6. Second-hand Trade Network

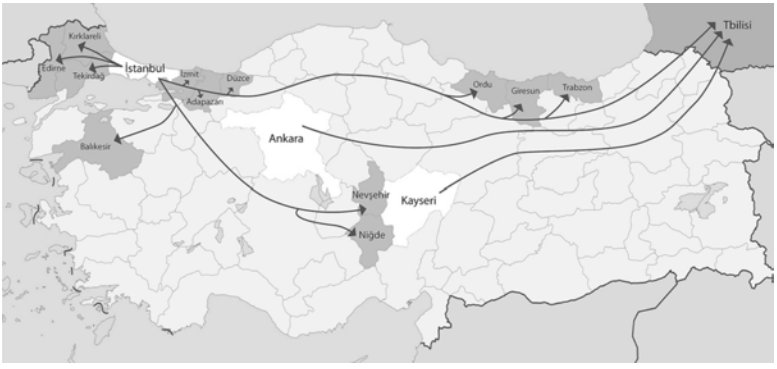
6.1 Introduction

The construction industry in Istanbul has several kinds of formal and informal businesses that facilitate the urbanization process. With the recently intensifying urban renewal projects focused on creating newer safer housing, some of the infrastructural needs gave birth to small entrepreneurs. Such infrastructural 'reuse and repair' economies are always intertwined with the formal sector in emerging countries (Corwin 2018). For instance, because of urban renewal, the number of excavation companies that transport demolition rubble and excavated earth have increased in Istanbul over the last decade (D. Öztürk 2019). As discussed in the context chapter, *çıkmacıs* have been one of the essential suppliers of construction material and informal credit for *gecekondu* squatters. In the face of the municipal authorities' failure to manage CDW, the *çıkmacıs* provide a functioning socio-economic network that can actually fulfill the demand for affordable materials. Their second-hand trade infrastructure, with its relational attributes, acts as part of an assemblage-network.

Their trade infrastructure consists of flea markets, scrap yards, roads, and online marketplaces. These function as stopgaps where the second-life of an object is determined based on its 'residual value' (Hetherington 2004, 157). Their supply yards are filled with all kinds of reclaimed construction materials and components: plastic window frames, sanitation equipment, metal doors, wooden interior doors, old heating systems, parquet flooring, window security bars, wrought-iron railings, garden fences, garage doors, and kitchen cupboards. Originating mainly from the supply yards in Istanbul, these materials flow to Anatolian cities and neighboring Georgia by road transport (Figure 6.1). In major cities like Ankara and Kayseri, where urban renewal projects are intensively progressing, structured demolisher cooperatives have opened second-hand supply yards. To emphasize the role of worker collectives, demo-

lition cooperatives enhance working conditions and create recognition while serving as policy interfaces that acknowledge informal waste management contributions (Dias 2016; Gutberlet et al. 2017).

Figure 6.1: The trade flow of second-hand components[1]



Source: Author's own

Çıkmacıs trade activities and their supply yards function as links between center and periphery, urban and rural, local and international. First, I will describe supply yards where reclaimed materials are accumulated in the peripheral urban areas close to the industrial areas in Istanbul, Ankara, Kayseri, Nevşehir, and Niğde. Because of its importance in terms of international trade, I will also describe a supply yard in Tbilisi, Georgia. I will use field notes, mappings, and satellite images to analyze where these places are located in the periphery of cities.

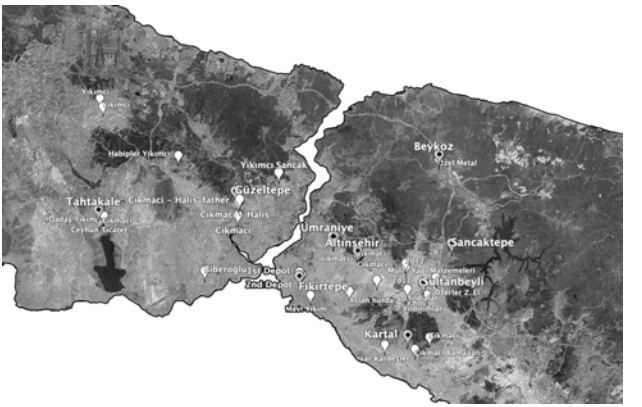
6.2 Places of Accumulation: *Çıkmacı* Supply Yards in Istanbul

Çıkmacı supply yards are located in former *gecekondu* neighborhoods, mainly peripheral to the center and close to organized industrial zones and recycling

1 Istanbul, Ankara and Kayseri (marked red) are the main cities where building materials are reclaimed. Other cities marked in green indicate the places where retailers bring second-hand materials.

warehouses in Istanbul. Since Istanbul is divided by the Bosporus, each side functions independently from the other. Further, Istanbul is growing linearly towards the east and west axis. As a result, the east and west borders (peripheries) of the city are not only geographically but also infrastructurally separated from each other. That's why the empirical findings regarding supply yards are grouped into two parts: the European and Asian[2] Sides of Istanbul (Figure 6.2). The fieldwork shows that some supply yards and depots are clustered together in specific neighborhoods. Independent of these clusters, some of the yards are distributed randomly within urban areas.

Figure 6.2: Map of the Çıkmacıs in Istanbul: White pins indicate places of çıkmacıs



Source: Author's own based on Google Earth

6.2.1 Asian Side

The *çıkmacıs* are located in the Umraniye, Sancaktepe, Sultanbeyli, and Beykoz districts in the Asian part of Istanbul. *Gecekondu* dwellers urbanized these districts with their own resources. During the apartmentalization of housing stock, the single-floor *gecekondus* became apartment blocks with four to five

2 Geographically, Istanbul is divided by the Bosphorus strait: One part lies on the Asian continent, the other one on the European continent.

floors. Some of the yards remained in between these buildings. In the following, each section is dedicated to the descriptions of second-hand supply yards.

Ümraniye: Alemdağ Street (Ataşehir) – A Supplier Hub for the Second-hand

Some supply yards, warehouses, and retail outlets are located in the Ümraniye[3] district close to the Istanbul Dudullu Organized Industrial Zone on the Asian side. Among the other types of construction material suppliers, one can easily spot the *çıkmacı* outlets accumulated around the Altinşehir metro station[4] and along Alemdağ Street, which goes towards the industrial zone. Like many other shops, they display their second-hand goods on the sidewalk. Due to their proximity to the industrial zone, the yards form part of a larger supply area in the Asian part. In this area, building demolition contractors were the suppliers of cheap construction components for decades in Istanbul. Each business was demolishing nearly 80 to 100 residential buildings per year when the first interviews were conducted in 2016.

Second-hand elements are stacked and put on display in a makeshift style. Customers are going around the yards with tape measures to find the right window frame or a radiator that matches the dimensions of their home. The old frames are processed and reframed to standard sizes in some supply yards that have production workshops. Aside from selling, these places are affiliated with a demolition practice. In their logos, there is generally some kind of construction machinery: an excavator or a dump truck (Figure 6.3).

Supply yards and retail outlets are concentrated on Alemdağ street, forming a supplier hub for those who want to access second-hand goods for construction (Figure 6.4). Close to this area in the neighboring Sancaktepe and Sultanbeyli districts, the yards are distributed randomly and individually. When I first visited the area in March 2016, there were eight businesses. In 2019, there were ten. Some owners have retained their businesses, some have handed them over, some got bigger, and some went out of business due to instability in the construction sector. Well-established *çıkmacıs* in the market like Rıfat maintained their positions because they are experienced and have a large clientele in the construction sector. After migrating to Istanbul at an

3 For the urban development of Ümraniye as a gecekondu neighborhood, please see (Erder 1996).

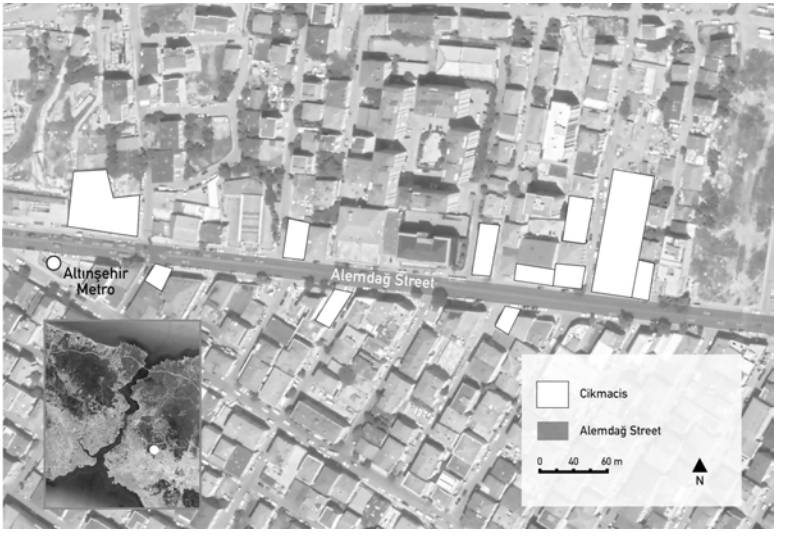
4 The stop is on the M5 Üsküdar-Çekmeköy Metro line.

early age, Rıfat started working in construction and eventually became a well-known demolisher. His story takes place between the informal housing of the past and the current neoliberal urbanization dynamics.

Figure 6.3: Business cards of çıkmacıs

Source: Author's own

Figure 6.4: Çıkmacıs in Altınşehir

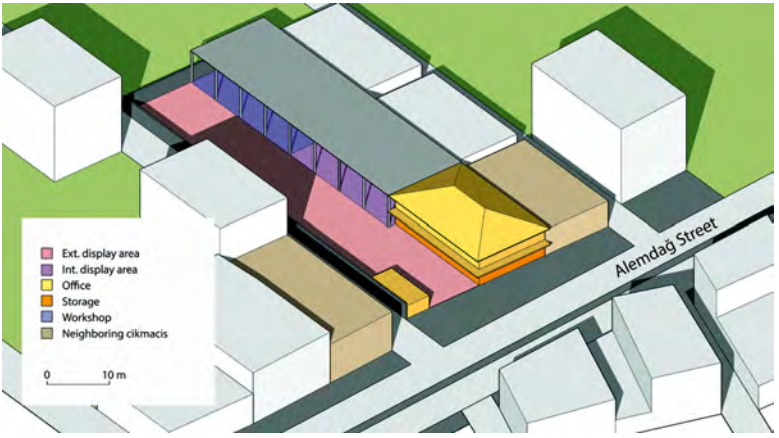


Source: Author's own based on Google Earth

Rıfat, the Master of Demolition

When I first met him in April of 2016, Rıfat's office was located in a makeshift structure assembled with salvaged metal bars that were probably part of an old warehouse. Below his office, there was a yard where building parts were stored and repaired in a workshop (Figure 6.5). In the corner of the stairs leading me to the office, a pickaxe and a shovel reminded me that they were ready to be used in a demolition or excavation. Hesitantly I entered an office decorated with 1990s furniture. There was a painting of a landscape depicting rural Turkey. It was difficult to get an appointment with Rıfat; his secretary did not understand why an interview request would be coming from a university student like myself. It was unusual for them to be interviewed because their work dealt with unwanted things. Due to unregulated market dynamics in the demolition market, I was aware of the illegal power relationships within the fields of waste collection, scrap dealing, and *gecekondu* construction (Beyond Istanbul 2017).

Figure 6.5: Spatial diagram of Rıfat's supply yard



Source: Author's own

Rıfat, 62 years old, sat at his desk, dressed in a suit and sporting a typical mustache. In this setting, he looked like a kingpin, like a lord of demolition. He migrated years ago from his village, Arapgir, in Malatya. Like many construction and service-related professions, he proudly stated that, since the

Ottoman period, the most successful demolishers in Anatolia were from his village. According to him, the modern demolishers inherited their discipline from "a Bozuculuk" [a 'breaker'] in the Ottoman period. He said he had worked in the construction sector for 40 years. Since he began, he has taught his profession to more than 200 professionals. He complained that everyone involved in construction, from unskilled workers to scrap collectors, has begun doing demolitions nowadays because of the renewal of housing stock intensifying since 2013.

Figure 6.6: The entrance of the Rıfat's supply yard

Source: Author's own

In the 1970s, he demolished municipal buildings, road infrastructures, cinemas, factories. Additionally, they tore down Ottoman mansions and traditional houses during apartmentalization. In the 1980s, he worked on the Tarlabaşı boulevard demolitions (see Ch. 4.5.2). Back then, he was trading reclaimed materials from the old buildings to squatters; wood floor beams, wooden roof structures, clay bricks, masonry blocks, window frames, doors, and parquets. The materials he traded were traditional when he started but, as time went on, they got industrialized. From the concrete factories that he demolished in the late 1990s, he cleared reinforcement bars out of the rubble. Using a machine that straightened twisted or bent bars, he was selling the

bars to squatters. Such materials were scarce for cheap constructions. Once they got affordable, he got rid of the straightening machine. More recently, he took part in clearing the wreckage of buildings after the 1999 Düzce (see Ch. 4.6.2) and 2011 Van earthquakes. It is significant to observe that the peak points in his business success were paralleled with the turning points in the urbanization developments in Istanbul. Those experiences made him the most experienced demolisher of all in the area.

At the current time, like the rest of the shops in Altınşehir, he confirmed that they were selling second-hand components to suppliers who ordered them in advance and then resold the items in Anatolian cities in the Marmara, Black Sea, and Aegean regions. In contrast to the *gecekondu* period, they were now selling to people living in rural parts of Turkey. Each shipment to Anatolia with a truck transported 600 to 700 hundred component pieces. He handed over the second-hand trade of the business to an old employee. Since there was a high demand for demolitions, he focused more on managing them than the supply yard (Figure 6.6). In the following quote, he describes the demolition process in detail:

> The contractor is responsible for getting a demolition permit from the municipality. For that, there should be an earthquake damage report from the experts. All the utilities like water and electricity should be cut. There needs to be an inspection that confirms that nobody is living in the building, and finally, a controlled asbestos removal should be conducted. But that is not generally taken care of by the authorities. We do not have the proper asbestos protection gear. For years, we did not control it. As a first step, I make an agreement with the contractor who manages the overall rebuilding process. In this contract, I agree to a subcontractor fee determined by my expenditures. The rent of the demolition machines, gasoline, labor wages, and debris damping are the major costs. After determining the fee, the scrap value of the materials that I buy from the contractor is deducted from the overall cost of the operation. Then I start hiring construction workers depending on the scale of the building. I generally hire workers from Bingöl to remove the components. They have been doing a similar line of work on the construction sites since they migrated. The workers who sledgehammer the walls are less experienced and qualified. I do not prefer Syrian and Afghans because their work is lousy. We put a small compact excavator on the top of the building, which is 3 tons, that demolishes the floors to a certain level. We use a small one for buildings that are higher than five floors. Then, an excavator with a jackhammer continues the demolition from the

ground level. During this process, we water the broken concrete to control the dust.

In 2016, they were demolishing four or six buildings on average per month. The month I visited them in March 2016, they demolished 18 buildings. And, on average, they removed 1800 building parts from each building. They chose standard dimensions of PVC window frames for reclamation: between 150x150 and 100x100. The larger frames were broken and sold to plastic recycling collectors. He was concerned about the wasting of double-glazing glass, but there was no way to recycle them. They removed the rebar steel from the concrete with excavators, making them into massive and heavy metal balls. They sold the balls to a metal scrap dealer who would then sell them to a metal factory. He complained that scrap steel prices decreased because the factories imported cheaper metal scrap from Russia. After all, the rates of recycling materials were dependent on international exchange rates, but second-hand components have their own independent valuation based on labor and infrastructural costs.

Rıfat represents an experienced actor in the market. Due to his long history in the demolisher profession rooted in his family and village, his business actively adapted to decades of urbanization processes. When industrial construction materials were scarce during informal urbanization, he supplied reclaimed materials to *gecekondus*. These types of supply yards were previously known as ardiyes (Duyar-Kienast 2005; Payne 1982; Şenyapılı 1981). More recently, he has been selling salvaged materials to entities outside Istanbul. Besides him, there were other new actors in the market such as Serhat, a recently established entrepreneur who I will focus on in the next section.

Serhat, the Entrepreneur

Serhat, age 56, is a demolisher and a second-hand trader of Kurdish origin that I met in 2016 at his shop. In 1975, at the age of 16, he migrated to Istanbul from Ağrı, an eastern region in Anatolia. He immediately began working on apartment construction projects as an unregistered and unskilled laborer. He and his partner opened their demolition business three years ago at a time when the demolitions were increasing.

Their business had three divisions: demolition, material reclamation, and trade. He started his outlet in the Altindağ district six months ago because that district was known for its second-hand markets. Serhat said that the market in Altınşehir was very competitive, and the relationship of sellers was not organized enough to form a uniform institutional identity that could represent

their rights. The cluster of 10 shops was well known in the area since the beginning of informal development in the area. His business partner mainly organizes the demolitions, while he manages the shop and deals with customers. They sometimes host workshops on repairing and resizing old PVC frames, and sometimes they produce new frames through a manufacturer in Habibler in the European part of Istanbul (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: The pop-up workshop area inside Serhat's shop

Source: Author's own

In the last three years, they demolished nearly 80 apartment blocks along Bağdat Street, which is the busiest transportation axis that cuts through the Asian districts along the Marmara shore: Kadıköy, Kartal, and Ümraniye. Beyond that, they worked in neighboring districts: Ümraniye, Dudullu, and Çekmeköy. From each demolition of an average apartment block with four floors, they reclaimed 120–140 component pieces; this added up to 960–1120 pieces on a monthly basis.

Individual customers, primarily from Istanbul, were buying second-hand components for small-scale remodeling projects. They sold in bulk to customers from the Black Sea region, especially ones from cities like Düzce, İzmit, Balıkesir, Giresun, Ordu, and Trabzon. These customers filled their trucks with large shipments while visiting several shops. Most of them owned

shops back in their cities. Serhat stated that most of the components sold to the Black Sea were used to repair summer or village houses. The transactions were in cash and some earnings remained unregistered. He also mentioned that some Romanian traders came and bought many second-hand goods five years ago.

Before starting, they hired unskilled construction workers from an informal day labor hiring site [*amele pazari*]. He mentioned the neighborhood Küçüksu[5] as a place for hiring Afghan workers. For a demolition, he hired 4 to 5 workers. He also rented two demolition excavators with an operator. The size and cost of demolition excavators change according to the size of the building. They demolish a 6-floor apartment block within five workdays if there are no delays due to an accident or complaint.

When I last revisited the area in 2018, Serhat had moved to a larger space across from his old shop, where he had an open yard and an enclosed shop area. His partner left, but he kept the business going with his family members. He retained the second-hand items and began trading new cheap components because the demolitions had slowed down and material reclamation was at a minimal level. However, he clarified that the situation was temporary because there was still a high amount of housing stock in Istanbul that had to be renewed.

Serhat worked as a construction worker for a long time. Having a lot of experience as a construction worker, he could adapt his entrepreneurial skills and sector relationships to new dynamics in the market. As a result of managing fewer demolitions after the decreasing demand, second-hand components remained in short supply. However, the other shops were not as flourishing as Serhat's outlet. For example, Mazlum, discussed in the next subchapter, could not keep his business.

5 Küçüksu is a neighborhood in the Beykoz district on the Asian side of Istanbul. It is a hiring hub for Afghan workers who live in crowded circumstances in neighboring Yenimahalle. Early in the morning, hundreds of Afghans gather on the main street, expecting to be employed as a day laborer by Turkish foremen like Serhat. After agreements for a 'day rate', the foremen loads them in their vehicles and brings them to construction sites, production stores, sweatshops, gardening, and waste collecting sites (Karadag 2021).

Mazlum's Bankruptcy

I interviewed Mazlum in March 2016 (before the coup attempt). He was displaying his reclaimed components on the sidewalk. He was 42 years old and had migrated from Tunceli. He had worked in the construction sector for over 30 years. Before that he installed electrical and ventilation systems in new buildings in Russia, where international Turkish construction companies were doing large-scale projects. Then, he was leading demolition workers for several businesses in Altışehir. When he first migrated in the 1970s, he used to live in a *gecekondu*. He stated that there were *Çıkmacıs* who were financing the construction of the squatter houses and added; "Rıfat was one of them. They were refurbishing wooden parts of old traditional houses that they demolished".

After gaining enough experience from Rıfat, he decided to develop his own business. He mentioned that the demolition business was at its peak after the earthquake legislation. Seeing this opportunity as a result of urban renewal, he took over the shop from a sanitary appliance wholesaler and started to sell second-hand components from his shops. The rest of reclaimed materials was traded to scrap collectors with pushcarts. In a workshop not far from their retail outlet, they repaired old PVC window frames. As he explained:

> We sell second-hand items at nearly one-third or one-fourth the price of a new one. The price is determined by bargaining. Often, we repair a frame with some other frame's hardware. Cheap frames have to be fixed anyway. The fixtures or the insulation become broken down in time. The average lifespan of a PVC frame is 20 years. In the old times, wood frames could last longer if one looked after them with proper wood treatment. But everyone wants to change them out with a PVC frame because it's cheaper and needs less maintenance. Nowadays, cheap goods are preferred by people who remodel their storage spaces like old coal basements or attics and old *gecekondus* for renting to refugees. These refugees are from Syria, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Senegal. As a solution to this problem, the government housing agency (TOKİ) should supply dwellings for refugees, especially for Syrians because of the war".

The construction sector, which was already showing signs of decline, was impacted negatively by the failed 2016 coup attempt in Istanbul. As a result, the booming situation changed, and some new actors were not able to avoid bankruptcy. When I visited the area in 2019, Mazlum's retail sign had been removed and replaced by that of another retail seller.

Altınşehir has been a second-hand supplier market since the beginning of informal urbanization. The second-hand market is located near a construction supplier area and industrial zone, unofficially making it a well-known hub for low-budget customers and Anatolian and Georgian wholesalers. It regulates its own dynamics, but the sellers do not have unity and are very competitive with each other. With its long history, the place itself has become a local resource for self-sustainable residents. One of the pioneers, Rıfat, has enabled the existence of such a market locality. Based on my observations, this market survived many fluctuations in a construction sector with frequently changing actors. Apart from this hub, there are other suppliers on the Asian side. These are individually located in newly developed districts that were squatter neighborhoods 30 years ago. In the following subsection, I will examine these supply yards.

Sancaktepe, Kartal, Pendik, Sultanbeyli – Scattered Locations

On the one hand, Sancaktepe and Sultanbeyli districts were developed by informal urbanization, and they became residential areas where working-class residents have dwelled (Işık and Pınarcıoğlu 2001). On the other hand, Kartal and Pendik, which share a shoreline with the Marmara Sea, are industrialized districts that accommodate small and large factories and retail businesses in between residential areas. These districts accommodate several recycling companies, metal and plastic warehouses and *çıkmacıs*.

Ulaş: From Newspaper Work to Demolitions

Ulaş, who is from Çanakkale, is 36 years old. He studied business management at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus. For the last ten years, he was a construction contractor and is now a demolition expert. In 2016, his supply yard was located on Yakacık Street in Sultanbeyli (Figure 6.8). Before, he worked as an audit manager in a national newspaper and as a sales manager for an energy drink. After having insight from his close friend about the growing demolition sector, he decided to take over the previous shop two years ago to manage demolitions and sell second-hand components. His business was registered as a construction and decoration company.

He preferred customers from Trabzon, Adapazarı, and Malatya that bought wholesale. For instance, he had a client who was a livestock breeder from Malatya. This client traveled to Istanbul once a year with his livestock on his large truck before a religious sacrifice holiday when trade tents were erected in certain parts of Istanbul. Before going back to his village on the

last days of the holiday, he visited Ulaş's shop to load his truck with second-hand components next to the remaining animals that he did not sell. He mentioned another truck driver customer: "He does not leave empty-handed from Istanbul after unloading the goods he transported. Taking two to three hundred items from the shop, he sold them back to his hometown in Trabzon. In his home village, he either rents a storage space or an empty field to sell the items. Another regular customer purchased all the interior components to remodel their village house in Rize, located in the Black Sea Region.

Even though he was making more money from wholesaling, he also sold second-hand components to individual consumers on internet marketplaces such as 'Letgo'. In this manner, he increased his internet presence. When I asked him whether he planned to create a website, he replied it wasn't required at the present because he had enough clients and didn't keep the components in his depot for too long. Plus, he had neither the time nor the payroll budget to maintain a website. He did the administration and management work, and his employees were responsible for the physical labor.

In 2016, he employed ten people without a contract: two were foremen; one was a craftsman and master repairer of reclaimed metal and wood components; and one was a shopkeeper. The rest were day laborers from the hiring site. Their business drastically changed after three years. On the second visit to the area in 2019, the shop was unrecognizable; there was a new 3-story building at the back of the old shop. By the side of the depot workshop, there was a yard with some reclaimed items on display. In a brief talk, Ulaş said that the demolitions had slowed down due to substantial competition over the last three years.

In order to adjust to the market, He decided to expand the retail part. Keeping the front, he demolished the back part of the shop, which was an old squatter house. Later, he erected a new building connected to the old part. It was not lucrative to keep up with demolitions, so he began stocking more newly manufactured doors and kitchen cabinets. He was still making demolitions but less of them. For that purpose, he kept the yard where he stored reclaimed components.

Figure 6.8: Ulaş's supply yard

Source: Author's own

Urban renewal projects opened a new path for Ulaş's ambitious plans. Within five years, he accomplished this by opening up a retail part where he sold all sorts of new doors. In contrast, the second-hand retailer in Beykoz that I will refer to in the next subchapter was determined to maintain affordable second-hand components. He invested in repairing components rather than selling new manufactured goods.

Beykoz: Distribution Center to the Istanbul's Black Sea Villages

Beykoz district is at the northern end of the Bosporus on the Anatolian side. Having borders with the Black Sea, it is the least populated district and is covered with forests, small villages, and gated communities. Currently, urban development projects cannot access Beykoz because the forests and natural habitat are being protected by law. However, the third bridge and its highways constructed in 2016 by the AK Party administration pass through the area. Urban expansion is planned to expand to the North of Istanbul.

Demir is a 40-year-old scrap collector from Niğde. When he migrated to Istanbul 25 years ago, he began his career with the help of a fellow villager. He wandered in the residential districts with his pushcart and called for used household items. Like the rest of his village, Keçikalesi, he was professionally involved in collecting and selling scrap and second-hand items. 13 years ago, he expanded his scrap business by purchasing 4 acres of land and turning it

into a retail yard (Figure 6.9) in Beykoz Cumhuriyet village, a district in the Black Sea Region of Istanbul. It is located 50 kilometers from the urban center. I first encountered Demir's yard during an excursion to the construction of the Northern Highway that goes over the third Bosphorus bridge in 2016. He was a very ambitious businessman and had a strong entrepreneurial vision:

> I am a well-known trader all over the country, from Giresun to Van, from Konya to Elazığ. My secret is customer satisfaction through word-of-mouth recommendations. Three generations of customers find us and buy materials. Since our business got successful, customers from outside the village are visiting. Although wholesale is more profitable, I want to stay local.

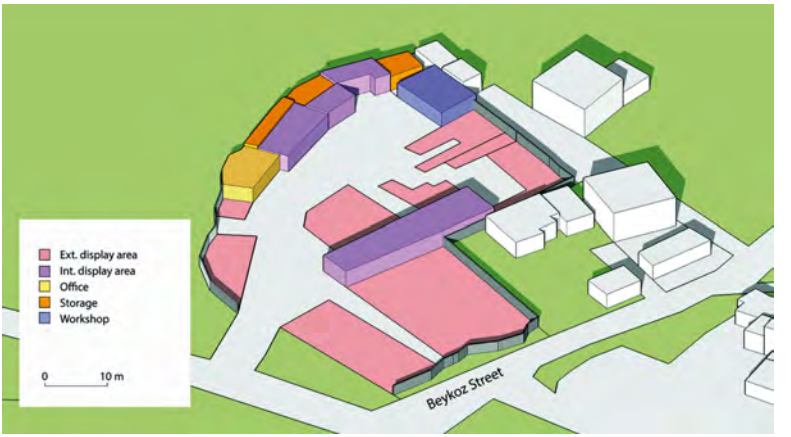
He was pleased with the number of customers representing a potential for other producers in the village, especially farmers: "I am introducing my customers to my fellow villagers who produce dairy products and local fresh vegetables. I am making our village known to outsiders". By taking a superior position and believing that he brought wealth to the village, he saw himself as a successful entrepreneur.

The source of his construction materials derived from his visits to demolitions in 2013. He bought reclaimed materials that he dismantled with his team; sometimes he also bought them from the contractor. He had a well-equipped workshop to repair the existing window frames. Plus, he has large storage facilities in the village. His team consisted of his relatives from his village. He was frequently sending materials to Niğde.

Because of the quality of his products and low price, low income and middle-class families preferred to visit his yard (Figure 6.10). Due to his accomplishments, he was once interviewed by a local newspaper. He even opened another shop.

Demir's second-hand depot supplies cheap components for rural parts of Istanbul. Villagers in the area often visit his establishment for repair and construction projects. As long as the building stock is renewed by demolitions, his model can survive within neoliberal dynamics, especially in a national economy dependent on the construction sector. However, such entrepreneurial approaches and accumulation of second-hand materials is no different on the European Side. There is a similar distribution of *çıkmacıs*: they are located separately in the Eyüpsultan district and there is an agglomeration of depots and supply yards in Tahtakale, which is situated in Avcılar.

Figure 6.9: Spatial diagram of Demir's supply yard



Source: Author's own

Figure 6.10: Demir's PVC frame displays

Source: Uzel Metal

6.2.2 European Side

Eyüpsultan: Güzeltepe – Old *Çıkmacıs*

The area is located between Eyüpsultan and the Kağıthane district along the main road, Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak Caddesi. Formerly, Kağithane[6] and Alibeyköy were part of an industrial zone surrounded by working-class neighborhoods. The workers were living in *gecekondus* and later *apartkondus* (see Ch. 4.5.1), which they built with their own resources close to the factories. Today, the area has become one of Istanbul's largest real estate development zones and is close to the city center. The deindustrialization of the area enabled gentrification, which changed the social and economic structure of the district. Unlike the European side, a few *çıkmacıs* from the *gecekondu* period remained in this area, but they could not participate in the high-end transformation controlled by corporate construction companies.

From Father to Son, Halis' Supply Yard

Halis, from Sivas, was 33 years old and running a supply yard near the old industrial valley along the Alibeyköy Creek on Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak Street. He had studied tourism at the university and his father was a retired demolisher. He took the business over from his father in 2014. For nearly 30 years, his father ran their previous supply yard that was situated on the same street. The area experienced the usual deindustrializing factory demolitions and massive development described elsewhere. The municipality confiscated the property of Hilas' father's old supply yard on which they had been squatting since the 1990s. They could not stay because their land deed was temporary. The spot became a municipal depot for road maintenance, and a new metro station was built next to it.

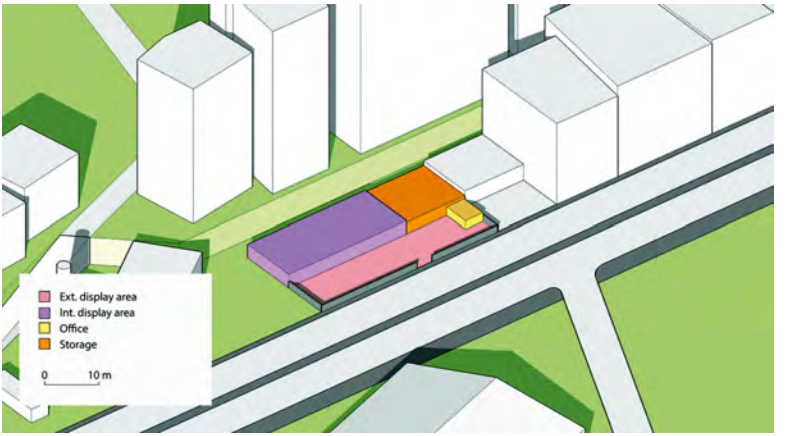
After his father's retirement, they rented a smaller property where there used to be two *gecekondus* with a garden (Figure 6.11). The gardens became their storage yard; the houses were transformed into offices and enclosed storage spaces . The salvaged plastic window frames leaning over a triangular stand were displayed in the yard surrounded by ramshackle garden walls. At my visit

6 The area was a large demolition site: concrete debris, rusted metal parts, corrugated roof material and structural remains in 2011. On this land today exist government offices, a university campus, shopping malls, offices, and high-end residential blocks. For further reading on Kağıthane's urban transformation please see (Özçevik and Tan 2013).

in 2014, they were not doing demolitions anymore, and Halis was only selling second-hand components that he bought from scrap collectors and demolishers. He expressed his frustration about corporate firms:

> They used to demolish factories along the Alibeyköy Creek, Golden Horn, and Marmara Shore. When corporate companies took control over the market, demolishers like my father could not compete with them. We were a small business. We hired ten laborers, and my dad did not invest in machinery. I could continue the demolition business, but I was not interested because it demanded heavy labor and the work conditions were dangerous.

Figure 6.11: Spatial diagram of Halis' supply yard



Source: Author's own

Eventually, Halis made an agreement with some scrap collectors to remove reusable components from demolitions. In his supply yard, he charged double what he paid the scrap collectors. During the interview with Halis, scrap collectors came with their truck and unloaded some leftovers from a condemned squatter house: an interior door, a metal exterior door, a PVC frame, a window security bar, and a marble kitchen counter. One of them from Niğde, where scrap collectors usually come from, stated that they did not have a shop to sell their components. Still, they wanted to launch a website to sell their stuff, not only giving them to scrap yards or second-hand shops but also putting them

in an online marketplace like gittigidiyor.com, a site for second hand goods in Turkey supported by eBay.

The building components are affordable for villagers living close to the periphery of Istanbul. Halis mentioned that there used to be more customers from the neighborhood because the demand for cheap products in the informal settlements was higher. When most of the *gecekondus* were transformed into apartment blocks and later large residential projects, Halis mentioned that fewer customers were interested.

Halis complained that the second-hand market was unstable, had a low profit margin, and lacked experienced demolishers. Instead of individual customers, he had more wholesalers from the Black Sea and Central Anatolian region visiting his yard.

Halis' supply yard sets an example of how second-hand businesses are inherited from family members. The demand for inexpensive materials comes mostly from the rural areas, where incremental constructions continued in Istanbul Black Sea villages. In contrast, the next part highlights that the demolishers' businesses increased their second-hand stock in their yards near urban renewal projects in Avcılar.

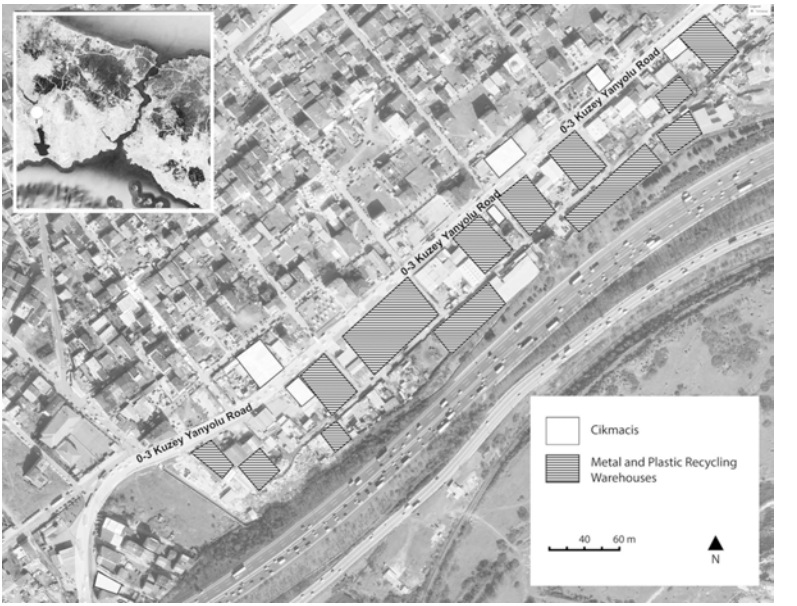
Avcılar: Tahtakale – A New Emerging Hub for the Western Periphery of the City

Avcılar district is located in a seismic zone that has been declared one of the most dangerous. In 1999, it was severely damaged by the Düzce earthquake[7], which occurred 190 km away. According to a recent earthquake damage projection report, an earthquake over 7.0 magnitude will destroy 233 buildings, cause severe damage to 1,261 buildings, and create moderate damage to 5,545 buildings (Sesetyan et al. 2020). In the same area, the developments of the Başakşehir district and the Olympic stadium have attracted government investments that fuel the construction sector. There were metal and plastic recycling warehouses along 0–3 Kuzey Yanyolu Road in the Tahtakale neighborhood of Avcılar

7 After the Düzce earthquake in 1999, the Avcılar district was the most devastated area in Istanbul. The main factors for this were the building's poor foundations and structural systems, and that 90 percent of the buildings were constructed with weak concrete using marine sands with shells (Dalgıç 2004). Even though the replacement or reinforcement of the buildings are urgent, the rehabilitation projects are moving very slowly.

(Figure 6.12). I spotted four second-hand supply yards along Istanbul Street in 2019.

Figure 6.12: Distribution of çıkmacıs and recycling warehouses in Tahtakale

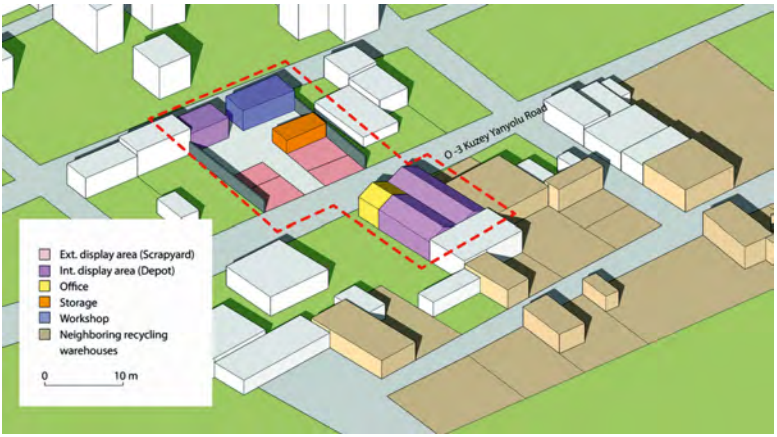


Source: Author's own based on Google Earth

Tezel Brothers: Experience is a Way to Success

While passing through Istanbul Street in the Tahtakale district, I spotted the Tezel brothers' banners on both sides of the street: "Demolition and Remodel Works." It was impossible not to notice the supply yard while driving up the road because there were second-hand components overflowing onto the pavement. On one side, they owned their depot, and on the other side, they were squatting in an abandoned supply yard (Figure 6.13). They covered the façade of the warehouse with images of heavy construction equipment and a photo from a demolition where a water cannon was spraying water at the rubble. Outside, they were displaying the PVC frames since they were durable in various weather conditions, and inside, they had metal and wood components, which were more expensive.

Figure 6.13: Spatial diagram of Tezel Yıkım



Source: Author's own

They were trading second-hand components to customers from peripheral districts of Istanbul and neighboring cities: Kırklareli, Edirne, and Tekirdağ. After the Syrian conflict, there was a considerable demand for cheap construction items from *gecekondu* owners who remodeled their houses in the area. Using these components, these owners transformed their gardens, attics, sheds, former barns, and other spaces in order to rent to Syrian refugees in the Tahtakale and Şahintepe neighborhoods. For nearly a decade, these peripheral low-income districts became densely populated by refugees. One can easily spot Arabic graffiti while taking a walk in the neighborhood.

Süleyman and Gürbüz first migrated to Istanbul in the 1970s from Arapgir village in Malatya. They knew their fellow villager Rıfat whose business was located at Altınşehir on the Asian side (see Ch. 6.2.1). Establishing their family business in 1987, they squatted a field in the Zeytinburnu district on the European side. Here the first *gecekondu* neighborhoods emerged among the factories. At the time, they worked on the deindustrialization demolitions along the Golden Horn. They were selling the materials and components they recovered from factory demolitions to *Gecekondu* dwellers and sometimes offered informal credit to dwellers for building their houses. Süleyman commented on their role:

> New arrivals squatted the state land, and we supplied them with construction materials. It was a time when there were no rules, and the mafia was strong in the *gecekondu* market. After informal houses were seen as a problem for city development by the government, we started demolishing them. First, we helped, later we destroyed.

Their second-hand trade declined after the *gecekondus* were targeted by the government for investment projects. Contradicting their first constructive relations with *gecekondus*, they were hired by the municipality to demolish squatter houses in the 2000s. For instance, in 2007, they conducted *gecekondu* demolitions in Ayazma and Tepeüstü[8] . Forgetting that they were also once migrants, the brothers commented: "It was sad to see people homeless. The state promised to place them in newly built TOKİ housing with affordable credits. Somebody has to do the work for the good of our country".

They relocated their supply yard to Tahtakale after selling their yard in Zeytinburnu, for which they obtained the land deeds in the 1990s. With that money, they expanded their business by investing in demolition machinery: three excavators with hydraulic breaker and digger attachments, one long-reach demolition excavator with jaw cutter, two mini excavators with bucket attachment, and two jackhammers with air compressors. He explained their entrepreneurial reasons for this business expansion:

> We used to do demolition all by hand using sledgehammers and pickaxes. For a more professional business we had to keep up with the competition, so we bought heavy construction equipment. Corporate customers or governments expect to deal with an established business.

In 1999, after clearing earthquake debris from several sites in the Avcılar district, they saw the potential of moving their depot to the Tahtakale area located close to Avcılar. Süleyman described this potential: "It was an ideal location where recycling warehouses were established. We were selling the reinforcement bars to metal recycling warehouses. There were not many materials to be reclaimed from damaged buildings, only steel". With other demolishers from

8 The urban renewal projects in Ayazma and Tepeüstü neighborhoods was the first large-scale transformation project in Istanbul between 2004 and 2007. The residents, mostly from the urban poor, were forcibly evicted and displaced from their decades-old settlements as the neighborhoods were "cleansed" for redevelopment and offered to developers for prestigious projects (Uzuncarsili Baysal, 2013).

different parts of Istanbul, it took them months to remove the severely damaged and totally destroyed buildings in Avcılar. What is more, it was an arduous task because the earthquake destroyed the buildings and people died in them.

Overall, the brothers were confident that they were doing a crucial job that enabled reconstruction processes after the 1999 earthquake and urban renewal projects. Plus, they were still supplying cheap material to the poor and refugees. Since they were located on the western border, they had customers from other cities. Their location among other recycling depots supported their visibility in the district. Since they were the oldest and most experienced, there was a dense circulation of materials in their depot. They said that there were less construction projects in Avcılar than Kadıköy because it had low-income households. Still, there was work potential since the municipality was giving financial support to the families in high-risk buildings.

6.2.3 Overview of Supply Yards in Istanbul

The infrastructure of the *çıkmacı* supply yards spreads out over both sides of Istanbul. Their workplaces appear in grouped or singular depots on lands they squatted During the rapid urbanization in the 1970s. The supply yards on each end of the city, Altınşehir and Tahtakale, are located close to the peripheral recycling warehouses and construction retail markets. The diagrams of the supply yards show that yards have storage, display and repair workshop spaces.

In the past, some *çıkmacıs* on the European Side demolished factories during the deindustrialization of the city center. Later, they participated in the clearance of squatters. Currently, they reclaim materials from urban renewal projects. For instance, Rıfat and Tezel Brothers have been part of this historical transition. Some of the *çıkmacıs* are wholesalers buying materials from demolishers or scrap collectors. Old and established ones also demolish buildings. Further, they use online marketplaces to sell second-hand items to individual customers. Georgian second-hand traders also do business with them.

Their mobility is an essential factor in maintaining their livelihood. Their flexibility can be observed in their labor structure also: they hire family members and refugees. This informal model is beneficial for the unstable market. In 2012, the number of reclaimed components increased. However, after the coup attempt in 2016, the numbers were declining due to economic instability. Due to these fluctuations in the construction market, *çıkmacıs*' operations are either shrinking or expanding.

Each actor has a role in spreading the magnitude of the informal practice (Simone 2009). Rıfat shared his knowledge and experience to other salvagers and reterritorialized the *çıkmacı* network by transferring his knowledge to others. According to sectoral and individual changes, supply yards may appear and disappear but the network continues to survive and expand its borders. Similar knowledge transfer occurs when the profession passes from father to son (see Ch. 6).

In the following subchapter, material reclamation processes outside of Istanbul are discussed since the urban transformation is not only associated with Istanbul.

6.3 Demolisher Supply Yards in Anatolia

Based on what I learned from Istanbul's *çıkmacıs* and following the path of the second-hand components being distributed out of Istanbul, I visited Ankara, Kayseri, Nevşehir, and Niğde. These cities were also awash in demolition waste excess because of urban renewal. Some *çıkmacıs* in these cities were operating in eastern regions where military conflict had destroyed the urban environment. Some of them worked in removing earthquake debris. And some of them, in Ankara, formed a demolition cooperative on the periphery of the city.

6.3.1 Ankara: A Demolisher Cooperative

Ankara, Turkey's second-largest city after Istanbul, is located in central Anatolia. The capital has a population of approximately 4.5 million in the urban core and 5.6 million within its provincial borders. Ankara has grown through rapid urbanization since the 1980s (Şenyapılı 2004). Half the population used to live in *gecekondus* (Özdemir 1999). The central government initiated urban renewal projects through a series of legislation in those areas, and they were executed by large and small development firms and TOKİ (Güzey 2009).

In Turkey, demolition is an 'unsystematic' deconstruction process. It seems to function arbitrarily and spontaneously by frugal efforts of individuals who barely make ends meet. These efforts, which echo the early industrial era when goods were frequently broken and had to be fixed and reused, are very sustainable. (Thompson 1979). For over a decade, the local demolishers have operated as a cooperative, which is located in the Tatlar area, also known as Karpürçek, part of the Altındağ district (Figure 6.14). Being 30 km from the city center, it is

a rural area at the city's edge. Together, they are responsible for the clearance and dismantling processes of buildings in the city.

Figure 6.14: Location of Ankara Demolishers' Cooperative

Source: Author's own based on Google Earth

Mehmet, Debris of Earthquake and War

Before the cooperative formed, the demolishers were located in the city center. The municipality of Altındağ sold them public land for affordable prices. During this transition to the periphery of Ankara, they became a cooperative. Now, the cooperative consists of 34 individual businesses forming a cluster of supply yards and warehouses.

The structure of the site looks improvised and ramshackle but, at the same time, sorted out and functional. The cooperative is 10 km away from the closest Ankara neighborhood. In between there are empty fields and the steppe. Its closest neighbor is an abandoned wrestling arena. In the yards, five-meter-long beams leaning over the surfaces created a splintered wooden façade. The warehouses themselves were hidden behind these surfaces (Figure 6.15).

Mehmet, aged 62, said that, for him, demolishing was an inherited profession. When he was young, he worked with his father and grandfather on

demolition jobs. Due to a lack of professional training in this field, the workers had to learn from kin or fellow villagers. Mehmet said that he was expecting his grandson to someday be an excavator operator. The grandson, Ali, was already at work, taking out nails from an old wooden beam.

Generally, they used their heavy machinery and operators. If theirs were not available, they rented excavators and other equipment. During their work, Mehmet provided daily insurance, which covered health and employment benefits for his temporary workers. Yet, since it was temporary, the workers were employed in precarious conditions. He said that the Turkish workers did not like working in heavy labor. It was sometimes hard for him to find day laborers. In those cases, he employed experienced Iraqi workers. On rare occasions, he hired Syrian refugees, but he did not prefer working with them.

Mehmet pointed out that their business doubled after launching their website. In addition, he made some strong connections with the local government and subsequently received an invitation to tender meetings for governmental building deals. He was also a strong supporter of the AK Party. For large-scale projects, the members of the cooperative came together. Besides Ankara, they also had many projects in other cities: in Bursa, they were dismantling a hospital; in Gerede, they were demolishing a private rest area of a bus company; and, in Bolu, they were bringing down the old municipality building. For jobs outside Ankara, they were renting a flat where all the workers could live. Either they brought the reclaimed components back to Ankara, or they sold them to a wholesaler in the same location. Since their base was in Ankara, the trade was controlled from the cooperative site in Tatlar.

They had customers from neighboring villages and cities and even as far away as Georgia. There were many hobby gardens with small-sheds and country cottages around the area. For instance, he sold 500–600 pieces to a farmer from Konya. Furthermore, he made clear that construction permissions were not checked very strictly in the rural regions:

> It is forbidden to make new construction in 2/B lands[9] without permission. However, no villager follows the rules because they know there will be a

9 Based on the Forest Law No. 6831, 2/B lands are places that lost their forest quality (for instance after a fire) (Turkish Parliment (TBMM) 1956). After being given land deeds based on properties such as private property or state treasure, they could be used for agriculture, animal husbandry and dwelling.

zoning and construction amnesty sooner or later. They even bribe the municipality or pay fines in small amounts.

Figure 6.15: Mehmet's depot with a Turkish flag

Source: Author's own

For Mehmet, urban renewal was not the only reason for demolishing buildings. Earthquakes and war were also reasons for destruction and reconstruction in the eastern region. In 2016, he worked in Şırnak (Cizre and Silopi) to clear the debris of destroyed buildings as a result of armed conflict.[10] He explained that the quantity of reinforcement bars in some destroyed buildings was three times higher than a typical building. After the destruction, Eastern cities in Turkey, where the Kurdish population was the highest, were immediately registered as risk areas associated with Law No. 6306 for reconstruction processes. In some cities, renewal designated by TOKİ followed the central government's decisions on land expropriation. Mehmet observed that the

10 According to a report by the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, buildings were destroyed by armed forces during 2015–2016 clashes between Turkish Military and Kurdish militant forces. The combat zone was declared as a 'risky area' based on law no. 6306 issued by the Council of Ministers (Union of Turkish Engineers and Architects Chambers (TMMOB) 2019).

building leftovers—wood, brick, and corrugated metal parts—were used by the survivors to make permanent shelters.

The demolishers were forced to move out of the city center by the municipality. During this transition, they stayed together as a worker organization. Furthermore, the cooperative structure enabled them to be recognized as a formal organization. For instance, Mehmet could participate in tendering processes. With the recent tectonic and political dynamics, he became an exclusive actor in the construction sector. Mehmet cleared and reused building remains in parallel to these conditions: earthquake debris, war wreckage, and excesses of urban renewal projects. The following section focuses on a similar cooperative structure in Kayseri.

6.3.2 Kayseri – Local Suppliers

Situated in Central Anatolia, Kayseri is a large industrialized city with a population of over a million. As a result of investments in local industry since the early days of the republic, Kayseri is counted as the first city to be among the Anatolian Tigers[11] of the Turkish economy (Karatepe 2003). In the 1990s, the urban area grew exponentially because of industrialization and domestic migration, which resulted in informal urbanization. Currently, it receives a growing refugee population from Syria because of the work opportunities there (Shakhsari 2014).

Özcan, The School Teacher

Like Ankara, Kayseri demolishers were located on the edge of town (Figure 6.16). I was surprised to find that they also formed a cooperative business structure. Their single-floored, *gecekondu*-style buildings constructed with brick and wood were hidden behind the second-hand building elements. More significantly, long wooden poles and part of a roof structure were leaning against the walls of the buildings. At the foot of Mount Erciyes, the supply yard seemed like a boundless place full of building leftovers: stone and brick piles, doors, iron bars, window frames, heaps of cut wood, metal profiles, roof tiles, and all sorts of junk. This scenery revealed that the repair and maintenance of the city are beyond formal governance and state domination

11 Anatolian Tigers is a term that refers to the Anatolia cities (Denizli, Kayseri, Gaziantep, Balıkesir, Konya) that have broken remarkable economic and industrial growth records since the 1980s (Demir, Acar, and Toprak 2004).

(Graham and Thrift 2007). The view also highlights a necessity of organizing material cycles that exists in flux. Not only because infrastructure breaks down constantly, but things decay —waste away—based on time (Viney 2014).

Özcan, aged 45, a math teacher in a high school, was taking care of his family's business after work. His father, Mehmet, who is now retired, started their demolition business in 1976 after several experiences in wholesale trade. In 2003, the family stopped doing demolitions. Instead, Özcan established a wood workshop that made doors and kitchen cupboards. Still, they were part of the demolisher cooperative, consisting of 24 small individual businesses located in the Konaklar neighborhood in the Melikgazi district of Kayseri. In the cooperative, several businesses assumed responsibility for: recycling, salvage, and production; scrap dealing, demolition, excavation, furniture production, and PVC windows; and sanitary equipment trade. Özcan said the cooperative earnings were neither registered nor invoiced but they still all paid a minimum income tax. The cooperative was initiated by Özcan's father, Mehmet, in 2010 by assembling the first group of businesses. Özcan explained his father's intention: "He formed the coop in order to avoid eviction and gain a formal institutional identity. Having a cooperative created a defined professional field which we lacked for decades."

At first, the cooperative was squatting on state land in the center of the city and did not pay rent; the state had them in a court battle and were trying to kick them out. Then, the land got more valuable due to its location. Because of these circumstances, the municipality offered them a newly planned industrial site on the periphery of the city. Last year, they bought 600 m2 of land from the municipality. The municipality promised to develop the new site. They were not so easily convinced to leave their central location since the development of the new site was prolonged due to a lack of resources. However, they did believe they could turn their businesses into small manufacturing workshops at the new site.

Özcan explained that, since they did not have heavy equipment, they used to demolish old country houses by hand in the 1980s and 1990s. That was when migrants from the villages in eastern Turkey were coming to Kayseri. Apartment blocks replaced the traditional buildings. After agreeing with the developer, they bought the overall house as scrap material. Reclaiming bricks, stone lintels, roof tiles, and roof beams, they sold these vernacular components to villagers who constructed houses in their villages and rural migrants from eastern Turkey who built squatter houses.

Figure 6.16: Location of Kayseri Demolishers' Cooperative

Source: Author's own based on Google Earth

After the nation-wide natural disaster risk legislation in 2012, Kayseri also was affected by speculative renewal projects. Despite the fact that Kayseri was not located in a seismic-risk zone, there were demolitions of traditional houses going on there. Additionally, there was a five-year exponential growth in the real estate market. By 2018, the projects slowed down due to the economic crisis. According to Özcan, there was a prominent real estate bubble in Kayseri. Since the 1990s, he was frustrated about how buildings have been replaced by concrete apartments:

> I used to maintain my income by selling massive masonry stones reclaimed from traditional houses. Mostly Armenian. They are extinct now. We sold the stones that were used to build *gecekondus*. Now, we are demolishing them.

There were fewer vernacular materials obtained from buildings. The industrial components like plastic frames or steel doors were easily disassembled from a building. There were many more wooden beams in the cooperative supply yard than in Istanbul (Figure 6.17). Damaged and overly old wood was cut to be sold

as firewood. Additionally, there were antique building parts that they sold to hotels in Cappadocia. They purchased rare building parts to use in restoration projects.

Figure 6.17: The beams from old vernacular houses are used for roof structures

Source: Author's own

The customers with low budgets, especially refugees, were visiting their supply yard from neighborhoods like Eskişehirbağları, a *Gecekondu* Prevention Zone[12]. Özcan highlighted that they have had more Syrian customers who rent apartments in the zone during the last five years and he clarified:

> The owners are repairing their old houses to fit several refugee families. They became rich from renting, and as a result, Eskişehirbağları became a refugee neighborhood. Refugees cannot find regular jobs. They survive from waste picking which is supposed to be illegal.

12 *Gecekondu* Prevention Zones (Gecekondu Önleme Bölgesi) are serviced plots of land provided for incoming migrants that are released once the infrastructure is put in place; land is parceled out and allocated according to approved housing construction policy, generally accompanied by some technical support from local governments, see also (Ch. 7.3.3).

The second-hand trade of the cooperative was not only local but also international. Özcan mentioned a trader called Bego from Batumi, Georgia, who bought second-hand components from the cooperative:

> He drives to Istanbul, Antalya, Bursa and Eskişehir. He fills his truck with cheap materials and sells them in Georgia. Depending on the demand, he also buys furniture and retail goods. The border is flexible since Georgians can travel without a visa, and there is a free trade agreement between the Turkey and Georgia.

The regular visits of Georgian traders prove that the demand for second-hand components goes beyond international borders. However, their visits did not follow a regular pattern. Local visitors from low-income neighborhoods and Cappadocian hotels regularly buy materials.

6.3.3 Nevşehir and Niğde – The Motherland of the *Çıkmacıs*

Nevşehir and Niğde are two small central Anatolian cities founded on the west of Kayseri. Compared to the rest of Turkey, urban renewal projects were not as intense in these two cities. People from both cities began migrating to Istanbul in the 1970s. Generally, they found jobs in scrap collecting through kinship relations and village fellowship. At the time of my visit, there were three supply yards in different parts of Nevşehir that had similar spatial layouts to the ones in Istanbul. Two of them were located in the industrial zone and one in Karapınar village. The owners of these places used to work in Istanbul as scrap collectors with pushcarts. In 2012, they began salvaging buildings in Istanbul. Maintaining their village relations, they arranged to ship items from Istanbul every three to four months. Concerning the decline of demolitions in 2018, they remarked that there were fewer second-hand components reclaimed in Istanbul. They mostly traded the items to villagers who had farms and vineyards in the area. These people were building small huts and cottages to watch their crops.

One of the owners of the yards (Figure 6.18), Mehmet used to be a truck driver and later a scrap collector in Istanbul. Coincidentally, he was a relative of Demir, whose supply yard was located in Istanbul (see Ch. 6.2.1). Every month, he transported 200 items from his brother-in-law Demir's supply yard in the Beykoz district. From demolitions of traditional houses, he was getting roof components, wood beams, and roof tiles. Like the *çıkmacıs* in the region, he

was selling second-hand items reclaimed in Istanbul and new pieces produced in Gaziantep. He said that budget customers preferred second-hand. What's more, he was actively using online second-hand markets and Facebook's product and service pages to advertise and show his items. Through online marketing, he sold several components to a truck driver from Ordu in the Black Sea Region, and he sent window frames to İzmir.

Figure 6.18: Mehmet's supply yard in Niğde

Source: Author's own

Nevşehir and Niğde supply yards were strongly connected to Istanbul because of the rural migration in the 1980s. They brought most of the second-hand materials from Istanbul and distributed them to the surrounding villages. Local urban renewal projects were not present as they were in Konya and Kayseri. As a result, the amount of second-hand material excess from local projects was low.

6.3.4 Overview of Supply Yards in Anatolia

The demolisher supply yards in Ankara and Kayseri become cooperatives to gain a formal identity. The municipality removed the demolishers from the city center to the perimeter and sold them land in small installments. Since they are a cooperative, they divided the land equally. They also share building demoli-

tion and salvage tasks. They pass information to one another in order to help each other. In contrast, the second-hand supply yards in Nevşehir and Niğde are scattered across the city. Due to the migrative associations of the area, they bring the materials from Istanbul and distribute second-hand components to villages. The business they do with Georgian exporters reveals the international trade routes. Free trade between Turkey and Georgia makes such a material exchange possible. *Çıkmacıs* prefer to sell wholesale because it brings a larger amount of cash at one time.

The second-hand customers are mainly locals, villagers, and farmers who make small-scale constructions in vineyards, country cottages, barns, and hobby garden sheds that are not liable to construction and zoning regulations. This gives a freedom to construct small-scale properties based on their needs and resources. Local authorities do not often control such small-scale constructions that can be categorized as informal self-help construction. The level of informality increases in the rural parts, and the demand for second-hand is substantial. The ownership of the supply yards passes down through kinship relations. However, some did not stay in demolition and reclamation. Their permits allowed them to shift between different sectors. They look for different ways for income. For instance, Özcan is making furniture but he stayed with the cooperative nevertheless. Their entrepreneurial maneuvers relocate them into the formal sector.

In addition to building reclamation, the Ankara cooperative is taking part in clearing condemned buildings caused by an earthquake or military conflict. Their role in clearing destruction is part of a heavy-handed system that erases the urban fabric physically and socially through forced evictions and Turkish-Kurdish military conflict. It is interesting to observe that demolishers are deeply integrated into this system created by the AK Party administration.

6.4 Second-hand Export: Georgia

The research in Georgia began when the *çıkmacıs* informed me about the activities of Georgian wholesalers. Following this information, I found an advertisement entitled 'Used windows from Turkey' on Facebook during a site visit to Tbilisi in 2018[13]. Then, I contacted a Georgian wholesaler for a visit and an

13 I first visited Tbilisi to attend the first edition of the Tbilisi Architecture Biennial in 2018. After completing preliminary research with the help of local architects, my findings

interview. The Georgian capital of Tbilisi, the most populous city, is the final destination for second-hand components from Turkish cities.

In the background of free trade, there is the bureaucratic, emigrational, and economic cooperation of the legal protocols between Turkey and Georgia. Second-hand dealers in Georgia use the advantages of business agreements and customs duty privileges between the two countries. In addition to being a migration destination for Georgian job seekers, Turkey also has mega projects and high-budget investments in Georgia's transportation and tourism infrastructure.

The traders travel with their trucks and visit supply yards in Anatolia to collect and ship second-hand elements back to Tbilisi and Batumi. The demand for cheap construction goods results from poor economic conditions and scarcity of industrial production in Georgia. Additionally, due to financial absences and incremental self-help construction, the repair culture in Georgia is another reason for the demand for second-hand trade.

The supply yard was 15 kilometers away from the city center. The owners also had a storage place in another location in Tbilisi. Most of the items were displayed randomly outside in a yard. There was a small rough stone building in the yard used as a workshop and an office. The owner, whose name was Giga, was 28 years old. He was from the Autonomous Republic of Adjara[14] in the country's southwestern corner bordering Turkey and the Black Sea. Like most Adjara people, he knew Turkish well enough to initiate an interview. His ties with Turkey began at a young age when he traveled to the Black Sea region of Turkey for several jobs: seasonal agricultural worker in tea picking, alcohol and cigarette smuggling, and second-hand car trade. After these experiences, he ended up helping his father, who was bringing construction materials to Batumi from Turkey. After the intensification of urban renewal projects in Turkey, they observed that cheap components were being reclaimed from demolitions. As a result, they decided to import these components.

Once a month, Georgian traders visited several *çıkmacıs* in Turkey. They traveled through Anatolia until their truck was full of building materials. Giga mentioned that one of his relatives in Bursa[15] arranged the demolition of 5-blocks of apartment buildings. He would bring his employees to Bursa to work

were first presented in a lecture as a pre-event; later, the documentation of the findings was exhibited in the biennial.

14 Adjara is primarily Muslim and has its own language.

15 Bursa, located in northwest Turkey, is its fourth most populous city.

in the demolition, salvage the blocks and transport them to Tbilisi. He was expecting to get five truck loads that they could sell within two months. According to him, such large-scale demolitions were the most profitable for his operation. If such a large batch of items arrived, he would distribute them to several storage places in different cities in Georgia: Kobuleti, Kutaisi, Batumi, and Kakheti.

In 2018, they brought two trucks full of 700–800 pieces of construction components every two months: wood parquet, windows, doors, heaters, and old natural gas boilers. Each shipment was posted on a Facebook[16] page as videos or photographs. They sold them at 2–3 times the incoming price. The number of second-hand components was insufficient to supply the demand, and they decided to produce new items in their workshop (Figure 6.19).

During a revisit in February 2020, Giga said they were bringing fewer second-hand items from Turkey because there were not as many demolitions last year. They had become more focused on their own new product production. Nevertheless, they were still dependent on Turkey as a source of raw materials. According to him, the cheap construction items were particularly needed by Georgians:

> We do not have an established industry since the Soviet period[17]. Russians took away all their factories after independence. Owing to the lack of industry, we are dependent on other countries. Most households are barely making ends meet. We need cheaply produced or second-hand items in the construction sector. After socialism, the Soviet micro-districts were developed by former dwellers and newcomers. Since then, cheap items are necessary.

16 In Georgia, Facebook is regularly used as an online marketplace.

17 Georgia was conquered by the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century after a long period of Ottoman and Persian dominance. Georgia had its own independent state from 1918 to 1921 when it became merged into the Soviet Union. Georgia became a constituent (union) republic in 1936 and remained so until the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. The Georgian economy was modernized and diversified during the Soviet era. Georgia declared sovereignty on November 19, 1989, and independence on April 9, 1991 (Collier and Way 2004).

Figure 6.19: Giga's Supply yard in Tbilisi. The brick building is the workshop area.

Source: Author's own

The need for affordable construction materials that Giga mentioned has its roots back in the housing shortage coming after the end of the Soviet period. The informal urbanization in Georgia that followed the fall of the Soviet Union was concurrent with informal urbanization in Turkey during the 1990s. The self-help construction culture coincided with informal urbanization trends in two different instantiations: *gecekondus* and post-Soviet kamikaze loggias. In both cases, due to accelerated liberalization, industrialization, and urbanization, the state was not able to provide for necessary housing infrastructure. For such self-help construction cultures, affordable construction materials and all sorts of found materials are essential. It creates valuable input to understand how building material reclamation and second-hand trade are embedded in the construction sector as a secondary market.

The fieldwork clearly shows that the considerable demand for cheap materials in Georgia is due to the inability of local industry to provide such demand. Because of the free trade agreement, second-hand components can be imported from Turkey at low cost. Georgian wholesalers visit *çıkmacıs* all over Turkey and have been transporting second-hand building components for the last five years. The excess of the reclaimed materials produced by neoliberal urbanization are unwanted and invaluable items from previous Turkish ur-

banization processes. The research shows that this excess has a considerable impact on the retail market in Georgia.

6.5 Discussion of Findings

Neoliberal dynamics actively urbanize Istanbul and other densely populated cities in Turkey through national urban politics and legislations. It is essential to observe that urban transformation has the same pattern of creating demolition waste in Istanbul as it does in other highly populated cities in Turkey. Additionally, other catastrophic events like earthquakes and war make buildings unusable. All these dynamics add up to the creation of complex assemblages of building reclamation businesses, groups and cooperatives.

Repair and maintenance do not depend on individuals but a network. The performance of a network is measured by the associations of its parts or the transitiveness of agency from one to the other (Latour 2007). Each part has emergent properties. Such emergence lies in the parts of assemblage in which every constitutive part has an agentic force that can reveal itself to extend the borders of a network and increase its function (Farías & Bender 2011). The assemblage of *çıkmacıs* operates as a trade network that is deterritorialized and reterritorialized by governmental powers, market dynamics and foreign trade. For instance, the Georgian second-hand exporters expand the trade network. This activity breaks down or reshapes the boundaries of assemblage and can be described as a deterritorialization or reterritorialization that influences the level of heterogeneity (DeLanda 2006; Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

Another conceptual reference to assemblage is apparent in the work experience of Rıfat. Recall how he transmitted his know-how to a coworker who later started his own second-hand business. As a result of that, the size of the market network increased. This shows how the labor network is socially and materially constructed (Simone 2015). *Çıkmacıs* learn the profession from each other and their associations multiply the magnitude of the network geographically and socially. There are other nonhuman actants in the network. For instance, the second-hand market expands its borders by utilizing second-hand supply yards as immutable mobiles (Latour 2007) to deliver second-hand commodities. Their purpose is the same in all situations and locations: to store, display and repair.

This chapter examines the spatialization of second-hand trade in different cities that form a network of relations in different ways. In contrast to scattered

individually-operating yards in Istanbul, the suppliers in Ankara and Kayseri have formed cooperatives to have legal representation and constitute a professional identity that enables them to bid legally on demolition tendering. In the Global South, it is a common strategy for informal waste workers to create their own organizations in order to gain some political power (Dias 2016: Gutberlet et al. 2017). As a result of such inclusion, the *çıkmacıs'* cooperatives bought their land with low-cost installments from the Municipality. However, they lost their land in the city center. Unlike waste picker depots which are frequently raided by the authorities (Dinler 2016; Tuçaltan 2018), they can survive with their organization and could even switch to a different production model like Özcan's business in Kayseri (see Ch. 6.3.2). The cooperatives store and sell reclaimed materials at their sites where each one has their own space. That cooperative structure does not exist in Istanbul. All that being said, second-hand Istanbul depots group together in the Asian and European parts of the city.

Çıkmacıs' mobility and flexibility are critical to their survival. Their adaptability to different situations is also seen in their labor structure: to maintain a low-cost business, family members are mobilized in order to expand the business; also, refugees and new rural migrants are brought on board. The prices of the second-hand elements are often determined by negotiation. As a result, this second-hand trade is able to stay out and not be controlled by monopolistic dynamics. *Çıkmacıs* can decide on their selling prices daily: If they are in survival mode, they can reduce their prices. Because of these aspects, low-budget customers prefer visiting their yards.

Nonetheless, their working conditions remain unregulated due to insufficient legislation and poor governance. In fact, they use the informal territory of building demolition to their advantage in order to find a way to control their second-hand market dynamics and labor organization. The demolishers have been the main actors in building reclamation for decades in Anatolian cities. Entrepreneurs seeking work from various areas were engaged in this market due to the increasing urban development projects. Scrap collectors, in the way that they can easily enter and exit the second-hand market, remain relatively flexible actors in the scene compared to demolishers.

PVC frames are the common components found in yards in Istanbul. Compared to these, the accumulation of industrial components in demolition cooperatives is less. Old vernacular materials like wood and masonry stone are more common in Anatolian yards because traditional houses in urban centers have already largely been demolished for multi-story apartment blocks. Some rare items having an antique value are preferred for expensive restoration projects

in tourist areas. By contrast, second-hand items were used in rural houses or farms. However, most of the worn-out wooden parts are used as firewood.

Kayseri and Ankara demolishers do not bring components from Istanbul. On the contrary, Niğde and Nevşehir *çıkmacıs* import Istanbul's components because of the trade and labor network and kinship relations created since the beginning of urban-rural migration. Additionally, the Anatolian depots are visited by Georgian wholesalers who buy and export a significant number of items to Batumi and Tbilisi, Georgia. The lifespan of waste continues through second-hand accumulation and distribution to different villages and cities. In terms of the Georgian triad, it is critical to see urbanism as a kind of metabolic activity because urbanization creates material flows that influence the production of space and livelihoods in regional geographies (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006).