a member of a left leaning family from Thrace region during seventies. This has caused a chain reaction for his preferences in politics and religious practice from that time on. From Nur networks to Naqshbandi groups, he narrates both his encounters and fallouts with these groups with pride and joy. As scattered as his stories are, he does have nodal points to them which shows how he applies an imaginary of the Ummah he is part of to his life trajectories. His first touch with and views about Erbakan appear as one of these defining nodal points. As he was sharing

finding his way in and of religiosity at one the lectures of Mehmet Zahid Kotku, the late sheikh of the İskender Paşa Cemaati in Fatih, he remembers meeting Erbakan.

Mehmet: There is a man behind Mehmet Zahit Kotku with a dark blue suit. I don't know Erbakan then. The lecture was over. We prayed. Then I saw that there was a stir there. I said who is this? They said this is Erbakan, and for the first time I met Erbakan at the İskender Paşa Mosque in year seventy-five. I said ok (there it is!), I found someone political who is listening to a hadith lecture and who prays just like us and thank god after the year seventy-five we have considered ourselves as his students. We have served him in his cause (da'wah) for years. And it is a cause that I never regretted. Oh right, his place is now empty, that is another subject. The deceased Erbakan was not understood in Turkey while he was also the man who gave the political consciousness to Muslims, to world in Turkey. But he was not understood unfortunately. His value was not appreciated in our Turkey. But he is very much known abroad. I have gone to so many Islamic geographies from Bosnia to, you know, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan...Palestine, Gaza-but everywhere he is called as "Mujahid Erbakan". I mean my conversion (to religion) started like that alhamdulillah.

After that Mehmet continues with his critique of other groups he shared memories with. Most of his "jumps" between memories is initiated by either a critical thought about a Muslim group's behavior, their either lack of care or wrong interpretations of the Quran; or an excitable moment for him as he claims a duty for becoming the Ummah detailed by what he sees in the Islamic geography. In one of these jumps, he mentions Erbakan again:

Mehmet: Now, as I said my daughter, we are the student of Erbakan. The deceased Erbakan had given us so many things, I understood this later. I mean, a Muslim, look, first of all, a Muslim cannot be like going back and forth at eight in the morning and five in the evening. The Muslim must finish his livelihood as soon as possible and then serve the cause. (...) We, my daughter, as the students of Erbakan we have a great cause. We, I mean the Islamic Ummah, we the lost children of the Islamic Ummah, I mean we are an Ummah that is kept in ignorance in one night. Oh! We have so many work to do! I mean we cannot be just like in our lives, like ordinary, like from eight to eight back and forth, eat, drink, sleep—No, there is no such a world. This- we, have a duty of leadership to the Ummah. The Ottoman empire that was burned a hundred years ago, we –I mean we are the caliph. Oh, as I said, we need to rule over the world again with the thing that being a caliph gives us. That is why we need to work very hard. I mean may Allah give mercy, we were raised with this spirit in the lectures and stuff. Besides I think a Muslim should- now, excuse me but you know there is a saying: "the socialists have become capitalists and our Mujahids have become contractors (müteahhit)".

It is very painful, I mean, this, this is painful but when you go from one street away from here (meaning At pazari where there are hookah cafes that mostly the youth hang out), you already see hookah thingies.

At the first glance, unlike Zeynep, Mehmet's interpretation of activism is less related to universalistic humanitarian discourses and more about the soundness of the Ummah. In the way of going against a certain suffering, the central issue is tangled between having a protective leader and having the proper affective and political stance to become the Ummah. What he describes as the ordinary life, the entrenched working hours is defined as an obstacle to perform Muslimness, as this template for temporality does not incorporate the greater duty of acting as a caliph. That is why, Erbakan appears as the one that makes him say "there it is", a politician that prays and takes time for religious studies, a potential leader whose performance overlaps Mehmet's definition of the da'wah, the cause of the Ummah. Then and there again, this strong sense of duty is interrupted with the frustration of people who take this duty lightly – as in the case of Mujahids who became contractors, as in the youth who kill time in hookah cafes. The mahalle that provided Mehmet with religious sources, physically, metaphorically and politically within the communities he attended and the protests he went via IHH's and other activist's networks; has also been home for the Mujahids who became contractors and alike. This metaphor is a much repeated one- as jihad mainly means struggle for Allah- the once struggler for Allah becomes the hustler for the money. The unnamed critique of the transfer of capital from seculars to self-acclaimed conservatives increasing with the popularity of AKP in the last two decades is painful; meaning that monetary power does not capture the strength of the Ummah, on the contrary, it distracts people from the actual duty and adds to "the loss" that Mehmet associated with the alphabet reform

and being kept in ignorance. In a way, the harm of the Kemalist State to the Ummah is in accord with the harm of the current trends of the mahalle and this inflicts pain.

When thought in terms of trajectories of becoming among Ummah activism; Mehmet's experiences and thought processes about them present a case that is less about salvaging humanitarian values –contrary to Buket and Zeynep- and more about embodying a mission, becoming not only the Ummah, but becoming the savior front of the Ummah by the accumulation of slight affective moments as well as grand political hopes that derives energy from neo- Ottoman discourses.

There is a tension and direction in “waiting”, when Mehmet claims the Ummah is waiting for them, that puts every single imagined actor in position almost in a divinatory manner. What makes him described as sort of the odd but welcome contribution to the community is more than his enthusiasm. His vision reminds of a branch within the Ummah whose hopes and desires are more particularistic and phantasmagoric and yet more bodily and functional in terms of this specific imaginary of the Ummah, that needs to be saved by its power obtained from within the past.

Mehmet's perception of humanitarianism is thus imperial in a way that attributes a natural superiority over those who perform the mahalle. While his humanitarian agenda opens up some of the national boundaries and makes him part of a larger crowd, his desire of embodying a savior identity creates other boundaries that create momentary hierarchies among the Ummah, between the helper and the helped. The imagined “wait” thus gives a direction that hierarchy and for those who would like to assume the savior identity.

## 5.6.2 The faces of the Ummah

At one moment, we we go out to the outer office and face those portraits of Erbakan and Abdulhamid together with others, Mehmet takes a deep joyous breath and and as he sighs proudly: Pointing to the portraits he says “This, my daughter, there this is the Ummah”, as if our long conversation needed no further explanation or summary other than the affects that should rise with seeing those images. At another moment he decides to give me a little calendar that is entitled “Muslim Pioneers”, showing me the front picture, as illustrated in Figure 6, saying again “This is the Ummah”:

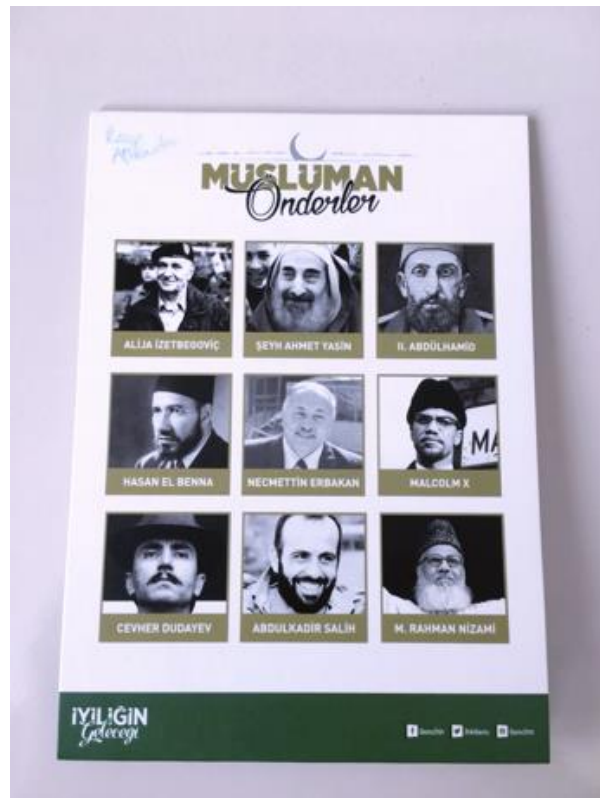


Figure 6: The IHH youth branch’s calendar

For Mehmet the Ummah is embodied by all these figures: Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II., the Palestinian (Gazan) Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, the Bosnian politician and activist Alija Izzetbegovic, the American human and civil rights activist Malcolm X, Erbakan, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hasan Al-Banna, the Bangladeshi leader of Jam’at al-Islami Rahman Nizami, a commander

who died during the Syrian war Abdulkadir Salih and the Chechen leader who was assassinated Cevher Dudayev.

The fact that all these people lived at different periods and fought in different geographies and that they are not alive anymore has multiple discursive outcomes.

There is a mythical relationship between these images and the spatial imaginary of the Ummah. As Barthes (1972), suggests, mythology is ideas-in-form when the mythical system serves as a metalanguage in which the meaning has its own use that belongs to a history, and a memory. These images in a frame mix histories of oppressed Muslims, yet, more than that, they mix histories of resisting Muslims. In a humanitarian setting such as IHH where suffering is what unites people, the Ummah is defined through a different history of the Ummah in which temporalities matter less and the action and its affective capacity for matter more. Through representing these pioneers, there is a subtle representation of past sufferings while there is also a representation of hope to be lead. There is a little notion at the left bottom side of the calendar saying “the future of goodness”. This past that has resisted toward suffering gives hope for the future, and more than that it provides a mental image that counteracts with suffering, that creates a metanarrative about the Ummah. In the emoscapes of humanitarian speech such nostalgia repeatedly appears on the stickers and banners on the walls of the streets. They act as a reminder of how to capture, how to remember and how to feel about the Ummah.

The question is, what does all these pioneers have in common that they appear part of the same discourse, same calling and same emotive language? I argue that they are the embodiment of grievable parts of what is regarded as the Islamic geography, they are the faces that map the spatial imaginary of the Ummah through suffering. By seeing them together, we know that the Ottoman, Palestinian, Bosnian,

American, Turkish, Egyptian, Bangladeshi, Syrian, and the Chechenian – They all suffered and resisted, serving to mark the borders and extensions of the Muslim geography. As suffering triggers intimacy and care; the idea of resistance create pride and the hope to carry on becoming the Ummah. In such representations, suffering is no longer about empathy, it about the capacity of hope for solidarity.

These images, the Rabaa stickers, the flags of Palestine and Syria; when they are together to mark a certain street and make it part of the mahalle where it originated, or temporarily during an event, they make sticky signs, in the sense that they regulate bodies and emotionalities by metonymic approximation (Ahmed, 2004).

What was interesting about Mehmet was that, as much as he was affected by this mythical speech, his appearance became part of it during protests and other events as well. There are two distinct cases that exemplify this argument. The first one is based on a minimal letter that was written to Mehmet during his Mavi Marmara journey.

On our second meeting, Mehmet tells me that he has brought me his diary that he kept during his journey on the Mavi Marmara. With great joy, to show me the spirit on Mavi Marmara, he shows me some pages, as sampled in Figure 7. They are mostly letters of people who were on board with him sharing their emotions about him and about the journey. One of these letters strike me more as it reminds me of how Mehmet is recognized by his unusual preferences of places to carry a flag despite his age. I find this letter, within the diary, however separated because it is written after the Mavi Marmara incident.

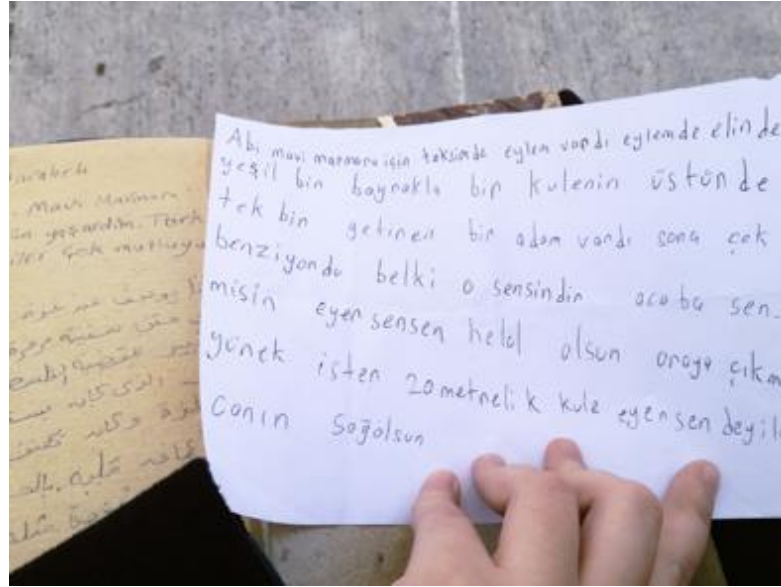


Figure 7. A letter from Mehmet's diary.

It says: “Brother, there was a protest for Mavi Marmara in Taksim. There was a guy who was saying Takbeer (Allahuakbar) holding a green flag in his hand on the top of a tower and he looked very much like you. Maybe it was you. I wonder was that you if it was you well done it takes a lot of nerve to go up there, it’s a twenty-meter long tower, if it was not you that’s alright.”

Earlier into our conversation, Mehmet had referred to his association with “being up there with a flag” as an important part of his lifelong struggle:

Mehmet: Alhamdulillah such a door was opened to us, thank God. Since then we are continuing this struggle, thank God, it has been forty years. Now friends tell me “Oh Mehmet we are like your energy this and that”. Ah! My son what is with me. Tut-tut! Allah Allah. “I am very energetic?” what energy I see nothing actually. But they say you are very energetic. Allah Allah. He tells me “why you are going up to the pole?”. I told him “I go up because you do not. If you did – (remembering a story about it) Hah! Because there was one them last time at the Aleppo march, the Aleppo convoy. I took a youngster with a Kelime-i Tawhid (La Ilaha Illallah) flag in his hands. I said “Look, go up here”. (...) He came and asked to one the officers “Can I go up here?”, of course the officer said he cannot. I said “My son, why are you asking. Do you ask such a thing!?” (Giggling). After that I went and got another flag from someone else. (...) You won’t die my son so what. This man (meaning himself) said go up there sooo go up there! I mean he will go up there, carry the flag and say Allahuakbar. And everyone will see that flag. Here nobody sees it and if you go up to the pole everyone will see and something will happen to people. Nope. He can’t.

The second case Mehmet became a visual contribution to this affective mythical narrative of the Ummah comes up right after this conversation when I ask him what exactly is the Islamic da'wah he was talking about, that he serves for.

Mehmet: I mean Islam, my daughter, as I said we- actually the Ummah geography – I went to Gaza in 2009 with the first convoy. When I went with that convoy do you know what I understood: To my surprise, the Ummah geography is waiting for us. I mean when I went to Gaza, in Gaza there was a white-bearded uncle over seventy years old. He hugged me, “Abdulhamid” he said, “where have you been, we have waited too long”. I mean we were emotional and did not separate with that uncle for a few minutes like that. (...) The things that I lived in this convoy for twenty-six days, like I just said, both at the earthquake region (referring to the famous Adapazarı earthquake in 1999) and before that before eighties at the Milli Selamet Party and then the Refah party. I mean like I said as your brother who has been kneaded constantly in this da'wah, alhamdulillah, I experienced the same thing the same spirit. Whenever I went abroad- that time all the Islamic towns... That time, look, from Bosnia to, say, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Tunis, alright... Palestine, Gaza, I understood they are all waiting for us. I mean I understood the Ummah geography is waiting for us. Why? When we enter with the convoy to Syria, you see two slogans: “Mujahid Erbakan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan”. Look. (...) Now, you know what I like about IHH? You know there is a saying “make it up as you go along” (dügün alayı yolda düzülür).

Having a long grey beard with a small frame, Mehmet does slightly resemble Abdulhamid's portrait. There is something more than a neo-Ottoman hegemonic outlook here. The Ummah geography is framed by the sensory of the sufferer's nostalgic hope for a savior. And the da'wah, the mission, the calling and the cause that is to perform becoming the Ummah is again defined by their awaiting.

The intimacy with the suffering body is as emotional as it is political at the moment for several reasons. First is the obvious association with the pioneering discourse through the murmurs about political leaders such as Erbakan or Erdoğan. As discussed in the second chapter, these sticky relations between bodies, images and signs show the outcome of a situation at the “moments of contact” with the suffering reworking past associations of the Ottoman Empire's protective attitude

towards Palestine through the humanitarian coming from Turkey, who embodies the Ummah at that moment of physical and emotional movement.

Secondly, the waiting of the sufferers, who is imagined spatially as the Ummah geography, constitutes a one-way relation. That is, in such a narrative of Islamic humanitarianism the giver is the mahalle: the particular Ummah that is associated with being geographically in touch with people such as Erbakan and Erdoğan or, that is the descendants of Abdulhamid as a mythical construct. While the waiting suggests hope, the hope is something imported, when it is done spiritedly, excitedly, and preferably spontaneously it gives the mahalle the capacity to respond to that hope.

Thus, Mehmet's appearance as a "flag carrier" that, in his words, can "make something happen to people" by going high places not only extends the space for spreading the mahalle but also it is aimed to extend the space for performing the Ummah as this politicized form of "hope" both for the activists and for the sufferers.

### 5.6.3 Sticky objects of Ummah activism

Mehmet's story confirms that the Ummah is performed through not only discourse on unity of the Muslims or common grounds of worshipping; it is also performed through employing mythical languages, metanarratives, sticky objects that create cartographic and embodied imaginaries of both the mahalle and the larger Ummah in general. As Mehmet was describing "what we must do as the Ummah" as sharing his Mavi Marmara experience, memories on the night he lost his friends on the ship and his own resistance he would bring up encouraging me to "look!" at different objects that he kept that motivates him as if they are self-explanatory when we are talking about the Ummah. One of these objects was his glasses case decorated with the

picture of fellow activist killed on Mavi Marmara Çetin Topçuoğlu, Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of Rock as shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Mehmet's glasses case

Another object he showed me was a map of Palestine next to a picture of a young man holding a rock and the Palestinian flag in front of the Dome of Rock. Mehmet took out this map, indicated in Figure 9, from his wallet in order to show me how important for him to carry around such an object loaded with resistive significance and emotion.

Such sticky objects are not peculiar to personal use for humanitarians. On the contrary, they are also used for creating humanitarian emoscapes out of settings for protest and solidarity.



Figure 9. A map of Palestine next to a picture of a young man holding a flag

At first, as I was going from protest to protest, I expected these objects to solely serve to frustrate and make angry against oppression through mythical speech as they function usually in the protests. However, when I spread the word that I am following Ummah activism I got invited to other spaces of alchemical humanitarianism that are marked as more culturally significant than emergent. There are intersections of these events with protests in terms of the use of maps and the objects that reminds of a collection of suffering. Also there are some people, just like Mehmet but more famous, whose presence contribute to the emoscapes of the mahalle as it mobilizes for showing solidarity for suffering. One of these figures is the band, Grup Yürüyüş (Group March), which perform in most of the big protests or

the “cultural” events for the Ummah. I have known Grup Yürüyüş from whenever I have attended a protest about Ummah activism either at Beyazıt Square, Saraçhane Park or at a conference hall. Their songs have a strong sense of opposition to injustice in especially for Palestine and Syria, composed during striking times of cruelty in these places.

As I was planning my way to reach Ali, one of my old acquaintances called me out of the blue, telling me that there is an association that he goes to, that there will be a big event, and since that I am interested in the Ummah I should go. The “bigness” of the event is, of course not that it was going to be in the largest hall of Haliç Congress Center; but that Khaled Mashal, the leader of Hamas organization in Palestine, will also be attending. I then decide to go this meeting, titled “Yedi Hilal Supranational Istanbul Talks: Palestine” even though the organizing group Yedi Hilal (Seven Crescents) is not a humanitarian organization.

### 5.7 Getting excited and the conditions of the Ummah

I enter the large building after a body search. At the large entrance there are cartoons on canvases depicting the struggle of Palestinian Muslims. The cartoon spread is accompanied by Palestinian flags. Before I make it to the hall, I see desks that some university students wait on. As I fill out the contact form I casually ask them what do they do with Yedi Hilal. They say “you know, people who are experts on the Islamic world, on the field of the Ummah, about the *conditions*” and that they have reading groups. If I am there, if I care, I know about what conditions she refers to, what kind of expertise that it is about. I go inside and find my way among the seats that are left in behind. There is a muttering noise around me. People ask each other: Is he here yet? A young woman in a burqa tells her friend that she is very excited. I know the

excitement is not for Yedi Hilal's video recordings, not for the fact that Grup Yürüyüş will be singing live, and not for the introductory, welcoming and motivational speeches in between. The mutter and the excitement is for Khaled Mashal and for he embodies at the moment, in a room full of low-key activists who show that they care about Palestine by filling the room.

Before the event starts there is an instrumental music playing in the background; when I pay attention I notice that it is the instrumental version of the famous song by Ahmet Kaya, an artist famous in the eighties and nineties in Turkey, who is famous for singing about social and political suffering with a resistive bold voice, who was also wronged by the nationalists in Turkey before his passing. The song, I realize, is named "I am left windowless, mother".<sup>17</sup> The background music resonates with the room; here "we" are, gathered to have supranational talk in Istanbul, about Palestine, with an embodied political figure among us, who will tell us about suffering and resistance – And we will empathize, as the music translates, we have also become windowless. Finally, there is a faceless announcement: "Our guests, our companions, please take your seats."

In a few minutes the leader of Hamas is seated with applause. In the first presentation the speaker thanks to "us", the audience, "who keep the cause of Palestine, Masjid al-Aqsa, and Gaza alive in their hearts – the sensibility that we have lost".

Then, as expected, there is a Qur'an recitation. In the large screen behind the reciter on stage and the meanings of each verse appear as the verses go. Four verses from Surah Al-Hujurat:

The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy. O you who have

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<sup>17</sup> Penceresiz Kaldım Anne

believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers. O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful. O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verses 10-13)

The verses set the scene as they are not randomly selected. The believers are brothers. We are here because of an affective kinship prescribed by Allah. No backbiting, no wronging each other. We are different so that we can know of each other. Thus the Ummah humanitarianism must abide by these rules.

After the recitation there is a prayer and the Jimmy Jib simultaneously moves above us to show us the way we pray saying “amen”, and putting our hands above with slightly tilted heads moved by the prayer. “We”, the audience, are on the stage. It appears as a momentary celebration and appreciation of togetherness and piety. How crowded it is. What a meaningful gathering this is.

The next is an introductory slide show with a spiritual voiceover. “To become a subject and not an object” it says. There are images of maps dissolving into each other. Then we hear Aliya Izetbegovic’s voice and the crowd excitedly shouts “Takbeer, Allahuakbar”. The voice continues:

We are coming as we are taking lessons from the elders’ silences, despairs, silence screams, who have seen their scholar’s headwear, whose dervish lodges are shut, at the gallows. We the youth of today, we are born to an agonized, unattended geography and time that has lost its caliph...

On a blurry map three animated cavaliers spread to the world, referring to the pioneer Muslims who had spread the calling of Islam, and then the map disappears.

At a time in which the ones that went to three continents with three crescents, now it is necessary to go to the seven continents with seven crescents. Conscious of the responsibility and the burden of the seven continents, we are on the track of the seven beautiful young. This is our trouble, concern and sorrow. (...) A youth who is feeling the conscious of the consignment. A youth who will shout out the justice to the oppressor.

The lines now dissolve into cartoons of clenched fists and protest sights. Then there are the black and white photos on the screen quickly changing from Malcolm X to Aliya to Erbakan to Mursi to Mehmet Akif Ersoy to Hasan Al Banna to Necip Fazıl Kısakürek; as the voice goes on: “A youth who will not beg from anyone”.

Now the voice stops describing and goes on to speak to the audience of the Self and the audience of the Other.

Oh the mothers, fathers, youngsters, crying grannies who is waiting for someone to come! With your prayers and with us youngster’s tears falling on the ground and abundant efforts, we will draw a map. The borders of the State of Heart will be drawn on the earth by us. Westerners! I am the seventh son of the father; whose six other sons you have unknowingly swallowed. I want to be buried here with no change. My father died because of the grief of my brothers. I do not want to make my father’s spirit sad, bury me without a change. I want to die as an Easterner. You have only one big power. Changing the one across you. I will not leave here even if you kill me.

As the presentation ends and the applause begins, the stage changes focus. It is now time to present Grup Yürüyüş and then Khaled Mashal.

The world looks at Quds, and looks at Istanbul. The world’s lock is Quds and the key is Istanbul. The hope, the excitement, the love. Khaled Mashal, one of those living Muslim pioneers. Colonization. Syria. A defensive resistance. The silence of the Ummah. A thanks to our government. A saying by the famous poet Sezai Karakoç that “Islam has arrived as wretched and it will just go as wretched”.

Ali, the soloist of Grup Yürüyüş appears with his kufiyah around his neck.

Sings the Arabic song, *Unadikum* (We are calling out to you). People start singing along. The soloist speaks in between the songs. “When you say Palestine somethings must stop. It is the teacher of resistance.” He introduces his next song “Aleppo and Quds”, because “the road to Quds goes through Damascus”. Men in the front are

making Rabaa signs, holding up four fingers, as the Jimmy Jib lets us know. Ali talks about fluttering squares, and aching hearts and aching bosoms. Then the last song triggers the crowd into a collective effervescence. Hit, hit, hit, hit Zionism. Hit, hit, hit Imperialism. Hit, hit, hit dictators. Hit taghuts. Fists and index fingers swinging in the room as the song goes on. Most of the room know especially this final song, since, it is quite popular in the sites of protests. Then after an impatient presentation Khaled Mashal comes, and the room becomes even more agitated in waves between the headlines such as Palestine waiting for the Ummah, the resisting power of Gaza, everywhere crying blood, and the Ummah coming together to be a cure for the wounds of the Ummah.

#### 5.7.1 Watching ourselves performing the Ummah

These conferences function as the epitome of what has been done and what needs to be done for the Ummah; in which the space for humanitarian care enhanced through screens and technology, i.e. the technology that allows people to have a close-up to see their praying selves, singing selves and the protesting selves. Watching “ourselves” coming together is making the actual bodies become the body of the Ummah through performing it. In this case, the performance of activism is strongly attached to performance of becoming the Ummah; by singing out mental maps on “being on the way to Palestine” but also having to go through Syria. This necessity is framed as historical, geographical and as a duty owed to the social memory of the Ummah. Akin to Butler’s concept of gender performativity, the Ummah is performed through resignification and reinvention of its virtual unity through the feelings of solidarity with suffering and anger and resistance against the postcolonial conditions that makes it analogous to an injured body. Interestingly, as much as the notion of

the Ummah stands for something positive as unity and, at times, an empowering affective kinship to Muslims; the way it can be performed in its highest capacity is through scripts of attending to sufferings that speak for the cartographic imaginary of the Ummah, such as Palestine and Syria.

In a similar vein, the representations on stage are not merely on suffering. The stage indicates the fuzziness of the “field” Ummah that has suffered under colonialism, secularization movements, world wars and racisms.

The mahalle is also enhanced to other places when it is necessary in order to spread care and action through enhancing affective borders that are represented in such milieus. Here in Yedi Hilal’s event, Istanbul, the “our mahalle” part of the Ummah, is regarded as the key to the world’s lock, which is the city of Quds. This, I argue, corroborates with Shavit’s reframing of the Ummah as a virtual community. The physical losses of the Ummah, not having a caliph and not having status as a nation as it was imagined what the Ottoman empire had (a proper nation of the Ummah) translates into post- Islamist reinventions of gathering affects, images, and sounds that mark the Ummah as an emoscape hoping to be revived by its suffering.

## CHAPTER 6

### MANAGING WITH THE STATE AS THE ACTIVE MUSLIM SUBJECT

The more time I spent in the protests, I have come to the conclusion that there are certain groups that are the mainstream of that particular milieu of attending to suffering, such as IHH or in such “culturalized” events as in Yedi Hilal’s gathering in which suffering is almost heterochronic, or say, timeless but geographically embedded. However, in the complex networks of Ummah activists/Muslim humanitarians there are other vocal groups that do occupy space and mythical speech in protests and in other activities. One of the most prominent examples of this is Özgür-der; a human rights organization that is also verbal about local issues such as the controversial legislative decrees that were imposed after the 15<sup>th</sup> of July coup attempts. To my surprise, as I was contemplating to contact Ali the soloist from Grup Yürüyüş and visiting Özgür-der for an in-depth interview, I found out that Ali works as an editor to Özgür-der’s online news magazine, Haksöz Haber. After a positive reply to my e-mail for scheduling a meeting with Yakup, one the head members of Özgür-der and Ali, the soloist.

#### 6.1 Meeting “the radicals”

I go upstairs in an apartment in central Fatih where the headquarters is located. Yakup welcomes me to his office ordering some tea. Seated as a guest across his desk, I sense that we are in more formal terms than with my other interviews. I start, as always, by asking if he can describe himself and his life.

Yakup: I was born in Erzurum. I finished first, second and middle school in Erzurum. Then...I studied journalism at Marmara university, here. For three and a half years I have been in Iran for doing Master’s in Islamic Philosophy

and Kalam.<sup>18</sup> Since a long time, I have been trying to take part in the kitchen of the Haksöz magazine. You know, I am married with a child and all my day is spent at the association work.

Then I ask what year he went to university.

Yakup: I completed it in 2001. I came to university late. During 28<sup>th</sup> February process I was in Istanbul, in the university. Then there were the headscarf protests, Imam Hatip protests... Well... 8-year compulsory primary education protests – Because of these we were in the squares. Then later on we found Özgür-der after all in the year ninety-nine.

After he mentions he did not finish his Master's degree in Iran because of disagreements, I ask him if he was affected by his experience during his time there.

Yakup: I mean yes. How... I went there partly aiming to see the state attempt of a movement that has political claims in site; to see the state-society relations, to analyze the social texture, to see its effects in site. I mean I did not have a major disappointment. I already went there critically. In that sense, I went there for more comfortable readings and observation. I mean, in that sense I saw there that the revolution and the thing is seriously finished. I mean that the state has assumed itself like that classic soviet states, that communist countries; that it has a “hypocrite-making” function in its relations to society; that it has no transparency; and regarding religion, that a majority of people hate religion unlike Turkey. (...) A second sad truth is, something I also learned: In general in Muslim culture's imagination, in its imaginary the Other is well, Ahl-i Saleeb,<sup>19</sup> you know, the giaour, the West. It is like this in Sunnism. The Other is the one who is not Ahl-i Qibla.<sup>20</sup> But, maybe you haven't encountered much with what I am about to say in other things or maybe you know. But the Other of Shia is Sunnis. We are the Other of Shia. Learning this hurts. I shall say that; this is an agonizing thing. I mean, with this, I understood that we cannot have common living thing with this point of view.

Even though I am not really enthusiastic about resuming our conversation with a focus on sectarian conflicts, observing that these experience have had a deep affect in his world views and that the “agony” Yakup talks about is about an unattainable unity of Muslims, I ask for a more concrete example.

Yakup: For instance, concrete... let me tell you this. First, Sunnism has built a psychology, culture and discourse on forgetting. I mean “forgetting”. Forgetting what? Suffering. Forgetting what? Killing each other. Like

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<sup>18</sup> Islamic Theology

<sup>19</sup> The crusaders.

<sup>20</sup> the family or follower of those who direct themselves to the qibla, the direction of Ka'ba; thus who pray.

Kerbela, like Cemel, like Sıffin. The fight. The killings of Hussain and Usman. It does a thing on forgetting all this, you know what I mean? But Shia is the opposite, an event that was 1400 years ago is kept alive and made an agenda as if it happened last week. Language and religion and worship is built on that. Therefore, conflict is always inevitable. Because those children think like I attacked Hussain. Now, one of them forgets. And the other is keeping it alive. But how does he keep it alive? As if the perpetrators are alive and it is you. Allah Allah...weird thing. And this becomes religion.

After many interviews and attending events I find it intriguing that Yakup thinks of forgetting suffering as a unifying element for the larger Ummah. Of course, this connects with the agony he talked about Sunnis being the Other of Shiites. Muslims suffering caused by Muslims in the past is an obstacle for living together. So, one of the sufferings that Muslims face today according to Yakup is that being unable to forget the sufferings of the past that Muslims caused each other; i.e. the suffering is identified by the failed unity that being an Ummah entails.

Moreover, the notion “Ahl-i qıbla”, those who pray in the direction Ka’ba as the “us” and the non-Muslim as the Other has two discursive dimensions. *Ahl*, meaning family suggests that affective kinship between Muslims in Arabic, while Qıbla defines a direction for performing Muslimness. Therefore, the notion Ahl-i Qıbla suggests that becoming “us” as the Ummah is not only spatial but also directional in a way that makes people akin to each other through performance.

## 6.2 “Thank God I grew up with that rage”

After listening to his memories on Iran I decide to mention 28<sup>th</sup> February process again, trying to comprehend whether it has a direct effect on his activism, since he has mentioned it as a milestone in his life.

Me: How old were you during the 28<sup>th</sup> February process?

Yakup: I was born in seventy-five. So I was twenty-two or twenty-three.

Me: You said you were in the squares

Yakup: Sure, sure.

Me: When was the first time that made you go out there? Did you have a religious family?

Yakup: As of our line...The family is religious. The family is of those parts the Republic has excluded. I am from the East, from Erzurum. From the Kurds of Erzurum. So it is double. I have a double citizenship thing (referring to exclusion from citizenship). I am told, I am the first who went to high school. Because of the tradition of not studying in order to not be a *giaour*—because the Kemalist education processes (...) included a formation that served the *giaourization* and *heathenizing* processes. To be religious you needed to refrain from studying. Now, this is something today's generation would not be able to understand. (...) And of course we grew up with Sheikh Said stories and memories. We grew up listening to what Mustafa Kemal has done to Muslims. I mean the people who was hanged by him because of the *hat* (act). His banning Quran courses, and banning Quran. You know the mosque- making *adhan* Turkish. Closing mosques. My father, Allah rest his soul, he told us all this. And thank God, I grew up with that consciousness, with that rage. I grew up with that hate. So it went on like that. Already in our childhood we saw the coup, the 12<sup>th</sup> September happened in downtown. I saw how scared were people. So scared. I was seeing that they were living dishonor. The soldier— even one soldier could bring the massive society in line. And when we came to 28<sup>th</sup> February we already were as a conscious passenger on the move —so to speak—, more precisely we were making a definition of existence: We were saying if we are making a choice in this earth that Allah created, claiming that we are Muslim; all political, social, cultural events concern us. We have to be the witnesses of the moment. We have to be witness. We have to be testifiers which is what being a Muslim is like. Look, we claim to be Muslim. The claim to be Muslim is not like as known, simple and dry or something, that can remain unfulfilled. It is to fulfill what is obligatory of the moment. Political, social, cultural; it is to be witness to all spheres of life. To adopt a particular attitude — since this was our point of view, as much as our strength, well, we were trying to be community whose Muslimness is active. And already when the coup came (referring to 28<sup>th</sup> of February), or in fact the coup process, without looking at our left or right, without saying who is there we went to the squares. It started with 8-year compulsory primary education protests. We got out. The Imam Hatip protests...then the headscarf protests. Like that, our protests continued for years.

To be the witness of the moment as the main concern comes repeatedly in the freeze frames of injustices to the *mahalle*. As a direct connotation to the Islamic confession of faith through *kalima shahadat*,<sup>21</sup> witnessing appears as an essential

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<sup>21</sup> Saying “I bare witness that there is no god but Allah and I bare witness that Muhammad is His messenger”

element of being active in religion. Thus, protests not only function as being the voice or even the sound of solidarity but also as announcing the testimony to injustice in relation to testimony in religion. For activists such as Yakup, being angry and full of rage is part of their consciousness in both religion and politics; so, what one makes of suffering is judged implicitly through an alternative enlightenment discourse; as in alternative to the state induced enlightenment. The doubled hazard in his citizenship status as a Kurd who is also a practicing Muslim, specifically during the 28<sup>th</sup> February process is what defines his becoming as active, what initiated his “being in the squares”. Again, bodily attendance to denouncing suffering is a mahalle defining criterion as Yakup reflects on it as a definition to their existence as Muslims who wanted justice for themselves.

Of course, this existential aspect of Ummah activism is not interpreted the same all over. I get curious about in what cases Özgür-der and Yakup himself felt like an outlier; since at some point in our conversation he has mentioned that they were labelled as radicals in nineties. So I ask him if there were any controversies or consensus among the mahalle when it came to any sort of action.

Yakup: I mean, about that Muslims need to pay a price, that they need to resist –their lives- that the communities are assuming a moral responsibility by not resisting, especially those Gulenists. (...) Also, we had anger towards Erbakan’s unresisting attitude. As a third point we would be concerned with stuff like “we will gain our identity by resisting”. Our Islamic identity. This is the most important test field for us Turkey’s Muslims that will gain validity of the claims of being a Muslim. After the foundation of the Republic the system has addressed us for the first time. It said I will clean religion out from the public sphere, Kemalism. (...) We were saying “We must exist with our identity, let us not resemble them”. (...) Then they were marching with Turkish flags with the 10<sup>th</sup> Year Anthem, our people were like let us also march with flags as well- We were saying “no, that flag doesn’t represent us”. Because it is the sovereigns’ flag, the sovereigns’...(Sighs). So there were this kind of arguments. Further, of course Muslims did not have much protest tradition. I mean we as a tradition, longstanding, I mean active...we didn’t have much problem but (referring to himself), such as the women-men issue, you know the matter of women attending to protests could

be a problem. The issue of shouting slogans, (clapping) the issue of clapping, these kind of things would be argued from time to time.

When I ask him later to explain his dislike for Erbakan, he responds:

Yakup: Passive. He is Passive. He is not resistant, he is soft. He loves position. I mean let's be open about it, Allah bless his soul. Secondly, he loves ostentation.

Clearly for Yakup the Muslim identity is a resisting identity. This resistance is towards the Kemalist nation state and what determines an action's compatibility with the Muslim identity is its difference in performance. Thus, in this narrative, the controversies on performance among the mahalle shaped the action in the squares of becoming the Ummah at times of resisting injustice of the State. Being vocal and embodying an issue can have many layers in terms of reflecting identity, or one could stay in terms of its stickiness. Thus, deciding how the bodies will move collectively, such as deciding to clap or not, is part of that becoming the resisting Muslim subject.

### 6.3 Carrying a flag, burning a flag, tolerating a flag

When Yakup mentions that the "flag doesn't represent them" I remember how flags occupy different spaces in the protests. Palestinian flags, Free Syrian Army flags, Egyptian flags, "Islam" flags, Uighur flags, crossed Israeli or American flags; and more and more lately in some cases, Turkish flags. Depending on the event, most dominantly in protests, flags would be a part of the sights of Islamic humanitarianism and Ummah activism. According to most of my interviewees including Yakup, the mahalle in the nineties was a counter public to that of the nation state so what represented the nation did not represent what the idea of the Ummah stood for.

Spending time in the field has already shown me that a combination of flags in a particular event signified not only solidarity but also a mark on that specifically

aching part of the imagined/mythical body of the Ummah. At these moments, what Turkish state represents as part of the Muslim community can determine the tone of the protests: Are “we” celebrating “us” resisting against the foreign epitome of injustice together or are we condemning the lack of “attitude” against suffering. Considering Erdogan’s perception as a big brother or the protector of the Ummah for people such as Uncle Mehmet; one of the questions I have in mind is whether being ruled by AKP has shifted that sense of being represented by the Turkish flag. So, I ask Yakup whether the Turkish flag represents him now.

Yakup: Well, it is like this: Nothing that is imposed on us as an identity tool represents us. (...) We reject it. I mean write whatever you like on it. Doesn’t matter. If you are ascribing sacredness to it, if it is a humane thing, doesn’t matter. It could be this or that. It could be something red and white, or it could be “La ilahe illallah”. If you are making a sacralizing story out of it, it doesn’t represent us. We don’t accept it. But if done, say, as an identification mark of a friend nation, I mean of course. I mean it is like this: Take the American flag, I hate the American flag. Why? Because America kills people, kills Muslims.

Me: Did you burn any of them?

Yakup: We did, we burned a lot. (...) But, for example, if that American flag was a flag of a counter that saved Palestinians, why would I hate it. I mean I could carry it in front of me, not that big of a problem. If the 28<sup>th</sup> February people are leading, then I do not carry that flag (Turkish). But if people who are doing good things for the world, for the people, for Muslims, or who are friends with Muslims I think it could be carried. I would not carry it if possible but it could be carried.

Me: Why wouldn’t you carry it if possible?

Yakup: Because the most important jahiliyya dirt of the century is nationalism. It is not something that is overcome that easily, Miss. (...) It is fought about, conflicted about this and that. Now, therefore, we cannot fall into this trap. (The ideal is) It is to stay out of this thing as much as possible. But it is different from yesterday. It is different from the flag of yesterday, the flag in 28<sup>th</sup> February. We know that too, I mean we know that reality too. That’s different. Now, we do not need to say something; our friends do not carry the flag in our protests. They do not bring the Turkish flag. (...) In the past, we would not take the ones who bring the flag among us. But now we do not utter a word. Why? Because it means something different than today. I mean, for example, today someone who looks at Turkey from the outside- For example how Turkey was seen yesterday: You know, banning headscarf

this and that, making a coup against Erbakan, a country that is intolerant to Islam. So the flag becomes like that. I mean the perception. Well then how is Turkey perceived today? Here, as the friend of Palestinians, as the friend of Syrians, against Assad, or like things against America from time to time. The country of people who embraces people, Muslims.

Accordingly, the affects and discourses attached to the flag reveals a shifting relationship with the state from the enemy to an ally when it comes to the suffering of the larger Ummah. Once an object of nationalization thus an oppressive form of secularization has become an object of intimacy and solidarity with the Ummah through political moments of caring for the suffering. Still a symbol of the nation, the flag now represents a dynamism in which its meaning is tolerated because of the associations and the new metanarratives that are constructed in the milieu of Islamic humanitarianism.

#### 6.4 Transitivity of performing care

As we talk more about contemporary protests, I ask him to talk about their work as Özgür-der specifically on Palestine and Syria, since they are more visibly vocal on the emoscapes and ideoscapes of these political matters. He tells me that their priority is existing as Muslims in the world and that they are trying to be active, attitudinal, and educational through seminars, conferences and panels. Then he goes on to tell me the types of their attendance to Palestine and Syria.

Yakup: I mean the issue of Palestine is standing as an issue we have been trying to take care of. But of course, because the occupation has been going on for decades the attention thing regarding there is absorbed from time to time. And from time to time it increases in relation to the practices and politics of the Israelis. But in general, for instance since the siege of Gaza, like bringing it up with protests, the process of Mavi Marmara etcetera. Other than that we are sacrificing (animals for the Eid of Sacrifice) each year there. In Gaza and in Syria.

Me: Are there any other regions?

Yakup: No. Syria and Gaza. We are not an aid organization; we have never seen ourselves as aid organization. IHH is doing this job very well. We canalize to there. (...) There the occupation army is too dominant. The aid had declined, cut down a lot some time ago in Gaza. Because they wanted aid from us insistently we were sending to Gaza. Secondly in Syria; the Syrian resistance was an orphan resistance. The Syrian resistance was bad named a lot. It was disparaged a lot. (...) In order to make it an agenda and because of the excess of the need of aid even us had to enter the aid work.

This transitivity of care work from alchemical humanitarianism to aid work depending on the emergency in question that Yakup describes is a characteristic component to the making of the mahalle. What triggers this transitivity is narratives of either lack of voice –about solidarity- or, an abundance in black propaganda on the suffering Muslims –about education on the basis of sometimes universalistic and sometimes pietistic humanitarianism.

#### 6.5 The mahalle on the move and on the stay

Finally, in our conversation with Yakup, considering that he represents the inner circle of those who organize protests and other educational events, I wonder his account when and how the space for showing care, solidarity and anger is selected for a protest.

Yakup: Ha, something happened, like “Hello! Mister, what do you say should we do the thing”, “honestly it seems it would be good, let’s discuss this with so and so”. (...) Then if we do it we decide where.

Me: How do you decide that?

Yakup: For example, when one says I should buy a dress he does not just go to the hardware shop for instance. (...) I mean, ha, for some places we are the ones that made it a field of protest (laughing with pride). Such as Saraçhane. We did it (protest) first time there. And Saraçhane remained as such since then. We have earned it for the Ummah Muhammed. Before that we were doing it after the Jumuah prayer in Beyazit. (...) As such, Saraçhane, Fatih Mosque. And sometimes it is according to the happening. Say, when the Syrian resistance first started naturally in front of the consulate of that state. It is more reasonable that it is somewhere that represents. (...) In general, it is

inside the mahalle, so to speak. Sometimes it is said, “let’s do it in Taksim, it is crowded” and stuff. You see it is not a very pleasant thing. It is not your mass. (...) I mean doing a protest in Taksim bothers us.

Me: Why?

Yakup: It is a place of subversion. Subversion.

Me: You mean the manner of life?

Yakup: Sure, sure, sure, sure.

Between spaces of articulating manners of life one is earned, i.e. the Sarayhane Park that has become a space for expressing the virtual community of the Ummah and one is put a black mark against, i.e. the Taksim square. Later on Yakup explains that they are worried that since they bring young people to the protests, they do not want them to be lured to spend more time afterwards in Taksim. Clearly, in this case, the metaphorical mahalle does not belong to a neighborhood in which alcohol is consumed more freely and the social texture is visually more varied. While I have come across many larger protests of Islamic humanitarianism in Taksim, I take Yakup’s account as an example of regarding Ummah through performance of specific practices of being Muslim.

When I ask him if he is not concerned that they might not be spreading their message as much, he confronts me that the perception that the mahalle has already heard about certain things is a say-so. This reminds us that performing the mahalle through times of suffering is perceived as an everyday hurdle, that is intertwined with both being compassionate fellow believers at times and being citizens walking around in a secular state that was once a threat to their existence.

Over all, in the larger scheme of Ummah activism, Yakup represents a part that is more engaged with reel political talks that justifies his rage as a search for justice. As he later on declares that according to his vision of religion, religious

personalities should not make the center, he diverges from the performative imaginary of the Ummah through resistive figures.

## 6.6 Grup Yürüyüş

We take a break for it is the prayer time and I get pleasantly surprised by the coincidence that Uncle Mehmet had come to visit his friends in Özgür-der as I was talking to Yakup. After we greet each other I go to another office with Ali from Grup Yürüyüş. Ali, the thirty-eight-year-old musician is largely popular among the younger demographic of Islamic humanitarians. His life story is similar to others; a journey of becoming “active” motivated by the conflicts during the 28<sup>th</sup> of February process: getting closer to religion in his hometown Iskenderun, coming to Istanbul for his university education, joining protests and sign ins for causes such as opposing the headscarf ban, or the F type prisons and ending up in court because of these. We talk about his activities especially when he was studying in university since it comes up as a deciding time for Ali’s life as an editor and as a band soloist. For Ali, the hustle and the excitement in the squares when he was young was an important contribution to who he is.

Ali: Of course our readings affected us. Plus, more than that the position in the field affects. The bans during 28<sup>th</sup> of February. Someone always runs in the squares, working, striving. And some are interested in different kind of endeavors. And we have a youth thing going on, a youthful excitement, so we are closer to the field standing in that period. Our communication with those who are more active in the field increased. I am talking about Haksöz.

Me: When you say field do you mean the squares, or something else?

Ali: Yes, yes, I mean the squares. Like demonstration and protest. I remember this for example: The Haksöz magazine came to Iskenderun. There was a news in the corner of a column on a clipping saying “fight in the Istanbul Faculty of Literature”. (Laughs) I don’t forget that. Leftist students attack Muslim students who are putting up posters with prods, and one or two friends’ head is broken and stuff. Following that they do punishing the Muslim students thing. For example, this kind of things, news were affecting

me. I read that news and I said I will go to Istanbul Faculty of Literature. I didn't care of anything the department and stuff. That is why I wrote Istanbul History (major) as a first choice. My score was, sure I regret that now, my score was sufficient for even Boğaziçi (...) But I mean it was like completely related to the emotional atmosphere: That liveliness, that fight, the square, that rush.

Following a thorough conversation on his memories, shifting agendas and struggles when he was a student I ask Ali what is the center of his agenda at this moment.

Ali: Now there is Syria. Personally, since 2011 there is Syria. Of course, I mean let me say the Arab spring. There was Libya. There was Egypt. Likewise, Egypt continued to be after the coup process but personally Syria has a different place in my heart because – I mean, I think the Syria issue was sold short. There was a serious operation there, and it still goes on. Well, what it has come to, like the problems, mistakes, troubles within the resistance, it is a separate issue. But before talking about these Syria was a cause that needed to be seriously adopted. We couldn't show this thing. We left it alone considering the scale of what has happened. For example, like between the reaction we gave to an event happened in Palestine, in Gaza and the reaction we gave what happens here (Syria), it is poles apart. We could break this about Syria. There is a malfunction in general among Muslims- in a lot of Muslim milieus. When you look at what is present, there is a resistance going on for six years, hundreds have died. (...) Six to seven millions have become immigrant, Muhacir. Misery, wretchedness. If there was an option that in the case of giving up the killings would stop, you would say “ok, we have lost, let's give up”, but unfortunately if they give up they will face a total destruction. They know this and carrying on with the option of resistance. So, we have so many lessons, examples, stories, maybe motivations – it is a productive ground from which we can transfer motivations to here at the same time. (...) There was something called “Scenes from the Companion (of Prophet Muhammad) Life”. I remember, it was three or four volumes. The stories, narrations, lessons that is shown there (...) Syria has become a school that show how much those scenes are updated and that in fact they can be live today as well. Suffering, maybe it appeared because of suffering but in consequence such an exemplary is lived but unfortunately they are left alone in this sense.

Before I came I did my research. I remember once he said “we have a concern to become and Ummah”. I ask him what does he mean by that.

Ali: Ummah means this. On 15<sup>th</sup> of July, there was a massacre in Aleppo, there was a massacre in Idlib if I am not mistaken. (...) Planes, Russian planes were on the top. On top of Aleppo and Idlib. They were bombarding. But that night people of Aleppo and Idlib did protest demonstrations till the morning. Normally, for the first two years there had been very strong massive demonstrations. They happened everywhere and then within the process the demonstrations went down. (...) You could not have done a protest because bombs are falling on top of us. But that day, they were in the

streets, they were in prayers. (...) Being Ummah is something like this. I mean, or you know similarly, a Palestinian, Gazan band comes up and makes a song about Syria. Like, writes a march composes it. Or people go from there to there, people from different cities from different countries flooding, activists are flooding and rushing. I mean being an Ummah is like this, I mean whatever happens, in whatever conditions you are, that a believer feeling the other believer's pain when he is sick or suffering; that the other organs to feel even though they are in very different geographies and regions. I mean it's like in the hadith: "The believers are like limbs of a body, when anywhere in that body aches, all parts of the body feel that pain". The Muslims in Indonesia feels, like a Muslim in the Balkans, or people in the South in Yemen, or the Muslims in the North, like Crimea, or Muslims wherever. I mean it is like not seeing ourselves differently, not seeing ourselves separately, not seeing ourselves as superiors; seeing ourselves as one around religion- it is like going to pilgrimage, as far as we get from the narrations it is like pilgrimage. People from every color, every language come together and establish an environment in which by no means the post and position or language and culture or color is helpful, in which every human is a sibling. Well, this is being the Ummah, this is our characteristic; if everywhere, every person, all the Muslim societies thought like this, then, I predict we will not suffer this much.

I ask him, since he is describing an ideal to himself, where does he see the Ummah.

He says at the very beginning, but way better than before.

#### 6.7. The cough, the government and Mavi Marmara

Deeper into his explanation, I try to make an extended query. Ali has been writing more hopeful or powerful songs, but also these songs are essentially written because of suffering. On the one hand, it seems there is the political memory that is attached to the Muslim identity, according to people I speak, especially after the experience of 28<sup>th</sup> February which practically has been described as statelessness. However, with AKP coming to power as a pro-Islamic party, it is not far-fetched to say that there has been more representation to the sufferings of Muslims. On the other hand, the theme of Grup Yürüyüş music in general thrives on that loss that reminds of a struggle against something. For sure, his songs are about suffering because there is suffering in those regions such as Quds, Aleppo or Gaza. Yet, the sense of loss that

adds to the solidarity and the reinforcement of affective kinship through metanarratives remains when Ali plays his music as if this solidarity withdrawn to a different temporality than the everyday politics of the Muslim mahalle.

As I unskillfully describe where I am getting at, mentioning the theme of his songs, the past sufferings and the current government in a mishmash, before I could ask the question, Ali suddenly starts coughing excessively. Then, with a half apologetic, half sarcastic voice, he reacts on his body's giveaway: "Yes. (Coughing and laughing) I immediately started coughing when I see the difficult question coming."

I pay attention to this moment, as it makes a connective fragment to the journey of this ethnography. Such a precognitive embodied moment of reacting to a dilemma is not novel to me. As much as the answers to such questions have had value for this research I have learned that these affective moments sometimes provide a more genuine narrative than what is communicated through calculable occasions of speech. Similar interactions in that spectrum took place with other informants as well; especially when I asked about the government and/or the abolishment of the court case for Mavi Marmara.

One of such examples was when I asked about the court case to Zeynep. After she sadly expresses although she thinks the case is open for her morally and spiritually, she predicts why the government might have needed to act as such by making a deal with the Israeli government. Still, there is a moment in the end of her monologue: A pause, with a sigh and then saying "We got hurt, I will say that, we got hurt", in a way suggesting that by saying "we got hurt" she is telling the things she cannot mention.

Another example is after our second meeting with Uncle Mehmet. After almost five hours of talking about his memories, the historical TV shows he likes, the good and bad politics, religious leaders, becoming an Ummah so and so forth we go outside walking along, soon to be separated to our own ways. Suddenly, he leans towards me a little bit and whispers: “You know my daughter, I say all those things but even for the up-coming election I honestly consider not voting for them because of this Mavi Marmara thing, I got really angry”.

I argue that these are the moments for the mahalle; in which the resistive compassionate imaginary of themselves as the Ummah and as Islamic humanitarians does not align with the being a citizen of a state which has its own agenda. The long answers and thinking in terms of the state, for the state and, at times, subtly proud of the state because how it has been towards Other Muslims provide how these activist subjectivities are managing with the State, while holding on to the affective kinship with the virtual community of the Ummah. However, the whispers, coughs and conveying the unspeakable through emotion words; they come from a place of affect and desire to actualize the Ummah through its ideals as an unbending, compassionate unity, that is constantly performing Muslimness, not affected by race or language; just like pilgrimage.

Thus, there is a different sphere of politics that emerges between the links that are built between the past suffering of the Self (the mahalle) and the contemporary sufferings of the Other: A sphere in which the mahalle is differentiated when it comes to humanitarianism depending on the suffering. If the state is welcoming, as in the case of perceived compassion towards the Syrian refugees, state is compassionate, thus it is the mahalle.

If the State “has to” put his interests before the Ummah for reel political reasons, then it leaves a burden, an excess to the emoscape of the Ummah that translates into scattered coping mechanisms ranging from rationalizations and empathy for the State to emanating affective resistance.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

This thesis is a glimpse to the ordinary life of “active” Muslims when they come together for the extraordinary events that cause suffering. It is a research that is about the alchemical humanitarian works on suffering, however, focused beyond suffering itself. That is, it is a study by which I tried to explore how the Ummah is sensed and performed through the representations of distant sufferings, across spatial imaginaries and performative gatherings; thus it is a story of becomings.

I must admit that before I identified my field, I was wondering whether I would be finding a case of Muslim melancholia, in which suffering somewhat debilitates Muslim subjectivities in Turkey in one way or another. Not only did I find that suffering in fact mobilizes certain discourses and affects, I have realized that before even asking such a question, we must creatively and methodologically engage with the milieu of what I call the Ummah activism; its spatial, temporal and performative practices to become what it is identified with: the proper active Muslim.

Therefore, I incorporated space at three levels to this thesis: First is the research unit, the mahalle, the politico-spatial metaphor for active Muslims in Turkey. Secondly, I included the settings in which being the mahalle is performed through Islamic humanitarianism. Finally, in the ethnographic part, I have discussed how certain imaginaries of space through suffering translates into the embodiment of the Ummah. For a take on the temporal and performative practices, I looked at the mythical speeches that repeat themselves in both spatial and narrative representations of suffering.

These speeches involved an array of regarding the Self as the lost children and simultaneously the hope of the Ummah while equalizing the Self with the Other perceiving the physical suffering of Other is perceived under the same umbrella of the social suffering of practicing Muslims in Turkey.

Fatih seemed as the perfect place for pinning down the mahalle, as it turns out Fatih is a neighborhood that circulates the social memory and discursive connection between being visibly Muslim and suffering in a secular State with a big S. Yet, because the mahalle is on the move, depending on the theme of humanitarian events, I quickly realized that Fatih serves as a base in flux for Ummah activism that is mobile.

So I followed. I followed the people, the suffering and the metaphor – in a way I followed the Ummah on the move for attending to suffering entering the world of representation within Islamic humanitarianism.

Having defined the field as a fuzzy field in Chapter 4, I find it difficult to ponder a conclusion to an affective world in flux. However, going back to the question of what is beyond suffering, I suggest to put a comma to this study for further research, by encapsulating how representations of suffering unfolds the political and affective hustle of Ummah activism.

Maps and mythical representations that not only show the power structures as they are imagined but also to show the Muslim body on the globe through where it aches. They appear as a coping mechanism with the unspeakable and grand sufferings through learning about the factual narratives about global political agendas.

Oral histories on the past sufferings of the Self, regarding their Muslim identity, shows both a dynamic positionality towards state, but also an empathic

connection with the humanitarian work they do – as if the sufferings have made them perform becoming the Ummah and by this way they can relate more to the Ummah, that they recognize themselves through attending to suffering. These positions and connection within the world of Islamic humanitarianism involve ways of seeing and showing; listening and sound-making. Bearing witness and making sounds such as slogans and murmurs is the theme for “the least we can do” while it creates spaces to experience anger, guilt and hope. In addition, Muslimness, is described as the moral sentiment, the “predominant emotion” that should trigger the former emotions that move humanitarians, since it is performed through bodily practices and emotive language.

The mahalle is thus not only an ideoscape, a collective political memory performed in spaces, but also an emoscape in which certain affects, emotions and movements are deemed acceptable and/or necessary: anger towards the oppressor, anger towards distortion of their perceived realities, encompassing guilt and resistive hope. Where these emotions are triggered changes from person to person; as we can see, while historical knowledge can be a motivation, it can be made to be a rather atemporal history of the Ummah. Accordingly, I argue that the emoscape of dealing with suffering takes place in a heterochronic time and a heterotopic space – in which suffering reflects realities that are beyond suffering, spaces that are now non-sites, histories that does not involve time.

Thus, when the mahalle gathers to react, to mourn; it momentarily makes a heterotopic site in which the suffering of the Other is the mirror image of the (capacity of) suffering of the Self, the human that is – at that moment– the embodied Ummah. Through crowds, sounds and – if the technology is involved– through

Jimmy Jib these sites speak to multiple audiences: The us that suffers, the us that cares, the us that is silent, the West that helps oppression and Allah.

While sticky objects, images of mythicized figures, flags as well as emotion words and soundscapes are anchors in making these emoscapes, they are never just symbols. Through metanarratives, they rather express the virtuality of the Ummah, coping with its existence within the imagined realm of an oppressive – and/or at times a secular– world, and sensing its body through both bodily and cartographic imaginaries of suffering.

The frequently used term throughout Chapter 2, the Islamic geography, is felt, understood, cared and attended better when there is a suffering. This can be thought as a symptom of the post-Islamist era, a reaction to the loss of charisma for believers, and the fact there is no Islamic state par excellence that can prevent suffering and beat the masterminds, the West, behind it. While I think this one the ways that this research can take another level for future studies, I for one do neither claim nor have attempted to have an answer to this hypothesis.

However, I do point this: While the leaders and the idea of resistive political figures constitute the majority of the scapes of Islamic humanitarianism, the yearn for the lost charisma is not the same as wanting an Islamic state. Neither the figures invoke the same affects for every, person group or settings. In Chapter 3, I have tried to explain this divergence within the mahalle as it manages with the world, the state and the frustrations with the self (the mahalle) on the way of becoming the Ummah. Noting these moments was not an easy task, as sometimes it meant paying attention to the moments when the rational/cognitive narratives end and the precognitive/affective reactions are insinuated or, well, leaked.

There were multiple challenges in the making of this research. The biggest challenge was the “unfinishedness” of affects being the subtext of my fieldwork. I tried to overcome this challenge by creating certain spatial and theoretical boundaries such as strategically situating the ethnography in Fatih as a base in a multi-sited research; and only discussing the literature that is at the very intersection of the main themes such as humanitarianism, space and affects. Another difficulty was the scale of the data. As I have mentioned in Chapter 4, in addition to participant observation to various events such as protests, seminars and conferences; I made in-depth interviews with sixteen people. While it was a beneficial exercise in order to understand the discursive variety, considering that this is a Master’s thesis, I have limited this number to five people, five alchemical humanitarians, who affected the scope of this thesis the most.

Alchemical humanitarianism is about being vocal about suffering at a moment when it is thought to be unheard, emergent, not grieved enough; but not necessarily ungrievable. By looking at alchemical humanitarians, I have shown how the Ummah performed suffering of people who can be grieved but who are imagined to be ungrievable by some Others, such as nationalist Turkish people, and the infamous West with a capital W.

So, this thesis did not explore what is not talked about among Islamic humanitarians. While the level of sensitivity about universal humanitarianism varied from one person to another, the affective moments to become the Ummah through suffering has a similar vocabulary pointing to similar imaginaries and struggles within those imaginaries. This does not mean to say there is no diversity in discourses and affects when it comes to performing Islamic humanitarianism; however, the diversity has presented itself in a rather covert fashion in the

ethnographic field. This also stems from the fact that the field is located within the realities of the Turkish state, where there has been a tension between secular practices and religious discourses; nationalist discourses and humanitarian practices; sometimes in a merged and a non-dichotomous way. As I have mentioned in the introduction, some doors that these tensions open have fallen beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet, I have tried to do justice to this “beyond” by engaging in a multitude of theoretical discussions and conveying the field as an open and dynamic collection of fragments that speaks to a limited motion of the Ummah when they mobilize for Islamic humanitarianism in certain ways of spectacle.

Since humanitarianism as a government, as an emotionality, as a language and as a representation involves more parts of our lives, I see this thesis as an attempt to contribute to the larger literature on the anthropology of humanitarianism that is yet to extend further to ask to mainstream and niche cultures of care: How does suffering and its representation move people through what practices and imaginaries of humanness, identity, care?

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