WOMEN LABORING IN HOME-BASED AND COOPERATIVE WORK IN NURTEPE/KAGITHANE: A DIVERSE SOCIAL ECONOMIES APPROACH

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- 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;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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ABSTRACT

Women laboring in home-based and cooperative work in Nurtepe/Kagithane:

A diverse social economies approach

This thesis research aims to depict a non-essentialist and non-reductionist representation of the articulation of home-based work with women's unpaid domestic labor within the household. It is a case study based on the in-depth interviews conducted with the members of a women's cooperative, who perform various kinds of labor and occupy multiple class and non-class positions both within and outside their households. The thesis provides a diverse economies framework for social analysis of the interviewees' households and the cooperative, by exploring the multiple class and non-class processes overdetermining these social sites.

ÖZET

Nurtepe/Kağıthane'de ev-eksenli ve kooperatif çalışmada emek harcayan kadınlar: Çeşitli toplumsal ekonomiler yaklaşımı

Bu tez araştırması, ev-eksenli çalışma ile kadınların ücretsiz ev içi emeğinin eklemlendiği hanenin özcü ve indirgemeci olmayan bir temsilini sunmayı amaçlıyor. Bu çalışma, bir kadın kooperatifi üyesi olan kadınlar ile yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanan bir vaka çalışmasıdır. Bu kadınlar, hem hane hem de kooperatif içinde çeşitli biçimlerde emek harcamakta ve çoklu sınıf ve sınıf olmayan konumlar işgal etmektedir. Tez, hane ve kooperatifi çoklu belirleyen sınıf ve sınıf olmayan süreçleri inceleyerek bu alanların çeşitli ekonomiler çerçevesinden toplumsal analizini yapıyor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Intent(s) of the thesis

As a Marxist feminist researcher, I was very intrigued when I came across an interview with a home-based worker in the newspaper. In the interview[1], home-based worker Fatma described her daily routine and the difficulties she faced in keeping house, caring for and supporting her family. She said she only slept for two or three hours a day because she had to spend an immense amount of time for both domestic work, home-based work (in her case, screwing lamp sockets), and caring for her children. According to the interview, Fatma's paid and unpaid labor time makes up around 20 hours. Instead of sleeping, she does piecework at night, which is followed by the waking up and sending off of her children to school. After sleeping for around two to three hours, Fatma's domestic workday begins, which lasts until the end of the school day. She then helps her children with their homework and feeds them, after which she gets on with doing piecework. Fatma also expresses feelings of inadequacy and guilt toward her children and husband, who is chronically ill therefore unable to stick to a regular job, for not being able to support them.

Since Fatma's experience is embedded at the intersection of relations of class and gender, I thought a research into the articulation of unpaid domestic labor and home-based labor would enable me to simultaneously study labor exploitation and gender oppression within the same site. As I did more research, I came across radically different (if not openly opposing) approaches to the topic by civil society

[1] https://www.evrensel.net/haber/398488/ev-eksenli-calisan-fatma-baser-ne-kadar-ugrassam-da-yetersiz-hissediyorum

organizations that focused on promoting the economic (and subsequently social and political) empowerment of women through home-based work by training them to be entrepreneurs.

These liberal accounts on home-based work, at first, strengthened my desire to make visible the oppression and exploitation to which Fatma was subject. At that point, I had in mind the following research question: How is it that when one looks at Fatma, they can view her as an autonomous independent worker with entrepreneurial potential? Because when I looked at her, I saw a super-exploited and oppressed victim of gender and economic structures. However, soon I realized I had fallen not only into one, but two fallacies in posing the aforementioned research question and fixing my position as a researcher in relation to my research. In this sense, my "leftist take" was underpinned by economic determinist and reductionist tendencies.

The first was that, as a feminist, I was denying Fatma any sort of agency by positing her as a passive victim of patriarchal oppression, based on the very limited information I had in hand. From this viewpoint, as Fatma continues to take on low-paying home-based jobs, the degree of her oppression by her husband intensifies, because she is further entrapped within the confines of her home which functions to strengthen her role as the sole undertaker of housework and care labor within the household as well as maintain her financial dependence over her husband. Hence, one may argue that, in this context where Fatma is working long hours doing low-paying home-based jobs and performing unpaid domestic labor within her home, she is subject to a double exploitation: by capitalism and patriarchy. This perspective tends to deny Fatma any form of active agency in viewing her as a super-exploited and oppressed female subject.

Secondly, I was thinking in reductionist and economic deterministic terms in assuming that, as the sole performer of domestic and care labor Fatma was exploited, and consequently oppressed by her husband/family. Such an account is reductionist because it posits gender inequality as being derived solely from the unequal sharing of domestic labor, and economic deterministic in the sense that Fatma's liberation depends upon an equal sharing of this labor. Additionally, analyzing Fatma's life in structural terms and concluding that her experience is the result of systems of exploitation and oppression, this perspective entails an inevitable deferral of the improvement of Fatma's conditions and fails to offer her any alternatives in the present.

The liberal take on Fatma's life can be something like the following: First, it could be argued that Fatma's liberation from male oppression may be achieved if she is to become financially independent through full-time employment outside her home, however is that possible (or even desirable) when she has a sick husband who is frequently out of a job and young kids? Then, it could be argued that home-based work seems to enable (at least potentially) Fatma to both provide for and take care of her family, putting aside the fact that she is unable to earn a sufficient income currently. It can be said that, as a flexible home-based worker, she has potential autonomy in allocating how much time she will spend doing what. Whether or not this potential is actualized is not yet our issue here. The issue is that Fatma appears as a heroic subjectivity endowed with the capability to endure the severe consequences of economic and emotional hardship, thus, with the right resources and training to improve her skills and abilities she can be empowered to establish a profitable business and become a home-based micro-entrepreneur.

I should note that these two liberal perspectives (full-time employment and micro-entrepreneurial approaches) are also underpinned by the aforementioned assumption that economic independence leads to women's liberation from male oppression which confines women into their homes and renders them domestic female subjects.

However, in praising Fatma for her resilience and ability to make ends meet with very little resources, it may be argued that the micro-entrepreneurial approach does more than my initial leftist approach, at least in the sense that it does not postpone, or consign Fatma's liberation to a distant future, but is rather aimed toward providing her with somewhat feasible solutions to create an alternative. These solutions may not be accurate and/or well-tailored for her, or other homologous home-based workers for that matter. Regardless, it can be said that, compared to the micro-entrepreneurial approach, the economic deterministic leftist take tends to point out the limits, rather than attempt to analyze the conditions that may enable us to imagine and build possible alternatives.

This realization guided me in designating my ethico-political stance as a researcher. Consequently, instead of analyzing the articulation of home-based work with unpaid domestic labor as emerging out of the intersection of systems of exploitation and oppression (capitalism and patriarchy), I attempted to depict my research field in a diverse manner, by looking at multiple and contradictory processes at work in this overdetermined site. Because only then it is possible to lay out the otherwise overlooked contradictions and possibilities for transformation existing within a social context. This would also allow me to conceive "the *existing* situation as a (problematic) resource for projects of *becoming*, a place from which to build something more desirable in the future" (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. xxxii). In

this vein, I also expanded my field research into a local cooperative, a hybrid enterprise founded by women who were either former home-based workers or still are.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

In this thesis, I attempt to make visible the contradictions emerging out of the articulation of women's unpaid domestic labor with home-based work. In order to analyze this articulation and explore ways to enact non-exploitative forms of class process within this context, I aim to emphasize the contingent and diverse character of the household, which is commonly represented as a social site wherein relations of exploitation and oppression are thought to be intertwined, functioning smoothly and without contradiction.

I begin the first chapter by depicting the intent of the thesis research, which is followed by an outline of its theoretical framework and the definition of its key concepts. The second chapter consists of a review of the existing literature on home-based work, wherein I critically engage with two distinct frameworks within which home-based work is studied.

The third chapter comprises the methodology section of the thesis and an overview of the research field. The section on methodology covers the research methods I employed, my entry into the research field as well as on what grounds and how I formulated my interview questions. The overview of the research field includes a brief introduction of the neighborhood where I conducted my research and some information regarding two key institutional agents of the field, Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV) and the Commencement Women's

Cooperative[2]. The final section of this chapter consists of the introduction of the interviewees.

In the fourth chapter, I provide a diverse depiction of the political economic landscape of the Commencement Women's Cooperative, with a specific focus on its members' commodity production, and identify the forms of class process characterizing the cooperative's varying activities. I conclude the chapter by elaborating a set of future possibilities and potential explorations to transform the cooperative's class structure toward the enactment of a communal class process.

The fifth chapter of the thesis focuses on the individual case of a home-based worker who is also a member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative. I begin by analyzing the interviewee's household through looking into the multiple and contradictory social processes overdetermining it, and depict the class and non-class positions that the interviewee occupies both within and outside her household. I expound the contradictions that emerge or may emerge from the interactions among these different positions, which are not fixed, but rather emerge as the results of constant bargaining and open to transformation.

In the sixth chapter I analyze the varying forms of domestic labor process pertaining to the households of the interviewees, and inquire the cases in which the domestic class structure undergoes a transformation. In doing so, I also trace the diversifying effects introduced into the field by subjectivity.

[2] The cooperative's real name has been changed for anonymity reasons.

1.3 Theoretical framework

J. K. Gibson-Graham advocates for a theory of economic difference and diversity and emphasizes the significance of differentiation of various forms of class process that are usually subsumed under the umbrella of capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 17) in her 1996-book titled "The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)". Her project stands on a re-conception of the category of class through the employment of the concept of "overdetermination" (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2000, p. 6) by Louis Althusser (who borrowed it from Sigmund Freud as will be explicated below). The concept seems to have had hit the spot, so to speak, for Marxists grappling with the question of determination in the second half of the 20th century. I think it is best to make a short detour here and attend to this concept, before delving into the conception of class that made Gibson-Graham's project possible.

1.3.1 On overdetermination

The concept of overdetermination complicates the classical Marxist edifice metaphor that treats the "superstructure" as a mere phenomenon of the "material base" (namely, the economy) and makes possible the establishment of a theoretical ground for analyzing social processes in their complexity, without falling into economic reductionism. From an ontological viewpoint, the concept establishes social processes, including economic ones, as not bearing within themselves an essence, or an immanent logic. Such an ontology not only treats the field of the economy as open to transformation through its interaction with other social processes, but also acknowledges the "relative autonomy" (Althusser, 1971, p. 54) of all social instances with respect to each other, and depicts the social as a complex whole (social formation) that is made up of the "articulation" of these different instances. In short,

overdetermination can be thought as the glue that links all parts that together form society, into the social whole (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 146). This glue is not totalizing but rather constitutive of a contingent articulation.

I would like to clarify that I employ a specific interpretation of the concept of overdetermination, which has multiple meanings across different disciplines; hence the existence of a vast literature on it. Althusser himself says he borrowed it from two disciplines, namely, those of psychoanalysis and linguistics. In Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, it is used to describe the process of dream formation. Freud identifies two distinct mechanisms at work in the formation of dreams. The first is "the work of condensation". This can be defined as multiple meanings being fused into a single image in a dream. Dream work condenses multiple elements into a unity, and:

> [E]ach element of the dream-content turns out to be *over-determined*, to be represented many times and in many ways in the dream-thoughts. (Freud, 1900, p. 216)

The second mechanism is called "the work of displacement", which can roughly be defined as the substitution of one image with another. According to Freud, this mechanism:

> [O]n the one hand strips the psychically valuable elements of their intensity, and on the other creates new values *by way of over-determination* out of elements of low value; it is the new values that then reach the dream-content. (Freud, 1900, p. 235)

Thus, for the psychoanalytical framework, and those disciplines that draw on it, condensation and displacement are key mechanisms in defining the concept of overdetermination.

However, within the scope of this thesis, I use the concept as it is interpreted by Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff (1987, pp. 2–4). This take focuses rather on the complexity of social relations and stresses the multiplicity of processes at work in

an inherently contradictory social site. This interpretation entails emphasizing the multiplicity of processes that are simultaneously effective over and affected by one another.

As noted above, one implication of the idea of overdetermination is that all social processes can impact, change, and transform each other, hence the characterization of every process in society and the social whole as ever-changing. The employment of the concept elicited further theoretical inquiries, one of which concerning the Marxian concept of mode of production. Mode of production in its broadest sense refers to "not only the material conditions but also the social conditions of production" (Althusser & Balibar, 1970, p. 180).

During the 1960s and 70s the mode of production framework underwent a reorientation (Özselçuk, 2009, p. 44) that gave way to the debate on the articulation of modes of production. The debate emerged upon Althusser's theoretical intervention and was also "called for by a number of distinct and pressing political concerns that traditional Marxism not only failed to address, but to an extent brought into being in the first place" (Özselçuk, 2009, p. 44). Thus, against the backdrop of the crises of the Soviet experience and upon Althusser's employment of the concept of overdetermination emerged the debate on the articulation of modes of production (which, in unity, make up the complexly and contingently constituted, in other words, overdetermined, social formation) which marked a deconstructive moment that rendered possible the decentering of capitalism as *the* mode of production.

A second implication of the ontology of overdetermination is that since each social process is constituted by all others, it contains contending or contradicting tendencies that are constitutive of itself. Wolff and Resnick call these "the pushes and pulls emanating from all the other processes that make it [the social process]

what it is" (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 147). In other words, to argue that something is overdetermined is to argue that it is contradictory.

Moreover, there also exists an epistemological implication of the concept of overdetermination, which is that it "insists upon the existence of an ethico-political aspect to the process of knowledge production" (Madra, Özselçuk, & Erçel, 2002, p. 126). This ethico-political dimension is an assertion that there exists no single theory to explain all truths and that each and every theoretical production attempt requires an entry point. This will be remarked below when I discuss class as an entry-point concept.

1.3.2 On class as a process and its distinction from the labor process

This thesis employs the concept of class as theorized by Resnick and Wolff. Their conception of class is non-essentialist in the sense that it does not assign class a constitutive privilege over other social instances or processes, and anti-reductionist as the category is not conceived in terms of relations of power, property, or consciousness (Wolff & Resnick, 1996). Instead, class is conceived as an economic process comprised of the processes of production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor (Resnick & Wolff, 1987).

In light of this definition of class along with the ontology of overdetermination, the social formation is conceived as a contingent articulation of the class and non-class processes that exist within it. Non-class processes include both economic and non-economic processes (natural, cultural, and political). Surely at this point, one must begin by clarifying what a process is. According to Resnick and Wolff (1987, p. 19) Marxian theory conceives society "as a complex totality of relationships":

> The basic unit of analysis in Marxian theory is "process." Every relationship in society is composed of its distinguishing set of processes…These processes, for Marxian theory, never occur in society alone; they appear rather in sets as the distinctive and constitutive aspects of relationships. Thus the theory approaches relationships in society as complex. To understand them requires the specification of their distinguishing aspects, that is, their component processes. (Resnick & Wolff, 1987, pp. 19–20)

This thesis is grounded upon an anti-essentialist and anti-reductionist theoretical terrain, as it is an inquiry into the various processes overdetermining the articulation of unpaid domestic labor with home-based work, as well as an attempt to provide a complex depiction of the political economic landscape of an enterprise (that is, the Commencement Women's Cooperative).

Before moving on to define the concept of "surplus labor" and define the forms of class process that its production, appropriation and distribution engender, first we need to look into how Marxian theory defines labor process. Karl Marx defines labor as a "process between man and nature, a process by which man [...] mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature" (Marx, Fowkes, & Mandel, 1976, p. 283). According to Marx (1976, p. 287) the product of the labor process "is a use-value, a piece of natural material adapted to human needs by means of a change in its form". This interaction between individuals and nature requires not only the exertion of the individual's muscle power, but also the exertion of his or her brain power to transform nature in order to satisfy human needs and desires.

Those members of a society who interact with nature as such are called "direct laborers" (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 152). For instance, let's take the example of an individual who performs domestic labor within her household through cooking meals for herself. In this case the individual is a direct laborer who is engaged in a labor process, of which the products are use-values, that is, home

cooked meals. In cooking for herself, she is engaged in an economic non-class process.

Let's say she gets married, moves in with her husband, and starts cooking meals for him as well. In the case where she was cooking for herself, she was performing domestic labor to nourish and reproduce herself. On the other hand, in cooking an extra portion for her husband she is also performing "surplus labor". That is, more than the amount that is necessary to reproduce herself. The products of her surplus labor are appropriated by her husband. Now, this process implies not merely a labor process, but also a class process, distinct from the labor process described above. Thus, although a labor process and class process are both economic processes, the existence of the former does not necessarily indicate the existence of the latter. In this sense, a labor process wherein the laborer does not produce surplus is an economic non-class process.

In light of this example we can conclude that class process entails the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor. Necessary labor implies the part where direct laborers produce the goods and services necessary to reproduce themselves as direct laborers (labor process), whereas surplus labor pertains to their performance of an extra amount of labor than it is necessary to do so (class process). This is a crucial differentiation because although class process and labor process have existed all across history, only after Marx it was possible to conceive and analyze the former as distinct and different from the latter (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 152).

This definition of class also leads to a kind of proliferation of class positions that an individual can occupy. When class is defined as the social process of production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor, this leads to a morphing

of “class as a singular process” into “class as a plural process” (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 153) and the affirmation of individuals’ class identities as potentially multiple and shifting (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 19). The moments of the production and appropriation of surplus labor in this process make up what Resnick and Wolff call the “fundamental class process”, whereas the distribution of the appropriated surplus labor corresponds to the “subsumed class process” (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, pp. 154–160).

The pluralizing conception of class is radically different than the “dichotomous theory of class” which is traditionally attributed to Marx:

> [T]hat is, a theory that societies are predominantly characterized by two opposing classes understood as actual social groups. Thus the Marxian tradition works with a prevalent notion of capitalism, feudalism, and slavery, for example, as societies (or “modes of production”) predominantly characterized by the class oppositions of capitalists-workers, landlords-serfs, and masters-slaves, respectively. (Resnick & Wolff, 1987, p. 112)

Moreover, Resnick and Wolff’s definition urges us to direct equal attention to the three distinct processes that make up the class process, without overlooking any of them. In this respect, it is also possible to emphasize the distributive moment, which is traditionally overlooked. Such emphasis further complicates the social process in question, making visible further contradictions and enabling one to theorize possibilities of change.

Last but not least, the definition of class as a process pertaining to the moments of production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor implicates a rather simple redefinition of another Marxian concept, that is, exploitation. The concept of exploitation has historically been associated or coupled with the idea of “alienation”. Althusser denounces the term “alienation” as part of the Feuerbachian

terminology implicit in the works of Young Marx[3], of which the basic philosophical problematic also remains Feuerbachian according to him, as Marx was merely applying Feuerbach's theory of alienation, namely his "theory of 'human nature' to politics and the concrete activity of man, before extending it (in large part) to political economy" (Althusser, 1969, pp. 45–46).

In the analytical framework of class as defined above, the notion of exploitation can be freed of the theoretical humanistic connotations attributed to it as is the case in the coupling of the concept with the idea of alienation, because it becomes an economic concept referring to the appropriation of surplus labor by those other than its direct producers.

1.3.3 Different forms of class process

In light of these expositions, we can finally remark the five forms of class process identified by Marx and Marxists: communal, independent (or ancient), slave, feudal and capitalist. Each form differs in terms of the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor, namely, how and by whom it is produced and appropriated; and how and to whom it is distributed in order to secure what conditions of existence.

Let's start with the first two, independent and communal, as they are similar to each other in the sense that they are both non-exploitative[4]. However, they differ

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[3] For Althusser's periodization of Marx's work see his essays in *For Marx* (Althusser, 1969).

[4] The characterization of the independent class process as non-exploitative is subject to questioning. This form of class process is sometimes defined as being exploitative in the sense that the independent producer is engaged in "self-exploitation". Satyananda Gabriel theorizes self-exploitation as being constituted by the "unified production and appropriation of surplus labor in a single human being" (Gabriel, 1990, p. 87). I do not adopt the framework of self-exploitation in this thesis, because I agree with the view that it bears the disadvantage of downplaying "the difference between the effects of appropriating one's own surplus and the effects of having one's surplus appropriated by someone else" (Gibson-Graham et al., 2000, p. 161).

in terms of who appropriates the surplus labor, as in the former it is the individual who appropriates, whereas in the latter it is the collective. The remaining three are exploitative forms of class process. In the slave class process, the producers of surplus labor are the private property of the masters who appropriate their surplus labor. In this sense, the master, as the owner of the body of the slave, has the power to figure the amount of necessary labor and surplus labor that the slave produces. The feudal class process implies the existence of "relationships of loyalty, personal obligations, and religious sanction" between the groups that produce surplus labor and those who appropriate it; the most common example of this process is serfs and landlords under feudalism in Europe (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 163) wherein the feudal lord appropriated the fruits of the serf's surplus labor in the forms of use-values such as crops grown on the feudal lord's land, or rent payments from selling them.

Lastly, the capitalist class process takes place between free laborers (in the sense that they are not bound to the appropriators of their surplus labor by aforesaid relationships of loyalty, personal obligations, or religion) and capitalists who enter into a relationship of employer and employee. Moreover, the capitalist class process differs from the feudal one not only by its characterization as centered around markets but also in terms of the transformation of "productive resources (especially labor-power) as well as products into commodities" (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 163), that is, use-values to be sold in exchange for money. The most significant aspect of the capitalist class process can be considered to be the transformation of labor-power into a commodity to be exchanged for money on the labor market.

In closing this section, it may be useful to exemplify each class process in order to concretize this analytical framework. For the communal class process, one

can imagine a group of journalism students publishing a weekly magazine consisting of campus news. They write opinion pieces and news reports, as well as edit each other's work. A portion of the copies are sold for them to earn wages (covering the necessary expenses of the reproduction of their labor-power to keep writing and reporting) and cover their production expenses such as printing costs. However they sell more copies than the necessary amount to cover all these, which means they also produce surplus labor. In this non-exploitative class process, the surplus is appropriated by the producers themselves and distributed as per their collective decision. In this respect, they may share this surplus equally among themselves or collectively decide to invest in a digital tool in order to improve their future work.

As to the independent class process, consider a freelance copywriter who produces content for various media outlets. She sells a portion (her necessary labor) of the content she produces and uses the money to purchase the goods and services she requires to maintain her life-standard. However she usually produces more than this, and this second portion represents her surplus labor, which she appropriates herself. As the individual appropriator of her own surplus labor, this copywriter is engaged in an independent class process wherein she is not exploited.

A contemporary example for the slave class process could be sex trafficking where those who are trafficked are not free laborers as they lack the freedom of contract. An example for the feudal class process could be a housewife who performs unpaid domestic labor within the household she lives together with her husband, as hinted in the previous section. As the sole undertaker of unpaid domestic labor, she performs not only necessary but also surplus labor, which her husband appropriates in exchange for his provision of basic goods and services such as food and shelter to her. The housewife in this context is engaged in a feudal class process where she is

exploited by her husband who appropriates her surplus labor in various forms such as home cooked meals, clean laundry, housekeeping and emotional support.

Finally for the capitalist class process one can think of a wage garment worker in an industrial clothing company. Her wage enables her to maintain her standard of living and reproduce her labor-power. Her wage corresponds to the necessary labor she performs[5]. However she also performs surplus labor as she is producing more commodities of value than necessary to cover her wage. The products of her surplus labor are appropriated by the company and sold to consumers. In this respect, the garment worker is subject to capitalist exploitation.

1.3.4 On class as an entry-point concept

Up until this point, we have depicted the social whole as complex, ever-changing, contradictory, and overdetermined by class and non-class processes. However, one may ask, if this thesis does not assign a privilege to class over other social processes, then why does it center on the concept and read its research field in class terms? As a researcher, in keeping with the framework of overdeterminist Marxian theory, I take class as an entry-point concept. Departing from the concept of class as its entry-point, Marxian theory "organizes the topics it will treat around the task of thinking through the relationships in any society between its class and non-class aspects" (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 153). But what even is an entry-point? According to Resnick and Wolff:

> An entry point represents a theorist's choice: it is the chosen way to begin to organize theory, that is, the initial concepts a theorist focuses on so as to produce its meanings to all of its objects. Just like a carpenter uses tools to produce an object, say, a chair, one can think of an entry point as forming the (theoretical) tools of a theorist to produce a specific understanding and

[5] This correspondence presupposes the existence of ideal conditions. In reality the wage of the worker may be lower than the value of her necessary labor-power.

meaning of some object, say, market price. (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 37)

Thus, we can conclude that the selection of any entry-point in knowledge production is in fact arbitrary. The fact that the theorist chooses her entry-point is related to the epistemological implication of the concept of overdetermination remarked above. As there is no single process determinant of the overdetermined social whole, it is crucial to assert that there exists an ethico-political aspect to all theoretical practice.

Resnick and Wolff (2012, p. 47) explain why overdeterminist Marxist theorists choose class as their entry-point concept: the shared silence of other theorists on class as an aspect of social life that prevents people from "constructing the kind of societies Marxists would like to see". Hence the acknowledgment that their focus on class is rather a position suggesting that conceptual thinking can and should have the achievement of social goals as its objective, instead of declaring class the ultimate determinant of the social.

In a similar vein, this thesis focuses on the class and non-class processes overdetermining the articulation of home-based labor with unpaid domestic labor, with the objective to make visible the potential ways in which non-exploitative class relations may emerge out of this articulation. I also focus on the political economic landscape of the Commencement Women's Cooperative and inquire whether it enables class transformation as such. In other words, in examining the social processes overdetermining its research field, this thesis also attempts to depict the possibilities of class transformation, that is "bringing into existence or strengthening of noncapitalist class processes of surplus *appropriation*" (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 175).

1.3.5 On the household and women's unpaid domestic labor

Up until the feminist debate on domestic labor[6], the household was excluded from the field of social analysis and seen as a unit of consumption that stood outside the sphere of production.

On the Marxian plane, this was possible through the "narrow" definition of the concept of mode of production as the unity between the forces of production and relations of production (Althusser, 1971, p. 21), leaving out the instances of distribution, circulation, and consumption as well as non-economic ones. As such, it was argued, women's oppression pertained to the ideological sphere of the social, which was theorized as pertaining to the "superstructure" that was determined by the material base (the economic sphere of the mode of production in its narrow sense). Hence the conclusion that the end of capitalism would mark the end of women's oppression.

The debate on women's unpaid domestic labor emerged in the 1970s and continued for around two decades. During its early years, as it emerged within Marxist feminist theory, the main concern of the debate was to challenge the demotion of women's oppression to the ideological sphere (conceived as fully dependent on the economic base with no material effectivity of its own) and demonstrate the "material" conditions of this oppression through analyzing women's unpaid domestic labor within the household.

Althusser's essay 1970-essay titled "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation" (1971, pp. 232–272) was highly

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[6] The domestic labor debate emerged among upon the theoretical space opened up by the articulation of modes of production debate, as well as against the backdrop of the social movements of the 1960s and 70s. The debates among feminists and Marxists regarding whether the political struggle against women's oppression is the struggle against capitalism or patriarchy (or some combination of both), are reflected in the debate.

influential over the early Marxist feminist theorizations of the relationship between capitalism and domestic labor. In the essay, Althusser placed emphasis on the significance of accounting for the reproduction[7] of a social formation, namely the reproduction of the conditions of its production (here, he defined the social formation as characterized by a dominant mode of production).

Upon this emphasis on reproduction emerged the theory of "social reproduction" (Brenner & Ramas, 1984; Vogel, 1983). The theoretical framework of social reproduction enabled Marxist feminists to analyze women's unpaid domestic labor under capitalism, and the further construction of the domestic sphere as constitutive of the reproduction of capitalist production. Such analyses exposed the exclusion of unpaid domestic labor from formal statistical data and were useful in revealing its crucial role in capital accumulation. Within the framework of social reproduction, the social reproduction of capitalism implies the reproduction of labor-power, the general labor-force, and the reproduction of capitalism as a mode of production.

Dealing at its core with the reproduction of capitalist society, the theory of social reproduction provides a framework within which one can analyze the non-class structures and non-economic spheres of a social totality. As such, Selma James and Maria Dalla Costa asserted that the subordination of women on various levels (physical, professional, and psychical) was vital for the capitalist division of labor

[7] This reproduction includes the reproduction of the forces of production (means of production, labor-force) and the relations of production. In order to analyze reproduction, Althusser advocated for "a *theory of ideology in general*" which he claimed to be lacking in Marx (Althusser, 1971, p. 173). Asserting that ideology has material existence and pointing to Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) as the site where ideologies are practiced and realized, he argued that "every ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete subjects" (Althusser, 1971, p. 188). In this respect, Marxist feminists drew on Althusser's reference to the school-family dyad as the dominant ISA which functions to ensure the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist relations of production (Althusser, 1971, p. 144) as a means to include the concept of gender and sexual division of labor within Marxian theory (Barrett, 1993, p. 170).

"in pursuit of productivity at the social level" (James & Dalla Costa, 1972). They argued that domestic work was essential to the production of surplus value and represented the specific form of exploitation/oppression to which women are subject within the family (precisely, the capitalist family). Hence the assertion of the central role of women, who are indispensable for the reproduction of capitalist society, within the socialist movement[8] against capitalism.

Social reproduction theory maintains the idea that unpaid domestic labor pertains to the sphere of reproduction and renders this sphere as secondary with respect to and dependent on the sphere of production. These analyses have a tendency to assimilate housework into capitalism and construct a wholly functional relationship between the spheres of reproduction and production (Molyneux, 1979), therefore, unpaid domestic labor as such is subsumed to the capitalist mode of production. It attempts to analyze the family (though it is defined as capitalist) and concludes that women's unpaid domestic labor is vital for the reproduction of capitalist society[9].

In this sense, although it asserts the existence of a distinct form of exploitation/oppression (an "other" form that is distinct from capitalist exploitation) in its analysis of the domestic sphere, this otherness is immediately subsumed under capitalism. Because within this unitary framework, the sphere of production, i.e. a given mode of production is endowed with a gravitational force, through which there emerges a relationship of direct correspondence between the spheres of production

[8] One example of the political implications of social reproduction theory was the "Wages for Housework" campaign (James & Dalla Costa, 1972). The campaign rejected the conception of housework as an unproductive form of laboring and the duality between the spheres of production and reproduction, by demanding wages from the government to all women on the grounds that women's reproductive labor is a vital constituent of capitalist production.

[9] More recently, social reproduction theorists are looking into other forms of oppression related to race, sexuality, colonialism etc. (Bhattacharya et al., 2017; Ferguson & McNally, 2014).

and reproduction. Although they seem to exist independently, the relationship between them is a one-sided one wherein one sphere is determinant of the other, in the sense that the latter exists as or consists of the effects of the former. Hence, there exists no way to analyze the sphere of reproduction separately, for it necessarily implies the reproduction of capitalist production. Gibson-Graham considers these theorizations of household economic practices as "capitalist reproduction" a discursive violence, which was made visible by feminist economics (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 12).

The secondary status of the household was problematized by some feminists whose work fall under the general framework of dual systems theories (Delphy, 1984; Eisenstein et al., 1979; Hartmann, 1979). In a broad sense, dual systems theories rest on the idea that capitalism and patriarchy are two separate systems of social relations of production and reproduction, and their articulation makes up the contemporary social order. Namings for this social order differed: "capitalist patriarchy" (Eisenstein et al., 1979), "patriarchal capitalism" (Hartmann, 1979).

This line of theorizing necessitates thinking in terms of a duality instead of monism, since "understanding the contemporary world requires the simultaneous analysis of class and its gender structures" (Connell, 1987, p. 46). However, they, almost always, ended up situating capitalism and patriarchy as articulated in a way that is mutually reinforcing, and concluded that women's unpaid labor benefited both capitalism and patriarchy.

As women's subordination is "mediated through different levels of the social formation and is inscribed within a number of distinct relations" (Molyneux, 1979, p. 27) the focus of an analysis of the social positions of women cannot be limited to a single instance of the social formation such as economy or ideology/culture. Such an

analysis needs to account for the complexity of the processes overdetermining women's social positions.

Social reproduction and dual systems theories can be considered as deconstructive of the representation of the social totality as capitalist, to the extent that they seek to account for difference in their accounts on women's subordination. Social reproduction analyses do so by treating the unequal sharing of domestic labor as a distinct form of labor exploitation from that of capitalist exploitation in wage work, dual systems analyses by theorizing the domestic mode of production as coexisting with the capitalist one (Delphy, 1984) or constructing patriarchy as a separate system (alongside capitalism which pertains to economic production) pertaining to the production of people in the sex/gender sphere (Hartmann, 1979).

Within the framework of social reproduction, the social is defined in terms of a singular totality, characterized as capitalist. Therefore it is rather difficult to speak of separate spheres of production and reproduction. In this sense, dual systems theories differ from social reproduction theory in terms of the autonomy and effectivity they attribute to their respective analyses of the domestic mode of production and sex/gender system, with regard to capitalism. They deal with two separate systems or structures, at least on an abstract/theoretical level, though in practice it seems impossible to say where one system begins and the other ends. That is why in concluding this section, I would like dwell on this issue of conceiving the social in terms of "systems".

Dual systems theories beg the question of why one should stop after identifying a second system, and not add a third or maybe a fourth axis to one's analysis. This tendency is seen in Heidi Hartmann's elaborations on how social analysis can be conducted. In this respect, Hartmann admits that one might add

"color/race systems" to provide a fuller depiction of the social and argues that "the most accurate" definition of our societies would be "patriarchal capitalist white supremacist" (Hartmann, 1979, p. 13). Thus, I believe, pointing out the infinite potential of theorizing further systems of social inequality (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 65) is a significant point in critiquing this line of thinking.

In their Introduction to "Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates", Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (1992, p. 4) underline dual systems analyses' difficulty of accounting for racial inequalities, which led either to a shift from macro to micro-level analyses or a tendency to employ a grid that combines these three axes, namely class, gender and race. Barrett and Phillips identify what they call "an almost paradigmatic shift" between 1970s and 1990s feminisms. This shift is marked by the breaking up of a consensus among feminists in the 1970s, that is, the importance attached to "establishing the fundamentals of social causation" (Barrett & Phillips, 1992, p. 4).

Barrett and Phillips's reading of the course of feminist thinking together with Gibson-Graham's critique of the representation of social sites in terms of systems that lead to the subsumption of differences (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 68), caution us to refrain from seeking out a single, universal cause of women's subordination, such as patriarchy as a system resting upon the unequal sharing of domestic labor or the marriage contract. I found this idea highly relevant to my conceptual framework and treated it as a guiding principle while conducting my research, because it allowed me to conceive the multiplicity of processes overdetermining my research field, without superimposing any theoretical assumptions over it.

This thesis argues that women's position can be analyzed through examining both class and non-class processes at work within a certain social context. As such,

the household, within which women's home-based work and unpaid domestic labor coexist in contradictory and complex ways, constitutes a fruitful site to look into these processes and what kinds of effects they have upon one another. That is possible through the non-essentialist conception of class explained above, as it does not render insignificant the other non-class social processes at play.

In this sense, the introduction of the concept of class (as a process pertaining to the production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor) into the household, does not entail a replacement or displacement of gender processes in analyzing this social site, but rather enriches the analysis by adding another dimension to it, that of exploitation (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Moreover, excluding class from any social site, in this case the household:

> . . . has the effect of making invisible the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor (and the struggles over these class processes) that go on in that particular social site. (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 65)

In this respect, a non-essentialist class analysis of any social site conceives its object of research as a composition of distinct and contradictory relations, open to constant bargaining and negotiation, and thus to transformation.

On another note, this conception of class enables one to inquire the relationship between an unequal distribution of domestic labor and gender oppression without presupposing that the former necessarily leads to the latter. As such, one inspirational text I would like to reference is Jenny Cameron's essay (2000) titled "Domesticating Class: Femininity, Heterosexuality and Household Politics". In this essay, Cameron seeks political potentialities for feminism through a disassembling of what she calls the representation of "domestic labor inequality, exploitation, and gender oppression as tightly and invariantly bound together" (Gibson-Graham et al., 2000, p. 48). Drawing from Fraad, Resnick and Wolff's anti-

essentialist analysis of the household (Fraad, Resnick, & Wolff, 1994), Cameron retains that gender oppression may or may not be present as an immediate condition of an exploitative domestic class process. She argues that essentialist representations contain within themselves a "disempowered and perhaps even falsely conscious subject".

Cameron suggests an alternative representation through the employment of a lens of self-appropriative domestic class process, which opens up the possibility of representing her interviewee, Fran, as an "*acting* domestic subject" (Gibson-Graham et al., 2000, p. 57). Drawing from her own fieldwork Cameron identifies three discourses[10] as overdetermining the self-appropriative domestic class process. Although I find Cameron's exquisite analysis profoundly enlightening, I am of the opinion that the lens of self-appropriative domestic class process has the potential to erase the ambiguity in figuring how much of the surplus labor of an unpaid domestic worker is being gifted to, or appropriated by others. Thus, I will not employ the self-appropriative framework within the scope of the thesis, as I find that it may hinder my analysis through rendering exploitative forms of class process invisible.

1.3.6 On representation, capitalocentrism, and diverse economies

Conceiving the economy as an overdetermined social site undermines its representation as isolated from all other social processes and renders it open to transformation through political and discursive interventions. Within a social formation where slave, feudal, independent, and communal class structures coexist

[10] The three discourses identified by Cameron are the discourse of the domesticated wife and mother, the discourse of home as the domain of the "missus", and the discourse of the independent domestic worker.

with capitalist ones, the representation of capitalism as *the* hegemonic economic system becomes questionable.

However, capitalocentric discourses function to ignore and suppress non-capitalist class structures and non-class processes and ensure the hegemonic representation of capitalist rhetoric. Capitalocentrism characterizes the dominant tendency in the discourses on economy to theorize non-capitalism by referencing capitalism. As such, non-capitalist forms are conceived:

> …as being fundamentally the same as (or modeled upon) capitalism, or as being deficient or substandard imitations; as being opposite to capitalism; as being the complement of capitalism; as existing in capitalism's space or orbit. (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. 6)

Capitalocentric economic theories treat other (non-capitalist) forms in a way that does away with the possibility to account for economic difference which consequently subsumes them under capitalism.

In other words, capitalocentrism is underpinned by a binary constructed between capitalism and its other. Not surprisingly, this binary constructs the former in terms of positivity as opposed to the latter which is defined in negative terms. While capitalism is characterized by productivity, dynamism, efficiency and rationality non-capitalism, is seen as unproductive, stagnant, inefficient and irrational.

Among those that suffer under this discursive dominance of capitalism is the household, the place to which women are generally assigned[11]. In this regard, the household is framed in such a way that it is excluded from the field of economy, viewed as a space of consumption or reproduction pertaining to the private sphere of culture, tradition, biological reproduction, family etc.; while the economy, as the site

[11] Gibson-Graham (2003) notes that she models her conception of capitalocentrism upon phallocentrism (Grosz, 1990).

of production, (alongside politics) is assigned to the public sphere. Thus, capitalocentrism demotes the household economy to a secondary status that is either rendered insignificant or characterized by its complementarity to capitalism.

Conversely, within the diverse economies framework the household can be seen as a site of reproduction of not only capitalist but also non-capitalist forms of class process. Moreover, as remarked before, in the theoretical space opened by overdeterminist Marxist class analytics, the household can also be theorized as an autonomous site of production involving both class and labor processes. The language of diverse economies clears out the discursive space for representing economic difference. It does not aim to provide a depiction of the economy "as it really is", but rather attempts to "disarm and dislocate the naturalized dominance of the capitalist economy and make a space for new economic becomings" (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. xii).

I construct my analysis within a diverse economies framework and focus on the diversity of class and non-class processes that make up my field. I also place a specific focus on enterprise, that is, the Commencement Women's Cooperative. My aim in this thesis is not to provide a complete or finished depiction of all class and non-class processes, and forms of enterprises that home-based work entails, for that would be beyond the scope of this, and possibly any research project. Rather, in light of my field research, I try to make visible the multiplicity of the social processes in which the interviewees are engaging. Through representing my research field as a heterogeneously classed landscape, I aim to counter the widespread inclination to view the economic space as colonized by capitalism, an outlook that stems from the hegemony of capitalist rhetoric within economic discourse (Gibson-Graham et al., 2000, pp. 13–14).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW OF HOME-BASED WORK

Home-based work constitutes a fruitful site for researchers to analyze economic and non-economic relations and processes. It is no surprise that it sparked the attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines such as economics, sociology, gender, and development studies. These analyses generally engage with the debate on the informal sector/informality in studying home-based work. Moreover, the gendered character of home-based work and its ubiquitous articulation with women's unpaid domestic labor have led the literature on home-based work to engage with feminist theories, especially the domestic labor debate of the 1970s.

I begin this chapter by defining home-based work and its varying forms, and then provide a review of the two distinct frameworks within which home-based work is studied, as well as a brief review of the literature in Turkey.

2.1 Home-based work literature: A review

Invisibility is the foremost common theme among the existing literature on home-based work. Feminist scholars trace the invisibility of home-based work to women's oppression under patriarchy as well as the invisibility of the domestic labor they perform within the home.

The predominance of women in home-based work is generally explained (Chen, 2014) through the gender division of labor designating women as the primary housekeepers and care givers within the household. In this respect, home-based work is seen as a leisure time activity and marginal to productive activity (Allen & Wolkowitz, 1986) that is devalued and rendered invisible, because it is seen as an

extension of women's reproductive labor (J. B. White, 2004). Such accounts contributed to the invisibility of home-based work through representing it as a leisure activity that women do for pin money. This representation was criticized especially by feminist scholars, who stressed the economic contribution of home-based work to the household and global economic production (Dedeoğlu, 2012).

The proliferation of home-based work through outsourcing is thought to create global assembly lines, and as members of this "hidden assembly line" (Balakrishnan et al., 2002) home-based workers were, at least at first, "in the shadows", so to speak. This invisibility and its gendered character attracted scholarly attention to render this workforce and its contribution to global production visible and demonstrate the economic and social conditions of home-based workers, as home-based work provided a site where it was possible to explore "the connections between economic processes and the dynamics of social relations within the household" (Beneria & Roldan, 1987, p. 1).

The existing literature on home-based work and the various national and international organizations working with home-based workers have largely compensated for this invisibility, bringing the needs and demands of home-based workers who are mostly women, as well as their conditions of work and life to the agenda of the labor movement.

2.1.1 Defining home-based work

Before reviewing the literature on home-based work, it will be useful to define this type of work and its varying forms. Home-based work is roughly categorized into two forms: dependent and independent. The dependent form of home-based work was initially called homework. This form had constituted the focus of the

International Labour Organization's (ILO) 1996-Home Work Convention. There, ILO defined homework as the following:

> [W]ork carried out by a person; in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer; for remuneration; which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used. (International Labour Organization Convention 177 on Home Work, 1996)

This definition was followed by who is excluded from the Convention, namely those who have "the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker under national laws, regulations or court decisions" (International Labour Organization Convention 177 on Home Work, 1996). Home-based work was later adopted as an umbrella term covering both dependent (homeworkers) and independent (self-employed) workers.

The ambiguity in defining the various degrees of independence in home-based work has been addressed by many of those who conducted research in the field (Chen, 2014; Delaney, Burchielli, Marshall, & Tate, 2019; Prügl & Tinker, 1997; Unni & Rani, 2005). Moreover, the category of self-employment is also highly differentiated, entailing various extents of independence in various contexts. In this respect, researchers Jeemol Unni and Uma Rani propose to view the employment status of home-based workers along a continuum of dependence[12], "from being completely independent to being fully dependent on the contractor or middleman for design, raw material and equipment and unable to negotiate the price of the product" (Unni & Rani, 2005, p. 6).

[12] The authors underline that whether home-based workers are classified as self-employed or wage-employed makes a difference with regard to policy making, since the former requires policy intervention "in the nature of access to credit and expansion of markets for the products", whereas the latter entails "grounds to argue for minimum wages and other social benefits" (Unni & Rani, 2005, p. 21).

Those engaged in the dependent form of home-based work are subcontracted workers and sometimes referred to as industrial outworkers. They are contracted, usually through an intermediary, by firms or factories that are putting-out labor-intensive work as a strategy to cut workplace production costs. Dependent home-based workers are often paid on a piece rate basis. They are not the sellers of the finished product and are usually provided with the means of production by the subcontractor. Workers engaged in this form of home-based work are sometimes referred to as "disguised" wage workers (Portes & Walton, 1981).

In the independent form of home-based work, the workers are defined as own-account or self-employed workers. As the sole undertakers of all production costs, independent home-based workers sell their goods and services, often locally but sometimes also on global markets. In some cases where the commodities are purchased from the producers and sold elsewhere by merchant firms, the producers can be characterized as semi-dependent. A home-based worker can simultaneously engage in all of these dependent, semi-dependent and independent forms of home-based work within a given period of time, or switch from one to the other. Hence, the category of home-based work can be considered as a blanket term used to accommodate different forms of commodity production entailing different forms of class process.

Below, I will review the ways in which home-based work has been represented by two distinct approaches: the global capital accumulation framework and entrepreneurial framework. I will begin by reviewing the global capital accumulation framework as it has emerged relatively earlier than the entrepreneurial framework. The first framework emphasizes the gendered, informal, and precarious character of this type of work and aims to reveal the exploitative and subordinative

conditions to which it gives rise, such as long working hours, low-pay, little to no social security and women's further domestication as mothers and wives through their confinement within the home.

The second framework, on the other hand, places emphasis on the flexible and autonomous character of home-based work, which leads to its representation as carrying a potential for women's prosperity on the grounds that it grants women easy access to the workforce without forcing them out of their positions as unpaid domestic laborers and caregivers.

2.1.2 Global capital accumulation framework

Early feminist scholarship studied home-based work within the social reproduction framework where relations of capitalist production and patriarchal reproduction are conceived to exist in a systemic unity (Beneria & Roldan, 1987; Mies, 1982). In this respect, a prominent theorist is Marxist feminist scholar Maria Mies, who wrote about the lace maker women in India's Narsapur (Mies, 1982) through the lens of global capital accumulation.

Mies coined the term "housewifization of labor" and identified it as the main strategy that international capital adopted in order to "integrate women worldwide into the accumulation process" (Mies, 1986, p. 4). According to Mies, the "housewifization of labor" entails the splitting of the economy into a formal and an informal sector, where the latter is rendered invisible through certain material and ideological processes such as the representation of home-based worker women as "non-working housewives" (Mies, 1982). Thus, the informal sector bears a potential of unlimited exploitation of workers as they are substantially atomized. Within this framework, Mies argues that women become the optimal labor force as their labor is

cheap, and gaining political and ideological control over them is possible since not only their labor is invisible, but also they are atomized and isolated.

In a similar vein, Lourdes Beneria and Martha Roldan examine women's homework in Mexico City through what they call a "unifying theory" of class and gender, where ideological relations of domination and subordination are conceived as integrally connected with material relations of exploitation (Beneria & Roldan, 1987). This conception wherein global capitalist accumulation and relations of domination are viewed as integrally connected is the same theoretical ground upon which Mies theorizes what she calls the housewifization of labor. Beneria and Roldan explain the predominance of women in home-based work by pointing to "a gender-based division of labor and social relations within the home that limits women's alternatives and choices" (Beneria & Roldan, 1987, p. 66) and argue that "homework responds to a strategy of *accumulation* and an *income-generating* strategy for capital and workers respectively" (Beneria & Roldan, 1987, p. 73).

Sheila Allen and Carol Wolkowitz consider home-based work as a form of "casualized employment". They argue that within the context of home-based work, the ideological and practical constraints on women's paid employment are used as a justification to construct them as an appropriate labor force "and to legitimate a method of production which persists primarily because of its benefits to employers" (Allen & Wolkowitz, 1987, p. 183). Their book, which focuses on home-based work in the British context, asserts that home-based workers' low wages are justified through the conventional view of women as "economically dependent wives and mothers who are at best secondary earners" and who do this work for spare money (Allen & Wolkowitz, 1987, p. 64). Although home-based work is commonly associated with developing countries such as India, Bangladesh and Mexico, Allen

and Wolkowitz (1987) defined it as a global phenomenon that also exists in developed countries such as Britain and the United States.

There appears to be a parallel between social reproduction theory's emphasis on the domestic sphere[13] (the idea that housework contributes to economic production through the reproduction of labor-power) and the global capital accumulation framework's objective to emphasize the role of women's home-based labor within the global chain of production.

Both of these frameworks challenge the representation of women as idle housewives, and aim to reveal how women's labor is systematically devalued, rendered invisible and insignificant by the capitalist mode of production/world economy. However, within both frameworks, the analyses tend to be economistic (and consequently capitalocentric), in the sense that the non-economic aspects of the social (cultural and political relations of oppression and domination) are reduced to exist as mere effects of the sphere of production (the capitalist economy/system).

The economistic and capitalocentric tendencies permeating social reproduction theory also exist in Mies' analysis of home-based work. Mies (1982, p. xiv) asserts that she was intrigued by the "combination of productive and reproductive work" in the context of home-based work. However, since her research question is the problem of the devaluation of women's labor (be it reproductive or productive) and her framework is a unitary one, she has no way, other than to trace the roots of this problem to capitalism.

Mies' capitalocentric tendency becomes apparent, for instance, when she states that her study of the combination of housework and home-based work enabled

[13] See "On the household and women's unpaid domestic labor" in Chapter 1.

her to "understand for the first time how the capitalist world market functioned" (Mies, 1982, p. xv). Mies is of the opinion that she was able to grasp the essence or modus operandi of the capitalist world economy through studying the combination of women's reproductive housework and invisible productive work. If we leave aside home-based work for a moment, we can see that Mies constructs a wholly functional relationship between housework and capitalism. Her representation leads to a demotion of housework (and women's overall reproductive labor) to a secondary position that exists as a subsidy to the capitalist economy[14].

Mies' economistic tendency surfaces when she theorizes what she calls "the ideology of the housewife" as an essential constituent of the smooth functioning of the system of production, namely, capitalism (Mies, 1982, p. 61). Here, we can see that a non-economic social process (of gender oppression) is theorized (once again in functionalist terms) as a subsidy to the economic (which is conceived as the determinant of all spheres of the social totality). Thus, it can be argued that within Mies' framework, the so-called "essence" of the social pertains to the sphere of the economic, and this essence is reflected in all and every sphere of the social totality.

Although Mies successfully demonstrates how women's housework and home-based work benefit capitalism, she fails to account for their gendered character, that is, explain *why* these forms of labor are performed by women, except by arguing that it is essentially a result of the capitalist world economy[15]. As such, Mies (1982) argues that capitalism in its essence perpetuates a permanent process of

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[14] In doing away with economic difference, analyses constructed within the framework of social reproduction resort to arguments of complementarity. In the case of Mies, this complementarity appears under the concept of "integration".

[15] Mies later adopted the concept capitalist patriarchy and argued that capitalism is the "most recent and most universal manifestation" of patriarchy (Mies, 1986, p. 13). The unitary framework of social reproduction remains intact in this conception, through the characterization of capitalism as patriarchal in its essence.

primitive accumulation wherein non-capitalist forms of laboring are integrated into the process of global capital accumulation without being transformed into "classical" capitalist labor (by which she means wage labor). Within her framework, the process of ongoing primitive accumulation results in the marginalization of certain groups of people (that is, housewives in the context of home-based work) and leads to their "pauperization" (that is, the loss of one's means of production). Thus, it is the combination of women's patriarchal oppression with their marginalization and consequent pauperization that prevents them from becoming wage workers.

Here, Mies is depicting a picture wherein capitalism is constantly penetrating non-capitalist spaces without transforming them into capitalist spaces proper, but rather creating its "necessary others", that is, its constitutive outside upon which it is integrally dependent[16]. Moreover, she furthers this integration argument via the idea of subsumption, when she points out that Narsapur's lace-making industry "in its *form* maintains the structure and ideology of petty commodity production, but in its essence is fully subsumed under a worldwide capital accumulation process" (Mies, 1982, p. 123).

Thus, home-based work is generally treated as a "disguised" form of wage work within the global capital accumulation framework. As such, some feminist researchers rejected the category of home-based work completely, on the grounds that it renders impossible to analyze the conditions of homeworkers as wage workers (Allen & Wolkowitz, 1986, 1987). The global capital accumulation framework posits home-based work as a necessary result of the process of global capital accumulation, resting on the idea that capitalism has as its constitutive other non-capitalist

[16] Here, Mies is drawing on dependency theory (Frank, 1969) within which underdevelopment is viewed as integral to development, and both are seen as two sides of the same coin, that is, the global capitalist economy.

economic forms (that is, non-wage forms) that are integrated into the capitalist world economy without being transformed into capitalist forms proper. In this sense, although the non-capitalist character of some forms of home-based work is recognized to a certain extent, it is incorporated into world capitalism through its representation as "disguised" wage work.

2.1.3 Entrepreneurial framework

The complex and diverse character of informal production renders home-based work an ambiguous category spanning across different forms of employment. As previously remarked, the employment status of home-based workers is not easily determined. Contrary to its representation as mostly entailing disguised wage work that was discussed above, home-based work came to be represented as an advantageous form of work by the 1980s (Allen & Wolkowitz, 1987, p. 3).

As full employment in the formal economy began to gradually fade out of the horizon in advanced capitalist countries, self-employment, part-time employment, and contract work started to become more widespread. Home-based work came to be seen as a form of self-employment that carries entrepreneurial potential. The idea that such forms of work carry productive potential can be traced back to the informal sector debate that emerged in late 1960s from within mainstream development theory[17].

[17] Encompassing a number of disciplines, mainstream development discourse is dominated by economistic and capitalocentric tendencies in the sense that it respectively treats the economy as the principal motor of social transformation and posit industrial capitalism as the ultimate goal to be reached for a society to become fully developed. The emergence of development discourse was possible through John Maynard Keynes' theoretical intervention in political economic theory, specifically his break from neoclassical political economic discourse marked in his book (1936) *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*. Up until Keynes, mainstream economics had the economy as existing distinctly from and above any other social sphere as its object of analysis. For a more detailed analysis on Keynes's thought, see Antonio Negri's essay "Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State" (1994, pp. 23–45).

Early theories on development posited the "subsistence/traditional" sector as one that can and should be absorbed by the capitalist/modern sector. This model of development is called the Lewis model[18], after W. A. Lewis. In this sense, development in "Third World" countries was grounded upon the assumption that growth in the "modern" or "capitalist" sector would free these countries from poverty. Those working outside the modern/capitalist sector were thought to be engaging in unproductive economic activities. However, the Lewis model was challenged by the fact that, even in countries with high levels of economic growth, no significant improvement could be observed in the standard of living of the majority of the population (Maul, 2019). Development practitioners became critical of the Lewis model, which fell short in attaining mass consumption (Prügl, 1999). The primary subject matter of this development model was "growth, and not distribution" (Lewis, 1955, p. 9)[19].

Against the backdrop of these challenges a shift occurred in development strategy. This shift was made possible through a deconstructive intervention in mainstream development discourse, following the launching of the World Employment Programme[20] (WEP) in 1969 by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The deconstructive moment was crystallized in the report of WEP's employment mission to Kenya. The 1972-*Kenya report* was penned by United Nations (UN) economists Hans Singer and Richard Jolly. In calling for a

[18] This model's objective was to render the Fordist model of development applicable in the Third World, through the absorption of the non-capitalist sector's labor-power by the capitalist sector.
[19] In this sense, it may be argued that the fixation of the Lewis model on economic growth resulted in the omission of the field of distribution, which, in the Fordist development model was regulated via the Keynesian welfare state.
[20] According to ILO's then Director-General David Abner Morse, WEP's main objective was "to make productive employment for large numbers of people a major goal of national and international policies for development" . WEP employment missions were established to selected countries such as Colombia, Sri Lanka, and Iran.

"redistribution from growth" (ILO, 1972), the report put forth a policy of labor-intensive growth and emphasized the strategic role of the "informal sector"[21] as a "dynamic element of developing economies" (Maul, 2019, p. 177). Through this reframing of development, the formerly denounced so-called traditional sector not only acquired a new name (informal sector) but also became a space with productive potential within the development imaginary [22].

This approach, which came to be known as the "dual-sector approach" and originally defined[23] the informal sector "in terms of any type of income-generating activity that took outside the wage labour market, e.g. self-employment, clandestine, unregistered or illegal activities", was later "associated with enterprise structure rather than self-employment" (Scott, 1994, p. 16).

Over the course of the 1980s, the debate on the informal sector began to permeate the fields other than those of development theorists and academics. By the end of the decade both the debaters and the content of the debate had changed (Rakowski, 1994). Among the debaters were Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, the founder of the Instituto Libertad y Democracia (Institute for Liberty and

[21] The term was coined by British anthropologist Keith Hart (1973) in a paper based on his field research about the poor city dwellers in Ghana.

[22] This reframing was accompanied by a shift in development strategy, from growth toward redistribution and employment. The Lewis model of development had viewed income inequality as necessary for economic growth and therefore for social progress in general, as it advocated for higher profitability of capitalist enterprises based on low wages (Peattie, 1987, p. 854). In this respect, the Kenya report's call for redistribution marked a break from the Lewis model in the sense that income inequality had come to be viewed as hindering growth and "generating an enclave economy ('the formal sector') which can neither grow adequately itself nor transform the rest for the economic system" (Peattie, 1987, p. 855).

[23] The term "informal sector" carried within itself certain ambiguities as its definition could not be fixed. As it permeated other fields and was taken up by different theoretical traditions[23], its definitions multiplied. This may have contributed to its popularization as "it became all things to all people, an instrument to push diverse agendas" (Prügl, 1999, p. 80).

Democracy, ILD) who advocated for neoliberal restructuring[24] and whose ideas were later adopted and supported by the World Bank.

This period is characterized by the neoliberal "counter-revolution in development economics" (Toye, 1993), though Dieter Plehwe traces the origins of neoliberal development discourse back to the 1950s (Bair et al., 2009, pp. 238–279). Within the neoliberal imaginary, underdevelopment is seen as a result of "excessive governmental bureaucracy and the persistence of a 'mercantilist' system" (Bromley, 1990, p. 330) and informal economic activities appear to be a "safety valve for societal tensions" (de Soto, 1989, p. 243). As such, individuals engaging in informal economic activities are characterized by creative and entrepreneurial potential[25]; they are locked out of the formal economy and struggling to earn their livings despite governmental regulation. The representation of home-based workers as independent micro-entrepreneurs is rooted in this neoliberal turn that took place in development economics.

Rejecting the division of the economy into two sectors, de Soto focused on the concept of "informality" and moved away from ILO's multi-criterion definition[26] of the informal sector. Instead he proposed a single criterion: "economic activities

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[24] See Timothy Mitchell's essay (2009, pp. 386–416) for a detailed depiction of de Soto's approach and its relationship with neoliberal thought.

[25] This characterization emerged out of de Soto's analysis of the Peruvian informal economy where he looked into three major areas that were dominated by informality: housing, trade, and transportation (de Soto, 1989). In the 1987-book *El Otro Sender* (The Other Path: The Economic Answer to Terrorism, translated into English in 1989 with the subtitle "The Invisible Revolution in the Third World) de Soto and his colleagues (whose names were removed from the English version of the book) highlighted the heavy costs of establishing and sustaining formal businesses and the costs of operating informally and argued that the "informals" had already figured the need for a new path. They called for legal change to incorporate and facilitate the already existing dynamics in the informal economy.

[26] According to Singer and Jolly, the informal sector was characterized by "[1] ease of entry; [2] reliance on indigenous resources; [3] family ownership of enterprises; [4] small scale of operation; [5] labour-intensive and adapted technology; [6] skills acquired outside the formal school system; and [7] unregulated and competitive markets" (ILO, 1972, p. 6).

that contravene official regulations but that do not involve murder, theft, violence, or other obviously criminal acts" (Bromley, 1990, p. 339). This redefinition was accompanied by a radically different policy proposal, and echoed the arguments of neoliberal critics of development planning (Bair et al., 2009, p. 392) such as Peter Bauer (1984). Those who adopted the ILO-definition of the informal sector had called for "increased public sector investment and involvement in technical assistance, training, and credit provision to small enterprises" (Bromley, 1990, p. 339).

Through advocating the adoption of free-market policies focusing on small-scale entrepreneurship and community self-help, this new approach called for deregulation, debureaucratization and privatization in order to level the playing field, so to speak. In this respect, the neoliberal turn in development led to the proliferation of non-state actors becoming agents involved in economic and social development. De Soto depicted the "informals" as the world's poorest and cherished their capacity to make ends meet in the face of stifling bureaucratic and governmental impediments. He sought to increase the productive potential of those engaging in informal economic activities, and advocated for legislation based on and aiming to sustain the existing reality, rather than that seeks to change it. According to de Soto, most Peruvians were not "proletarians", which he described as blue-collar workers, but rather emerging entrepreneurs who were doing business outside the law (de Soto, 1989).

This view was well in line with the ideas of Bauer, a member of the Mont Pelerin Society[27], who had emphasized the importance of entrepreneurship in under-

[27] Founded by economist Friedrich Hayek, a friend of Bauer.

developed countries (Bauer & Yamey, 1957) and argued since the 1950s "that the citizen of the Third World is a natural entrepreneur" (Bair et al., 2009, p. 392). Hence, the neoliberal turn in development theory included the re-emergence[28] of the discourse on entrepreneurialism.

Thus, the entrepreneurial framework, under which home-based work is studied, has as its main objective the enabling of women to realize their entrepreneurial potential and their consequent integration into the economy (Ernst & Young, 1988; Women's World Banking, 1989). This approach followed the "discovery" of women by development and the consequent emergence of "women in development" as a development subfield (Escobar, 1995, p. 13). As such, women's income-generating activities became a key area of focus for development institutions such as the UN and World Bank (*Human Development Report 1999: Globalization with a Human Face*, 1999; *World Development Report 1995: Workers in an Integrating World*, 1995).

The turn of the century marked the emergence of micro-enterprise development strategy[29] for women and the gendered entrepreneurial subject. The gender and micro-enterprise development approach (K. White, Otero, Lycette, & Buvinic, 1986) rose upon the argument that women's economic participation endows them with increased power not only in the market, but also in the household, and state. The concept of empowerment appeared numerous times in World Bank's 2012

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[28] The neoliberal theory on entrepreneurship can be considered as a "revival of the concept of entrepreneurship", which has its roots in Joseph Schumpeter's thinking. For a comprehensive review of the neoliberal image of the entrepreneur, see Dieter Plehwe's essay in *Nine Lives of Neoliberalism* (Plehwe, Slobodian, & Mirowski, 2020, pp. 129–142).

[29] The micro-enterprise development strategy is generally characterized as comprising two distinct approaches (Mayoux, 1995, p. 4). The first is the market approach that aims to assist entrepreneurs in increasing their income, which is associated with large development agents, such as the World Bank, seeking to integrate women into the process of economic growth. The second is the empowerment approach, which is associated with non-governmental organizations that also seek to increase the bargaining power of producer women.

annual report, where micro-enterprise programs are proposed as effective tools to facilitate women's access to resources and their consequent empowerment (*World Development Report 2012: Gender and Development*, 2012).

Underpinning the symbolic construction of the female entrepreneur as a key actor in economic and social development (De Vita, Mari, & Poggesi, 2014), is the idea that women's participation in the economy will also lead to their liberation from gender constraints. This figure is, in a sense, is the juxtaposition of gender with the representation of the Third World citizen as a natural entrepreneur by Bauer.

The literature on home-based work within the entrepreneurial framework is grounded on an economistic conception of gender inequality insofar as it presupposes that increasing women's participation in the economy leads to their liberation from gender constraints. In this sense, there exists an economistic tendency within this framework wherein the political and cultural/ideological aspects of male oppression and domination are conceived to be deriving from women's exclusion from economic life.

This framework also fails to account for the differences among home-based workers, by treating them all as individual entrepreneurs. As the continuum of dependence is erased from the picture, a subcontracted home-based worker is equated to an independent home-based producer on a theoretical level, which makes it impossible to address their differing practical problems and needs.

2.1.4 Home-based work literature in Turkey

The large number of empirical studies conducted on home-based work in Turkey suggests that the topic sparked interest among numerous scholars from a variety of

disciplines, generally under the departments of sociology and economics. These scholarly works can be traced back to the 1980s.

The initial studies that focus on home-based work belong to Sencer Ayata, and Kuvvet Lordoğlu whose works reveal that women are constantly being kept out of the wage bargaining processes (Ayata, 1987), and that 92% of the women who did homework were full-time "housewives" (Lordoğlu, 1990). Two other studies belong to E. Mine Çınar (Çınar, 1994) and Belkıs Üşümezsoy (Üşümezsoy, 1993), who attempted to designate the extent of homework in İstanbul, during the 1980s. An extensive book on the topic belongs to Jenny B. White, who conducted her fieldwork with a group of women doing homework (knitting, sewing, or embroidery) in İstanbul's Ümraniye (J. B. White, 2004) and studied the issue by focusing on how women's labor is perceived in terms of reciprocal kinship relations, and as an extension of their reproductive work which leads to its devaluation. Ayda Eraydın and Asuman Erendil's work aims to reveal the role of women's labor in the restructuring of industrial production and stress its significance in the general process of production (Eraydın & Erendil, 1999).

Similarly, Saniye Dedeoğlu's study investigates women's labor in the garment industry in İstanbul, through an ethnographic study conducted with women workers in ateliers and in home-based production networks (Dedeoğlu, 2012). Throughout her study, Dedeoğlu treats labor markets as "bearers of gender", and concludes that as long women's work remains confined within relations of kinship, family and neighborhood-based networks; "employment is practiced as an extension of [those] domestic roles, and as a temporary state rather than a radical departure from the confines of the patriarchal system" (Dedeoğlu, 2012, p. 6).

These scholarly works study home-based work within the post-Fordist economic restructuring framework through looking at the transformations (informalization, flexibilization) that the labor force underwent in Turkey, and have a common point of departure in the sense that one of their main objectives is to render this type of work visible.

The existing literature on home-based work in Turkey provides insight into questions such as why women choose to do this type of work, how their family members view their job, how this work is organized in neighborhoods, how it leads to a reorganization of housework within the household, whether it has different effects over women in nuclear and extended families (Sarıoğlu, 2012), how women perceive their work/themselves, and whether home-based work can be considered as a "vicious circle" for women engaging in this type of work (İçli, 2011). These studies are well in line with the global capital accumulation framework, because home-based work is treated as a necessary result of the interaction between the capitalist world economy and the existing gender constraints imposed upon women in Turkey.

A prominent scholar in the field is Dilek Hattatoğlu, who stands in a rather distinguished position within the existing literature in Turkey. Hattatoğlu makes use of the Foucauldian concept of micro-power relations in accounting for the organization of the women's daily lives, in addition to other concepts such as "empowerment" and "socialization" (Hattatoğlu, 2000). In her doctoral dissertation based on her fieldwork conducted in İstanbul's Avcılar district, she identifies two fundamental axes that make up the whole of her study. The first one is to account for the effects, probable effects and possibilities that emerge from home-based work, and the second is to account for the possibilities that home-based work entails with regard to the establishment of solidaristic and organizational bonds among workers.

Hattatoğlu inquires not only the conditions under which these women are empowered/organized in the context of home-based work, but also whether this empowerment/organization provides them the useful tools and possibilities that enable them to transform the power relations to which they are subject. Her analysis strikes out within the literature in Turkey because she concludes that home-based workers are able to transform their relations both within and outside their households and form new relations via this form of work. As such, she stresses that through these transformations and new relations home-based workers are able to partially create free spaces for themselves.

2.2 Conclusion

In this chapter I have critically engaged with the two dominant frameworks within which home-based work is studied. I demonstrated the economistic and capitalocentric tendencies permeating both frameworks.

As explicated above, the first framework emphasizes the gendered, informal, and precarious character of home-based work, and aims to reveal the exploitative and subordinative conditions to which it gives rise, such as long working hours, low-pay, little to no social security and women's further domestication as mothers and wives through their confinement within the home. I argued that within this framework, non-economic social processes (such as gender oppression) are rendered secondary with respect to economic ones because they are theorized (in functionalist terms) as subsidies to the sphere of the economic. Hence, the so-called "essence" of the social pertains to the economic sphere, and this essence is somehow reflected in all and every sphere of the social totality.

The second framework, on the other hand, places emphasis on the flexible and autonomous character of home-based work, which leads to its representation as carrying a potential for women's prosperity on the grounds that it grants women easy access to the workforce without forcing them out of their positions as unpaid domestic laborers and caregivers. This literature on home-based work is also grounded on an economistic conception of the social. That is because it presupposes that increasing women's participation in the economy will to their liberation from gender constraints. In this sense, there exists an economistic tendency within this framework wherein the political and cultural/ideological aspects of male oppression and domination are conceived to be deriving from women's exclusion from economic life.

Moreover, both frameworks tend to overlook the differences among home-based workers, by treating them all either as disguised wage workers or as individual entrepreneurs. In constructing my field analysis upon the theoretical space opened by overdeterminist Marxist class analytics, I aim to represent the diversity of my field without essentializing one or more of its multiple aspects. As such, I explore the multiple class and non-class processes that make up the fieldwork of this thesis in the following chapters. In doing so, I also employ the language of diverse economies in order to clear out the discursive space for representing economic difference.

CHAPTER 3

ON METHODOLOGY AND FIELD RESEARCH

The field research of this thesis was conducted between August 2021 and December 2021. The fieldwork was conducted through qualitative data collection methods, such as semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. Using snowball sampling, I held a total of 13 interviews with nine women who, either currently or used do home-based work.

I collected signatures from each participant for my consent forms and verbally informed them that I would be using pseudonyms instead of their real names in the thesis, as well as making audio recordings of our interviews. Five out of the nine interviewees were members of the Commencement Women's Cooperative that was founded in 2004 in Kağıthane. The cooperative was founded by two women who used to do home-based work, with the support of KEDV. In this respect, I paid visits to the Commencement Women's Cooperative in order to observe the daily routines and meetings of these women.

I kept an audio diary consisting of my notes throughout the fieldwork. I logged entries right after the interviews and meetings. These notes included observations as well as my reflections. I transcribed the interviews and my fieldwork notes within the next day. In total, the interviews lasted around 25 hours in total whereas I spent approximately 10 additional hours observing within the cooperative.

I held two of the interviews on Zoom, three in the cooperative building, two in different cafes in the neighborhood, and one in the workshop where the interviewee was employed. One interviewee invited me to her home where I also met my next interviewee and interviewed her there.

Additionally, throughout the production of this thesis, I conducted regular web searches to monitor the media coverage of the Commencement Women's Cooperative and be up to date regarding its state of affairs. I also followed the Instagram accounts of the Commencement Women's Cooperative and its playroom, as well as KEDV.

3.1 Entry into the field

This thesis aims to examine articulation of home-based work with unpaid domestic labor through a lens of economic difference and account for the various forms of class process that home-based worker women engage in, as well as depict the non-class processes at work in this context. The Commencement Women's Cooperative also constitutes a focal point in the thesis as the majority of my interviewees are connected to it.

I held a preliminary meeting with Nadide, one of the founding members of Turkey's recently established Home-based Workers' Union (Ev-Ek-Sen) in İstanbul's Beyoğlu district. I had come across her name online, in a newspaper article on home-based work. As a home-based worker and unionist, she provided me with a general picture of their organizational activities.

After this meeting I decided to conduct my research in Nurtepe, a former *gecekondu* neighborhood in İstanbul's Kağıthane district. Up until the 1980s, Kağıthane was one of the leading industrial districts in İstanbul and its proximity to industrial workplaces rendered it an attractive location for informal housing projects; the district underwent a process of deindustrialization from the 1990s onwards.

As a resident of Kağıthane's Merkez neighborhood myself, I had personal connections in Nurtepe. Before beginning my research there, I met with Nadide once

more on Zoom, to do an official interview. I had drafted my questions a couple weeks before I interviewed her. This interview led me to revise my question set and turned out to be very informative for the rest of the fieldwork. While transcribing the interview, I realized that I had restricted myself trying to get clear answers to my readily prepared questions instead of formulating follow-up questions on the spot regarding some insightful information Nadide provided during the interview. With this in mind, I revised and rephrased some of my questions, tried to be more open with the structure of each interview and attempted to prompt lengthier conversations with my interviewees.

Through a family friend who had been living in Nurtepe for over 10 years, I met with my second interviewee in Nurtepe, Leyla. She had recently formed a close relationship with KEDV and the Commencement Women's Cooperative. Leyla referred me to my third interviewee, Aysel. I met with Aysel in the workshop where she is employed. Leyla also briefly introduced me to a KEDV employee who referred me to Meral, another Commencement Women's Cooperative member. Meral invited me into her home to do the interview. There, I also met and interviewed another cooperative member, Nevin. After meeting talking to Leyla once again, I was referred to Hülya whom I met on Zoom. Hülya was a founding member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative. Hülya put me in touch with Hayriye, who had been involved in some activities of the cooperative in the past but was not its member. After interviewing her, I visited Hülya at the cooperative building and met with other members Semra and Dilek, whom I interviewed later in the cooperative building.

3.2 Interview questions

My interview questions fell under six sections respectively. The first section covered personal information of the interviewees such as date of birth, marital status, familial structure, employee status, education, where and for how long they have been living in İstanbul.

The second section covered the pre-home-based work period of the interviewees lives. In this section, I wanted find out how these women acquired their occupational skills through inquiring into their personal histories, especially with regard to the relationship between their unpaid domestic labor and paid labor. Overall, in order to grasp their professional and personal capabilities, I attempted to designate the class and non-class relations in which these women have engaged in the past, both within and outside their households. Additionally, I wanted to know how these processes were changed after they got married.

The third section, to which the answers usually get intertwined with the former section covered when, why, and how they began doing home-based work. I also asked about their current channels/connections of finding work, how frequently they take on jobs and the conditions of existence of their home-based work. In this respect, I wanted to identify varying the class positions they occupied in doing home-based work without overlooking the diverse character of the field. Here, I also asked how their family members reacted to them taking on home-based work and whether these jobs are shared among other members of the household. I wanted to depict the effects of women's paid labor on the household as well as uncover whether these effects lead to contradictory relations within it.

The next section covered their daily lives, the domestic labor they performed within the household, how the performance of domestic labor is shared among

family members, how their daily routine changed after taking on home-based work, and how they decide to allocate time to each activity. Since women produce surplus labor in both home-based work and unpaid domestic work, this articulation entails different forms of class process. Through these questions I aimed to reveal these processes and identify whether certain contradictions arise out of this articulation and/or transform the class and non-class relations among household members.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people had lost their jobs across various sectors. Therefore the fifth section covered the interviewees' pandemic and post-pandemic life. I wanted to find out whether the pandemic led to a decrease in the quantity of home-based jobs, and its overall economic effect over the interviewees' households. Additionally, the lockdowns restricted people's mobility which meant that those working outside the home were stuck inside. Thus, I was curious if the pandemic caused a significant change in terms of women's unpaid domestic labor.

In the final section I asked where they spend their earnings from home-based work, in order to reveal the decision process with regard to the appropriation and distribution of their income. I would then ask them to reflect on their future plans and dreams so that I could grasp the issues they identify as central in order to improve their conditions. And finally, the interviewees were asked about their household income. Initially, this question was part of the first section, however after observing that the interviewees felt uncomfortable exposing this type of information earlier in the interview, I moved it to the very last section.

In the cases where the interviewee was a member or has some connection to the Commencement Women's Cooperative, I asked an additional set of questions about how she first came into contact with the cooperative, why she undertook an

active role and what her responsibilities were within the cooperative. I also asked about her family's perception of her involvement in the cooperative as well as her future expectations.

Through the relatively loose structure of my interviews as depicted above, I aspired to prompt lengthy conversations with the interviewees in order to reveal the diverse and contingent social relations and processes that overdetermine their class and non-class positions. In framing and reading the landscape through the inputs of my fieldwork, I also aimed to uncover "what is possible but obscured from view" (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. xxxi).

3.3 An overview of the field

Eight of the nine interviewees reside either in Nurtepe or Güzeltepe neighborhoods of İstanbul. Two interviewees, Nevin and Hayriye, had been involved with at least one of the activities of the Commencement Women's Cooperative in the past, whereas two interviewees, Nadide and Aysel, had no connections to it. Nadide is also the only participant residing outside İstanbul; she currently lives in Muğla. Aysel, who used to (and sometimes still) do home-based work herself, is an employee in a workshop that acts as a mediator between contracting firms and home-based workers.

After reviewing the data I collected, I decided to construct my analysis focusing on the five women who were closely connected to the Commencement Women's Cooperative. These interviewees come from varying religious sects and ethnicities. Two of the five interviewees are Sunni, whereas three of them are Alevi. Of the three Alevi interviewees one is Kurdish, the remaining two are Turkish. One of the three Alevi interviewees is Kurdish, whereas the other two are Turkish.

3.3.1 Neighborhood

While I have conducted my field research in Kağıthane's Nurtepe neighborhood, three of my interviewees were actually the residents of Güzeltepe, because Nurtepe and Güzeltepe are adjacent neighborhoods that have the Sokullu and Trans European Motorway (TEM) access roads as their border. Güzeltepe is part of İstanbul's Eyüpsultan district whereas Nurtepe falls within the boundaries of Kağıthane. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) Kağıthane's population was 454.550 whereas Eyüpsultan's was 417.360 in 2021 (*Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi Sonuçları, 2021*, 2022).

Formerly a rural settlement, Kağıthane became one of the first industrial areas in İstanbul, following the enactment of the 1954-dated city planning law. The establishment of industrial facilities led to migration to the district, and the formation of *gecekondu* neighborhoods around these industrial facilities. By the 1980s the number of industrial establishments in Kağıthane was around 160; this number began to decrease following the enactment of the 1984-Golden Horn Regulation Project by the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, within the scope of which over 500 industrial establishments were abolished or relocated on the grounds that they were polluting the Golden Horn (Erden, 2009).

The area is generally referred to as Nurtepe by its dwellers, and up until mid-1970s it was an underpopulated *gecekondu* neighborhood. Many of Turkey's revolutionary leftist groups began to form people's committees in these neighborhoods, which led to the growth of their population. These committees became the leading actors in organizing the collective construction of new *gecekondu*s. Örnektepe and Güzeltepe were the first squatter settlements around the area; they were followed by the establishment of Çayan neighborhood (named after

People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (THKP-C) leader Mahir Çayan) which comprised the neighboring streets of Güzeltepe to Nurtepe.

Home-based work became popular among *gecekondu* dwellers in Turkey from the 1980s onwards as these neighborhoods were located in proximity to industrial establishments. Hence, since Güzeltepe and Nurtepe are two of İstanbul's slum neighborhoods where women do various kinds of home-based work, I decided that the area would serve as an appropriate setting to conduct my fieldwork.

3.3.2 KEDV and the Commencement Women's Cooperative

The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV) is a Turkey-based non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1986 with the objectives to contribute to the elimination of poverty and social inequality, and support women's endeavors to better their lives and strengthen their leadership in local development[30]. KEDV describes its mission as the empowerment of women in order for them to transform their lives, communities, and the world.

Furthermore, its vision is a community without inequalities and poverty, which is considered as attainable through the strengthening of women's abilities/skills to transform their communities by way of exercising their active citizenship and participatory leadership at local, national, and regional levels. The NGO's activities fall under three main programs: cooperativization[31], economic empowerment[32], and disaster and migration management[33].

[30] https://www.kedv.org.tr/kedv-hakkinda
[31] https://www.kedv.org.tr/guclendirme-ve-kooperatiflesme
[32] https://www.kedv.org.tr/ekonomik-guclendirme
[33] https://www.kedv.org.tr/afet-ve-goc

KEDV has been the leading NGO promoting the formation of women's cooperatives across Turkey since 2002, the year in which they prepared "The Handbook of Women's Co-operatives" and "Co-operative By-Law." KEDV supports women's cooperatives in terms of institutional and economic capacity building, in addition to providing early childhood education services via trainings on neighborhood mothering[34] and the establishment of childcare centers within cooperative buildings. The cooperativization program also includes "empowerment trainings" on topics such as leadership, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, information technologies and participation in local governmental processes.

The majority of my interviewees were members of Commencement Women's Cooperative[35], which was established by 10 women residing in Nurtepe (and the neighboring Güzeltepe), through a loan provided by KEDV's "Maya Microcredit Program" in 2004. Currently, this program provides loans to low-income entrepreneur women of an average around 1000 Turkish Liras; the repayments are made monthly within a maturity period between 6 to 12 months. At the time when this field research was conducted, the Commencement Women's Cooperative had 30 members; only a few women (around five, two of whom remain the same since 2004) have actively tended to its day-to-day activities since its foundation.

The cooperative is located on the first floor of a three-floor building. Its childcare center is located on the second floor and above is the neighborhood chief's (*muhtar*) office. This space was allocated to the cooperative upon their request, by the Kağıthane municipality, with the help of the neighborhood chief. Hence, the

[34] Women become neighborhood mothers [*mahalle anneleri*] through a training program which enables them to generate income by providing home-based child care services for three or four children.
[35] Sınırlı Sorumlu Kadın Çevre Kültür İşletme Kooperatifi.

Commencement Women's Cooperative does not pay rent or bills for electricity, water, and gas.

The childcare center, or the playroom as KEDV and the cooperative members refer to it, is the cooperative's sole project that has been sustained throughout the years. At first, the women who were trained as part of the neighborhood mothering program worked in the childcare center. Later, a teacher, a graduate in child development studies, was employed by the cooperative to work here for almost ten years. The current teacher of the childcare center, who is also a graduate in child development studies, began working in September 2021 and she is the daughter of one of the cooperative's founding members.

Around 20 children were enrolled in the playroom during my fieldwork. Their mothers are obliged to become members of the cooperative before registering their children. This is due to the childcare center's lack of authorization from the Ministry of Education. The children's families fill out a financial assessment form designating their household income, upon which a registration fee is determined for each child. Children can be registered monthly, daily or even hourly; hence not all children are present in the playroom at the same time. Becoming a member requires a payment around 100 Turkish Liras; this fee is repaid upon membership cancellation.

In its early years, the Commencement Women's Cooperative was selling second hand clothes in order to generate income for its members. Throughout the years, it has provided leadership, financial literacy, entrepreneurship trainings to women, as well as trainings against domestic violence to both men and women residents of the neighborhood via KEDV project funds. In the recent years, the cooperative has taken on sewing jobs once or twice every year. These jobs are

usually completed within the course of a week by less than 10 members. This is mainly due to a lack of regular orders but also due to the COVID-19 outbreak because of which the cooperative could not operate fully for a year. In September 2020, before the second wave of the pandemic hit, the cooperative held a weaving course and established a weaving workshop in their building. They were aiming to do sewing and weaving related production, in order to improve their productive capacity. However, the ongoing pandemic hindered their production process.

In this respect, the Commencement Women's Cooperative can be defined as a hybrid enterprise acting as a consumer (members purchasing childcare services for a discounted price) and producer (producer of social services and sewn/woven commodities) cooperative at the same time.

3.4 Introducing the interviewees

In this section, I will respectively introduce the five interviewees, to whom I have limited my analysis because they are closely connected to the Commencement Women's Cooperative. First, I will briefly remark current work and life conditions as well as their relationship to and involvement within the cooperative.

Meral, who is currently an own account home-based worker, has been a member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative for over eight years. Hülya and Semra are founding members of the cooperative, whereas Dilek has been its member since its foundation. Hülya, Semra and Dilek are three of the active voluntary laborers in the cooperative since its early years. They are not currently doing home-based work on a regular basis, though they used to before their involvement in the cooperative.

Meral, Hülya, Semra and Dilek are among those doing most of the sewing weaving jobs that the cooperative takes on. As for Leyla who still does home-based work, at the time I interviewed her, she had recently formed a close relationship with the Commencement Women's Cooperative and KEDV.

3.4.1 Meral

Meral, a Kurdish Sunni woman in her early 30s, lives in Nurtepe with her three daughters and husband. She did not attend school but received an elementary diploma upon taking an exam within the scope of the open education system (*açıköğretim*). She started doing home-based work after getting married and moving to İstanbul when she was 17, but her work life began much earlier, that is, at the age of 7 or 8, when she started picking cotton in a Southern coastal city, where her family resided for a while before returning to their hometown, which is located in Eastern Anatolia. Around the age of 10 she began to work at a carpet weaving workshop, where she would get paid monthly on a piece-rate basis. The workshop operated in cooperation with the Local Public Education Center (*Halk Eğitim Merkezi*) and was thus subject to unannounced supervisions as per the labor law, during which Meral and other underage workers would either flee via the back door or hide under sacks of coats and clothes belonging to those formally employed there.

She also worked at a nut factory in her hometown for six months, again without a formal employment contract and social security. Remarking that because she started working at an early age, Meral stresses she never felt comfortable taking money from her husband; hence, after getting married and relocating to İstanbul's Gültepe neighborhood, she began beading "before the henna on [her] hands faded away" and took on a babysitting job.

"I've never had anything to do with my husband's income, I have no idea how much he makes or how" Meral says. She adds that in the past, he had attempted to use Meral's and his own savings to make business investments. When asked whether her husband currently has anything to do with her income, she replies:

> No, he doesn't either. He doesn't ask about it. At first, he thought I would keep house and he would save his own money. He did, and then attempted a bunch of things like becoming partner [of a business], etc. Because he failed so many times, I told him to have it his own way from then on, and not meddle with me. [Meral]

She has taken on different kinds of home-based jobs. When there were no beading jobs available in Ayazağa where they lived for almost five years, she began knitting. After moving again, this time to Nurtepe where she's been living for the past eight years, she took on bead work via a mediator again, but only for a short while because her youngest daughter started swallowing the beads. She continues to do knitting work and occasionally prepares party foods upon orders.

Meral was able lift the burden of child care off her shoulders through the cooperative's playroom. She says she was able to make more time for herself, "not for housework, but for socializing, spending time with [her] friends", after her older daughters started elementary school and she enrolled her youngest to the Commencement Women's Cooperative's playroom.

Meral's husband works shifts, two-week night shifts and two-week day shifts, at a construction site located far away from their home; he leaves without having breakfast in the morning and sometimes sleeps there until his next shift. Meral says it is hard to track the rather confusing schedule of her husband. Since his workplace provides his meals, he rarely eats at home. As such, it can be argued that Meral's

husband's employment contract enables Meral to outsource[36] a portion of domestic labor as it frees Meral from having to cook for and clean after her husband on a regular basis.

In the morning Meral wakes the children, cooks them breakfast, and gets them ready for school. "With three daughters, that is a whole lot of work. You have to make their hair, get them into their pantyhose, etc." she says, and adds that after walking them to school, she returns home feeling exhausted, which is why she sometimes takes a nap before having breakfast and proceeding with her other domestic responsibilities. If, after cleaning and cooking dinner, she finds the time, she does her handiworks. She works on her own account, knitting five-skewer-slippers, vests, sweaters, and other baby goods and sells them to her neighbors and friends. She also takes orders via WhatsApp and Instagram. She then picks up her daughters from school and serves them dinner before helping out with their homework.

If she has orders in place, this sometimes leads to a "loosening" of her domestic work. If she receives an order, she re-figures the amount of domestic surplus labor she will produce. For example in order to minimize the time she will spend on domestic work, she postpones doing the dishes or serves rather more easily prepared meals to her kids, such as breakfast for dinner. Other times she is forced to multitask, since, if her husband were home by dinner time, he would complain by saying "You were home all day, what did you do until now?".

[36] Here, I am appropriating the concept of outsourcing, instead of theorizing this as a division of labor because, although Meral is not making a payment in exchange for her husband's nutrition at his workplace, she represents herself as exclusively responsible for cooking for her husband in general. As such, when her husband comes home without having dinner at the workplace, she is expected to feed him.

3.4.2 Leyla

Leyla, a Turkish Alevi woman in her mid 50s, resides in Güzeltepe with her sons who are both in their early 30s. Leyla is a high school graduate and moved to İstanbul for work. She had succeeded in the first phase of the first university exam, however after meeting with her husband she did not proceed with the second phase, about which she feels regretful. After getting married Leyla started working as an accountant for a merchant firm. During this period, she sold a major portion of the jewelry gifted to her during their wedding, in order to set up a small business (tea shop) for her husband who was struggling to find wage work.

After giving birth to his son, Leyla quit her job to take care of him. As her husband was frequently out of a job, she took on home-based jobs while taking care of her two sons when they were children. She took her first home-based job via a relative who owned a small manufacturing workshop, for which she did running stitches on the back of neckties on a piece-rate basis. When her son began elementary school, she stopped doing it because she became a classroom mother[37]. And also because during this period her husband had set up a shop in the neighborhood (after he went bankrupt running the tea shop), which, for a while provided them with a sufficient income to get by.

Leyla sometimes worked the cash register in the shop her husband ran, and through this shop she received food orders from their customers on special occasions:

> I received so many *meze* orders, especially stuffed vine leaves. They call me for birthdays, special days, charity dinners, [religious holidays]. Sister Leyla, they say, we need halva, stuffed leaves, rice, and chicken for a group of 20— Or for birthdays, four or five different *meze*s. I don't do cake, I'm not good. I

[37] *Sınıf annesi*. Leyla states that her son's elementary school teacher lacked the sufficient educational background (as an aquaculture graduate) to properly educate her son and his classmates, thus she and a number of other mothers volunteered to give lectures to the kids in order to compensate this lack.

> set up the price, after invoicing the products I purchase myself. Then I add on my handwork/manual labor. I made good money from stuffed leaves orders. I still receive orders but I can't find leaves, and also my health condition gets in the way. [Leyla]

Leyla says her health deteriorated because she was standing all day working the register. During this time she was receiving various orders from home-made dumplings, to sauces, marmalades and pickles, etc. She was also volunteering, preparing foods to be disseminated to the low-income attendants of the Nurtepe *Cemevi* or to be sold on the bazaar (*kermes*) that the *Cemevi* holds occasionally to generate income.

She says her husband would get angry with her for tiring herself by taking on these jobs, which led her to do it during the day and finish by the time he was home: "He would say that, but we did not have enough [*yetmiyordu bize*]. Because of that I couldn't not do it, I had to support him somehow. So I would finish them without him seeing". She also adds that after coming home, her husband would sometimes take the kids out so that she could do more domestic work such as laundry or start preparing lunch or dinner for the next day.

After a while their family business began failing, however, Leyla says her husband refused to close the shop until they were at the brink of bankruptcy again. This was right before the COVID-19 outbreak, during which they separated and got divorced. With her now-ex-husband unemployed and her older son being let go from his job during the pandemic, their only source of income was the younger son's salary. Hence, Leyla began doing carving relief tableaus (*rölyef tablo*) at home, which she had learned from a course taught at the Local Public Education Center. She sold around 20-30 boards for around eight hundred to thousand liras each until she started experiencing nerve entrapment in her hands. During the pandemic, before she injured her hand, she also made baskets from combed cotton yarn and sold them

via an Instagram account set up by her older son who was having a hard time being out of work.

Toward the end of 2020, Leyla's sons came up with an idea to open a small eatery to sell meatball sandwiches. Concerned for her unemployed son's psychological state and the fact that her younger son did not work a proper job that aligned with his educational background, Leyla took loans both from a bank and her close relatives to set up a small eatery on one of the busiest streets of the area.

I should note that Leyla was able to secure a retirement pension for herself via her own earnings with some financial support from her husband during when he ran the family business. However her retirement paychecks go directly to the credit repayments for the eatery she opened for her sons.

At the time of our interview, Leyla was in contact with KEDV and the Commencement Women's Cooperative regarding a future project to establish a small shop in the neighborhood to sell food-related products produced by the cooperative.

3.4.3 Hülya

Hülya, a founding member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative, is a Kurdish Alevi woman in her late 50s residing in Güzeltepe with her husband. Like Meral, she received her elementary school diploma upon an exam within the scope of the open education (*açıköğretim*) system. Hülya has four daughters between the ages 24 to 39, all of whom are currently employed in varying sectors.

Hülya and her husband were forced to leave their hometown which is located in Eastern Anatolia, in the second half of the 1980s due to the problems they faced because of her husband's left-wing political associations. Her husband's dismissal

from his position as a public employee forced them to move to a town located on the coast of the Sea of Marmara, where they lived for a couple years.

During their time there, Hülya started working in a small clothing shop where she created knit patterns for the owner of the shop. The shop owner, who was also Hülya's friend, outsourced the manufacturing process. Hülya's pattern would serve as a sample from which home-based worker women, often including Hülya herself, would produce the copies. Stating that she earned good money from sampling and knitting sweaters while her husband was unemployed, Hülya also points out that she would often stay up all night in order to deliver the patterns on time. After her husband's appeal resulted in the overturning of the decision that cost him his job, he was reappointed to İstanbul in the early 90s.

> After I moved to İstanbul, you know, how hard it is here. I had my three daughters then and all of them were in school, so I had to work. I began working in a kindergarten and while I worked there, I also started taking on beading jobs. . . via a neighbor. [Hülya]

She had started beading via her neighbor, who got the job from a group of mediator women that set were set in an empty shop in the neighborhood. She remarks that at some point they produced chain belts for the multi-national retail clothing brand Zara via this subcontracting agency. Due to the health problems of a relative of her husband, she had to quit working in the kindergarten and started baby-sitting the children of her in-laws up until early 2000s, during which she continued taking on bead work via the subcontractor agency.

Hülya met a KEDV employee in 2001 and was invited to attend a training on "neighborhood mothering", which, she says, turned out to be very intriguing and led her to attend further KEDV trainings on a variety of topics. The neighborhood mothering training was part of KEDV's early childhood trainings and enabled

women to become certified “neighborhood mothers” as a result of which they could babysit more than one child at the same time and generate income.

> There was [also] a leadership training of sorts, to empower women. I attended all of their trainings, and then I thought to myself, what if I took in a number of kids. . . We did not have private schools here back then. No preschools. . . Also, they were very pricey. So I asked ‘Why is our neighborhood disadvantaged?’ Wouldn’t it be better if it was for all children? Women can bring in their kids and go. . . So first, I attempted to open a private school, but that turned out to be very costly. After consulting with KEDV, they offered us to start a cooperative, within the scope of which a playroom could be established. [Hülya]

After establishing the Commencement Women’s Cooperative, they set up the playroom in which those who received the neighborhood mothering training, including Hülya, worked for a while. From then on, she did not take on many home-based jobs because they were able to get by with her husband’s and oldest daughter’s wages.

Currently Hülya is a member of the managing board of the Commencement Women’s Cooperative and participates in its occasional sewing and weaving related production activities. She remarks that membership in the cooperative does not enable women to generate a sufficient living income as that they have not been able to come up with many projects, except for the last couple years. Unlike Leyla, she was not able to secure a retirement pension for herself as she was an insured employee for less than 25 years. Moreover, as per Turkish legislation, she was not able to become an insured employee in the Commencement Women’s Cooperative because she has been a board member since its foundation.

3.4.4 Semra

Semra, a Turkish Sunni woman, is one of the founding and managing board members of the Commencement Women’s Cooperative. Her family migrated to

İstanbul from the Black Sea region in the 1950s; she is in her late 50s and resides in Nurtepe with her husband and son. She is an elementary school graduate. She learned how to use crochet needles and skewers from her shipmaster dad and started making lace ornaments around the age of 10. During her adolescent years, her work came to be appreciated by people outside her family which is why she decided to "monetize (*ekonomiye dökmek*)" her work.

Semra states that she was raised in a "religious/conservative (*mutaassıp*) family" where daughters' outings were not very common. She was expected to undertake housework alongside her mother; in exchange of which her dad would give her pocket-money in small quantities. She would spend this money to prepare her dowry. In deciding to take orders for her handicrafts, one of her intentions was to be less of a burden for her family.

In doing business she is very chary, that is why she would request a model before taking on the job in order to have a grasp of the client's expectations. She would also inform them that she would work with any type of yarn but one, as she found that one brand extremely difficult to work with. Before getting married she also worked at a garment manufacturing workshop for a short while, again in exchange for pocket money, to "help out" a relative who had fallen behind on their orders. After getting married and settling in Nurtepe with her husband, she began working at her husband's cassette shop and continued making handcrafts upon orders.

Unlike the other interviewees I introduced so far, she never took on subcontracted home-based work. In the more recent years, she also began making handbags out of waste materials after they received a training on how to produce

recycled handbags in the cooperative. She makes them upon the occasional orders she receives from her social circle of friends and relatives.

As one of the founding members, she says her biggest advantage in taking an active role in the cooperative's foundation process was that her son was not so young and already enrolled in secondary school. Along the lines of Hülya's remarks on the cooperative not being able to generate income for its members, Semra adds:

> I have not come here for 17 years to earn something or pocket cash. I have come to solve [others'] troubles, to improve myself. Because when you sit at home you are much different. [Semra]

She finds that being stuck at home hinders one's self improvement and says that her husband was very supportive of her to take an active role in the cooperative: "My husband never favored me to spend time watching daytime television". Lastly, I should note that Semra was able to secure a retirement pension through her husband's cassette shop.

3.4.5 Dilek

Dilek is in her late 50s and has lived in Nurtepe for over 50 years. She currently lives with her daughter and husband. She was born in an Eastern-Anatolian city, to a Turkish Alevi family who migrated to İstanbul when she was little. Around the age of 9 or 10 she became interested in embroidery. She turned out to be very talented at it, to the extent that women began hiding their patterns from her as she was able to copy them instantly.

She was the second oldest of her siblings, and the oldest of all daughters. Thus, she was expected to undertake domestic chores alongside her mother, who fell ill for a couple years which led to Dilek dropping out of school after receiving her elementary diploma, in order to take care of mother. Although she says she was not

very keen on going to school anyway, the fact that this decision was made on her behalf seems to have had a significant effect over her:

> A woman came to our neighborhood, from Antep. She was said to teach sewing and embroidery. . . Our oldest was my big brother, I was the second oldest. So, everything fell to my lot. My mother was ill. . . Thereby I revolted. With this woman's arrival, I said to [my mother and father], "You didn't send me to school, you will buy me a sewing machine and I will attend a sewing course." [They] could not deal with me so they were forced to buy [a sewing machine] and we took it down to that tailor woman's house. [Dilek]

When she was 15, she applied for a job at the spinning factory in the neighborhood, going against the will of her older brother who was already employed there. This was her first formal employment where she was insured, and after the factory closed down, she started working at another factory that was set up in the same region.

After a couple years she began working at a textile manufacturing workshop where she began as a labeler and worked her way up to all sorts of machines. She continued to work different jobs after she got married and gave birth to her son, in addition to doing home-based work. She was able to do so as she had sent her son to live with her parents; this division of care labor enabled her to not only work but also attend further courses on embroidery and sewing.

Throughout the early years of their marriage, Dilek was responsible for most of the domestic work within their household, with the exception of ironing which she had delegated to her husband. During this period her son was living with her parents, so she was able to both work in an undergarment firm's workshop and attend embroidery and sewing courses at the same time. She remarks that she feels bad for having to work and send her son off to her parents' house, because she was not able to "mother [her] son".

Moreover, during this period she also enrolled herself to a folk dancing course, where she took other girls from their neighborhood along herself. She

worked outside during the weekdays, attended her courses on Saturdays and visited her son on Sundays. She was also making washcloths which she made via embroidery hoops when she was off the clock, and selling them to her friends, relatives and neighbors. Like Semra, Dilek never took on subcontracted home-based work either.

Dilek's husband who worked as a personnel manager, was frequently out of work due to switching between different firms and their move from one district to another within İstanbul. During one of these times when her husband was unemployed, they moved back to Nurtepe (because her family built a family apartment there), which caused Dilek to lose her job at the garment workshop as well. Thus Dilek's handcrafts was the sole income of their household for a while.

CHAPTER 4

A DIVERSE ECONOMY OF THE COMMENCEMENT WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin to analyze the data collected through the field research of this thesis in order to provide a diverse economies of the political economic landscape of the Commencement Women's Cooperative.

In the first section, I provide an overview of the Commencement Women's Cooperative's activities and move on to analyze the various forms of class processes characterizing these activities. Then, I direct my focus onto the cooperative's sewing and weaving-related production activities, in order to identify the forms of class processes characterizing them.

Finally, I close this chapter by elaborating on some future possibilities and potential explorations for a restructuring of the cooperative's political economic landscape. In this respect, I will be drawing on Resnick and Wolff's class analysis of different kinds of capitalist firms (Wolff & Resnick, 2012, p. 219), as well as Gibson-Graham's diverse characterization of enterprises (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. xiii).

4.2 An overview of the cooperative and its activities

According to the UN, cooperatives can be categorized into three types; these are producer, consumer, and worker cooperatives (Ki-Moon, 2011). This membership-based categorization can be detailed further by adding two more types, purchasing,

and multi-stakeholder cooperatives[38]. In a producer cooperative, the members, who can be businesses or independent (self-employed) producers, come together to produce a certain product in order to increase their market share. A worker cooperative is a business owned and democratically managed by workers. In a consumer cooperative, the members purchase goods and services they need from the cooperative, usually paying a cheaper price for higher quality. In a purchasing cooperative, the members, who are usually businesses, come together to increase their purchasing power. Lastly, a multi-stakeholder cooperative is owned and managed by a mix of members (be it producers, consumers, workers, volunteers, etc.).

Turkey's law on cooperatives categorizes them according to their objectives and areas of activities instead of the types mentioned above[39]. Moreover, the legislation to which cooperatives are subject is dispersed into varying legal texts and instead of providing a unitary legal framework for all cooperatives. The Commencement Women's Cooperative was founded under the authority of the Ministry of Trade as per the "Women, Environment, Culture and Enterprise Cooperative" articles of association[40]. It is defined as a social cooperative by its members, which is not legally recognized by Turkish legislation. On a broad level, social cooperatives aim to provide social benefits for disadvantaged groups and assist them in joining the work force (Gönüllü Atakan & Çoban, 2022, p. 6). A social cooperative is a hybrid enterprise that falls under the multi-stakeholder cooperative type defined above. The Commencement Women's Cooperative is indeed a hybrid

[38] https://www.democracyatwork.info/about_co_ops
[39] The Ministry of Trade lists a total of 23 cooperative types on their website: https://ticaret.gov.tr/kooperatifcilik/kooperatif-nasil-kurulur
[40] *Kadın Çevre Kültür ve İşletme Kooperatifleri ana sözleşmesi*.

enterprise, because its different activities (the playroom, sewing and weaving-related production, social service activities) place it under different cooperative types.

The cooperative has two full-time employees, a teacher and a housekeeper. These employees' wages are paid via project fundings. In this respect, KEDV either grants project funds to the cooperative to sustain the employment contracts or pens project proposals on behalf of the Commencement Women's Cooperative once every few years as projects come to an end.

The housekeeper, who opens the cooperative building in the morning, is responsible keeping the premises clean and orderly as well as cooking lunch for the children in the playroom. In light of Resnick and Wolff's (2012, p. 177) class analytics, the housekeeper can be classified as an independent producer (of cleaning and cooking use-values) selling commodities to the cooperative. As she does not produce commodities for the cooperative to sell, she is thus engaging in an independent fundamental class process.

The teacher's position appears rather more complicated than that of the housekeeper. First of all, as remarked before, the playroom provides childcare services to its members and thus characterizes the cooperative as a consumer cooperative (that allows members to purchase these services for a cheaper price)[41]. The cooperative does not sell these services, i.e. commodities, for a fixed price, but rather grants it upon membership in exchange for a certain amount of money designated in accordance with the financial status of each member.

In consideration of its senior members' remarks about how the cooperative is barely able to financially survive (to the point that founding member Semra states

[41] The playroom does not render the Commencement Women's Cooperative a producer cooperative because its members are not currently the producers of childcare and education services, though they used to be during its early years.

they sometimes make personal monetary contributions to keep things running), we can assume that these payments are nowhere near to covering the teacher's monthly wage.

The teacher produces childcare and education services for the cooperative to sell. In this sense, the teacher produces not only necessary labor but also surplus labor that is appropriated by the cooperative. Since the cooperative is unable to make a profit or even cover its production costs (the teacher's wage) from selling these services, it can be argued that a non-class monthly payment is made to the teacher via project funds. Thus, the Commencement Women's Cooperative can be considered as an alternative capitalist enterprise providing education and childcare services upon membership. In this sense, the project funds function both to render the degree of capitalist exploitation bearable for the teacher, and keep the price of the commodities below average market value.

The sewing and weaving-related production activities characterize the cooperative as a producer cooperative[42] wherein independent producers come together and form a collective to reduce their costs of production, as well as to increase their market share. After orders are placed, a number of cooperative members are assigned to the jobs in accordance with their production skills. After estimating a price for each piece, the producing members add an extra amount to the sum price. The extra amount belongs to the Commencement Women's Cooperative. The payment is received following the completion of production.

[42] Because a worker cooperative is a business that is owned and controlled by its worker-members, whereas in a producer cooperative the members are independent (self-employed) producers. Though this will be open to debate in discussing the cooperative's sewing and weaving-related production activities for different firms.

Production generally takes place within the cooperative, but this is not always the case. Sometimes the producers take either a portion or the whole of production into their homes[43]. In these cases, the producers' piece-rate remain unchanged. Here, too, a portion of the revenue is left to the cooperative. Thus, when production is done by cooperative members[44], either inside or outside the cooperative building, the class process entailed by these production activities remain the same.

The activities such as holding trainings (with the support of KEDV) for women residing in the neighborhood on leadership, early childhood development, financial literacy, information technologies etc., also characterize the cooperative as a producer cooperative. In holding these trainings, the cooperative members engage in a volunteer fundamental class process wherein the surplus labor they produce is appropriated by the women residents of the neighborhood.

These activities, as well as the occasional distribution of jobs to home-based workers in the neighborhood[45] also characterize the Commencement Women's Cooperative as a social cooperative. The "*Evden eve dayanışma*" project[46] they launched during the pandemic also falls under this third activity group. Lastly, the

[43] For instance, in the case of Nahıl cloth masks the sewing machines in the cooperative were sent to the homes of five cooperative members so that they could produce from their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was mainly due to health concerns. In the case of Goody handbags, weaving was done within the cooperative and whereas embroidery was done at home. This is because weaving looms cannot be transported into the homes of the producers.

[44] When production is distributed to non-members, that is, when the cooperative is outsourcing, the situation changes. Because non-member producers do not appropriate and distribute their own surplus, as they are not involved in the cooperative's decision-making processes (such as determining the piece-rate and cooperative's cut, how revenues will be distributed). Thus, in the case of outsourcing, the cooperative acts like a capitalist enterprise. However, I will not focus on the cooperative's outsourcing activities because, first, these occur even more rarely than its other production activities, and second, my focus in this thesis is mainly limited to the processes wherein cooperative members are direct laborers.

[45] Here, I am referring to non-cooperative members.

[46] Launched in collaboration with KEDV, this project employed a total of 10 cooperative members under part-time contracts to reach out to women in low-income households with the objective to determine their urgent needs such as food and hygiene and refer those in most need to the Turkish Red Crescent [*Kızılay*], Turkey's largest non-profit humanitarian aid organization.

active members of the cooperative who perform managerial labor (communications with KEDV, keeping track of event and meeting schedules, keeping accounts, decision-making, etc.) are all engaging in a volunteer subsumed class process.

Though, frankly, these latter two activity groups (sewing and weaving-related production, and social service-related production) are unevenly developed when compared to the playroom, which has been up and running for over 15 years.

4.3 Sewing and weaving-related commodity production

Before opening the weaving workshop in the cooperative building, the Commencement Women's Cooperative was mainly[47] producing commodities to be sold by KEDV's social enterprise Nahıl[48] and a clothing brand that is owned by an industry and trade limited company[49] named[50] Goody.

Some of the products of the Commencement Women's Cooperative are sold, alongside those produced by other cooperatives across the country, by Nahıl. Founded in 2003, Nahıl currently has three physical stores in İstanbul, İzmir and Mardin, in addition to an e-commerce platform[51]. Nahıl is the brand under which all women's cooperatives' products are sold. Except for food products, the items that are on sale on Nahıl do not include the names of the cooperatives producing them. Instead, they all include the following generic statement:

> This product was produced by women producers and women's cooperatives supported by the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV). By purchasing, you can support KEDV's endeavors to empower low-income women.

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[47] Prior to my field research, they had taken on a sewing job from a costume designer, who was designing costumes for a tentpole movie.
[48] KEDV Nahıl İktisadi İşletmesi, Trade Registration Number: 663624.
[49] Goody Tekstil Sanayi ve Ticaret Limited Şirketi, Trade Registration No: 207***-*
[50] While Nahıl is the real name of KEDV's social enterprise, the private company name has been changed for anonymity reasons.
[51] https://nahil.com.tr

The same goes for Trendyol[52], another e-commerce platform where Nahıl products can be purchased, there too the names of the cooperatives are not specified. If some items are produced within the scope of a specific project of KEDV, Nahıl labels them as part of their "special collections". These collections include the name of the firms that KEDV works in collaboration for that specific project but not the cooperatives' names that are the producers of the items.

The Commencement Women's Cooperative produced some products for Nahıl in the past such as candles, cushions, pillows, cloth dolls, and bags made out of waste materials, although not regularly and not very recently as of the time when the field research of this thesis was conducted. The most recent items the cooperative produced for Nahıl include pillows, cushions, recycled bags and cloth masks.

As for Goody, it has mainly produced handwoven and handsewn bags and belts, in addition to embroidering some readily-produced handbags. It is important to note that the cooperative's production for Goody is also mediated[53] by KEDV. These items are produced upon the respective orders of Nahıl and Goody and are replaced as they go out of stock.

Production begins after orders are placed and usually ends within a week. A number of cooperative members are assigned to the jobs in accordance with their production skills. The number of items to be produced is pre-determined by Nahıl or Goody. Hülya, a founding member, states that in order to determine how much they will charge for the job they begin by producing a number of samples in order to measure the average amount of time required to produce a single item. After estimating a price for each piece based on the hourly state-mandated minimum wage,

[52] https://www.trendyol.com/
[53] Though it is not clear, it seems unlikely that KEDV receives a merchant fee for acting as a mediator between Goody and the Commencement Women's Cooperative.

they add an extra amount to the sum price[54]. The payment is received following the completion of production. The extra amount belongs to the Commencement Women's Cooperative and the rest is shared equally among the producers.

4.4 Identifying the form(s) of class process

In order to identify the form of class process at work throughout the course of commodity production within the Commencement Women's Cooperative, we need to look into the processes of production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor.

In cases where production is planned to take place within the cooperative, the group of cooperative members assigned to these jobs collectively decide on the price they will charge for producing a certain amount of items. Then they produce the items collectively, some women do weaving, others sewing or embroidering. Then either Nahıl or Goody purchases the items from the cooperative as per the mutually agreed upon amount of price. After allocating the reserved portion for the cooperative, the producers share this amount equally among themselves.

Then, the following question comes to mind: Who or what appropriates the surplus labor of the cooperative members? Here, we should first take into consideration the fact that the Commencement Women's Cooperative is not the seller of its final products, Goody and Nahıl are. Although both firms can be characterized as alternative capitalist within Gibson-Graham's framework (1996, p. xiii), the class process pertaining to the cooperative's production for them are not identical. Below I will look more closely into the conditions of existence for the

[54] For instance, if the job is done by four members, they assume as if it were done by five and allocate that part for the cooperative.

production, appropriation and distribution of the cooperative members' surplus labor, in order to determine the form of class process characterizing the cooperative's production for these firms.

In the case of Goody, the cooperative members do not have much say over the decision-making processes pertaining to the productive moment. Here, the cooperative provides a portion of the means of production (sewing machines and weaving looms), whereas raw materials (fabrics and yarn) are provided by Goody. Upon the completion of production, Goody purchases the final products from the cooperative and sells them for a higher price.

After an agreement has been made between the cooperative and Goody, production begins. From that point on, the items that are expected to be produced are owned not by the direct laborers, but by Goody. In this sense, Goody appears to be acting like an industrial (productive) capitalist firm that owns and sells the commodities that result from the cooperative's production. Then, the cooperative members appear to occupy the position of Goody's wage laborers, (not only because the price of the commodities are estimated based on the state-mandated minimum wage, but also) because Goody is the owner of the overall output of the process of production. Goody's ownership of the final products is an indication that collective appropriation does not take place.

Since the Commencement Women's Cooperative does not seem to act independently in neither the productive nor the appropriative moments in producing for Goody, the producing cooperative members are engaging in a fundamental capitalist class process, wherein the surplus labor they produce is appropriated by an alternative capitalist firm. I am characterizing Goody as an "alternative" capitalist

firm because it can be categorized as a "green capitalist" enterprise[55] based on its definition of itself as a sustainable clothing brand and its production process as "slow, transparent, and ethical".

The case of Nahıl is different. In producing for Nahıl, the cooperative has more say in the productive moment, as Nahıl and the cooperative members mutually decide on the items to be produced. As such, the items produced by the Commencement Women's Cooperative have varied across time in accordance with its active members' skills and qualifications.

Upon the completion of production, Nahıl purchases the items from the cooperative and sells them for a higher price in its stores and/or on its website. As was the case in Goody, the cooperative members estimate the total price of the commodities they produce based upon the state-mandated minimum wage in producing for Nahıl. However, unlike Goody, Nahıl is an (unproductive) merchant capitalist firm. In this sense, we can argue that in producing for Nahıl, the cooperative members are collectively appropriating their surplus labor, and distributing it among themselves in a way that is mutually agreed upon (after reserving a portion of the total revenue for the cooperative).

I argue that collective appropriation takes place because, up until the moment of Nahıl's purchase, the items that the cooperative members produce are owned by the cooperative. In re-selling these items, Nahıl is engaging in a non-class process of commodity exchange, whereby it is able to make profits. Thus, when they are producing for Nahıl, the cooperative members are engaging in a communal fundamental class process as they are collectively producing and appropriating their

[55] The company claims to use long-lasting and durable materials to create versatile and seasonless products as well as re-integrate its waste materials to the manufacturing process.

surplus labor[56], as well as engaging in a communal subsumed class process in distributing it collectively.

In short, although the Commencement Women's Cooperative's production for Nahıl and Goody appear to be similar, they are characterized by distinct forms of class process. When producing for Nahıl, the cooperative members act like an independent group of producers and engage in communal fundamental and subsumed class processes. Whereas when producing for Goody, they occupy the position of Goody's wage workers engaging in a capitalist fundamental class process. I should also note that this latter case renders the cooperative a worker cooperative instead of a producer one.

Finally, I would like to remark another interesting point regarding the relationship between the cooperative and Nahıl, which I have categorized as a socially responsible merchant capitalist firm. Moreover, since it is the commercial enterprise of KEDV, a non-profit that is bound by law not to retain profits, a portion of Nahıl's profits are distributed to the cooperatives supported by KEDV all across Turkey. As such, in a 2017 interview[57], the director of Nahıl stated that the firm's revenues are used to provide educational materials to the existing women and childcare centers established with the support of KEDV, as well as to fund new ones. The playroom within the Commencement Women's Cooperative is among these existing centers, hence a portion of Nahıl's profits is distributed to the Commencement Women's Cooperative in the form of educational materials.

[56] Although it should be noted that the value of their surplus is subject to significant restriction, a problem that I will attempt to address in the next section.
[57] https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/gecmis-kadinlara-gelecek-oluyor-749442

4.5 Inferences

As outlined above, various forms of laboring that take place within the Commencement Women's Cooperative entail different forms of class process. In this section, I will compile my inferences before moving on to explore potential ways to transform the class structure of the cooperative.

We have defined the Commencement Women's Cooperative a hybrid enterprise, that can be categorized as a social cooperative (as its stakeholders are multiple, consisting of producers and consumers). As remarked previously, social service activities and sewing and weaving-related production renders the cooperative a producer cooperative, while the playroom renders it a consumer cooperative. I also remarked that the cooperative's activities other than the playroom are unevenly developed.

I argued that there exist distinct forms of class process within the cooperative and framed it as an alternative capitalist enterprise that sells childcare and education services to its members. I demonstrated that the housekeeper and the teacher are respectively engaging in independent and alternative capitalist class processes, whereas cooperative members are engaging in volunteer fundamental (social service-related production) and subsumed (managerial work) class processes. Lastly, I concluded that the cooperative's sewing and weaving-related production activities entail distinct forms of class process across different contexts (alternative capitalist class process in producing for Goody, communal class process for Nahıl).

A problem that became apparent in my analysis pertains to the relationship between the Commencement Women's Cooperative and KEDV, as the production activities of the former is dependent on the latter's mediation. The interviewees had mentioned that they are almost completely dependent on KEDV's mediation in the

cooperative's sewing and weaving-related production activities. This relationship of dependency urges one to question whether the Commencement Women's Cooperative can be characterized as an independent enterprise. The basing of price estimates upon the state-mandated minimum wage casts more doubt over the independence of the cooperative, leading to a significant restriction of revenues in its production for Goody and of the surplus value in its production for Nahıl.

Moreover, as remarked before, KEDV's social enterprise Nahıl does not specify the producer cooperative's names (except for food products) and prevents them from marketing their own products. This can be considered as an intensifying factor over the degree of dependence of the Commencement Women's Cooperative on KEDV. Conversely, Goody mentions the name of the Commencement Women's Cooperative (along with Ankara-based White Dove Women's Cooperative[58]) in its description of its products. However it should be noted that only a small portion (around 5%) of Goody's products are produced by these two cooperatives. This is because Goody is an industrial capitalist firm that depends mainly on its own manufacturing workshop and outsourcing does not characterize a significant portion of its manufacturing process. Also, all of the items produced by the Commencement Women's Cooperative and White Dove Women's Cooperative for Goody are made out of waste materials and marketed as "upcycled" products which indicates that the Goody is effectively lowering the production costs of these items.

Another problem, namely the unevenly developed character of sewing and weaving-related production within the cooperative has been remarked by all interviewees. They all admit that the cooperative rarely receives orders and is unable

[58] The cooperative's real name has been changed for anonymity reasons.

to sustain production. Here, I will touch upon on one of the multiple processes overdetermining this "failure" of the Commencement Women's Cooperative's inability to sustain production. We can argue that the first and foremost overdeterminant of the cooperative's inability to sustain production is that there existed no desire to do so. Hence, framing it as a failure may be an erroneous point of departure.

As remarked before, since the establishment of the cooperative, only four senior members (among them are interviewees Hülya, Semra and Dilek) have been actively involved in cooperative activities. These women have all remarked that their main objective for being involved is not to generate income but rather to unburden neighborhood women of care labor (in addition to providing quality early childhood education for neighborhood children) and enable them to actively participate in social life in general.

However, the non-existence of a desire to sustain commodity production (other than childcare and education services) in the cooperative was only the case until recently. During the period while the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted, the cooperative was preparing for a change in its administrative cadre. This decision stemmed from the senior members' (especially Semra and Dilek who are experiencing health problems) desire to delegate their responsibilities to younger women in order to make more time for themselves and families. In this respect, around 20 women residents of the neighborhood (among them are interviewees Meral and Leyla) were receiving trainings to take over the cooperative's activities from the senior members. We should note that not all 20 women are expected to actively volunteer for the cooperative's managerial work, but rather a group of five to 10.

In this light, considering the fact that both Meral and Leyla (who can be defined as junior members) expressed their desire to enhance the productive activities of the Commencement Adım Women's Cooperative, it can be argued that their willingness (along with the willingness of other new and younger members) can act as a push toward sustaining continuous production and perhaps a restructuring of the cooperative's political economic landscape.

4.6 Further questions and potential explorations

In this section, I will attempt to depict future possibilities for class transformation within the Commencement Women's Cooperative. One of the reasons behind the cooperative's inability to sustain production was due to its lack of resources, specifically means of production. Therefore, as mentioned before, a weaving workshop made up of four weaving looms was established in the cooperative building and 10 cooperative members were trained to be equipped with weaving skills in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the acquirement of these looms, the cooperative only had five sewing machines.

The establishment of the weaving workshop and providing courses on weaving can be seen as a good start in terms of production sustainability, since means of production and labor power are indispensable to the production process. This can enable the cooperative to form relationships with multiple firms, lead to a consequent increase in orders and perhaps to the dissolution of the relationship of dependency between the cooperative and KEDV.

Moreover, the cooperative is faced with another problem, namely the basing of price estimates upon minimum wage which casts doubt over its independence. This stems mainly from the cooperative's inability to sustain production and its

consequent stripping off of its bargaining power. Since, setting a higher price will risk losing the orders it rarely receives as it is. Hence, an increase in orders can re-enforce the cooperative's independence in decision-making.

As remarked in the previous section, when producing for Goody the cooperative members are subject to capitalist exploitation. Several ways[59] can be explored to minimize the rate or eliminate the capitalist exploitation of cooperative members by such alternative capitalist firms. As for their production for Nahıl, although the cooperative members are engaging in a communal class process wherein they collectively appropriate and distribute their own surplus, the value of their surplus labor is significantly restricted. In order to minimize the rate of their capitalist exploitation in the former case and do away with the restriction of their surplus value in the latter, the cooperative members should not base commodity prices upon the minimum wage standard.

For instance, Goody's marketing strategy of slow and ethical production reflects upon its "fair" wage policy wherein the wage estimates of all producers are made upon mutual declarations and the time they producers spend working. The cooperative may negotiate with purchasing firms to re-figure the value of its members' labor-power[60]. As remarked before, this can be done by enhancing the bargaining power of the cooperative through increasing its production capacity and creating a larger market. Building networks with similar alternative enterprises that seek to support independent women producers can help widen the customer portfolio

[59] I will elaborate possible ways that can be explored within the cooperative and not focus on the general institutional difficulties faced by women's cooperatives in Turkey. See Gönüllü Atakan and Çoban (2022) for a review of the legal and structural problems of women's cooperatives in Turkey.
[60] Enhancing the cooperative's bargaining power will reduce the producers' rate of exploitation on the condition that the increase in wages is not reflected onto the prices of the commodities sold by firms such as Goody.

of the cooperative. Moreover, KEDV may be expected to step up in such negotiations in order to increase the cooperative's bargaining power.

Perhaps the most obvious way to enact a communal class process entails the Commencement Women's Cooperative to independently conduct the production and sales of its commodities. This requires the cooperative to create resources for purchasing raw materials and establish its own space (a physical store or an online platform) for the sales of its products. Currently the cooperative's resources are dependent on the district municipality (rent and bills) and KEDV (by KEDV's project funds or project applications made on behalf of the cooperative). So, the cooperative should focus on securing future funds to obtain and sustain its own resources for commodity production, instead of taking on projects to fund its social service-related activities.

Moreover, the cooperative needs to build an independent brand identity under which its products will be sold. Developing a brand entails a set of designing processes (logo, website, social media, packaging and labeling) as well as market research and advertising. In this regard, the cooperative can request trainings from KEDV, to render its members competent in their use of technology, specifically on the relevant digital used for marketing and sales.

Before concluding, I would like to share some recent information I obtained while doing web searches during the writing process of this thesis. I came across a recent project launched by KEDV in collaboration with one of Turkey's leading national TV networks in spring of 2022. I was informed that, within the scope of this project, the Commencement Women's Cooperative, along with nine other entrepreneurial initiatives (cooperatives, groups or individual producer women), received consultancy services on brand and corporate identity building. In this

respect, commercial films were produced for a portion of these initiatives, including the Commencement Women's Cooperative. These commercial ads aired in between prime time broadcasts and were uploaded to the network's YouTube channel.

The creation of a brand and its promotion was an adequate departure point for the Commencement Women's Cooperative to conduct its own marketing and sales operations. However, although other initiatives' independent sales points were included in these commercials, the ad for the products of the Commencement Women's Cooperative only included Nahıl's website. This was because the cooperative was planning to launch its website within the scope of another KEDV project. It can be argued that this delay has hindered the realization of the cooperative's potential to start doing its own sales operations.

In concluding, I would like to re-emphasize the significance of the cooperative members' desire for sustaining commodity production as well as class transformation within the cooperative. Because my elaborations rest on the presupposition that such desire, which was explicit in the accounts of Meral and Leyla, exists. The Commencement Women's Cooperative appears to be on the route to enhance its character as a production cooperative (wherein independent producers come together to increase their market share and collective control over market conditions) which may consequently stimulate the enactment of a communal class process within it.

CHAPTER 5

THE CASE OF MERAL: A DIVERSE DEPICTON OF CLASS AND NON-CLASS POSITIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze the individual case of an interviewee, Meral[61], who has been a member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative for over eight years. I begin by analyzing Meral's household, which I argue is characterized by a feudal class process, and depict the multiple and contradictory social positions she occupies within it.

Then, I depict the class and non-class positions Meral occupies outside her household, and attempt to expound the contradictions that emerge or may emerge from the interactions among these different positions. I conclude that these positions are not fixed, but rather emerge as the results of constant bargaining and are open to transformation. Finally, I conclude the chapter by focusing on Meral's own reflections and framing them as respective struggles against the multiple class and non-class processes in which she is engaged.

5.2 Occupying multiple class and non-class positions

As introduced in Chapter 3, Meral has worked various types of jobs throughout her life, sometimes more than once at the same time. Currently, as a home-based worker

[61] My choice to dedicate a separate section to Meral's case has been overdetermined by multiple processes. The first and foremost is that Meral was very outspoken about her life story and personal experiences. Another reason is, Meral was the only interviewee whose children are still dependent upon parental care. Perhaps another reason was that, as a young, devout and veiled Muslim woman coming from a traditional Kurdish family, she would have easily been categorized as an oppressed female subject from the standpoint of mainstream feminism.

she produces knitted handcrafts and occasionally prepares party foods upon orders. As a mother of three, she is also the undertaker of all unpaid domestic and child care labor within her household. Moreover, she has an active role in the Commencement Women's Cooperative's various activities related to management and commodity production. All these different labor processes in which Meral is engaged entails managing different class and non-class positions at the same time and also requires a managing of physical and mental exhaustion.

5.2.1 Inside the household

I would like to begin by noting that an inspirational text for this section belongs to Harriet Fraad, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff; the essay is titled "For Every Knight in Shining Armor, There's a Castle Waiting to be Cleaned: A Marxist-Feminist Analysis of the Household" (Cassano et al., 2009, pp. 19–70).

Turkey is one of the countries where the gender-divided households such as Meral's are widespread. In this household, the husband is typically employed in a capitalist enterprise and works outside the house. The wife on the other hand is a direct laborer in the house. She cleans, cooks, does laundry, etc. She produces use-values in the forms such as clean rooms, home-cooked meals, and clean clothes. These products are consumed not only by her but also by other members[62] of the household, which indicates that she performs domestic surplus labor. The domestic surplus labor produced by the wife is appropriated by the husband. This household can be characterized as feudal, as the husband does not purchase his wife's labor-power or sell the use-values she produces for him.

[62] In analyzing the class process pertaining to domestic production in Meral's household, I will limit my discussion to Meral and her husband, though it could be argued that their children are also appropriating Meral's domestic surplus labor.

In the feudal household, wives are morally, religiously, and legally tied to their husbands similar to the way medieval serfs were to the feudal lords. These ties make up the non-class processes that overdetermine the feudal class process within a household. Non-class processes include three types of social processes: economic, cultural and political.

In this respect, we can argue that Meral is engaging in a feudal fundamental class process; her position resembles the feudal fundamental class position of a serf. Meral's surplus labor (in the form of clean rooms, laundry, meals, etc.) is appropriated by her husband, on whom she is financially dependent. In this framework, as a wife, Meral's duty is to serve her husband in exchange for his financial provisions such as paying rent and covering household expenditures (replacing household means of production such as food and hygiene products).

The feudal class process is also overdetermined by non-economic processes. For instance, Meral's husband provides her with protection on an ideological/cultural level. That is because religion, tradition and gender ideologies (such as biological essentialism) bind together husband and wife under the marriage relationship in such a way that the latter is rendered "dependent", "subjected", and "in need of protection" by the former (from the hardships of the world outside the household and/or men other than her husband).

However, arguing that Meral is subject to feudal exploitation by her husband does not necessarily mean that she is consequently oppressed and dominated by him. Moreover, Cameron (2000) had remarked that such representation tends to ignore Meral's own account and represent her as a passive subject who is acted upon rather than a subject who acts, perhaps by deeming her words as originating from a false consciousness. An alternative representation can emerge if we analyze further.

Since her husband spends some nights of the week at his workplace, Meral is the one actively managing household. She is responsible for managing the schedules of her kids, tracking her husband's shifts, keeping track of whether household means of production are running out, going shopping, creating and implementing a list of domestic tasks. Meral says that even when her husband is out of a job, he still does not spend much time at home. Thus, her husband's absence can be read as him distributing the domestic surplus he appropriates to Meral which consequently renders her the manager of the feudal household.

This distribution corresponds to the feudal subsumed class process, which means that Meral occupies the feudal subsumed class position of household manager. This subsumed class process of the distribution of domestic surplus appears as one of the conditions of existence of the feudal fundamental class process, that is, ensuring that Meral will continue to produce domestic surplus labor for her husband to appropriate when he is at home.

Meral's home is a space where other forms of class process coexist with the feudal one. The different kinds of home-based work Meral does, place her in different forms of class process. For instance, when she first began home-based work, she did bead work (via a mediator who appropriated a portion of her piece-rate) for a subcontracting firm, she was engaging in a capitalist class process wherein her surplus labor was appropriated by the firm. She notes that the reason she quit was because her daughter had started to swallow the beads, but also expresses her discontent regarding the amount of money mediators make off of others:

> . . . what [mediators] do is they make deals with 15-20 firms, maybe more. That is what [the mediator woman in the neighborhood] does. I know her, for instance she bought a car, and several houses. Her kids all go to private schools. [All] off the backs of others. [Meral]

Hence, her decision to quit bead work may have originated out of concern for her daughter but she also felt dissatisfied with the capitalist fundamental class process entailing the appropriation of the surplus labor she produced by others. When Meral says "The main gainers of bead work were mediators", she expresses her discontent regarding the mediator's cut (merchant fee paid by the capitalist firm) and the degree of exploitation that subcontracted bead work entails.

As for more recently and regularly, Meral does knitwork. In doing knitwork, Meral purchases the necessary means of production as per requested by the client after an order has been placed. In this context, she can be classified as self-employed and working for her own account, which means that she is engaged in an independent fundamental class process. The same goes for the cooking orders she receives occasionally.

For her knitwork, she receives orders from WhatsApp and Instagram in addition to her neighbors, friends and relatives. Although these orders are not as frequent as she wishes they would be, she also says that she is already very busy, especially because it was very difficult managing three children at home during the pandemic lockdowns.

5.2.2 Outside the household

Meral worked many jobs, but the first time she became an insured employee was through a joint project of the cooperative with KEDV. She earned half of the official minimum wage. She was later employed a couple more times under similar temporary contracts within the scope of projects that usually last around one or two months. A recent example is the "*Evden eve dayanışma*" project that was mentioned in Chapter 3.

Within the scope this project Meral and other women were employed to conduct research into the economic status of the neighborhood residents' in order to determine their urgent needs (such as food and hygiene products) during the pandemic and refer those in most need to the Turkish Red Crescent, Turkey's largest non-profit humanitarian aid organization. In this case, it can be argued that Meral occupied a capitalist fundamental class position working for KEDV as a part-time wage laborer under a temporary contract. The fact that KEDV is a non-profit does not necessarily amount to a non-class process in this context, since KEDV can be defined as an alternative capitalist enterprise that appropriates the surplus labor of its wage employees and is bound by law to not retain profits (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. xiv).

Meral is also involved in some of the Commencement Women's Cooperative's sewing, knitting and weaving related production activities. As demonstrated in detail in the previous section, these production processes, which usually last around a week, occur rarely and upon KEDV's referral of firms to the cooperative. As explicated in the previous chapter, in these instances Meral and other producer women are engaging in distinct class processes across different contexts: alternative capitalist fundamental class process in producing for Goody, communal fundamental and subsumed class processes in producing for Nahıl.

Moreover, as discussed in the previous section, the Commencement Women's Cooperative occasionally provides social services for women residents of the neighborhood. These include holding trainings on empowerment, leadership, financial literacy, early childhood development, disaster management, and information technologies, as well as coordinating humanitarian aid allocations. Inasmuch as Meral and other members are involved in providing these services they

are occupying volunteer fundamental class positions wherein the voluntary surplus labor they produce is appropriated by women residents of the neighborhood.

Lastly, Meral also occupies a volunteer subsumed class position in the Commencement Women's Cooperative. Her overall endeavors in attending the cooperative meetings, being involved in planning and organizing its activities as well as her plan to become a managing board member are all part of her voluntary managerial labor. In this respect, all active members of the Commencement Women's Cooperative occupy volunteer subsumed class positions within the cooperative.

5.3 Contradictions

The feudal fundamental class process within Meral's household cannot be thought to occur without contradiction. As remarked in Meral's introduction, her loosening of her household responsibilities when she receives orders indicates the existence of a contradiction between her feudal fundamental class position as a wife and independent class position as an own-account home-based worker. She is also aware of the extent to which she can minimize the domestic surplus labor she produces for her husband to appropriate, because he will argue with her for, say, not cooking a proper meal.

Thus, Meral has to produce a certain amount of domestic surplus labor for her husband to appropriate when he is home, in order to sustain her independent fundamental class position as well as her feudal subsumed class position as the household manager. Her husband's occasional criticism, when he deems insufficient the amount of domestic surplus labor that Meral produces, can be read as a challenge to Meral's feudal subsumed class position, implying that he may potentially

redistribute an increased amount of domestic surplus labor to himself and consequently become the manager of the household himself.

When her husband allocates an insufficient amount of money to the household budget, Meral says that she adds an extra amount from her savings instead of arguing with him for a higher amount. In such instances, it can be argued that Meral is making subsumed class payments (from her appropriated surplus value of independent production) to replace the feudal means of production, in order to reproduce her independent fundamental class position as a home-based craft producer.

There also exists multiple non-class processes we need to look into. For instance, Meral asserts that she does not conform to cultural constraints at the expense of her independence when she characterizes herself as different from those women in her husband's and own extended families. "I have always been free" she stresses, referring to her childhood. She continues: "My uncle would complain about me and my sisters to my father saying we were 'disobedient', my father would tell him that he didn't raise us to be obedient in the first place." Comparing her husband's family to her own, she asserts that the former is more "enclosed" than the latter. She adds that she stands in a rather distinguished position among her extended family members as the only woman who wears trousers, which is considered rare in her community since Meral is a veiled woman.

A similar cultural process is at work when Meral questions whether "other women" also feel uncomfortable when asking for money from their husbands:

> For example, in the simplest term, say I will buy a present for my husband on his birthday, or a cake. Do I tell him give me money to buy cake? . . . This seems a little off to me, I don't know if it's just me or other women feel the same way. . . For instance, last year I took the girls, and went shopping for my husband. We got him cake and all that, we celebrated. He was shocked. He celebrated my birthday involuntarily. [Meral]

Here, Meral is self-reflecting. In light of this and her statement "You know, [husbands] leave money. Mine doesn't. Because he is not used to it", one can argue that Meral is reflecting on societal gender roles, calling womanhood, or more accurately what it means to be a woman, into question.

I should note that Meral is not referring to the household budget here, but rather an extra amount for her personal expenses. In this respect, it can be argued that Meral's identification as "free" and somehow different from other women may contradict with the feudal fundamental class process in her household, which entails a more general class position that women occupy with respect to their husbands. Thus there exists a gender process that bears a potential to disrupt the feudal fundamental class process as she is not bound to her husband in terms of docility and obedience. Moreover, this gender process is accompanied by a class process as well, since Meral's independent class position (as a home-based worker) and capitalist class positions (as a part-time wage laborer in KEDV projects, and commodity producer in the cooperative), are also overdeterminant of Meral's relative financial independence (not receiving pocket money) from her husband.

Another non-class process that reduces the degree of Meral's feudal exploitation in the household, is her involvement in the cooperative. Through registering her youngest daughter to the cooperative's playroom, she was able to outsource[63] a portion of domestic care labor and make time for herself to socialize

[63] Here, too, I am appropriating the concept of outsourcing, instead of theorizing this as a division of labor, because Meral not only made monthly payments to the cooperative for this service, but also remained exclusively responsible for domestic care labor. When childcare and education services are outsourced, women's role as primary care givers remains intact as they remain responsible for tracking the children's schedules, helping them with homework, and performing care labor when, for some reason, it becomes impossible to outsource these services (as did happen during the pandemic lockdowns).

and participate in the cooperative's activities. Then, she received trainings on topics such as leadership, entrepreneurship and peaceful communication within the family.

She says being involved in the cooperative activities has boosted her confidence: "After I met the cooperative, my confidence and self-respect increased. Until then, [my life] was nothing outside four walls, I could not even leave the house to buy milk. You can't go out because you can't leave your children". These trainings aim to educate women or assist their self-improvement; thus they entail various cultural processes that distribute certain discourses on gender, household and familial relations, self-improvement and so on.

Toward the end of my field research, a conflictual situation had arisen between Meral and her husband. Although her husband had no significant problems throughout the many years she participated in the activities of the cooperative, he became angry with the idea of her taking a more active/administrative role. According to Meral, his reaction stemmed from a "misinterpretation" of the change she has undergone; that is, he thinks she became more "empowered" now, which means she will leave him. She also remarked that his response could have been triggered by the overwhelmingly busy schedule of the online KEDV trainings she needs to attend before taking on an administrative role in the cooperative.

Meral's husband's reaction was an attempt to (re)assert control over her and can be read as overdetermined by a series of contradictory social processes, which I will try to elaborate below.

Meral refers to empowerment not in economic terms, but rather alludes to cultural or ideological empowerment, that is, her confidence in herself and training to take on an administrative job. Meral was convinced that her husband was acting out of "paranoia", which led her to seek psychiatric help for him. So we can argue that

this oppressive act did not lead to immediate submission on Meral's part, as she was looking for ways to communicate with her husband.

It appears that Meral's husband felt anxious about the effects of the non-class processes entailed by Meral's involvement in KEDV trainings (and the consequent volunteer subsumed class position she plans to occupy on the managing board of the cooperative) over the control he has over her. Apprehensive about the idea of his wife becoming a managing board member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative, Meral's husband expresses his anger to her, which can be read as his attempt to (re)gain control over her. Thus, here we can speak of a contradiction between two gender processes (men trying to wield dominance over women and the discourse on women's empowerment produced within the cooperative).

Though this is not to say that Meral's husband's reaction stemmed solely from a contradiction between non-class processes. This reaction may have also been caused by him feeling that his feudal fundamental class position as the appropriator of Meral's domestic surplus labor was being threatened. As such, Meral remarks that KEDV training schedule is so busy that she often has to attend trainings in the later hours of the day when her husband is home.

Thus, we can argue that Meral's husband's anxiety may have been triggered by Meral's omission of certain domestic responsibilities, and/or a cessation of or decrease in the emotional labor she performs for her husband; and in seeking of psychiatric help Meral seems to be looking for a way to outsource the latter.

5.4 Meral's struggles

The above-mentioned conflictual situation reflects well the multiple and contradictory positions Meral occupies. The positions she occupies within the

household are her feudal fundamental class position (as a producer of domestic surplus labor), her feudal subsumed class position (as the manager of the household), and her independent fundamental and subsumed class positions (as an own-account home-based worker). Outside the household, Meral occupies a communal fundamental class position (as a producer for Nahıl), capitalist fundamental class positions (as a producer for Goody, and a wage laborer in KEDV projects), as well as volunteer fundamental and subsumed class positions (as a social service worker and managerial laborer). The gender position she occupies as an independent and free woman encompasses both her household and the cooperative.

Meral has in mind varying considerations while managing these positions. These positions are overdetermined by various class and non-class processes and thus not fixed, but rather open to constant bargaining.

In their household, Meral is struggling against the amount of feudal surplus labor she is expected to perform. Her husband's absence enables her to re-figure the amount of time she spends for housework as she rarely has to cook for and clean after him. Remarking that she had a difficult time during the pandemic lockdowns when schools were closed, Meral is content with her husband's absence, as it is much easier to keep the house tidy when her husband and kids are away. Similarly, she was struggling against the amount of care labor she needs to perform when she enrolled her youngest child to the cooperative's playroom.

Moreover, she was ill-pleased about the capitalist exploitation entailed by subcontracted bead work; thus her setting up an Instagram account for her knitwork and use of other digital platforms can also be read as her struggling to create a market for herself in order to engage in an independent class process.

Meral is struggling outside the household as well. She is discontent because she cannot secure a sufficient income through participating in the cooperative's commodity production activities, which stems from the cooperative's inability to sustain production[64]. She notes that this prevents other women from being involved in the cooperative as well: "When there is production, [more] women will come. Because yes, morale [*maneviyat*] is also good for them but materiality [*maddiyat*] is also mandatory during these times".

This discontent can be read as pertaining both to the capitalist exploitation to which Meral is subject in producing for alternative capitalist firms like Goody, and the restriction of the value of her surplus labor in producing for Nahıl. Though she is hopeful about upcoming projects, which demonstrates her desire for transformation. The voluntary labor she currently performs in order to take on an administrative role in the Commencement Women's Cooperative also reflects her desire to act against the issues about which she feels discontent. Thus, it can be argued that Meral's desire may enable the cooperative to sustain sewing and weaving-related production, and perhaps stimulate the enactment of a communal class process within the cooperative.

[64] As remarked before, the cooperative's inability to sustain production is due to a lack of regular orders. In order to increase orders, they had set up a weaving and sewing workshop in one room of the cooperative building. This was before the second wave of the pandemic, which spanned from October 2020 until March 2021, and the workshop was not active as per the beginning of this field research because the cooperative members usually spend their summer in their hometowns.

CHAPTER 6

DIVERSIFYING EFFECTS OF SUBJECTIVITY ON CLASS TRANSFORMATION

6.1 Introduction

I begin this chapter by respectively analyzing the households of the remaining interviewees and identify the forms of domestic class process characterizing these households. I point out that some of the interviewees' households underwent a class transformation at some point in the past, and attempt to depict the overdeterminants of these instances.

In doing so, I demonstrate the varying effects of subjectivity over the field. In this respect, I argue that the interviewees' desires, self-representations and enjoyment lead to diversifying effects over women's performance of unpaid domestic and care labor. I also argue that these effects are interconnected with the discourse on empowerment produced and distributed by the Commencement Women's Cooperative and KEDV.

The first effect pertains to the interviewees' households' respective domestic class structure. In that regard, I argue that although subjectivity may contribute to the enactment of a class transformation in some cases, it may not do so in others.

The second effect is related to the articulation of the discourse on empowerment with the discourse on motherhood. As such, I argue that in some cases, the articulation of these discourses fail to lift the burden of care labor off of women's shoulders, and instead strengthens their role as primary care givers.

Through analyzing the ways in which interviewees reflect on the various forms of labor they perform both within and outside their households, I find that

some of them find enjoyment in striving and wearing themselves out, which, I argue, goes hand in hand with a heroic self-representation.

6.2 Analyzing the households of the interviewees

As introduced in the previous chapter, Hülya and Semra are founding members of the Commencement Women's Cooperative, whereas Dilek has been its member since its foundation. Hülya, Semra and Dilek are three of the active laborers in the cooperative since its early years. They are not currently doing home-based work on a regular basis, though they used to before their involvement in the cooperative. They are among those doing most of the sewing and/or weaving jobs that the cooperative takes on. As for Leyla who still does home-based work, as of the time I interviewed her, she had recently formed a close relationship with the Commencement Women's Cooperative and KEDV.

6.2.1 Leyla's household

As introduced in the previous chapter, Leyla currently lives with her two sons who are both in their early 30s. Leyla had always been the sole undertaker of domestic labor within their household. When her sons were young, she would wake up very early, prepare the day's meals, serve them breakfast, and start doing home-based work whether it be neckties or preparing foods upon orders.

Currently, her sons are running an eatery that Leyla set up through taking loans from a bank and her close relatives. Leyla is preparing their meatballs daily:

> It takes around two and half to three hours every day. I even say to my kids, "you are making me work informally", and that I want supplemental pay. It takes three hours every day. I even shared this with KEDV, told them that there are so many women working informally like me. I sometimes make [the meatball mix] out of five kilograms of meat, when there is a high demand. But right now it has decreased to three, or two and a half kilograms. Many

> take-away restaurants have opened here, so our orders decreased by half. But I still do three kilograms daily. I wake up in the morning, I have thyroid disease, so I take my pill with a glass of water. I start kneading the meatball mix and finish it. Then I move on to breakfast. I put the mix in the fridge until [my sons] come to pick it up. I wait for them, afterwards, I do housework, cooking. . . I sometimes come to the eatery to pack the chili peppers, answer the phones, take orders. [Leyla]

Currently, Leyla does not serve breakfast for her sons who leave in the morning to open the eatery, but still cooks them dinner, does the laundry, cleans the house, and does the household shopping. It can be argued that since she has separated from her husband, the amount of domestic surplus labor she has to produce has decreased since she does not have to cook for him, do his laundry or clean after him.

If we are to focus on the division of unpaid domestic labor within Leyla's home, we can argue that throughout her life she appears to have more or less occupied a feudal class position, wherein her domestic surplus labor has been appropriated by her husband in the past, and more recently by her sons who are in their early 30s.

However, unlike Meral (whose household I have represented as feudal), Leyla does not express discontent with regard to her husband's or sons' lack of involvement in domestic work. This entails a difficulty in determining whether her household can be characterized by a feudal class process. When asked whether her husband was performing any domestic labor, she says he would sometimes "help" with breakfast and was "supportive" of her by taking the kids out in the evening so that she could do more housework.

In this light, it is clear that when they were together, Leyla's husband was not producing much, if any, domestic surplus labor. Neither do her sons in their current household. However, in light of Leyla's own remarks, her domestic surplus labor appears not to be appropriated by her sons (or her husband in the past), but is rather

gifted to them by Leyla herself. Thus, I believe Leyla's household can be characterized by an independent class process wherein Leyla produces domestic surplus labor, appropriates it herself, and then distributes it as she sees fit.

6.2.2 Hülya's household

As introduced in the previous chapter, Hülya is a founding member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative and currently lives with her husband. She participates in the occasional sewing and weaving related production activities of the cooperative.

When asked about the sharing of domestic labor in her household, Hülya says "Even though my husband is a socialist, he never had such capability". She notes that her brother was also an advocate of leftist politics and although they always had an open communication within their parent's household (as well as her household with her husband and children), her brother never took on any domestic work either:

> My husband is the same, just like my brother. I always say that although [our guys] are socialists, they are also bearers of a little bit of feudalism [*feodallik*] when it comes to housework…Work in the house is not work [for them], the work outside is to read, do [their] duty, work and mind [their own] business. Nothing more. There was no sharing of work in the house. [Hülya]

Moreover, she says that her husband would even get angry at her for doing bead work in the past, saying "Instead of wasting time on this, do something else, read a book or something". Similar to Leyla, Hülya says that she felt obliged to take on home-based jobs in terms of the reproduction of their household, as she was not working full time.

Hülya notes that she was able to share domestic work with her daughters when they lived together:

> We worked collectively. That is my mentality; my children were also like me. They would come home from school. We each had tasks, one was assigned to

> the bathroom, I was assigned to the kitchen, another was assigned to tidying the house. [Hülya]

Hülya stresses that she never assigned them to bead work. She says she would start beading and they would start their studying after they were done with domestic work.

Like Meral, Hülya explicitly says her husband, who is currently retired and spending much of his time at home, does not take on domestic work (by referring to his feudalist tendency). Although, unlike Meral, she remarks that her husband would never complain if there was no dinner and is able to cook for himself in those instances. In this light, one can argue that Hülya appears to occupy a feudal fundamental class position with respect to her husband within their current household. Hülya also occupies the feudal subsumed class position of the household manager. However, if we are to analyze Hülya's reflections more closely, we see that this has not always been the case.

It appears that Hülya did not feel discontent regarding the unequal sharing of domestic labor in the past:

> We had a hometown association and my husband was mostly there when he was not at work. He was [politically] active there. He would be home for dinner so naturally there was no time [for him to take on domestic work]. Honestly I did not have the heart [*kıyamıyordum*] to burden him with that as well, because he was already so busy. [Hülya]

As to why Hülya felt no discontent in the past, we can argue that this was due to the fact that her husband was the one laboring outside (as a public employee and a volunteer in their hometown association) and their household depended mainly on his income. Hülya feeling obligated to do bead work (despite her husband getting angry at her for "wasting" her time with it) and unwilling to burden her husband with domestic work in the past appear to have been overdetermined by Hülya's husband's employment status. Since, although Hülya worked both outside (part-time in a

private kindergarten) and at home, her income remained marginal when compared to that of her husband.

These remarks constitute a difficulty in representing Hülya's household as continually feudal. Hülya's household appears to have undergone a class transformation at some point that is likely related to her husband's employment status. As such, I believe Hülya's household in its past form can be characterized by an independent class process wherein Hülya produced, appropriated and distributed domestic surplus labor as she saw fit. It can be argued that an economic (non-class) process (gender-based wage gap) had a significant effect in the overdetermination of Hülya's independent fundamental class position, as well as her capitalist fundamental class position as a subcontracted home-based worker.

As per Hülya's current remarks on the unequal sharing of domestic labor in their household, we can argue that the independent class process has dissolved and that her household has transformed into a feudal one in recent years[65]. That is because her husband has now been retired for a while and not working outside the home; this has led to Hülya becoming less willing to distribute her domestic surplus labor to him. Thus, as remarked above, Hülya currently occupies a feudal fundamental class position as the producer of domestic surplus labor, which is then appropriated by her husband.

6.2.3 Semra's household

As introduced in the previous chapter, Semra, who is a founding member of the Commencement Women's Cooperative, currently lives with her son who is in his

[65] Especially considering that she is herself invoking the concept of feudalism, though not strictly in the sense that it is conceived within the scope of this thesis.

early 30s. She participates in the occasional sewing and weaving related production activities of the cooperative.

When asked about the division of unpaid domestic labor within her home, Semra says her husband has always been "helpful". She adds that it is only understandable that he takes on domestic chores, as he was supportive of her to take an active role in the Commencement Women's Cooperative.

> I've been married for over 30 years. I never folded my husband's pajamas. He is orderly, he deals with his own matters. If he is up before [me and our son] he makes the table. The washing machine and etc,, he is supportive of me in every way you can imagine. [Semra]

I should note that Semra's husband is producing necessary domestic labor in "dealing with his own matters", whereas preparing breakfast and doing laundry can be considered as him producing domestic surplus labor. Semra also expresses that she occasionally feels like she is being ungrateful toward him:

> Frankly, sometimes I become ungrateful [*nankör*]. Because I get so used to it, when I go into the kitchen—I may ask [him] why didn't you put this away? But then sometimes I look at myself and say you are going too far. [Semra]

However, Semra's husband works in the media broadcasting sector and has been away from home working in different cities for the most part of the past couple years.

When asked about who does what kinds of domestic work in the house that she currently shares with her 32-year-old son, Semra adverts to her Black Sea origin and notes that in their community, mothers do not let their children do much. She says "Our men do not work" referring to a wider social and economic reality in the region. Semra states that she has not been able to "overcome" the issue of letting her son do housework.

At first glance, it seems that in her current household Semra is engaged in a feudal fundamental class process like Meral and Hülya. However, unlike Meral and

Hülya who expressed their discontent about their husbands' lack of participation in domestic work, Semra clearly states she herself does not let her son take on domestic chores.

In this respect, as was the case in Leyla's household, we encounter a difficulty in concluding that Semra's household can be characterized by a feudal class process. Because Semra, too, seems to be willingly gifting the domestic surplus she produces to her son. Thus we can argue that, like Leyla, Semra is also engaged in an independent class process within her household, wherein she occupies the independent fundamental class position as the producer of domestic surplus labor. She appropriates the domestic surplus labor she produces, and distributes it to herself and her son as she sees fit.

This argument can be furthered in consideration of the following. I found that Semra's independent fundamental class position had dissolved when she underwent a major medical operation a little over one year before I interviewed her. During her recovery her son had quit his job to take care of her; this period lasted for a whole year. He had started working again three months before our interview. During Semra's recovery her son undertook all housework in addition to the care-work required to get his mother back on her feet. During this period Semra's son occupied the independent fundamental and subsumed class positions as the producer, appropriator and recipient of domestic surplus labor, whereas Semra occupied a non-class position. In this sense, Semra's son would appropriate his own surplus labor, make a subsumed class payment to himself by distributing a portion of his appropriated domestic surplus, and then make a non-class payment to his mother.

Now that Semra is better and her son is back to work, she is back doing housework. Semra adds that her son is not comfortable with letting her do it all: "He

tells me ‘Why did you do this? I could’ve done it’. He knows his responsibility; I know he would have. But I act before him, out of my agility [*atikliğimden*].” As for her husband, although they frequently spend time apart, Semra states that he has always been “helpful”, hence it may be argued that she maintains the idea that she is individually responsible for domestic work.

Semra’s characterization of herself as agile and mainly responsible for domestic work are the overdeterminants of the independent fundamental class position that she re-claimed after recovering from her illness.

6.2.4 Dilek’s household

As introduced in the previous chapter, Dilek, another senior member of the Commencement Women’s Cooperative, is currently living with her husband and daughter. Like Hülya and Semra, she also participates in the occasional sewing and weaving-related production activities of the cooperative.

Dilek’s husband was frequently out of work due to switching between different firms and their move from one district to another within İstanbul. Dilek remarks that during one of these times when Dilek’s handcrafts (washcloths) were the sole income of their household, she made her husband help her with making washcloths by teaching him to wrap the yarn after which she would do the sewing.

> He was ashamed. My husband had a very timid personality. I had had made two hoops, one from wood and the other from iron. I told him you do the wrapping and I the sewing. You wrap, I sew. I said you are sitting at home, so please give me some support. And [he did] abashedly. That way I opened [him] up. [Dilek]

However, this period did not result in a division of domestic labor between Dilek and her husband. She remarks that although she had taught basic cooking and cleaning skills to her son, it was only after her husband had retired and she started having

health problems such as hernia, that she was able to distribute the burden of unpaid domestic labor by delegating certain chores to her husband who would otherwise go off to the coffeehouse:

> What good does [him going to the coffeehouse] do to me? So, I made my son take over ironing from my husband. Then I started giving my husband the vacuum cleaner. Slowly. Now I never vacuum the house, [he] does once every week. [Dilek]
> [My husband] was retired. Who employs a retired person? Then I said, since you are unemployed and I am working—I mean, I am coming to the cooperative. I am working and my back hurts, so we will do everything jointly. You will keep house [*evi sen çekeceksin*]. For instance, before sending my son off to university, I raised [*yetiştirdim*] him exactly like this. [Dilek]

In this light, Dilek was engaged in a pedagogical labor process both toward her husband and her son.

In their current household, Dilek lives with her husband and daughter as her son has married off. If Dilek is feeling well, she mops after her husband vacuums the house, if not she just does the dusting. On weekdays, Dilek leaves the house in the morning before everyone else to run her personal errands such as going to her doctor's appointments, she then arrives at the cooperative. Her husband wakes up rather late toward noon and prepares breakfast for himself and for their daughter, who has been working from home due to the pandemic. Dilek leaves the cooperative in the afternoon to get home and cook dinner.

In the current state of things, Dilek's seems to be the only household among the interviewees' where there exists a division of unpaid domestic labor between household members. It can be argued that the feudal fundamental class process within their household was disrupted and replaced with a communal one through Dilek's efforts (in teaching her husband how to do domestic work), as well as her health problems and her husband's retirement.

6.3 Managing exhaustion

It is difficult to designate the work day of the interviewees, especially when their home-based labor is articulated with domestic labor, it seems like the only time they are not laboring is when they are sleeping. Interviewees express physical and mental exhaustion entailed by their performance of various kinds of labor:

> I am cracking up [after dropping the kids to school in the morning] because when I return I feel tired already. [Meral]
> There are these knives [used in making relief tableaus] you know. We got nerve entrapment in our hands from [carving] them. [Leyla]
> I would sit up until the morning creating sample patterns… I was babysitting [during the day], I would return home and do bead work at night. [Hülya]

Moreover, some of them note that they do handcrafts when they are free, hence one can argue that the work day of a home-based laborer begins when she wakes up and lasts until she goes to sleep. In most interviewees' households, the interviewees have always been the first to wake up in the morning and last to go to bed at night. Moreover, almost all of them have been the sole undertakers of care labor in raising their children[66].

The interviewees are endowed with a certain ability to manage the various forms of labor they perform within and outside their households. This exhaustion can be thought together with the idea that people, and especially women who perform informal paid and/or unpaid labor, are becoming increasingly time-poor, in the sense that they are deprived of leisure or free time because most of their time is spent working. I believe the ability of the interviewees to manage this exhaustion is closely linked to the discourse on empowerment that is produced and distributed throughout the trainings of KEDV and the Commencement Women's Cooperative.

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[66] Out of the five interviewees only Dilek was able to delegate care labor to her extended family for a certain period of time. When her first child was in elementary school, she had sent him to live with her parents. Dilek thinks this prevented her from mothering him, for which she expresses feelings of guilt.

As remarked in the third chapter, women's empowerment is one of the main objectives of KEDV and its cooperativization program. Empowerment within this framework includes economic, political and cultural/ideological aspects. KEDV offers micro-loans to women in order for them to cover the costs of setting up a cooperative as was the case for the establishment for the Commencement Women's Cooperative. Moreover, KEDV urges the cooperatives to hold trainings (for both members and non-members) on topics such as product and business development, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. On a political level, KEDV offers trainings on local organization and participation in governmental processes on a local level. As for cultural/ideological empowerment, KEDV provides trainings on leadership, gender, and communication.

Here, I will focus on the cultural, specifically the gender effects of the discourse on empowerment. Through the introductions in the third chapter, I aimed to emphasize the varying forms of paid and unpaid labor that these women have performed throughout their lives and continue to do so in different ways. I believe the discourse on empowerment has a significant effect in the context of the articulation of home-based work with unpaid domestic labor as well as with regard to the volunteer class positions the interviewees occupy in the Commencement Women's Cooperative. Although the concept of empowerment was not included in my questions, it was an implicitly recurring theme in the interviews.

6.4 Enjoyment of striving and wearing oneself out

Throughout their lives, the interviewees have been performing different forms of paid labor in addition to the unpaid domestic labor they perform within their

households. Their assertiveness with regard to their ability to manage these varying labor processes is an interesting theme, which I would like to elaborate further.

As remarked before, Leyla's husband underwent multiple bankruptcies, the last of which led to their separation and divorce. With regard to his first bankruptcy, Leyla says:

> As a newlywed bride, I cashed out my bracelets and set up a business for him. I said, you know, let him strive [*mücadele etsin*]. All in all, when men face difficulties…We women can face all kinds of difficulty, but they cannot. I set up [that] business for him. Acting in good faith, he took in his relatives [as employees] and went bankrupt. [Leyla]

In the face of her husband not being able to find wage work, Leyla cashing out of her wedding jewelry is a form of primitive accumulation to set up a business for her husband. "Women have somehow strived" Leyla says about her fellow volunteering women in the *Cemevi* and public education center (*halk eğitim merkezi*) trainee women. She also says when her oldest son (aged 31) became depressed after losing his job during the pandemic, she felt like she had to do something about it and took loans from a bank, as well as from multiple relatives to set up a business for her sons:

> As [my sons] could not find work [in accordance with their university education], I strived [*mücadelemle*] and opened this small eatery for them.

She notes that they will "work until [her] kids are tired" and, at one point, adds that she "will strive for [her] kids until [her] last breathe".

In this light, one can argue that from Leyla's emphasis on her striving emerges a heroic self-representation. Thought together with her views on men not being able to face hardship and women being able to strive against it, it appears that this is beyond a self-identification but rather a general characterization of women.

Like Leyla, Dilek also places emphasis on her husband's weaknesses and her own influence in his personal development, however, she departs from a more

individualized point[67] compared to Leyla, who had explicitly stated that men in general cannot cope in the face of difficulties. When asked about how her husband felt about her working, Dilek begins by remarking that her husband was raised without parents and says:

> He was very understanding in that matter. I mean you know; you have got to hand it to him. He is definitely very kind; he never offends anyone. I never saw anyone like my husband in my whole extended family. For instance he would tell me "go anywhere you want without taking me". Because he was raised as an orphan. He knew nothing about entering into familial relations, or paying [social visits] etc. [*Ne aileye girmeyi, ne bir yere oturmaya gitmeyi biliyor*]. He learned [those] after marrying me. You feel sorry for him, give him a hand, etc. All in all [marriage] is life companionship. I taught him these too. [Dilek]

In addition to this pedagogical aspect, Dilek also points out to her struggle in the face of her husband's financial incompetence when she tells the story about her attempt to buy a house by joining her savings from working at the manufacturing workshop and selling handmade washcloths, with her husband's monthly income:

> My husband gambled our savings away. I learned about that as well. All hell broke loose, but what then? Then you lose trust in your husband. So, what happened then? Me, silent Dilek, began to be unabashed [*yırtık*] Dilek. [Dilek]

From then on, Dilek took financial control over her husband's paycheck as well. This control later enabled her to buy an apartment for her son through making a down payment with their savings:

> I also bought a house for my son; I made a down payment. He is now paying his credit debt. Through that kind of striving, by dribs and drabs I saved and tried to help my child. [Dilek]

She remarks how nobody, not even her husband, believed that she would be able to secure a mortgage with the amount of money she had saved.

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[67] After reflecting on her own relationship with her husband and his personal traits, she also talks about men in general being "pre-determined", which will be discussed further below.

Leyla and Dilek's narratives are both centered around their struggle to take on various kinds of jobs in order to provide for their family (specifically for their children). They place emphasis on their own endeavors and the lack of financial (in Dilek's case also emotional, since he thought she was uncapable of securing a mortgage) support from their husbands. It appears as they strived to compensate for their husbands' incompetence in providing their families with financial security. Considering how they were also the sole undertakers of domestic labor within their households (in Dilek's case up until she began experiencing health problems) both Leyla and Dilek appear as heroic figures striving to provide and care for their families.

As for Semra's case, her narrative is not centered around her individual self per se, but rather her self-improvement within and desire to help others (future administrative cadre of the cooperative's younger members) through the cooperative. In multiple occasions she remarks that she dislikes the idea of being a stay-at-home woman. However, as remarked above, her volunteer fundamental and subsumed class positions in the cooperative had not led to a division of domestic labor between herself and her son (aged 32) in their household which I have characterized by an independent class process.

Following her recovery from a medical operation, Semra is back to being the sole domestic surplus producer in their household. In that regard, she states that although her son is not comfortable with letting her do it all, she is very "agile" (*atik*) and she is the one wearing herself out in performing domestic labor at home, not her husband or her son.

When asked whether her role in the cooperative led to a prioritization between domestic work and cooperative activities, Semra clearly states that even

when she has a lot on her plate, she never makes any compromises with regard to domestic work, but instead wakes up earlier in the morning to get things done. She says if she were to bring a guest to her home at any point during the day without prior notice, they would ask "Have you just left the house now?", because everything would be perfectly in order. She also adds that she acquired this trait of orderliness from her mother.

In this light, Semra asserts herself as the primary domestic laborer and one can argue that neither her husband nor her son produce a significant amount of domestic surplus labor, despite her previous remarks on her husband preparing breakfast if he is up before everyone else and doing laundry, etc. That is because in addition to admitting that she is not willing to let her son take on domestic work (by referring to her Black Sea roots), she is almost always the earliest one to wake up in the morning.

Semra's assertion that she is the one wearing herself out indicates that she imposes upon herself an ideal image of an achiever of all things. When asked whether she faced difficulties in juggling between her roles within the household and cooperative, it seems that she also imposes this ideal image over others as well:

> I did not face any difficulties. Although [my son] was still young, I never made any sacrifices with regard to him, he got everything whenever he needed it. He was at school all day and we were home during the weekends. When there were meetings or events requiring institutional participation, I would prepare everything from the night before. I never had any problems. I even got mad at those who had problems, asking why they did not arrange everything from the night before when they already know they are required to be somewhere on the next day. [Semra]

She also criticizes herself for not living up to this ideal image. For instance, she expresses a feeling of discomfort she experienced recently, for having to "turn to convenience food" (*hazıra yönelmek*) in preparing her 32-year-old son's dinner one day last week, because she had left the cooperative later than normal in the

afternoon. In this respect she said to another cooperative member: “I do not want to feed my son convenience food [*oğluma hazır yedirmek istemiyorum*]”.

Leyla and Semra’s heroic self-representation can be read as their way of enjoying their feudal fundamental and subsumed class positions. In the case of Leyla and Semra, their main concern is caring and providing for their children. This was also true for Dilek. However in her case, a class transformation occurred at a certain point, according to her own account this was possible after her husband’s retirement and she was diagnosed with hernia. But, as we discussed Leyla and Semra have experienced major health problems as well, and no class transformation took place with regard to domestic work in their household (except during Semra’s recovery period). Although this may be a result of an economic process (their children and husbands continuing to work higher paying jobs than those of Leyla and Semra), I think a non-economic process is also a significant overdeterminant of this non-transformation, that is, Leyla and Semra lacking a desire for class transformation within their households.

Both Leyla and Semra assert that their husbands and children have always been very supportive of them, both in terms of their domestic work and their economic and non-economic endeavors inside or outside their households. Though in both cases, husbands and children do not perform much, if any, domestic surplus labor.

When asked about whether her husband started performing domestic labor during the period in which he was unemployed and she was doing independent home-based work, Dilek expresses her discontent regarding her husband, and men in general, by saying “It did not change back then. Men were always pre-determined [*erkekler hep belirliydi*]”. In this sense, Dilek views men as somehow limited,

resistant to change and perhaps lacking the ability to adapt. Hence, it can be argued that in addition to her husband's retirement and her health issues, the class transformation in Dilek's household was overdetermined by her longstanding distinctive desire for this transformation within their household.

Moreover, we can argue that an additional non-class process that led to this class transformation was Dilek taking an additional pedagogical role toward her husband ("raising" him to do domestic work like she raised her son) and later assigning him the responsibility to keep house. Moreover, as remarked before, Dilek had taken a pedagogical role toward her husband before in various contexts (teaching him how to be involved in social and familial relations as well as how to wrap yarn for the production of washcloths).

6.5 Women's pedagogical labor

The idea that women should occupy a pedagogical role with regard to men also emerges when Hülya argues that her husband and brother's lack of involvement in domestic production stems from the fact that their mothers did not teach them how to do domestic work when they were children:

> These things must come from childhood. Mothers must teach them. Unfortunately, my brother was the man of the house back then. We were seven sisters; he was the only [son]. He was the fair-haired boy [*el bebek gül bebekti*], no way any work could fall to his lot. My husband was the same. [Hülya]

When asked if her husband was currently (after his retirement) involved in domestic work, Hülya states that she "could not make that happen", indicating that she was unable to take up a pedagogical role toward her husband.

Meral feels that she is unable to communicate the excessive amount of domestic surplus labor she produces at home in keeping house and taking care of

three children. When she does not produce a certain amount of feudal domestic surplus labor, her husband criticizes her by saying “I deal with a 100 people [at work] can’t you deal with three?”. Meral’s frustration can also be read as her inability to take up a pedagogical role toward her husband in explaining the requirements of sustaining a household and childrearing.

Moreover, Meral also expresses dissatisfaction regarding a certain understanding that her husband lacks, an understanding of the costs of keeping house. Hence, every week she has to throw in an additional 50% of what her husband allocates to grocery shopping. She avoids asking for more, because she is convinced that they will argue over it and he will accuse her of not being “sparing”, which, according to her is impossible these days. Meral adds that her husband is also unaware of the educational expenses of their kids such as supplementary books, water bottles, and stationaries; she believes that he cannot understand the unexpected costs that arise from their school lives. She does not even try to explain these to him as it would be virtually equal to trying to “teach embroidery to a blind person”.

Meral, Leyla, Dilek and Hülya seem to conceive men as incapable of developing certain mental and technical skills (especially with regard to the domestic sphere) and agree that women can and should take a pedagogical approach toward them. Although Semra distinguishes her husband (and her son too), she seems to agree with this line of thinking on a general level, at least in terms of mentality. This can be observed in the advice that Dilek, Hülya and Semra gave to Meral with regard to the previously mentioned conflictual situation in which she found herself.

Meral’s busy schedule (of KEDV trainings and meetings she has to attend before taking on an administrative role in the Commencement Women’s Cooperative) had led to a feeling of resentment in her husband, who, in Meral’s

words, was misinterpreting her "empowerment" and acting out of "paranoia". When she shared this problem she had with her husband, she was advised by other interviewees (Hülya, Semra, and Dilek) to "handle" (*idare etmek*) and "educate" his husband without resorting to hostile or adverse language and make subtle changes to make life easier for herself. Moreover, Meral was also advised to inform KEDV representatives and leave online trainings when her husband arrives home.

At this instance when Meral shared the conflictual situation in which she had found herself, Hülya also shared a personal experience regarding her own husband. Noting that her husband had experienced a physical and psychological trauma during his youth, Hülya said he did not do much to try to cope with this issue. When Hülya advised him to go to therapy, he would say "Am I crazy, why would I go?". She also stated that he was consuming alcohol when he could not find her home and added that she was able to draw him away from it through sweet-talk.

Expressing her concerns about Meral's wellbeing, Hülya stressed that she was not advising her to be a "pushover" (*pısırık*) in front of her husband but rather to make changes in a clandestine manner without him noticing and reflect her own change to him. In light of the advice given to Meral, empowerment appears to be a laborious and multi-faceted process wherein women not only work on transforming their own selves and lives, but are also expected to do so in a way that does not attract hostility from their husbands. This entails a certain ability for convincing and guiding of, and perhaps to some extent, manipulation of the husband.

Hülya and Semra also recommended Meral to say "no" to certain things and not participate in each and every one of the overwhelming trainings and meetings. In response to this advice, Meral admitted she felt inclined to saying "yes" to everything. Hülya also said that "real empowerment" comes when one is able to say

"no" and added: "What's the point in attending all these [entrepreneurship] trainings, how many [of us] start up their own business anyway? Are we not entrepreneurs already? Keeping house with so little [resources]." Here, Hülya is defining empowerment not in terms of enhancing one's certain capacities or abilities, but rather as being able to act as one wishes. Aware of the risk of women wearing themselves out in trying to become empowered, Hülya is advising Meral to not do certain things at her own expense. I think Hülya's remarks, to a certain extent, allude to an ambiguity that I attempted to demonstrate in the previous section. More clearly, Hülya appears to be addressing the ambiguous effect of subjectivity (specifically in the context of its encounter with the discourse on empowerment) in increasing the amount of labor that a woman performs on a daily basis, which can potentially cause her to wear herself out.

Before closing this section, I would like to go back to the issue raised by Hülya in the beginning. That is, the ultimate form of pedagogical labor performed by women, namely that included in childrearing. As mentioned before, care labor makes up a significant portion of unpaid domestic labor. Meral had remarked that enrolling her youngest child to the cooperative's playroom was a liberating act, as a result of which she was able to socialize with her friends and participate in the various trainings and sewing/weaving related production activities within the cooperative.

Dilek stated that she had sent her son to live with her parents in order to work at a manufacturing workshop and attend courses on handcraft production. Semra emphasized that she was able to be involved in the cooperative's foundation process because her son was old enough to go to school. Similarly, Hülya was able to work at a private kindergarten when they moved to İstanbul, because her daughters were all enrolled in school.

Although women's performance of care labor is highly interrelated to the feudal class process in the gender-divided household, the rendering of women as primary care givers cannot be derived solely from their feudal class position, as cultural and political processes are also among its overdeterminants. These include the dominant discourses on gender, as well as legislations such as labor laws not granting paid parental leave for men. Here, I will focus specifically on the cultural process regarding the discourse produced by KEDV and the Commencement Women's Cooperative on motherhood in early childhood trainings.

In this sense, it is clear that the Commencement Women's Cooperative's playroom is providing a crucial and essential service for its members, that is, childcare. This service enables the cooperative members to lower the amount of their feudal exploitation within their households through outsourcing care labor. Through unburdening themselves from a portion of unpaid domestic labor, these women can engage in different social processes, be it economic (in the cases of Hülya and Dilek who were able to find work) or non-economic (in the cases of Meral and Semra who emphasize leaving the house to socialize). As for Leyla's case, since she was unable to outsource care labor, home-based work enabled her to be able to simultaneously generate an income and take care of her son.

After all, the founding idea behind the establishment of the Commencement Women's Cooperative was to open a childcare center in Nurtepe. Hülya asserts that, their main aim was to provide children from low-income families with a high-quality education. The playroom provides childcare services for children under the age of seven until they are young enough to start elementary school. Since the playroom is the sole project that the cooperative has been able to sustain since its foundation, we can consider it a successful initiative.

However, this does not necessarily indicate that the cooperative has succeeded in enabling its members to re-figure a division of care labor within their households. On this issue, we may evoke Meral's remarks about her husband having nothing to do with their children's homework and Leyla quitting beadwork in order to become a classroom mother after her son began elementary school. That is because even in the case of Meral who was able to outsource care labor, when children come home from either the playroom or their school, their school-related needs are still expected to be met by their mothers. This can also be observed from the Instagram account of the cooperative's playroom where photos from parent-teacher meetings are shared. Only two men were present in the past four semesters' parent meetings.

Moreover, the cooperative trainings provided by KEDV on early childhood including the "neighborhood mothering" training can considered as part of this gender process strengthening the role of women as the primary pedagogical laborers. This line of thinking is crystallized when Hülya tells the story of the Commencement Women's Cooperative's foundation. She begins by saying children are "our future", and adds that their main focus was on the following question:

> How can mothers raise good children, children who do not beat us but love us?[68] We aimed to provide these trainings [to mothers], and we continued on that path. [Hülya]

One can argue that when coupled with the discourse on motherhood, the discourse on empowerment produced within and distributed by the cooperative and KEDV may lead to the strengthening of women's pedagogical role, intensification of their care labor, and the consequent rendering of women primarily responsible for rearing

[68] Here, Hülya is referring specifically to boys.

children. This implies that within the discourse on empowerment, gender and gender-related issues are condensed into womanhood through the emphasis on women's role as mothers and educators.

6.6 Inferences

In this chapter, I analyzed the domestic class process pertaining to the households of the remaining interviewees. Overall, I characterized two of them as independent (Leyla and Semra), two of them as feudal (Meral and Hülya), and one of them as communal (Dilek). I also found that in two of these cases (independent to feudal in Hülya's, feudal to communal in Dilek's) the domestic class structure had undergone a transformation at a certain point.

In Dilek's case, I found that the (feudal) domestic class structure dissolved following her husband's retirement and the deterioration of Dilek's health. I concluded that the emergence of a communal domestic class structure was overdetermined by Dilek's desire of class transformation, as well as the pedagogical role she undertook with respect to her husband regarding unpaid domestic work. In Hülya's case, too, I traced the dissolution of the (independent) domestic class structure back to her husband's retirement. Although a desire for class transformation was explicit in Hülya's account of her (feudal) household, I found that such desire did not suffice for the emergence of a class transformation. In light of Hülya's remarks on her inability to undertake a pedagogical role toward her husband, I concluded that such pedagogical labor may play a crucial role in bringing about class transformation.

I have also addressed varying effects of subjectivity over the field. The first is that subjectivity in its encounter with the discourse on women's empowerment, does

not necessarily bring forth a class transformation in the household and may conversely lead to an increase in the amount of labor that women perform. The second effect I have demonstrated pertained to the articulation of the discourse on empowerment with the discourse on motherhood, which, in some cases, fails to lift the burden of care labor off of the cooperative members' shoulders.

One can conclude that these women conceive themselves to be endowed with outstanding capabilities in managing different forms of paid and unpaid domestic/emotional/pedagogical labor processes in order to provide for and secure the overall wellbeing of their families. Considering that they face up to exhaustion, wearing themselves out and even experiencing physiological problems, it can be argued that they are willing to go out of their way to achieve these.

When paired with the self-representation of these women as heroic achievers of all, the dominance of the discourse on women's empowerment produced and distributed within the cooperative and KEDV leads one to question whether empowering women can suffice for providing them the necessary conditions to lower the degree of or eliminate their feudal exploitation within the household.

In the fourth chapter, I had emphasized the significance of the junior cooperative members' desire for class transformation with regard to the enacting of a communal class process. Here, too, I would like to stress that a desire for class transformation is a necessary (but not sufficient) overdeterminant of the dissolution of a class structure within the household.

As remarked above, the dissolution of the feudal class process in the case of Dilek's household was overdetermined by various processes including the deterioration of Dilek's health, her husband's retirement, the pedagogical approach she took in her relation to her husband in various contexts, as well as her

longstanding desire for class transformation in her household. In Meral and Hülya's case, since they also express explicit discontent regarding their feudal exploitation by their husbands, their further empowerment may lead to the dissolution of the feudal class process within their households in the future.

We have seen that, in the cases of Leyla and Semra, it is difficult to argue that they are subject to feudal exploitation in their respective households. First, because they do not express discontent with regard to the domestic class structure of their households[69]. However, second, and perhaps more importantly, they frame their own performance of domestic surplus labor as a gift to their children, which indicates that their households can be characterized by an independent class process. In this sense, it seems likely that their further empowerment may lead to an increase in their gift-giving capacity, rather than to the dissolution of the independent class structure of their households.

Thus, it can be argued that although the discourse on empowerment provides women with cultural/ideological means to overcome the oppressive relations in which they are engaged, it also bears the potential to increase the amount of labor (specifically directed toward caring and providing for their families) that women perform throughout their lives.

[69] As such, they characterize their husbands and children as supportive of and helpful to themselves in domestic work. Though they usually refer to non-class processes of their performance of necessary domestic labor, in which case the argument that they are being feudally exploited can be upheld.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I attempted to make visible the diverse and contradictory processes emerging out of the articulation of women's unpaid domestic labor with home-based work. I began by critically engaging with the dominant frameworks within which home-based work is studied, and demonstrated the economistic and capitalocentric tendencies permeating them. Then, I began analyzing my field through a diverse economies framework, and explored ways to enact non-exploitative forms of class process within it.

In the fourth chapter, I provided a diverse depiction of the Commencement Women's Cooperative placing a specific focus on its members' commodity production activities, and framed the cooperative as an alternative capitalist enterprise that sells childcare and education services upon membership. I also argued that the cooperative's sewing and weaving-related production activities entail distinct forms of class process across different contexts. I have also addressed the problems stemming from the cooperative's relations with alternative capitalist firms, and speculated potential ways to transform the class structure of the cooperative toward a communal one. Representing the political economic landscape of the cooperative as such, I aimed to counter the widespread inclination to view the economic space as colonized by capitalism and which makes possible to imagine future alternatives.

In the fifth chapter, I have discussed the diverse class and non-class positions that an interviewee occupies both within and outside her household. I defined Meral's household as feudal and depicted the multiple and contradictory social positions she occupies both within and outside her household. I argued that these

positions are not fixed, but rather the result of constant bargaining and thus open to transformation. By constructing my analysis upon the theoretical space opened by overdeterminist Marxist class analytics, I was able to represent my field without essentializing any of its multiple aspects, and argued that no single (class or non-class) process, can be identified as the determinant of Meral's case. Through analyzing Meral's own reflections on her personal experiences as a home-based worker and cooperative member, I represented her as a struggling female subject instead of an oppressed and passive one that is trapped between smoothly functioning exploitative and oppressive relations.

In the sixth chapter, I analyzed the different forms of domestic class process pertaining to the households of the remaining interviewees. In doing so, I attempted to make visible the multiple and contradictory class and non-class processes within each household. I found that in two cases the domestic class structure had undergone a transformation (independent to feudal in Hülya's, feudal to communal in Dilek's) at a certain point. In Dilek's case, I found that the (feudal) domestic class structure dissolved following her husband's retirement and the deterioration of Dilek's health.

In the same chapter, I also demonstrated the varying effects of subjectivity over the field. I found that the interviewees' desires, self-representations and enjoyment have diversifying effects over their performance of unpaid domestic and care labor. I traced these effects along the interviewees' accounts and suggested that they manifested themselves in the interviewees' self-representations as heroic achievers of all, and in their enjoyment of striving and wearing themselves out.

In this light, I concluded that the emergence of a communal domestic class structure was overdetermined by Dilek's desire of class transformation, as well as the pedagogical role she undertook with respect to her husband regarding unpaid

domestic work. Though I also found that such desire did not suffice for the emergence of a class transformation in Hülya's case. In consideration of Hülya's remarks on her inability to undertake a pedagogical role toward her husband, I argued that women's pedagogical labor toward men may play a crucial role in bringing about class transformation.

Moreover, in cases where interviewees did not express a desire for class transformation within their households, I found that the discourse on empowerment had the potential to lead to an increase in the amount of domestic or other forms of labor that women perform in order to provide for and secure the wellbeing of their families. I also found that in some cases, the articulation of the discourses on empowerment and motherhood strengthened women's role as primary care givers, and did not lead to an equal or fair division of unpaid domestic labor among genders. I argued out that such coupling led to the condensation of class and gender-related issues into womanhood through the emphasis on women's role as mothers.

In this thesis, I have looked into the contingent and diverse relations that home-based work entails, instead of treating it as a constraining form of work for women. Additionally, rather than theorizing the interviewees as subjects that are being acted upon by exploitative and oppressive structures or systems, I represented them as acting subjects, whose desires are not only effected by but also effective over the social processes in which they engage. Through emphasizing the heterogenous character of the interviewees' households and the Commencement Women's Cooperative, I was able to designate certain moments of transformation within these overdetermined social sites, as well as lay out the existing contradictions which may potentially lead to transformation in the future.

In concluding, I would like to touch upon the limitations of the thesis and remark some ideas that I find interesting and think that could be explored in future research projects. The first limitation is that the fieldwork of this thesis had a span of around three months, and my analysis is based on the data collected from interviews conducted with five women. As noted, I was able to depict Meral's case in more detail, because out of these five women, she was the one I spent the longest time with, and one of the most outspoken. Moreover, a more focused field research is required to provide a more detailed mapping out of the different kinds of transactions and ways of negotiating taking place within the Commencement Women's Cooperative. I also think an action research can be initiated with the cooperative members in order to explore the "difficult process of cultivating subjects who can desire and inhabit noncapitalist economic spaces" (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p. x).

One point I found interesting was the discourse on empowerment leading to what I think is the of condensation of gender and gender-related issues into womanhood through an emphasis on women's role as mothers and educators. I believe further research into this ambiguity can prompt discussions about the uneven distribution of discourses on gender to those other than women and the effects of this unevenness over women's relationships with their husbands. In this regard, I also think it would be interesting to explore the interviewees' remarks on how women communicate their personal transformation to their husbands, which appears to be some form of manipulation that women practice toward their husbands throughout or as a result of their empowerment process.

APPENDIX A

APPROVAL OF THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 13.04.2023-122611

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER YÜKSEK LİSANS VE DOKTORA TEZLERİ ETİK İNCELEME KOMİSYONU
TOPLANTI KARAR TUTANAĞI

Toplantı Sayısı	:	43
Toplantı Tarihi	:	12.04.2023
Toplantı Saati	:	14:00
Toplantı Yeri	:	Zoom Sanal Toplantı
Bulunanlar	:	Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı, Doç.Dr. Arhan S. Ertan, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ayşegül Metindoğan
Bulunmayanlar	:	Doç. Dr. Senem Yıldız

Zeynep Sıla Sarıkaya
Sosyoloji

Sayın Araştırmacı,

Daha önce "A sociological inquiry into home-based labor / Ev-eksenli emek üzerine sosyolojik bir araştırma" başlık ve SBB-EAK 2021/41 sayı ile onay almış, içerik değişmeden yeni başlığı "Women Laboring in Home-Based and Cooperative Work in Nurtepe/Kagithane: A diverse social economies approach" olan başvurunuz SBB-EAK 2023/36 sayı ile komisyonumuz tarafından 12 Nisan 2023 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar üyelerin toplantıya çevrimiçi olarak katılımı ve oy birliği ile alınmıştır. Onay mektubu üye ve raportör olarak Yasemin Sohtorik İlkmen tarafından toplantıya katılan bütün üyeler adına e-imzalanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla, bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yasemin
SOHTORİK İLKMEN
Öğretim Üyesi

e-imzalıdır
Dr. Öğr. ÜyesiYasemin Sohtorik
İlkmen
Öğretim Üyesi
Raportör

SOBETİK 43 12.04.2023

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

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