DERSIM AUDIBLE: RELATING TO SPACE THROUGH MUSIC IN DIASPORIC CULTURAL PRODUCTION

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology,

In partial fulfillment of

the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

Current discussions over major conflicts leading to waves of migration points a direction where movement is increasingly made sense of as a norm, rather than a deviance in humans' lives. In that direction, post-structuralist theories of 20th century offer an understanding where spaces are not comprehended as holding fixed properties, but rather being defined through movements that go through them. Within this comprehension, 'diasporic' cultural production presents an explicit articulation of how resettled people relate to places beyond the fixated divisions of spaces as 'homeland' versus 'destination after displacement'. In this thesis, I adhere to Deleuze and Guattari's works on 'deterritorialization' and 'nomadicism' to analyze the example of diaspora artists of Dersim music in Germany, whose narratives of how they moved to Germany and why they make music connect their cultural production to Dersim Alevi oral traditions and 'nomadic' movement of Alevi religious leaders. The significance of this work derives from the fact that, first, it is the precedence of conceptualizing Alevism through 'deterritorialization' theory, which offers a novel perspective on discussing the politics of cultural production in Turkey. Deriving from that conceptualization, I examine cultural production as a force essentially contesting the 'settled' ways of understanding social relations. The interviews I conducted throughout an ethnographic fieldwork present indications of an alternation between today's diasporic Dersimi artists and old religious leaders of Alevism, as cultural representatives who contest 'settled' social relations whether through religious or non-religious lines of conduct.

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Introduction

Eating the handful of sunflower seeds each of us had, we were trying to find a spot from where we could see the stage in the huddled area in front of the entrance to the Atatürk[1] stadium. I believe it was some time in the late 2000s, main stage of the Munzur[2] Festival was set up in the Atatürk neighborhood of Dersim[3], or as we call it, in Siyenk. I was always getting distracted for some time when arriving to the festival area, wondering who were buying those 'political souvenirs' on the stalls in the entrance to the stadium, flags covered with poor print copies of symbolic figures of leftism in Turkey like İbrahim Kaypakkaya, Ahmet Kaya and Yılmaz Güney[4], or wristbands colored in yellow, red and green. Women in *şalvar*s[5] were passing by, not interested. Young girls and boys in their 20s, already had those wristbands. Suddenly, when a cheerful applause came our way from the crowd in the stadium, we were all ears, trying to recognize who it is on the stage. I remember being mesmerized by the idea that I was to listen to Aynur Doğan and Mikail Aslan one after another, two among the most beloved artists of Dersim. Just like when older people talked to each other, I did not understand the language of music. Yet, it felt as if music was supposed to be incomprehensible, anyway. As much as the level of my enchantment had to do with my childness, fervor was in fact everywhere since these artists were coming from some distant countries only once a year to their hometown, the place where they were cherished the most. It became comprehensible for me later, why the festival

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[1] The founding leader of Turkish Republic.

[2] Name of the main river cutting through Dersim region, central to the culture.

[3] Originally the name of a region in the southeastern Anatolia, comprised of current Tunceli province at the core and of parts of current Erzincan, Erzurum, Elazığ, Bingöl, Malatya and Muş. After founding the Turkish Republic, state officials named the center of now partitioned Dersim "Tunceli" (the bronze hand). Throughout the thesis, the name Dersim is used to refer to both the current Tunceli province and the historical region.

[4] Ibrahim Kaypakkaya was a significant leader of Communist movements in Turkey in late 1960s and early 1970s, who died in prison. Ahmet Kaya was a Kurdish singer vocal of Kurdish rights in Turkey in 1990s, who fled prosecution in Turkey and died in exile. Yilmaz Guney was a Palme d'Or awarded Kurdish cinema director who depicted in his movies rights violations against Kurds in Turkey.

[5] Traditional baggy pants currently worn by mostly women in Anatolia.

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happened in such a diffuse sense of longing. This is a scene which is "a point of departure for both exploring a site of memory and anchoring historical discourse" (Shelemay 2006, 19). I find this anecdote worthy of describing here, because it illustrates a turning point where the 16-year emergency regime was lifted, and Dersim became a living place again. It mattered not only to Dersimi[6] people but to all the Kurdish-majority in the southeastern part of Turkey because Dersim was only one part of the whole region going through change, after having experienced decades of displacement and dispossession. It is noteworthy that thousands of people not only living in Dersim, but also Dersimi people living abroad and people from all around Turkey were gathering and enjoying the sense of being a community on an event of a music festival. It was after long years of being diffused to different parts of the country and the world by the Turkish state. And the very possibility that songs in Zazakî[7] and Kurmanjî[8] could be voiced in public without the fear of being prosecuted rendered the festival exemplary of developments to come in the field of cultural rights in Turkey. Music in this sense is a 'cultural glue' (Bohlman 2011, 155) which is closely bound with language and spark affects 'detached from temporal and geographic origins' (Parr 2010, 13).

This research aims to analyze diasporic cultural production, in particular, music making, as an explicit articulation of relating to places beyond comprehending them as spaces with fixated properties. Diaspora is on focus, because I contend that the experience of resettlement crystallizes the inexpressiveness of maintaining strict boundaries between spaces and experiences such as: Homeland- happiness, peace, welfare, sense of togetherness…; Destination of resettlement- despair, unease, rupture, longing… Dersimi cultural producers are the reference of this research, as their articulation of relating to places is unequivocally

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[6] From Dersim.
[7] Called also Kirmanjki or Dimilli, the local language in Dersim region, belonging to the Iranian section of the Indo-European language family. Its speakers sometimes refer to it as 'Kurdish', as well, connotating that it is a dialect of Kurdish.
[8] The most widespread dialect of Kurdish spoken in Turkey.

illustrative. I aim to follow the questions of how Dersimi artists construe making music of and about a place where they are far from, and how they articulate the connections they have to Dersim, by looking at their narratives of Dersim, process of migrating, and of living in Germany. This way, relations between movement and territory, cultural production and space can be comprehended more extensively. While following these questions, I mainly adhere to Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of space as a notion created through the movements, which I make sense of as emphasizing people's relation to places through their experiences rather than physical presence or absence. Music in this sense is considered as an alternative form of experience and expression. Hence, in this thesis I will first review the junctures of politicization for Dersimi people to historicize the position of Dersimi cultural producers, later I look at the discussions on politics of cultural production as these discussions identify the points of departure when analyzing cultural producers' articulation of relating to space and where that articulation is sourced in. Later, because I focus on Alevism as the major source of Dersimi cultural producers' articulation of relating to space, I lay out the ways in which Alevism can be understood as a tool for deterritorialization. In chapters two and three, I incorporate theories discussed in first chapter to the findings of the ethnographic fieldwork I have conducted in Germany, interviewing the Dersimi artists.

Methodology

This thesis is based on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in three cities of Germany, Mainz, Wiesbaden and Berlin. These are among the cities where the Dersimi people comprises a significant part of the population. I did a pilot visit in March 2017 and did full-time fieldwork in April 2017 as part of my master's research. A total of nine artists of Dersim music were interviewed in eight occasions in the form of semi-structured interviews. I have selected my interviewees based on convenience sampling (Marshall 1996) and I 'entered the field' by initially getting in touch with officials from one of the Dersimi associations in Germany, the Zaza Community in Germany (Cematê Zazayanê Almanya). These artists were permanently based in Germany and were either only German citizens or held dual citizenships, together with the ones from Turkey, except one of them who was at the time of the interview seeking to move to Germany. Among these four of them had immigrated to Germany escaping political execution in Turkey, two of them had decided to move for the sake of pursuing their music careers in Germany, one of them moved for family reasons and two of them were second-generation residents in their families and were born in Germany. I visited the 'Mainz World Music Academy', which is a place where Dersimi artists along with artist from other countries give music courses to mostly the diaspora community in Mainz. During my stay in the field, I was hosted by Dersimi people and received 'insider' knowledge about the perception of Dersimi people in Europe about the Dersimi artists and issues about the diaspora community in general. For this thesis, I have conducted narrative analysis of the interviews I made, because it is a qualitative data analysis method which enables "individuals, cultures, societies, and historical epochs comprehensible as wholes" (Richardson as quoted in Schutt 2011, 339). I coded the texts based on general patterns and distinctness in the narratives and utilized the structural and post-structural theories as lenses of analysis. That way I contextualized the position of artists within the overall picture of cultural production in diaspora. This was an

inductive process, as I concentrated primarily on the exact articulations and forms of expressions used by the interviewees and later re-contextualized them within theoretical frameworks.

Chapter 1. Historical Context of Dersim as a Reference of Politicization and Discussion of Cultural Production related to Space

1.1 Defining Junctures of Politicization of Dersim: 1938 Massacre, 1970s' Leftistization, 1990s' Rising Kurdish Movement

Dersim is the historical name of a region in the eastern Turkey, whose core was renamed as Tunceli under Turkish Republic. As a part of the Kurdistan region of Ottoman Empire, it had been the livelihood of a heterogenous population ethnically comprised of Zazas, Kurmanjs and Armenians, and religiously comprised of Christians, Sunni Muslims and Alevi Muslims for centuries. The region had long been the locus of dissensus vis-à-vis the state and the founding years of the republic marked its history with forced expulsions and a massive massacre undertaken by the state. To be able to depict the context through which the Dersimi artists have adopted the basilar notions that formed the ways of cultural production they are currently engaged in, this section offers a brief background of the benchmarks of the history of Dersim.

The most critical reference of collective memory today for Dersim is the 1938 Massacre, on which many works have been written to explore the progress of events that culminated in the military operations against the people of the region at the time. Geographic characteristics of the region comprise a significant element in depicting the political context prior to 1938 in the region as the high mountains surrounding the valleys rendered the region inaccessible. This inaccessibility was significant in formation of social organization and politics as it meant autonomy from the central state. Martin van Bruinessen describes the population as a large number of small tribes, in total estimated to be 65,000 to 70,000 people (van Bruinessen 2007, 2). The cultural distinction of Dersim today is traced in mainly the geographical component, since it produced and enabled the preservation of peculiar religious and linguistic characteristics. While some of the tribes were known to speak Kurmanjî dialect of Kurdish like

the rest of the Northern Kurdistan region, majority of the population in Dersim spoke Zazakî. Whole of the population is known to be Alevis, unlike the rest of the region who are Sunni Muslims. The particularity of Dersim had most significantly to do with the fact that tribes in this region did not recognize the laws of governments, and were ruled by the tribal law (van Bruinessen 2007, 2). The long-lasting dissensus and conflicts between these tribes and the state is attached to this non-recognition of central authority, yet 1938 marked an unprecedented point in the history of these conflicts.

There are varying accounts of what exactly gave rise to the escalation of the clashes between the local tribespeople and the state that initiated was initiated by the government's Dersim Operation in 1937 and peaked in 1938, which amounted to a massacre on the level of a genocide. However, what is relevant for this study is that in the following years of 1938, the collective social representation of Dersim as 'the nest of rebelliousness' became integral to the identification of the geography. Jordi Tejel Gorgas asserts that most of the literature on production of political symbolisms adhere to the idea that state holds the upper hand in defining the symbolic impositions vis-à-vis dissident claim-makers (Gorgas 2009). This is particularly important in the case of Dersim, as symbolism of dissidence and 'rebelliousness' highly influences the sociological and historical analysis about the region. Yet, Gorgas points out to the necessity of interpreting the symbolic strength of anti-establishment actors in a more balanced way. That is to say, when thinking of the Dersim case, one needs to evaluate the collective social representation designated as 'rebellious', as a produce of the mutual interaction between the Dersimi people and the state together, especially through looking at the politicizations of people from the region in 1970s and 1990s. As it will be visited in the interviews with the Dersimi artists, 1970s mark the time of Turkish leftism's rise, following the 1960 coup d'état and Dersimis were in the forefronts of the Turkish leftist organizations. One implication of leftisization was repudiation of Alevism by the Dersimi youth, as the Alevi

religious leaders were accused of exploiting the people through their unjustified authority. When in 1980 another coup was attempted with the stated aim of dismantling the conjuncture of civil war in the country, many of the Kurdish and Alevi political activists were either detained, tortured and killed in the prisons, or fled the country for Europe to escape these risks. Founding of PKK (Partîya Karkêren Kurdistan, Kurdistan Workers' Party) in the first half of 1980s not only thickened the ethnicity-based framing of politicizations in Turkey but also raised voices critical of Turkish leftism for reproducing republican Kemalism's monolithizing Turkish nationalism. That way, most of the politicization of Dersimi people shifted to the fronts of Kurdish movement, much as joining other leftist fractions in the country.

In parallel to these developments in Turkey, mass migration of Kurds and Alevis, the two major ethnic and sectarian groups involved in opposition politics, took place in waves first in 1960s and later in 1980s. Although Sökefeld (2003, 139)asserts that there were two main motivations of Alevis when migrating from Turkey to Germany, quest for employment and escaping from the rising political pressure, I would argue that it is difficult to differentiate economic motivations from political motivations in the case of Kurdish Alevi migrants. This is because the heavily discriminative identity politics against Kurdish Alevis is undermining of the employment prospects for this community. As a consequence of the suppression regime in Turkey abrogating the oppositional politics, diaspora in Europe became the locus for both Kurdish Alevi oppositional organizations. However, in the case of Alevi mobilization it can be claimed that diaspora organizations were definitive of the direction Alevi politicization took in Turkey as well, compared to European Kurdish movement's lateral position.

In the light of this background, this thesis is constructed around the phenomenon of Dersim as a 'social and cultural entity'(Aslan 2010, 9), that shaped through its spatial reflections. This experience of displacement and dispossession from cultural and fundamental rights in Turkey has contributed to the reconstruction of the field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1983) for

Dersimi music, as the positionality of its producers now shifted to a diasporic one. This way, this thesis aims to look at the relationship between resettlement and cultural production, with the objective of presenting the case of Dersimi musicians in diaspora as cultural producers who reimagine and reproduce a territorially defined identity space from afar in a way reconstructing and rearticulating the intersection of identity spaces of Alevism, Kurdishness, mother language and migration.

1.2 Politics of Cultural Production and Space

In this section, I review the different approaches on how experiencing of space is viewed in connection to cultural production. The recent literature on politics of cultural production and its relation to spatiality/territoriality mostly focuses on the transformations of cultural production with the effect of movement. More precisely, scholars are looking at this relationality mostly as a subject of migration and its effects on resettling and host communities (Sökefeld 2003; Erel 2010; Bohlman 2011; O. E. Aksoy 2014). Hence, examples of theorization of this subject is less frequent in the fields outside of the migration studies.

One such field is pertinent to the identity spaces and their influence over cultural production, and as the scope of this thesis demands, I mainly focus on the works in this field related to musical production. Hamelink and Barış investigate the ways how traditional Kurdish singer-poets (*dengbêj*) of Turkey differentiate notions of home and foreign place in their recital songs (*kilam*) that they perform in village gatherings and weddings (Hamelink and Barış 2014). Their departure point is a very intriguing one, where the relationship between art and sense of place for Kurds is quested. It is argued that Kurds do not construct their relationality to the notion and institutions of state the way state-nations do, hence, their relationality has the potential to challenge the well-accepted assumptions about the subject. However, the authors prefer to explain this relationality by resorting to the dichotomous depiction, that is, home versus foreign place, and that way this analysis lacks a stimulating understanding of relating to

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places beyond the bordered distinctions. Songs are studied as having the fundamental function of "drawing an imaginary map of the local geography, in which the Kurdish local environment occupies centre stage" (Hamelink and Barış 2014, 46). This major argument in the work demonstrates that, this type of dichotomous perspective can easily be become a psychological analysis where the conclusion is the suggestion that people perceive the world in a way positioning themselves in the center of it. Another significant work intersecting with the focus of this thesis is Emrah Aksoy's unprecedented doctoral research where he analyzes music as a mode of articulating collective histories and narrating belonging and identities in the example of Kurdish Alevis living in Germany (O. E. Aksoy 2014). His work approves prominent folk music scholar Philip Bohlman's contention that music comes to symbolize groups, as it inheres in itself the needs and practices of groups, in dialogue with the processes of change that influence these needs and practices (Bohlman 1988).

Somewhat challenging these stands, renowned ethnomusicologist Dieter Christensen refers to the complication of identifying what exactly it is that renders vast variety of music 'Kurdish', performed in the geographies inhabited by Kurds. He asserts that the essential characteristic can be the tradition of performing sung narratives (Christensen 2007, 2). Although music has been central to Kurdish social life, Christensen asserts, it was not until introduction of radio to the lives of people in Kurdistan (places expanding in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey where Kurds inhabit) that music became a marker of social identity for Kurds (Christensen 2007, 4). And, it is as of today that urban diaspora is being observed to be a space where Kurdish identity is widely reproduced and preformed via music (Christensen 2007, 5). Christensen's arguments already undermine the accommodation of particular ways of making music to particular identity spaces, and the picture gets even more complicated when one looks at the literature on 'Alevi music'. Alevi music is also identified as being based on oral tradition and sung poetry. Irene Markoff asserts that sung poetry tradition is inseparable from Alevi culture, as use of music and

dance are essential to spiritual catharsis in Alevi ritual ceremonies (Markoff 1986, 42-5). What is particular in Alevi sung poetry is that the musical repertoire has variations like 'poems of mystical love and the mystical experience (*deyis, nefes*) or 'music and poetry that accompany ritual dance called *semah*' (Markoff 1986, 48). This sung poetry was performed by wandering minstrels, who resembled the *dengbêjs* of Kurdish music. Hence, it is possible to observe the complication of delineating spaces of identity in a clear way when taking the example of musical production into hand. Then, a more illuminating perspective is adopted by Mediya Rangi, who focuses on the cultural production of an Australia-based artist from Kurdistan. She utilizes the Deleuzian angle to analyze cultural production of a displaced artist, beyond the conceptualization of the phenomenon as reproduction of diasporic identities (Rangi 2015). The significance of this work is that the artist who is at the center of analysis is not articulating having moved to another country as an eternally agonizing experience. Rather, he asserts that the very life of exile if his home and that he loves his exile. This approach challenges the dichotomy of diaspora versus homeland, where it is implicated that resettled cultural producers can experience this only either being assimilated to the field of cultural production in the destination country of exile and not defining one's experience as exile, or not being assimilated to that field and constantly being in pain. She shows that, because the diaspora denotes maintenance of boundaries drawn with nation-state world order and that depiction of sensing of space is insufficient in the case of this artist. That is because, this artist defines his experience as being at exile yet not longing to 'go back', because he enjoys the artistic autonomy he has found in exile. Subjectivities cultivated in the space of art challenges the boundary-enforcing imaginations of space of state-centered politics.

Here I would like to refer to Bourdieu's theory of field of cultural production as well, although his structuralist perspective has been argued to be contradictory to post-structuralist perspectives like of Deleuze and Guattari's, especially in the case of conceptualization of space.

While Bourdieusian theorization constructs reproduction as explainable by discernible lines between different fields, Deleuze and Guattari's presentation calls for an understanding of reproduction as not comprised of encircled totalities of relationships, but as movements and relations making up space-time configurations. So on the one hand for Bourdieu field, the main unit in his analysis of cultural production, is a space of an intersection of a given time and a given society where social agents relate to each other based on their social trajectories (Bourdieu 1983). On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari reject a thinking based on spaces, and argue for a thinking in terms of "the consequences of movement and time for (corporeal, spiritual, animal, mineral, vegetable, and, or conceptual) bodies" (Parr 2010, 12).

Although Deleuze and Guattari openly position their theory against the ways of thinking like the one of Bourdieu's, their theory does not render field theory invalid. This potential of compatibility has been addressed in previous works as well (Eyal 2013), and it is argued that Deleuze and Guattari are "interested not in substituting one conception of space with another, but rather in how forces striate space and how at the same time it develops other forces that emit smooth spaces[9]" (Parr 2010, 257). Thus, in some parts of my analysis I find it useful to apply Bourdieu's theory where he explains field of cultural production as comprised of spaces of position-takings which are possible in a given period and a given society (Bourdieu 1983). That is to say, he systematizes cultural production as inseparable from the conditions of social reproduction that the artist stands in.

Following a parallel path to Rangi's perspective, I find it necessary to look at more nuanced takes on space and cultural production relationship in the literature. One such work is Jacques Attali's *Noise,* where music is not conceived of as a cultural product ascribable to a particular group of people, but rather a tool of understanding the world, a new theoretical form

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[9] 'Smooth space' denotes "an infinite succession of linkages and changes in direction' that creates shifting mosaics of space- times out of the heterogeneous blocks of different milieus"(Deleuze and Guattari as quoted in Parr 2010, 257).

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(Attali 1985). Attali asserts, what he does in his book is not only theorizing *about* music but also theorizing *through* music. This can be one justification for the methodology of this thesis as well, as deriving from Attali's denotation, I contend that the form of knowledge musicians pursue has the potential of being more expressive about relating to spaces/places. Further, Attali believes that music is 'prophetic', meaning it has the potential to point at future possibilities, since it has been illustrative of the evolution of societies when one looks at the processes it has been through: Deritualization of social forms, repressing of activities of the body, specializing of practice, selling of spectacle, generalizing of consumption, stockpiling until meaning is lost (Attali 1985, 5). The subtitle of *Noise* is *The Political Economy of Music*, and indeed, Attali frames music as a -special- form of commodity and a combination of economics and aesthetics. Yet, he also conceives music as a 'herald of the society' (ibid). That is because, he believes 'music is a credible metaphor of the real' and that it is a 'play of mirrors in which every activity is reflected, defined, recorded, and distorted'(ibid). His denotes that, to listen is to memorize, and that gives one 'the ability to interpret and control history, to manipulate the culture of a people, to channel its violence and hopes' (Attali 1985, 7). This point resonates highly with the narrations of Dersimi diasporic artists I have interviewed, as they forge a forthright bond between making music in mother language and preservation of culture as distinct features of a people. Departing from that, it is possible to question the very connection between politics and culture. One approach is to see them as fundamentally inseparable and discussing 'politics of culture' and cultural politics', rather than separate discursive subjects, as Nina Glick Schiller does. Schiller asserts that cultural politics is processual, and it is a matter of assertion, acceptance, contestation, or subversion of relations of power through the means of ideas, values, symbols and daily practices (Schiller 1997, 2).

Federico Reuben on the other hand, construes the concepts as separate entities which are formative of each other. In particular he discusses the imagination of music as a means of

creating an alternative model of 'emancipatory politics' and criticizes such a conceptualization as simplifying of the interconnections between music and politics (Reuben 2015). He asserts that the reasons of why this kind of a straightforward connection is established can be found in the standstill of a "lack of creativity in proposing new ways of distributing the sensible forms and practices that can produce viable radical change (alternative musical or political systems)" (Reuben 2015, 240). He presents another way of understanding music and politics relationship by asserting that "music is a variable receptacle of different practices, thoughts, affects, percepts, actions and forces that constitutes a particular sociohistorical framework with provisional conceptual lines and distinct nodal points of interrelation with politics" (Reuben 2015, 235). Reuben's theorization mostly relies on Jacques Rancière's conceptualization of aesthetics. In his *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière defines aesthetics as something at the core of politics: "a system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to the sense of experience. It is delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it (…)" (Rancière 2013, 14).

I would like to conclude these discussions with the remark of Martin Greve who, after an elaborated review of the changes in the field of ethnomusicology, writes that '[i]nstead of searching for music that might be typical of a particular ethnic group or culture, it seems more meaningful today to investigate the complex interaction of such different fields of discourse as religion, nationalism, aesthetics, and technical discussion of music'(Greve 2016, 8). Departing from that, the following discussion of Alevism as a fundamental reference for Dersimi artists does not aim to designate the boundaries of a particular community's cultural production. Rather, I aim to 'construct an object such as the literary field'(Bourdieu 1983), that is, frame Alevism as the aggregation of manifestations of social relations with which today's Dersimi cultural production interacts significantly.

1.3 Alevism as a tool for 'Deterritorialization'

In this section, I aim to lay out the defining references of cultural production of Dersim. While ethnic references are of gravity as well, Alevism has its clear mark on Dersim music through extensive use of instrument *saz*[10], symbolisms in lyrics and themes of songs. What is more, the way diasporic artists articulate their relation to Dersim and Germany challenges the boundary-enforcing designations of space. I trace this characteristic back in Alevism's challenge to the centralized system of administration, in the body of Ottoman Empire. Hence, I outline here the properties of Alevism to demonstrate the continuity between those properties and today's cultural production of Dersim.

Cultural production and particularly making music of Dersim is first and foremost an issue of speaking of languages other than Turkish in Turkey. Reuben points out that music resembles politics to a large extent, if we think of both of them dealing with 'what is audible or inaudible, or who is represented or not in musical and political systems'(Reuben 2015, 243). Although the ban on speaking of any other language than Turkish in private and public was lifted in 1991, legal and informal restrictions over practice of cultural identity remained relevant in various forms (Pierse 1997). Here it should be noted that, there are ongoing debates over whether Zazakî is a dialect of Kurdish languages like Kurmanjî, Soranî and Goranî, or a different language, and each argument points to different claims over the history, culture and identity of Dersimi people (see Aksoy 2016; Aslan 2010; Haig 2004). However, Zazakî speakers were subject to the same pressure of not being allowed to speak the language as well, since the Turkish nation-state discourse primarily did not recognize these languages spoken in

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[10] "*Saz* or *bağlama* is a long-necked, plucked lute that can be considered Turkey's national instrument. *Saz* literally means instrument while the term bağlama derives from the Turkish bağlamak, "to tie." Built in a variety of sizes and with up to 26 frets, the instrument's strings are generally arranged in three sets of double courses, and tuned according to regional preferences. It was traditionally strummed and plucked with the fingertips or a plectrum of bark although plastic is the norm today. For the Alevis, this instrument has assumed powerful significance as a material representation of the imam Ali and the tenets of his faith; the resonator represents his body, the neck his sword Zülfi- kar, and the twelve strings or sometimes frets, the twelve Alid imams of Shiia Islam."(Markoff 1986).

'the east' as languages proper, and later it did not differentiate between them beyond outlawing public use of them. Furthermore, there is no consensus among Dersimi people about how they define themselves in terms of ethnicity or nationality. I have witnessed different people referring to themselves as Kurdish, Zaza or only Alevi. However, in the case of artistic production, regardless of how they define themselves, Dersimi artists have been subject to same mechanisms of validation of their cultural capital as the Kurds. That is to say, the boundaries of artistic and political representation were overlapping in a way rendering silencing of 'Kurdish' art trivial (Karaca 2011, 179). Therefore, I consider these artists as Kurdish throughout the analysis, in line with the assertion that 'Kurdish' cultural production connotes a 'discursive subject' (Kocer 2014) rather than ascription of ethnic/national identity en masse.

While I adopt 'Kurdishness' as a discursive definition, the formative identity space for these artists is Alevism. Being the second largest religious formation in Turkey, the estimates are that Alevis (belonging to several ethnic communities like Turkish and Kurdish) comprise at least ten to over one quarter of the population in Turkey (Erman and Göker 2000, 99). Dersim has been one of the centers for Alevi communities for centuries and currently it is the only city in Turkey where the majority of residents are Alevi. In a broader context, Alevism refers to a complicated social and cultural entity. Starting with the 1937-1938 military operations on the region, Dersim has got to be labelled as an inherently 'rebellious' region and a prevalently adopted reconstruction of 1938 as a state response to the rebellions (van Bruinessen 2007) in the region later merged with the Alevism dimension of the geography.

Ozlem Goner looks at the issue by resorting to theories on hegemony as practice of 'difference blindness' versus 'respect for difference'(Goner 2005, 108) and argues that, although Alevism persevered the potential of a counter-hegemonic social movement during the republican Turkey, the changing global environment and Turkish state's changing policies towards the diverse members of the country weakened Alevism's counter-hegemonic character

(Goner 2005). Various perspectives have been introduced on how to understand this process of transformation of Alevism until today, and how this transformation have shaped the identity spaces for Alevis in republican Turkey (see van Bruinessen 1996; Erman and Göker 2000; Dressler 2006; Aksoy 2016). However, the distinctions of Alevism and how its image as a state enemy have been formed throughout the history is still not transparent, as the debates over how exactly it has emerged and transformed throughout the history are not concluded. Departing from that, I look at the oral tradition element of Alevism as an essential ground for antagonism against the power (the nation-state in the case of Turkey) as an entity rising above the institutionalization of written tradition. Further, I project this antagonism to the differing understandings of space/territory by each party of this antagonism. The lines through which these cultural producers articulate their sense of space offer a possibility of understanding of Alevism as 'nomadic' movements in a settled territory, since these cultural producers also possess the experience of resettlement. Dersimi artists' articulation evokes an understanding of space and relating to space which transverse the boundary-enforcing imaginations of space of state-centered politics. Departing from that, resorting to Deleuze and Guattari's explanation of territory formation will enable me to establish the first ground of the analyses in this thesis, which is the Alevism and territory/space relationship. Establishing this ground is essential as I argue that diasporic Dersimi artists' sense of space and ways of relating to territories are borrowed from the notions of space/territory in Alevism.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, spaces do not possess properties attached to them, but rather properties of spaces get produced by virtue of the movements that happen through them. Movements are of three dispositions, territory formation, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Forces that work to make territories create the reterritorialization of spaces, while forces unmaking the territories deterritorialize them (Deleuze and Guattari 2005). In other words, what Deleuze and Guattari names as reterritorialization is creation of territories through

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different activities engaged on spaces and deterritorialization is the process of unmaking and unsettling, shaking those territories. These forces produce the functionality of a territory and that functionality becomes the property of the territory. Movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization happen concurrently through the same space and forced vis-à-vis each other (Massumi 2005; Parr 2010). So, if I take the example of a state-building process on a given land, state founders first deterritorialize that space which was formed as a territory at an undeterminable point of time. That would mean, state-building becomes a 'movement producing change' (Parr 2010, 69) within a territory which would have been defined previously by various terms, by pre-existing relationships between different 'forces'. This movement producing change aims to 'free up the fixed relations' and 'expose it [the territory] to new organizations' (Parr 2010, 69). In turn, this exposure to new relationships and organizations will reterritorialize the space the state is founded on, because then on state-building forces will be definitive of the given space. Sunni Islam, in this sense, from the time of Muhammed has been a movement of reterritorialization, as it was clinched to state formations, to conquests of land, to caliphal empires from the very beginning. Alevism, on the other hand, bears the patterns of deterritorialization movements: It was a 'movement producing change' within Ottoman establishment, which aimed to 'free up the fixed relations' brought by the centralism- and hierarchism-based Sunni Islam. Further, it introduced new organizations which were to challenge territorialized power of its ruling ideology. These agonistically positioned movements of Alevism and Sunni Islam continuously produced and reproduced what 'Ottoman Empire' was about. Dersimli musicians of those times, who basically were religious leaders of the community with their *saz*, emerge as the carriers of these movements on the side of Alevis.

Both internal and external forces of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Alevism and Sunni Islam are of relevance to the discussion of alternation of *pirs*[11] by today's

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[11] Religious leaders of Alevism, also called *dede.*

Dersimi cultural producers. External forces can be delineated mainly through the relationship of Alevis to the Safavid Empire, that produced the sense of space for Alevism, a sensing of the space as detached from physicality of territory and as centerless. Internal forces can be outlined based on the antithetically positioned doctrines of two religions, which brings up the issue of oral versus written, and nomad versus sedentary dichotomies embedded in their doctrines.

Until Shah Ismail (1487-1524) led the consolidation of Alevis against the Ottoman Empire by founding the Safavid Empire in 1501, Alevism was organized as a 'proselytizing politico-religious movement that espoused an ideology of rebellion', sprawling through Ottoman and Iranian lands (Karakaya-Stump 2008, 128). The fact that this organization entered a path of apposing to the Safavid state complicated the relationships between Alevis at the two side of borders, because adherence to Twelver faith[12] as the official religion transformed the movement of Iranian branch to a reterritorializing one for the Safavid state. Complication arose from the fact that under the effect of Safavid vision, Alevism in Iran gradually transformed to an orthodox form of Islam, which posed a challenge to the philosophy of the movement in its emerging years.

The way how Alevism under the rule of Ottoman Empire preserved itself as a deterritorializing movement and remained independent of the external force of Safavid reterritorialization was that *pirs* were not required to pattern the guidelines (*risales*) in the exact form they were dispatched to them from the convents in Safavid state, even though they appraised these convents to the end (Karakaya-Stump 2008, 205). It was at each *pir*'s disposal to decide to what extent they were going to practice these religious texts, with the consideration of the context in which members of their *ocaks* lived. The fact that Alevi teachings are conveyed orally, that rituals are based on sung poetry and the performance of *cem* demonstrated already that Alevism could not be taught from texts, but only *experienced/felt* (Karakaya-Stump 2008,

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[12] Largest branch in Shia Islam, which is based on Quran. The name refers to the twelve imams, notably Ali, his sons Hasan and Huseyin, and other imams who followed Ali's 'path'.

207). Dividing and demarcating lines on the faith, (in Deleuze and Guattarian terms, 'striating the space' of faith) influenced by reterritorializing force of Sharia, moved against the fluidity in Alevism movement. This way, although the vivid Safavid influence over Alevis posed a physical challenge to the Ottoman Empire through mobilizing Alevi communities by the side of Safavid state against the Ottoman (Karakaya-Stump 2008, 208), reterritorializing force of Safavid state concurred and contributed to the survival of Alevism, as an ideologic ('spiritual', in Deleuze and Guattari's terms) deterritorialization movement.

Internally, Alevism and Sunni Islam moved against each other on the grounds of orality versus inscription, and on nomadism versus sedentariness. Sunni Islam is unequivocally based on the Koran, where the principles of communal faith and communal action are prescribed (Endress et al. 2002, 32). Following the conflicts over interpretations of the Koran and transformations of societies, Sunni Islam was institutionalized in a way that its doctrines have become strictly specified and knowledge on every branch of sub-doctrines became monopolized by the *alims* (religious bookmen) (Endress et al. 2002, 33). Centralization of faith this way in the hands of powerholders of the society contributed to sedentariness of Sunni Islam's institutions in each Islamic state since Muhammed. Endress et al. argue that [Sunni] Islam has always been a state power, meaning its sphere of influence was attached to institutions of state. This way, it was equipped with physical infrastructures, that is mosques, religious schools, sacred sites and so on, which rendered Sunni Islam utterly 'sedentary' throughout spaces of states. This sedentariness is the very system which enabled the monopolization of knowledge production concerned with faith, through formal and informal systems. This was the very basis of critique of Alevis against the Sunni Islam in the beginning. Alevism emerged against monopolization of faith, centralization of social organizations against people's wills through sedentariness mechanisms of Ottoman Empire.

This sectarian legacy evolved into a form of Turkish-Islam synthesis during the early years of republican Turkey, which is visible in the very early debates on the constitution and writings of Kemalist elites. With the official statements of comprising a secular constitution, several major attacks against Alevis was indicative of these statements' lacking substantiality. Starting from Dersim '38, Kırıkhan (1971), Malatya (1978), Sivas (1978), Maraş (1978), Çorum (1980), Sivas (1993) and Gazi Mahallesi (1995) are some of the most well-known cases of that understanding. Considering the engagement of Alevis youth to the leftist organization in 1970s, the historical emergence of these attempts for massacre addresses the political promise of Alevi identity for the opponents of governments.

Thus, Alevi social organizations were formed in opposition to this sedentary structure of Sunni Islam. Here I want to focus on personas of both itinerant dervishes who were the apostles of Alevism, and the *pir*s of the Alevi *ocak*s to elucidate how Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'nomadicism', is useful to comprehend the ways how Alevism challenged the 'sedentariness' of Sunni Islam.

Nomadicism is first and foremost an understanding of space-time, which centralizes the movement itself within this understanding. It aims to disclose an alternative to the state-based understanding of space-time, which is very much about boundary-drawings, that transfixes, that constrains more than it opens possibilities. Brian Massumi explains it as 'arraying oneself in an open space' in opposition to 'entrenching oneself in a closed space'(Massumi 2005, xiii), so it is a space of thought which aims to replace the boundedness and finiteness of representational thought which operates through discrete components, 'reducing manyness to the One of identity' (ibid). Nomadicism means moving out of necessity, because the nomad is characterized by the very process of 'becoming, renewal, changing form', 'from repressed, denied and murdered to free, celebrated and at peace' (Rangi 2015, 4). This movement is not necessarily a physical one: 'the nomad moves, but while seated'(Deleuze and Guattari 2005,

420). In this sense, the very principle of nomadicism enables deterritorialization to take place, because the hierarchies and identities produced with the distribution of territory (through state's 'use, seizure, occupation and measurement') (Parr 2010, 187) get shattered with the endless mobility inherent in nomadicism (Deleuze and Guattari 2005).

Both the philosophy of Alevism and the way Alevi religious leaders, *pir*, related to their disciples, *talip,* constituted this nomadic force against the sedentary forces of Sunni Islam-centered Ottoman Empire. *Pir*s do not settle in places and summon their disciples before themselves, but travel from village to village where their disciples live in. And when the Alevi charismatic family lines, *ocak,* moves from one place to another, *pir*s move with them. Further, Alevis define the whole of their beliefs as "the Path", and believe that "the Path is one, droves thousand and one" (Dedekargınoğlu 2010, 193). The terminology itself adheres to a language of movement, mobility, which internalizes the priority of movement as a reference rather than the space. Moreover, there are no 'center's in the Alevi religious organization, but there are scattered sacred sites in the nature, where certain religious practices like animal sacrificing take place. Here, conceptualization of Alevism as a movement of deterritorialization as it is formulated by Deleuze and Guattari allows me to follow the patterns of resettlement of Alevi people as a historical continuity and depicts this history in a way which enables following the traces of the sonorous legacy of *pirs* in today's cultural production of diasporic artists.

Chapter 2. Politics at the Core of Cultural Production

In this chapter, I delve into the interviews I have conducted with the artists of Dersim music living in Germany, and demonstrate how they unfold the reasons of why they are engaged with making music essentially as an act of political opposition to the displacement and dispossession acts of the state. In Bourdieusian terms, they point out to the tight connections between the changing conditions of field of power and the position-takings available to them within the field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1983). Hence this part of the engagement with interviews is connected to the discussion of the politics as at the core of cultural production.

A sunny Friday of March in Berlin, sitting in the kitchen of Maviş and Kemal, I watch them rolling cigarettes one after another, lighting one with the previous one's glowing. Standing in front of me is who gives voice to Dersim, whom I had been admiring from the first moment I listened to his songs. Kemal Kahraman, born in a small village of Dersim in mid-1960s, is a pioneer figure in Dersim music today. Together with his brother Metin, they have initiated a comprehensive approach to making music of Dersim which has the characteristics of folk researching. They assert in many interviews that they were witnessing their culture dying down and their primary aim for making music was that to collect oral history narratives, songs, folk stories, accounts of religious practices by talking to and recording the elderly people of the region. They aimed to both compile collections consisting of original records of elderly Dersim people's voices and to make their own music in Zazakî based on the spirit of how predecessors made music. In due course, they developed understanding of the fragments of Dersim culture, and engaged in intellectual discussions over the characteristics of this culture. Later, Metin and Kemal Kahraman are visited by Dersim artists who move to Germany, as they become the most important sources of this novel way of music making. Mikail Aslan, ZeleMele, Ahmet Aslan and Aynur Dogan are the prominent figures of Dersim music today, who were initially

socialized into diasporic circles by making music and engaging in conversations about their cultural production with Metin and Kemal Kahraman in Berlin and after they leave this short-term collaboration to establish their own careers. In that sense, Metin and Kemal Kahraman's music can be defined as avant-garde in this diasporic cultural production, since the methods of archival collection and oral history started with them and continued by those other artists who have met them in Berlin. This avant-gardeism is a major ground for connecting music to 'emancipatory politics' as discussed by Reuben (2015, 236). That is to say, the idea that through making music sourced in elderly people's stories and songs, they contend that they are acting against Dersim cultural production going extinct. This emancipatory mission attributed to music making is visible in accounts of all Dersimi artists. When I asked Kemal Kahraman how he started to make music, he did not start to narrate the story from how much he loved to listen to his family members play *saz* or how he himself started playing it, as is the case with most of the narratives of this sort:

> I went to jail in '90 – nope, '88. (…) I went to jail because of a student protest in Ankara
> (…) They took five-six hundred people but there was an indictment against forty-fifty of
> them. Among them ten-twelve of us were arrested. In two-three years' time of the lawsuit
> they let them out, then eight-nine people got sentenced for membership to [terrorist]
> organization. It was such a serious student lawsuit. (…) so Kurdishness is on the rise,
> Kurdish songs… Metin and I as people interested in music… I was in the jail, he would
> come and go. [We were saying], "let's make [music in] Zazakî, we also have – we know
> this language.[13]

Immediately after Kemal got out of jail, together with Metin and other friends he visited Dersim to start their project of compiling elderly people's songs. This story is exemplary of the social trajectories of Kurdish artists and the junctures where they engaged with the existing conditions of the field of literary production in Turkey. More specifically, they pursue a cultural

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[13] Translations of statements from Turkish belong to me.

production 'committed' to reclaiming of cultural rights. "an artist can be committed, but (…) commitment is not a category of art. This does not mean that art is apolitical. It means that aesthetics has its own politics, or its own meta-politics" (Rancière 2013, 61). For Maviş Güneşer, the female vocalist in Metin and Kemal Kahraman's albums, the process of leaving Turkey is of a similar nature. She elucidates that, because of facing the threat of being imprisoned due to her involvement with Kurdish political organizations in the late 1980s, she fled the country to request asylum in Europe. Both Kemal's and Maviş's migration coincides with the last wave of Kurdish and Alevi migration to Europe. In the case of Mikail Aslan, the element of Alevism is brought up right from the beginning, Music was a tradition in their family and he started playing music at home. This narration points out to a rather implicit naturalization of making music to being a member of an (Alevi) family.

The ways in which avant-gardeism unfold takes other forms in the example of artists later coming to the diaspora. One significant example is Taner Akyol. He is the figure who diverges the most from other Dersimi musicians in Germany, in terms of his relating to Dersim and the career path he followed accordingly. He studied classical European music composition in conservatory in Berlin and applied his knowledge of composition to *saz*, being the first artist ever to bring together these two traditions. He labored to found a department of *saz* instrument in the Berlin University of Arts, the largest art school in Europe, as it was the most prevalent instrument played by the large community from Turkey living in Germany. He asserts that he has politicized his music in a way he can voice the, what he feels, left unrecognized and disregarded state atrocities against Dersimi and other suppressed peoples in Turkey to the world. He finds this feasible as he perceives his musical production having a global audience. He gives the example of his collaboration with Greek singer and political activist Maria Farantouri, to whom he has described the Dersim people in the context of Kurdish people's struggles and that then she desired to sing a famous Dersim folk song in Zazakî in an album

made of songs of Taner Akyol. He explains that he thought of this idea after feeling in pain about the comments of a republican nationalist member of the parliament saying: "What were they [early republican officials] supposed to do? Were they supposed to feed them, instead of killing?", referring to the 1938 massacre. He asserts, because he wrote a politically controversial commentary in that album, it wasn't allowed to be licensed as a local album. He notes:

> I had this aim: This album is distributed in fifty countries. Everybody listening to Maria Farantouri will first, read what had happened in '38 in Dersim, second, that Zazakî is a language under protection by UNESCO, and third, that I wish that no such incident will ever happen in any place of the world and [be it known] that is why I made this.

A very strong expression of what Reuben refers to as 'emancipatory politics' (Reuben 2015) can be observed in Akyol's narration. He is of the opinion that Dersimi people are only voicing and sharing their lament and rage within their own communities, and he is trying to change this through making projects like this one. The most intriguing part about his approach to politicization of his cultural production is that he constructs this a rather personal mission of engaging his music to the efforts of reclaiming identity in diaspora, or, attaching of political justification to his cultural production. Beyond his project of making 1938 and other atrocities in Turkey familiar through his music, he does not put forth an envisagement about dissensual politics around Dersim. In other words, he does not express what he expects to discern if indeed 'world' becomes familiar about Dersim and 1938.

A recurring theme in the narratives is the experience of 'being othered' as a triggering condition for engaging with cultural production. Mikail Aslan starts from the very beginning of the conversation to talk about being an 'exile family', who were forcefully sent to Kayseri, a city in central Anatolia known for being inhabited widely by Sunni conservatists, after the 1980 coup in Turkey. He mentions that his sister was tortured and his family has been through major sorrows. He asserts that it was only then, when starting to live in a neighborhood of Turkish Muslim families that he experienced how "being an 'other', being marginalized because of

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being an 'other' felt like". He connects this feeling to the fact that his family and he did not know 'the language' (Turkish). The fact that they did not know Turkish was becoming materialized in public for Aslan and his brother in their mother's presence, because she did not know Turkish at all. He tells a very intensive anecdote, himself being moved at the time of telling the story, as well:

> My mother does not know Turkish at all. Whenever we took the public bus together, my mom in her *şalvar* and *poşu*[14], my older brother was telling her: "Don't utter a word." I was sensitive about this since my young ages, although I still do not know the source of it. I was getting very angry at my brother, swearing at everybody around us, I was bursting out: "Shout out!". "Speak", I was telling her, "let everybody know what you are, you are Kurdish, don't be ashamed!"

Combining this anecdote with the mentions to come later about his mother, it is possible to observe that he establishes almost a direct equation between his mother, Zazakî and Dersim. It can be claimed that here it is evident how language is particularly suitable to the notion of 'mobility within immobility', which was before articulated to be an essential part of deterritorialization. That is because, language is very much mobile as anyone in any part of the world can speak a language, it is carried everywhere with the person who is able to speak it. It is also placed in an immobility, which is all the cultural significations and the historical references, that language is embedded in. This is indeed what is indicated in Mikail Aslan's referring to his mother, who spoke Zazakî only and was the one who knew the cultural practices and watchwords of social living in Dersim, as his living, embodied channel of relating to outdistanced 'homeland'. If that way his mother was an embodied source to refer to when questing elements of Dersim culture, music had become the pathway of reconstructing this

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[14] Also known as keffiyeh, is a type of scarf made of cotton and has white and black squared pattern. Widely used in the middle east.

relating. A similar story is articulated by ZeleMele, when asked how he started making music, telling the story of how his relationship with language and Turkishness was constructed:

> "I started the primary school on a day when a huge Turkish flag was flown. Only later I figured out that it was the anniversary of the 1980 coup d'état. Of course, we saw ourselves as Turks, everybody had to hide themselves. Family elders asked us to hide ourselves, otherwise something bad could happen to us- houses were busted back then. At that point, we believed in [us] being Turks, everything at the school was in accordance with that. 'This language we speak is the village language, now we live in the city and we need to speak the city language'- that language would be Turkish.

Mikail Aslan mentions that his "classical leftist friends", that is, Kemalism-influenced leftists suggested that he translates his songs to Turkish, that way more people would listen to him, while Kurdish people and people from Kurdish movements were supporting his effort to write in his mother tongue had been definitive of his political alliances, which can be argued to be pursued until today.

Furthermore, he thinks of the processes of engaging with art and politicization as driven with his senses about what felt right and what felt wrong, that he first had these feelings about the injustices, traumas, assimilation his family and his people had been through and later he found the political arguments to substantiate, justify his position within the circles of Kurdish movements of the time. In a very bold statement, he says "Just like a person takes to the mountains and fights, for me making music with *saz* in this language had that kind of a meaning." Then, he asserts:

> "Relying on them [Kurdish political activists], I thought that there could be no art in the language of the colonists, real art could only be made in one's own language, one's own culture, if one had to change her/his mother tongue when engaging with art, it cannot be considered as art."

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He points out that the people from his family, his villagers, his Alevi circles were not supportive of his effort to make music in Zazakî in the first eight years of his career, claiming that it was a nationalist tendency to do so. The ground of this claim can be found in the political context of the time, where both Turkish leftist groups and PKK were clashing with the Turkish state with Marxist maxims and, nationalism, in this case presumably a proto-Zazaism, was considered to pose a challenge to the struggles from within and that is why it was unwelcome. However, later, as the music Aslan made became appreciated, the ideas about the need to preserve Zazakî language was flourishing as well, especially among the Dersimi population in the diaspora. This anecdote is reminding of Jacques Attali's depiction of the complicated position of a musician in a society when he says

> The musician, like music, is ambiguous. He plays a double game. He is simultaneously musicus and cantor, reproducer and prophet. If an outcast, he sees society in a political light. If accepted, he is its historian, the reflection of its deepest values. He speaks of society and he speaks against it. (…) Shaman, doctor, musician. He is one of society's first gazes upon itself; he is one of the first catalyzers of violence and myth. I will show later that the musician is an integral part of the sacrifice process, a channeler of violence(…) (Attali 1985, 12)

Later, he expresses the final position his cultural production endeavor has taken vis-à-vis politics when he says: "if there was no social and political struggle put up, we would be left alone, because there would be no audience to shoulder our endeavor."

Taner Akyol's position vis-à-vis engagement is significantly different compared to Aslan's, Kahraman's positions. Primarily, his current social circle is comprised of the well-known *saz* virtuosos in Turkey, who are Turkish Alevis. This indicates a distinctive path in his politicization, yet he narrates this condition through musical proficiency, when saying he has not been able to maintain relations with other *saz* players he met in Berlin until this time, because of not being able to communicate with the one who were not educated professionally

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in music. He believes this effort of his rendered him non-populist and thus he rejected material gains to an extent. However, he believes that having been educated in Western classical music and composition broadened his perspective compared to the people who have pursued artistic careers without a conservatory education. This articulation offers a completely different case of politicization in diasporic cultural production.

Chapter 3. Ways of Relating to Space in Cultural Production of Diasporic Artists

In this chapter, I examine the discourse of artists on how they make sense of making music of Dersim being while living in another country. The commonality in their discourses is the expressions of relating to both Dersim and Germany through their experiences but not through physical presence or through the dichotomy of homeland versus foreign land. Very much in relation to those experiences, they express strong commitment to Dersim as the source of their musical production. In a seemingly contradictory fashion, it can be inferred from their telling that they don't find it necessary to have born in Dersim, to live in Dersim or longing to 'go back' to Dersim. Cemil Qocgiri, one artist of Dersim music who has born and raised in Germany expressed that

> It is not the people to whom we can attribute music as the source, but rather it is the land,
> that owns music. And that is how a timbre from thousands of years ago can pass along to
> us today, even though we are not aware of it.

Although in this expression it is evident that they perceive music as having a direct connection to land/soil, these artists do not imagine this land/soil as a fixed space afar from them. This line of vision echoes Deleuze and Guattari's 'deterritorialization' through 'nomadic' way of thought, since Qocgiri's framing of soil inheres the 'mobility within immobility' (Rangi 2015, 4) when made sense of as something immobile when denoted as the permanent source of music and then made sense of something mobile when music sourced from the soil is in constant evolution as the 'timbres' are composed infinitely different ways.

Following the same vein, these artists express that their music is sourced from Dersim but they do not feel the need to go to Dersim to produce music. Also, the fact that they produce Dersim music in Germany does not mean that the destination of their music has become Germany. By destination I mean, neither the target audience is (the people in) Germany, nor

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the future generations to follow the path of this generation of artists will refer to Germany as the source of their music, even though they are not born and raised in Dersim, or don't plan to 'go back' and live in Dersim. This condition that they have a starting point but they don't have a predesignated destination is in line with 'nomadic movement' defined by Deleuze and Guattari. Edward Said makes a similar point when he asserts that "Life of exile is "nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew" (Said 2001, 149).

One intriguing aspect of in Mikail Aslan's articulation of his cultural production is about 'realness of art'. In opposition to widely reproduced discourse that art stands as a form of fiction, whose relation to reality might be discussed, Aslan indicates that because art is "the language of the most noble sensibilities, emotions", the artist cannot lie. Artist produces the way s/he feels like, and what one feels cannot be changed by force. And this is how "art is very much realist". His point bridges his understanding of music making as creation of affection, and it is connected to the reasons of why he started to make music. He explicates, in their years as youth in Kayseri, whenever they missed their village, gathering with few Dersimi people, they were listening to the little tapes they had brought with them from Dersim. They felt, the only way to connect to their identity, history, their past, the only emotional connection they could make was through listening to those records of local minstrels. Here he creates a very delicate way of expressing how music is instrumental to him, that he is engaged with music because it carries with it the culture, the power to assert one's identity, to reconnect with one's history and past, that it was something very material because it could immediately trigger the affectional experience they were missing due to being detached from homeland. He asserts that although he could not establish bonds with the leftist tradition due to being rather interested in "seclusion, listening to the nature's voice, listening to the god's voice, meditation in silence and religious orders", all his social circle was comprised of leftists. This point sounds like trying to

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justify his political stance, since in the context of Kurdish Alevi politics in Turkey, one need to justify her/his position as a public figure, by having involved with leftist politics, having 'paid the price'.

An important reference for all these artists is *saz,* as they equate their music to this instrument. When talking about making music for the first time, Mikail Aslan starts his narration by saying "The things I first did on *saz…*". I find this very important because *saz* looks like the embodiment of the essential material part of rendering Dersimi artists' cultural production connected to what is 'physical'. That is to say, as it was sometimes implicitly sometimes explicitly readable in artists' statements, what connects them to the land/soil is this instrument which makes the sound that is peculiar to and that is reminding of Dersim. *Saz* instrument this way becomes a very intriguing means of relating to a space, not only for the musicians who play it, but also for the listeners. Voice as well is an instrument as such, but because *saz* embodies the history of a tradition, that it can be carried along, it can be handed from master to the apprentice, that it is highly symbolic in its physicality renders it a key component in the relationship between Dersimi musicians and Dersim as a land/soil.

Another significant point in Aslan's narration is his relation to Alevism. he asserts that he was indeed affected by the Alevi folk poems, *deyiş*, but he was immediately using his mother tongue when he wanted to make "music of his own". Here I see that he wants to differentiate Dersim music from Alevi folk poems, as much as he notes that he himself benefits from religious sources, it is not the Turkish *deyiş* tradition that he roots Dersim music in. He narrates that he started to make songs based on the stories of traumas they have been through as a family. The lyrics of one song he prefers to mention goes as: "'38 massacre is not over yet, siblings don't lay down your arms!" He finds it important that he was as young as 18-19 when he had these ideas to which he still adheres to.

In the second part of the narrative, Aslan illustrates the conditions in which he and his mother moved to Germany, after being expelled from university due to his political activities. He likens the first five years in Germany he spent with his mother in an asylum center to seclusion, because he was excluded, dismissed in the associations where "classical" Alevis and leftists predominated. In this sense, he establishes his bonds with music through two main grounds: Music as a form which becomes the means of engaging in a political struggle of reclaiming cultural rights, and music as a content which inheres a reflection of Aslan's spiritual and religious understanding of the world.

When it comes to what he thinks about being in Germany and engaging in with Dersim culture, he primarily suggests that the quest for identity and culture usually develops in the diaspora. When he argues that it is the potentiality to "ask questions about yourself and your society in a braver manner" that renders diaspora an open space of engaging in those quests, he establishes a connection between the spiritual/imaginal form of being in search and the material/physical practice- movement. His way of thinking can be read as asserting an inseparable tie between movement and productive questioning of one's allegiance to space/territory, because it is to assert that only when one moves away from 'the center' from where those allegiances defined, that s/he can get in a quest for, questions the very idea of 'center'.

Another aspect of how artists conceive of being a cultural producer who lives away from Turkey appears through discussion of exposure to the highly one-sidedly ideologized media broadcasting and publication in the case of marginalized or othered groups in Turkey. Artists assert that it is the possibility of 'listening to one's own voice', that is, contemplating about notions like language and culture, by being able to distance oneself from intenseness of daily politics in Turkey. Mikail Aslan among them asserts that, most of the works on Dersim culture and language have been produced in the diaspora. Moreover, because the institutional channels

like conservatories, concert halls are more open for migrants in Germany, than they are for non-Turks in Turkey, he finds it natural that it is easier for the Dersimi people in the diaspora to embrace otherwise disregarded Zazakî language. What is more, he contends that the ground of cultural production, whether in the form of making music or the endeavor of preserving language.

In the case of Taner Akyol, his relation to Dersim as a hometown is also different from the other artists who have moved to Germany from Dersim, as Akyol's family lived in the western city of Bursa before he moved to Germany and Akyol was isolated by his family from the awareness that arose among the Dersimi children and youth in the 1980s. As he narrates, it was only after he socialized within the Dersimi and other Kurdish communities in Berlin that he embraced the identity of being Dersimi. This late socialization is evidently dissimilar to the other Dersimi artists in the way he is engaged with making music, as much as he expresses that he is fed from his 'roots' from Dersim, and his music is very much political. He states, as he entered into discussions about history and cultural production of Dersim in Germany with Dersimi people like Kemal Kahraman, he became familiar and adopted the claim of being Dersimi. Yet still, he neither knows Zazakî nor pays tribute to the previous generation Dersimi artists like Zeynel Kahraman, Silo Qiz and others in his works, unlike the other Dersimi artists, whose mother tongue is Zazakî and who have been raised in Dersim. His mission of making sufferings of his people may be interpreted to be connected to, or even deriving from his dedication and insistence on manifesting the presence of Alevis in Germany, and particularly in Berlin. He robustly emphasizes that he does not identify himself as a migrant, that he "does not behave like a migrant", that he does not look forward to going back to Turkey to live there and that Germany is his homeland. When asked how various genres of music he is engaged with is labeled by production companies or music organizers, since he is a musician of *saz* informed by western classical music, he explains that the "Taner Akyol Trio" is labelled as

'ethnic jazz', while one concerto he has composed, which has *saz* melodies included in it, was labelled contemporary classical music. "For me, it is contemporary music, it is my music, and I am living today." He values that he can disclose his identity and express political opinions freely, and also, that he enjoys a standard of wealth, which would not be the case if he pursued the same life in Turkey. Moreover, it is the possibility of isolation from the constant exposure to news from Turkey and the "silence and loneliness" that he finds essential for being able to produce. It should be asserted that all Dersimi artists share this contention that living in Germany gives them this artistic autonomy.

Conclusion

This thesis has articulated that the experience of movement can be thought of as the very space of cultural production. In the case of Dersimi artists, the experience of resettlement in Germany has become the very condition of engaging in making music. This relationality can be thought of in the way Walter Benjamin asserts that "construction presupposes destruction" (as cited in Navaro-Yashin 2009, 6). Meaning, cultural production, and in particular music making, articulated to inherently possess the experience of movement, movement that deterritorializes, that is nomadic in itself. Dersimi artists' articulations of how these relations can be expressed. Further, it should be asserted that this relationality is not peculiar to diasporic Dersimi artists, but rather their experience of resettlement echoes the properties of Kurdish-Alevi music which is based on a cultural production that is based on not being territorialized. Therefore, when looked at the motives and contextualization of music within social organization of life for Kurdish-Alevis, it can be argued that it is fundamentally an expression of how these people have established their presence as an antinomy against the state as a mechanism colonizing, monolithizing and standardizing. What is particular about Dersimi artists at diaspora is that, I contend, they are engaged in cultural production with the high awareness of what their music implicates within a greater picture of cultural production in a colonized world. It is also significant that these artists are not resorting to the repeated discourse of feeling the need to 'go back to homeland' to reconnect with what they are missing in the 'foreign land' that they have resettled in. This is also reminding of Edward Said's assertion that, it is the 'nomad's or in his words exile's feature, that s/he "jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong" (Said 2001, 145), and that is what defines diasporic cultural production as a divergent position of experience.

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