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# PRODUCTION OF MEANING OF PLACE THROUGH CULTURAL PRACTICES: THE CASE OF VAN

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## ABSTRACT

PRODUCTION OF MEANING OF PLACE THROUGH CULTURAL PRACTICES: THE CASE OF VAN

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The aim of this thesis is to study the multidimensional relation between the spatial and the social by focusing on *Van as a place*. In order to understand social processes, it is important to view the complex relation between the spatial and the social. Taking the space-place relation into consideration, this work approaches to the processes of construction and representation of identity of place in the framework of the interrelation between place, culture and identity. Different groups in society are in a constant contestation over the construction of the meaning and the identity of place. This work, studies how place is constituted both materially and imaginarily within this contestation process. Senses of place and the meanings given to places are formed by social, cultural, economical and political situations of the people. Consequently this thesis, discusses the contestation over the representation and the use of place in the context of social, cultural, economical, political processes and power relations. It considers the dynamics which are effective on the constitution of image of Van. It studies the influences of these dynamics on the construction, the use, the transformation and the reproduction of place through the cultural practices of different groups in the city. This thesis, researches the relation between place and culture, the everyday life practices of different groups and the process of production of meaning through these practices.



Keywords: Space, Place, Senses of Place, Cultural Identity, Everyday Life

# ÖZ

KÜLTÜREL PRATİKLER ARACIIĞIYLA YERİN ANLAMININ ÜRETİMİ: VAN ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tezin amacı mekansal ile sosyal arasındaki çok boyutlu ilişkiyi, *bir yer olarak Van*'a odaklanarak incelemektir. Sosyal süreçleri anlamak için mekansal ve sosyal arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiye bakmak önemlidir. Çalışma, mekan-yer ilişkisini dikkate alarak yerin anlamının inşasındaki ve yerin temsilindeki süreçlere yer, kültür ve kimlik arasındaki karşılıklı ilişki çerçevesinde yaklaşır. Toplumdaki farklı gruplar, yerin anlamı ve kimliğinin inşası sürecinde sürekli bir çekişme içindedirler. Bu çalışma, bu çekişme sürecinde yerin hem maddi hem de imgesel olarak nasıl kurulduğunu inceler. Yer hisleri ve yere verilen anlamlar, insanların içinde bulunduğu sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik ve politik durumlar tarafından oluşturulur. Dolayısıyla bu tez, yerin temsili ve kullanımı üzerindeki çekişmeyi sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik, politik süreçler ve iktidar ilişkileri bağlamında tartışır. Bir yer olarak Van'ın imajının kurulmasında etkili olan dinamikleri ele alır. Bu dinamiklerin, yerin kurulmasında, kullanılmasında, dönüşümünde ve yeniden üretimindeki etkilerini kentteki farklı grupların kültürel pratikleri üzerinden inceler. Bu tez, yer ve kültür arasındaki ilişkiyi, farklı grupların gündelik yaşam pratiklerini ve bu pratikler aracılığıyla anlam üretim sürecini araştırır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mekan, Yer, Yer Hisleri, Kültürel Kimlik, Gündelik Yaşam

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In last 30 years, inclusion of space in social sciences has started the debates on space. In the developing space literature, instead of being considered as a fixed, stagnant and dead scene, space has begun to be discussed as socially produced/constructed. Many theorists (Lefebvre, 1974, Harvey, 1989, Soja 1998, Massey, 1994, Castells, 1989, Shields, 1996) emphasize the importance of space in social analysis. According to them, to study the complex relation and interaction between spatial and social is important in order to understand the social processes. In this context, today the debates on space are made through following questions: How are spatial categories historically constituted, and how do historical projects reify and challenge spatial categories? How do spatial relationship guide the growth and development of individuals and communities, inform human understanding of nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, class and the environment? How are categories, such as urban and rural constituted and how are they interfered by technology and their inhabitants? How does space shape decision-making process of individuals and institutions, and in what ways has space been used to assert? Under what conditions has space been transnational? Many theorists who deal with space, problematize these issues and assert that without understanding these issues, namely the spatiality, the social facts, today's social, economical, cultural and political changes would not be understood. Therefore, they stress that the notion of spatiality should be included in social theory as an explanatory category. In this sense, I theoretically discussed the social scientists who deal with space with this approach in this work.

I would like to study the relationship between spatial structures and social/cultural structures. Especially I focused on the construction of Van and a particular set of cultural practice in/along that place. I tried to deal with the constitution and representation of the place. My main questions are; 1. How a place is constructed materially and imaginary? 2. How different/various social actors perceive, interpret and constitute a place? Accordingly, there is a need to look at contestation over the use and representation of place.

In addition, I studied the ways people feel and think about place. My subtitle is *a sense of place*. Many geographers use this phrase when they want to emphasize that places are significant, because they are focus of personal feelings. And they use the term "place" to refer to the significance of particular place for people. They argue that feeling for place, a sense of place, develop from every aspects of individual life experience and that senses of place spread through everyday life. Following this idea I referred to a sense of place as a way of pointing out that places are woven with meaning and feeling. In this discussion of senses of place I have an idea that place is something created by people both as individually and in groups. I understand the connection between the place and people by thinking about identity. In order to comprehend local place and local culture it is important to deal with the issue in a wider context. This work is an inquiry about how people - specifically people living in Van- construct identity and how this identity affects the social fabric of a community.

In Chapter 3, I studied the critical space theories which were initiated in 1970s. This critical approach has emerged as a reaction to the aspatiality in social theory. In this context, conceptualizations of social theory which gives priory to time and reduce space to a secondary category have been criticized. Emphasizing the complex relation between spatial and social, many social scientists mentioned that space is an explanatory category in understanding and transforming the society (Lefebvre 1974, Harvey 1989, Soja 1989, Massey 1994). The effort of placing the space into the social

theory means to try to conceptualize time and space as an essential dimension of social being. In this view which stresses the relation between society and space, space is not considered as a passive geometry where social facts are constituted. In this context, Lefebvre's argument which says "(social) space is a (social) product" becomes important. Massey states that time and space should be considered integrally. She accepts Lefebvre's argument which says "space is socially constructed" but points out the other side of the social and spatial relation. According to her at the same time "the social is spatially constructed too". She, conceptualize space "as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global" (Massey, 1994, 264). Massey emphasizes the space structure which is full of power, meaning and symbolism. On the basis of Lefebvre's argument, Soja states that the relation between social and spatial can be considered as interactive and interdependent. According to him, with the spatialization of social theory, it becomes impossible to consider space merely as a reflection of social relations. Soja states that spatialization of social theory provides the space to be considered as a determining element of the social life.

Briefly, the efforts of adding space to social theory which are discussed in this chapter are very important studies in terms of explaining how social, economical, cultural and political processes operate today. This development in social theory has given rise to new debates about the complex relation between place, culture, identity and power and their construction. Emphasizing the relation between spatial and social, in this chapter the production/construction and reproduction/reconstruction of urban space is studied.

In Chapter 4, considering space-place relation, I approached to the processes of construction of meaning and representation of place in terms of mutual relations between place, culture and identity. In the case of *Van as a*

*place*, I discussed construction of meaning of place, senses of place, identity and representation of place in the context of social, cultural, economical, political processes and power relations. Space is socially constructed and is constituted in stretched out social relations (Massey, 1994). Social space consists of the complexity and contextuality of social interactions and interconnections in any geographical scale. Place is "a unique mixture" of the relations which structure social space. There is a constant mixing of cultures through the interconnections between the places. Today being exposed to wider processes, places can be considered as a "meeting place" in the sense of a location of intersections and interactions. Within the activity spaces different lives are intersecting and interacting, thus, this "juxtaposition" of different groups leads to conflicts.

In this context there is a constant contestation between the different groups of the society over the physical character, material construction, identity and representation of the place. In these processes identity is the central issue. Cultural identity is generally defined according to the place. The relation between place and identity is constructed through senses of place which are developed in different shapes and different scales (Rose, 1995). The meanings which are given to places may be too strong and people can identify themselves with a place or referring to the people they positioned against themselves they develop a sense identified against a place. In some cases it is possible to establish a relation, which is not strong, between place and identity. Senses of places and the meanings given to places are constituted by people's social, cultural, economical and political situations. Feelings about the place are related with power, inequality and resistance processes which structure the life.

The process of construction of meaning of place also embraces an othering process which develops through the claims which determines who belongs to that place and who does not. The meaning and identity of the place vary between different groups. There is a constant contestation over the identity of

the place, between these different groups. On other words, the meanings and representations of the places are constituted in a constant struggle. Competitive claims about the identity of a certain place also include the past interpretation of that place. These different claims contest over the (material) future of the place. In this sense it can be stated that "what should be the future of place" depends on which of these different interpretations of place would win.

In this chapter, I researched the meaning of Van as a place by interpreting the data of field work in the framework of this theoretical approach. I inquired the competitive claims of different groups on the meaning and representation of Van, and in this context I investigated how place is constructed both materially and imaginarily. I tried to display the dynamics which are effective in the construction of the image of Van, where is a city in the most eastern side of Turkey. These dynamics can be listed as tribal structure and relations of relatives, religious structure, social class and ethnicity. In Chapter 5, I discussed these dynamics in the context of culture.

In Van as a place, patriarchal elements organize everyday life. Patriarchal order determines the positioning of individuals, sexes, woman-man relations within the construction and the usage of the space. In this order woman has a secondary position. Tribal structure, determines the roles and cultural practices of sexes, individuals and groups. In this sense, once constructed, space constitutes these relations, transforms and reproducts them. Briefly, we encounter with tribal structure and relations of relatives as important dynamics in the construction of both imaginary and physical character of the place. As another dynamic, embedded in every aspect of social life and in space, religion, rather than bearing an abstract meaning, becomes concrete. I can emphasize that certain groups in Van, want to implement the necessities of Islam in their most "real" senses and organize the space according to this. Religion determines the daily routines and some groups try to accord religion with everyday life.

Social class is another dynamic in the construction of the meaning of the space. In this sense, social class should be considered as the primary variable. I can state that, In Van, tribal relations and religious structure do not operates independent from economical structure and we cannot simply separate these structures from each other. Here we see that social class is immanent in tribal order and in religious structures and interweaved with them. If we take into account that, Van is 75th in 81 cities in terms of development, and the high level of unemployment in the city, the fact of poverty is the central issue in social structure. Poverty is a dynamic in the organization of society and changes people's perception towards space.

As another dynamic wee see ethnicity. The identity of Van, is defined as a Kurdish city by some groups and as a Turkish city by some other groups. There are also other ethnic groups in the city and all of them are in a contestation over the construction of the meaning of place, they have claims through ethnicities. The construction of the meaning and the physical characteristic of the place are based on these four variables. In this sense, while one of them is more important than the others for some groups, another one is more important for some other groups.

In Chapter 5, I examined the relation between place and culture, every day practices of different groups and the process of production of meaning through these practices. I research how people perceive life through cultural practices and how they interpret the social reality. The dynamics (tribal order, religious structure, social class, ethnicity) effective in the construction, organization and use of space, which I mentioned in Chapter 4, are also effective in constitution of the culture and the organization of everyday life. In this chapter I tried to make a culture analysis through the concrete micro politics and discourses of different groups. Cultures are systems of meaning and meanings are embedded in the material and social world (Hall, 1995). Cultures are not the abstract systems of meanings which are in people's minds, they become concrete through the social organization models

(Jackson, 1989). Language, religion, tradition, custom, ritual and place are the culture producing meaning systems. In today's conditions, like place it is also impossible to consider culture as settled, enclosed and internally coherent. Like place, culture is also a meeting point where different influences, traditions, powers, discourses intersect and "juxtaposition" of all of these is constituted through co-presence. There is also a contestation over culture which is caused by this juxtaposition. The constitution of culture and the process of the production of meanings operate in power relations.

Briefly, I examined the process of production of meaning through the cultural practices of different groups in Van as a place, in the framework of the dialectical relation between place, culture and identity and on the base of above mentioned four dynamics.

## CHAPTER 2

## METHODOLOGY

Van is a city in the most eastern side of Turkey, bordering to Iran. It is 75th in terms of development in Turkey and has a high level of unemployment. Especially after 1990, city has witnessed an intense migration along with the evacuation of the villages and the population of the city has grown approximately threefold of its population in last ten years. Uneven development between the regions, lack of investment to the city because of several reasons and overgrow of the population has led to an increase in unemployment and poverty. Moreover, there are groups which have different ethnic origins. For these groups the city has a symbolical meaning and importance. As one of these ethnic groups Kurds are the majority in city population. They consider Van as the second big city of Eastern Anatolia. Turks define the city as a Turkish city which is on the Iran border. In the city, also some people from other ethnicities live, such as Acems, Azeris and Mıtrıps (Gypsies). Van has other meanings because of being a border city. Some goods, especially diesel, are smuggled to country through illegal ways over this city. City is considered as a passage for drugs traffic between USA, various European countries and Turkey. In addition to these facts, the religious structure of the city is notable. Various religious sects and their sub sections have an important influence on social, economical, cultural and political life of the city. Also, we see tribal structure and relations of relatives which have the same influence in the city. All of these characteristics have led me to make a study upon Van.

This work which is made by accepting the argument of "space is a (social) product", is focused on city of Van as a place. When we consider the place

both as a sphere and a particular set of social relations, the relation between place and culture should be examined. In this sense, construction of the meaning of place, representation of place, identity of place, contestation over the identity of place, how we construct our own identity in all of these processes are the main issues of this work. Moreover, all of these should be discussed in the context of wider social relations and power relations. Considering that culture is maps of meaning and people make sense of the world through these maps of meaning, I tried to research how people of Van make sense of the place they live in through their everyday life practices. In order to read people's spatial and cultural maps, I discussed their cultural practices through their narrations.

In this context, I followed a qualitative method in order to research social reality through different urban experiences. I preferred qualitative method because it helped to present more detailed explanations in understanding social and cultural reality. While quantitative method is taking the numbers, calculations, tables and graphics into account, qualitative method rather takes experiences, sentiments, views and thoughts into account. In this research my aim is to understand how people make sense of the place they are living in, of the world and of the life, and to research the relation between their subjective narrations, sentiments, thoughts, experiences and social, economical, cultural and political conditions. In this research I followed an ethnographic method, accordingly I examined a certain culture in particular. My work should be considered as an effort and a reading to understand culture. It should be noted that any of a reading of culture could not be interpreted as correct or wrong, it would be only a particular reading.

In the field work which I have made in city center of Van, I have used deep interview and participant observation techniques. Since I have interviewed with more people during my research, I have included only 33 (18 of them are women, 15 of them are men) of them. Moreover, since I have been living in Van for more than two years, I was able make observations by

participating to city's social life personally. Daily conversations which I had with different groups than the informants, my own experiences and observations about the social life of the city have contributed to my work.

Along two years, sometimes spontaneously sometimes by planning I had conversations with different people in the city about the cultural life of Van. Sometimes, these conversations were in the form of focused interviews. During the conversations I have asked some questions about the comparison of the past and present of Van, the customs and the traditions which are peculiar to the city, cultural practices etc. Sometimes through the intermediation of some acquaintances I have participated to various activities, home gatherings and meetings. Moreover, since I am living in the city center, when I went out, I had the chance to observe the everyday life practices through an "internal view", while walking on the streets, shopping, traveling in public transport vehicles and working in the university. While shopping with the shop owners, while walking on the streets with the migrants' children who beg or sell paper towels, in the university with the students, employees and with various civil servants, I made unstructured interviews about their own lives and practices.

I tried to be mindful while choosing informants in terms of their gender, ages, religious and political concerns, economical income level, social and spatial balance and variety. I have experienced some difficulties in accessing to the persons I interview with. I have accessed to my informants primarily with the reference of my acquaintances. Besides, I have interviewed with some other informants whom I have accessed through the informants. But in spite of the references of the acquaintances and even though I have declared my identity and the purpose of my work clearly, some people have rejected my demand to interview with them. I can mention several reasons of this: First I can state that most of the people in Van feel an intense insecurity and fear. This lack of confidence and feeling of fear cause a state of avoidance, especially towards the people "coming from out". Another reason is that, most of the men living

in Van, are not open to communicate with women in social life because of the traditional point of view. As a matter of fact, the appearance of woman in urban, public sphere is condemned by certain groups. Thus, being a woman has prevented me from accessing to some possible informants.

I have made interviews by making appointments with them in the places they find proper. This place was sometimes the home of the informant, sometimes a working place, sometimes a patisserie, a cafe, a tea garden in the city. Interviews have last approximately two or five hours. Since I am a woman especially the woman informants have used a more sincere and forthright language while they were telling about their lives and thoughts, feelings, anxieties about the events occurring in their environment. In this sense, I can mention that male informants were more careful in picking up the words and they have not mention much details about their lives. On the other hand most of the informants have emphasized that, the interviews serve as a medium for them to express their anxieties, their troubles about the place they are living in and about their lives. At the end of the interviews they have mentioned that they felt relieved of voicing all of these. They have stated that, westerners do not know anything about their lives and their conditions, they cannot make their voices heard, nobody concerns them, they have been forgotten and abandoned. In this context, I can say that, interviews make the informants to feel that they have been concerned about and have the opportunity to voice out their troubles.

This research is based on *semi structured* interviews which aim to learn how various city dwellers who have different spatial and social positions make sense of the city they live in and how they experience it, their everyday life practices, their life stories, their personal witnesses and thoughts. Moreover, it contains information about the neighborhood, districts and houses where these informants live. My interview form is based on a series of open ended questions relating with the topics I research. Open ended questions provided some topics to be discussed in details by me and by the informants. In some

cases I have formulated the questions according to the characteristics of the informant. In any case, instead of asking same questions to every informant, I have tried to ask adequate questions in accordance with informant's characteristics. Some conversations developed spontaneously with some informants, consisting of different questions and topics which I have not asked to other informants. In some cases I had the opportunity to discuss the topics originated from informants' talks. Another advantage of semi structured interviews was to have the opportunity to discuss the answer of the informant more deeply. Sometimes by giving some clues I tried to unfold the topics which the informant wants to pass over with short answers or had difficulty to answer. Besides, as well as individual interviews I have made group interviews also. In some cases I have made spontaneous focused interviews. I have made all of these interviews intensively in March, April, May, June 2005.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE SPATIALIZATION OF SOCIAL THEORY

Intensifying in 1970's, debates related to space, developed the literature about space. Many social scientists have participated to these debates started with the geographers. These debates were based on that, space is the principal category in understanding and transforming the society; until 1970s social sciences have not been considering time and space categories equally and have been making conceptualizations that give priority to time. Profound influence of Enlightenment philosophy and modernization project upon social sciences have brought along the conclusion of "aspatiality of social theories". Critique of the negligence of space in social theory has brought about the questioning of modernization.

Fed by the basic principals of modernization project, social sciences have intensified on social change, progress and (historical) time. Questioning of modernization project has brought along the critique of its understanding of history. Criticized "hegemonic view of historicism", conceptualizes history as a linear process. According to this view, history goes forward in a straight, no returning, evolutionary line, which relies on the principle of sequentiality. Governed by evolution laws of the history, society, remain in a certain point of this linear evolution process. As the "progress" is the essential one, society would go forward with the uninterrupted flow of the history. At the same time, in the same locality some differences and exceptions could be seen, but these are temporary. The evolutionary, universal laws of the history would eliminate these differences and exceptions. This understanding of history defines the development line of Western societies universally and

West is imposed as a model for social progress to the rest of the communities of the world.

The conceptualizations of modernization project, which give priority to time in social theory, undervalue the space. The view, which considers the social relations and processes those represent another historical time, seen in a certain moment, in a concrete space as temporary and reduces space to a secondary category. To accept differences and exceptions as temporary and contingent, caused the space also to be perceived as a contingent category. Thus, progress entails the conquest of space, the tearing down of all spatial barriers, and the ultimate "annihilation of space through time" (Harvey, 1989, 205). Historicism does not consider space as an explanatory category for social relations and processes. With the interrupted flow of history/time, which is considered as an explanatory category, human can become free. As Soja mentions referring to Foucault, while considering space as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, modernist view considers time on the contrary as richness, fecundity, life and dialectic (Quoted from Foucault, 1980 by Soja, 1989, 10).

In 1970's, pointing out the social, economical and political processes, which are behind the spatial processes, Marxist geographers emphasized the relation between the social and the spatial one. The emphasis on the spatial one, brought along the simultaneity, which has been neglected on behalf of historicism's obsession of sequentiality. Castells, Harvey and Lefebvre made important contributions in spatialising of Marxist social theory. These theoreticians have emphasized that spatial relations and processes should be studied within the production and reproduction relations of the society.

The historical-geographical approach of Marxist geographer David Harvey, considers the concepts related to the capital accumulation processes, which have been developed by Marx, as essential. Harvey mentions that capitalist relations cause uneven spatial development (Harvey 1975, 1978). According

to him (Harvey, 1985), capitalism conquers the space, plunders it and positioning it to a place, which is necessary for the capital, rearranges it. In other words, even it has its own political and social characteristics, as a result space must submit to the necessities of capitalism in capital accumulation processes.

Harvey stresses that time and space conceptualizations cannot be independent from physical processes, thus these processes should be studied. Referring to the change of the views about time and space from the Enlightenment to present day, Harvey mentions that Renaissance has lead to a great revolution in time and space understandings. Thus, this revolution has established the conceptual principles of Enlightenment project (Harvey, 1989). The map drawing techniques, which were developed by the influence of Renaissance perspectivism, were providing the whole population of the world to be positioned in a single spatial frame. So the property rights on land, country borders, administrative regions, social control regions, communication ways etc. were determined with definite lines (ibid, 249-250). Renaissance maps have acquired qualities such as objectivity, practicability and functionality and objectivity in spatial representation become a valuable feature. The influence of perspectivism in the maps has developed the idea that the earth is a knowable wholeness and the space can be possessed in the imagination (ibid, 245).

Harvey says that, in the thought of Enlightenment, which is founded by Renaissance, accepting the space as a natural fact, makes the conquest and rational arrange of the space a part of modernization project. The conquest and control of the space assumes that space can be dominated through human action before all else. Perspectivism and cartography makes this assume possible by the understanding of homogeneous and continual abstract space. The thing, which is necessary for the abstract use of space in social life, was the private ownership of the land and the trade of the space by rendering it a commodity (ibid, 254).

Explaining that time-space comprehensions could be used as an important means of domination relations in the society, Harvey says that these comprehensions are formed according to the needs of capital accumulation process. In this process time has priority against space. Reproduction of capitalism means also the reproduction of this time-space comprehension. Harvey asserts that with the reassertion of Enlightenment project, the devastating powers of capitalism can be controlled and adds that this would be possible with the class struggle.

According to Harvey, the changes, which are caused by capitalism in terms of time and space, should be re-evaluated according to world's representations in cultural life. He stresses that by passing from Fordism to flexible accumulation there had been important changes in uses and meanings of space and time. Harvey asserts that, in last two decades, an intensive "time-space compression" stage is being experienced. This stage has caused traumatic results upon political-economical applications, class-power balances and cultural, social life (ibid, 284). Setting off from this point, Harvey makes cultural explanations by using the metaphor of time-space compression. Harvey's cultural explanations are connected with capitalist development and considers post-modernity as the last stage of capitalist development. He claims that, postmodernism is a kind of a response to a number of experiences about time and space and to a new stage of "time-space compression" (ibid, 283).

Harvey says that transition to flexible accumulation has been realized partly through new organization forms and technologies. Acceleration of the circulation speed of production entails a parallel acceleration in trade and consumption. With the rationalization efforts, advanced communication systems, information flow systems, distribution techniques also enable the commodities to be circulated rapidly in the market. A general acceleration is seen in the circulation period of the capital. "Annihilation of space through time" is placed on the center of the dynamics of capitalism from the

beginning and now a new stage of this process is being lived (ibid, 293). According to Harvey, the competition, which is intensified in conditions of crisis, has oriented capitalists more to the relative advantages dependent to settling. Decrease of spatial obstructions, enables capitalists to have the power to exploit tiny spatial differences on their own behalves. Capital becomes more sensitive about the differences of place within space. So, the efforts increase, to differentiate place in a way to be attractive for fluid capital. Thus, within the increasing abstractions of space, the characteristics of place are emphasized more. The result is, the creation of fragmentation, lack of guarantee and uneven development. According to Harvey the new stage of time-space compression creates possibilities as well as dangers for sustaining certain, particular places (ibid, 276).

For Harvey, in a process that the fluidity of the capital is too fast for the humans, human beings should be dependent to more local places. Accordingly, the emphasis, which is made on place-bound identities lead to dangerous results for working class. Harvey says that localism and nationalism are the products of the security search, which place provides against the change caused by flexible accumulation (ibid, 306). Time-space compression, which has been lived in last 40 years and the transiency and fragmentation in political, social and private realms in parallel, are peculiar to postmodernity. In these conditions, search for individual or collective identity can be considered as a security search in a continuously changing world. Harvey mentions that in the collage of the piled up images, the emphasis on place-identity increases (ibid, 302).

Edward Soja suggests that, the place of history and geography in contemporary theory, and the ways of seeing the time and space through new ways should be researched. He, defends that the interaction of history and geography should be re-discussed. He discusses Harvey's historico-geographical approach critically and conceptualize time-space relations in different dimensions. The theoretical approach of Soja in his work,

"Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory" (1989), is based on the dialectical point of view which is developed by Lefebvre and Foucault's view of history. He emphasizes that, the time-space relation in historical materialist approach which has been developed since Marx, should be reconceptualized critically. Soja argues that, historical materialism considers history in a more privileged position than space. In this case, according to this approach concept of space and concrete geographical differences would be considered as given facts without problematizing their social and political contents.

For Soja the issue is not to make space dominant simply by shifting the temporal and the spatial. The issue is to acquire a new conceptualization which interweaves social production of space and structuring of history together. According to him only through this way a transformative re-theorization, which includes a triple dialectic of space, can be possible (ibid, 12). Soja emphasizes that, his aim is not to demolish historical understanding but to reconstruct historical imagination realm by critical spatiality understanding. In his theory, he uses the dialectical method which Lefebvre has developed while criticizing reductive Marxist theories. Lefebvre, appropriates a more open, flexible and cautiously eclectic Marxism. He attempts to re-conceptualize Marxism in theory and practice, so that this attempt includes many sources in terms of materialist spatiality (Soja 1989, 48).

Lefebvre makes a triple distinction in conceptualization of the space; spatial practice, representation of space and representational space (the perceived, the conceived and the lived): These three elements are interrelated dialectically. Thus, with this triple distinction he objects to the oppositions such as nature-culture, discourse-practice and the experienced-the imagined. He argues that the dichotomies indicate nothing anymore and three elements are necessary for understanding the space. There are continuous interaction and interconnection among three elements.

Lefebvre's basic argument says that (social) space is a (social) product (Lefebvre 1991, 26). Space cannot be perceived only as a cycle or a field that includes objects. According to Lefebvre, after the space has begun to be produced socially, physical space began to disappear and every society began to produce its own space. Lefebvre also emphasizes the connectedness between the social process and the power relations.

Lefebvre connects advanced capitalism with reproduction of the social space. The organization of the space in capitalism is related with the dominant social relations. The dominant social relations are reproduced by capitalism in occupied space and especially in urban space. Survival of capitalism is possible by the reproduction of these relations and occupation of a fragmented and homogenized space. Capitalism does not end with the end of production, the final end of capitalism will come with the end of the reproduction of production relations (Soja, 1989, 91).

Soja challenges to Western philosophy, which opposes time and space against each other and reduces each one to other. According to him a new approach should attempt to understand social life both in time and in space. Such an attempt may prevent the space to be considered as a simple object which is determined by the objects within history. Thus, the constitutive influence of space in social life can be seen. He criticizes the thought system which is based on dualities. Because, in such a dualistic logic, one of the terms would be marked as positive/preeminent and other term would be conceptualized as negative/deficiency. In other terms, in this thought time refers to the positive and the preeminent one, and space refers to the absence of time and the negative one.

Soja states that, a crisis is being experienced in modern capitalism which marginalizes the geographical imagination. According to him the only way to overcome the perils in contemporary world, is a cultural, political and theoretical reconstruction -which also includes reassertion of space- against

the spatializations of capitalism. Modern Marxism, social sciences and the traditional methods which are used by them, do not seem to be able to overcome with the crisis which contemporary capitalism has generated. According to him, most appropriate ways to cope with this crisis are offered by postmodernity. However, Soja warns to be careful against the reactionary postmodern politics. The approach Soja suggests against the crisis in both global and local scale is based on the notion of spatiality. For him, only this approach would help us to understand today's economical, political and cultural changes (Soja, 1989).

According to him, Marxism should be open to spatiality and the material interpretations of the space in order to maintain its historical materialist dimension. In Soja's approach, spatialization of Marxism would be possible by adding epistemological and ontological perspectives of postmodernism to Marxist discourse. In this context, according to Soja, in the process of analyzing a social formation, original spatial and historical conditions of the social relations should be considered. Reproduction of these dynamic conditions and social relations can be understood not within a relation of causality but in the spatial and historical context. In brief, Soja suggests a transformative re-theorization of the relations between history, geography and modernity.

Doreen Massey is another important theorist who focuses on conceptualization of space and time. Like Edward Soja, Massey criticizes the thought systems which are based on dualities. Massey says that space should be considered as constructed in social relations not as an abstract dimension and should be conceptualized integrally with time. She states that, in 1970s new generation Marxist geographers have challenged to hegemonic positivist "spatial science" and a debate began about how the relation between space and society would be conceptualized. "The aforism of the seventies was 'space is a social construct'... Space is constituted through social relations and material social practices." (Massey, 1994, 254)

Massey accept the argument which states that "space is socially constructed", but according to her, this argument points out only one side of social and spatial relation. She states that this formulation implies that geographic forms and distributions are simply outcomes, "the end point of social explanation". She says that, as a part of social and economical changes which have been seen in the world in 1980s, spatial structuring has provide the other side of social and spatial relation to be noticed: "the social is spatially constructed too". That is to say, society is necessarily constructed spatially and the spatial organization of the society "makes a difference to how it works" (ibid, 254).

Massey criticizes the view which considers space as "statis" and as completely opposed to time. According to her, space should be considered integrally with time. Space is not an absolute independent dimension, it is constructed by social relations. Important thing here is not the social phenomenon in space, but both the social phenomenon and the space to be constructed by social relations. Besides, social elations are not still but dynamic.

According to her, in order to develop an alternative view of space, should be avoided from the notion of three dimensional space. Such an alternative perspective should be based on "four-dimensionality of things". She stresses that space is not static and spaceless. Spatiality and temporality are different from each other but none of them can be conceptualized by the absence of one another. Massey suggests the space to be conceptualized as follows:

> We need to conceptualize space as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global" (Massey, 1994, 264)

Thus Massey, underlines that spatial is constituted socially and at the same time "social is necessarily spatially constituted too". She states that, all social

relations and activities have a spatial form and a spatial location. There is a spatial form in every scale, in every relation which binds community together. Spatial dimension and form of social relations may change over time. In short, "the social is inexorably also spatial" (ibid, 265). Space is created with wide complexities in every scale from the local to global and with network of relations which intersect and interact with each other. What makes these social relations specifically spatial is their "simultaneity" which is not statis. According to Massey, space should be considered as an inherently dynamic simultaneity of social relations. Morover, since social relations are imbued with power, meaning and symbolism in everywhere, "spatial is as an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification" (ibid, 3). To consider space like this entails to see "the real multiplicities of space-time". In this context, Massey emphasizes that space is political. According to her, space is both open to politics and is a necessary element of it. Massey emphasizes that spatial organization of society is not only a result of the production of social but it is integrally in its production. "It is fully implicated in both history and politics" (ibid., 4).

According to her, to consider space in this way, also challenges to some conceptualizations about place. She states that especially since 1980's some excluding claims about place has reoccurred and they try to fix the meanings of certain spaces and to keep them enclosed. This view which considers space as statis, conceptualizes the place "as bounded, singular, fixed and unproblematic in its identity" (Massey, 1994). But Massey, asserts that space is formed out of social interrelations in every scale within space-time context and place is a certain articulation of these relations. Place is a particular moment in these social relation networks and understandings. This view of place is against the claims of internal histories and timeless identities. Massey, underlines that the identities of places are "unfixed, contested and multiple".

> The particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counterposition to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that "beyond" (ibid, 5).

Massey states that, with such a conceptualization of place t is revealed that places are open and porous.

Biriefly, in this chapter the critical space debates which have emerged as a reaction to the "aspatiality" of social theory, are studied. Since 1970, many theorists who deal with space have criticized the negligence of space in social theory and the conceptualization of space as a secondary category. They emphasize the complex interrelation between space and society. Thus, space should be considered as an explanatory category in comprehending the social relations and processes. This view is developed through the understanding of the conceptualization of space and time integrally.

Placing the interrelation of the spatial and the social to the center, this work aimed to research which dynamics are efficient and which processes operate in the constitution of place and culture in today's conditions. In the following chapters, relation between place, culture and identity will be discussed in the context of social processes and power relations.

# CHAPTER 4

# THE CASE OF VAN

## 4.1 DESCRIPTION OF VAN

### 4.1.1 Historical Geography of Van

Van is a city in East Anatolia Region, which is the biggest geographical region of Turkey and it is located in the east of Van Lake. The city is in a wide plain called Van Plain at approximately 1750 meters altitude, which is surrounded by Turkey-Iran border at the east, Hakkâri province at the south, Ağrı province at the north, Bitlis and Siirt provinces and Van Lake at the west (Figure 1). High, irregular rough terrain and being far away from the sea are the geographical characteristics of East Anatolia Region. These characteristics have shaped the settling geography of Van (Figure 2).

Geographical location of Van and its environment provides convenient defense conditions. Because of this, the city has been settled in since ancient times. The findings found in the archeological excavations have proved that the city and its environment have been settled in since 4000 BC. By 2000 BC the city was the central province of Hurrian. After Hurri-Mitanni state has been destroyed by Hittites, Asurians and Urartians have tried to rule the province. The city lived its most splendid period under the rule of Urartians, between 900-600 BC. The city of Van, which has been called Tushba by then, has been the capital of Urartian state for 300 years. According to historical resources the name "Van" comes from Urartian words "Biane" or "Viane".

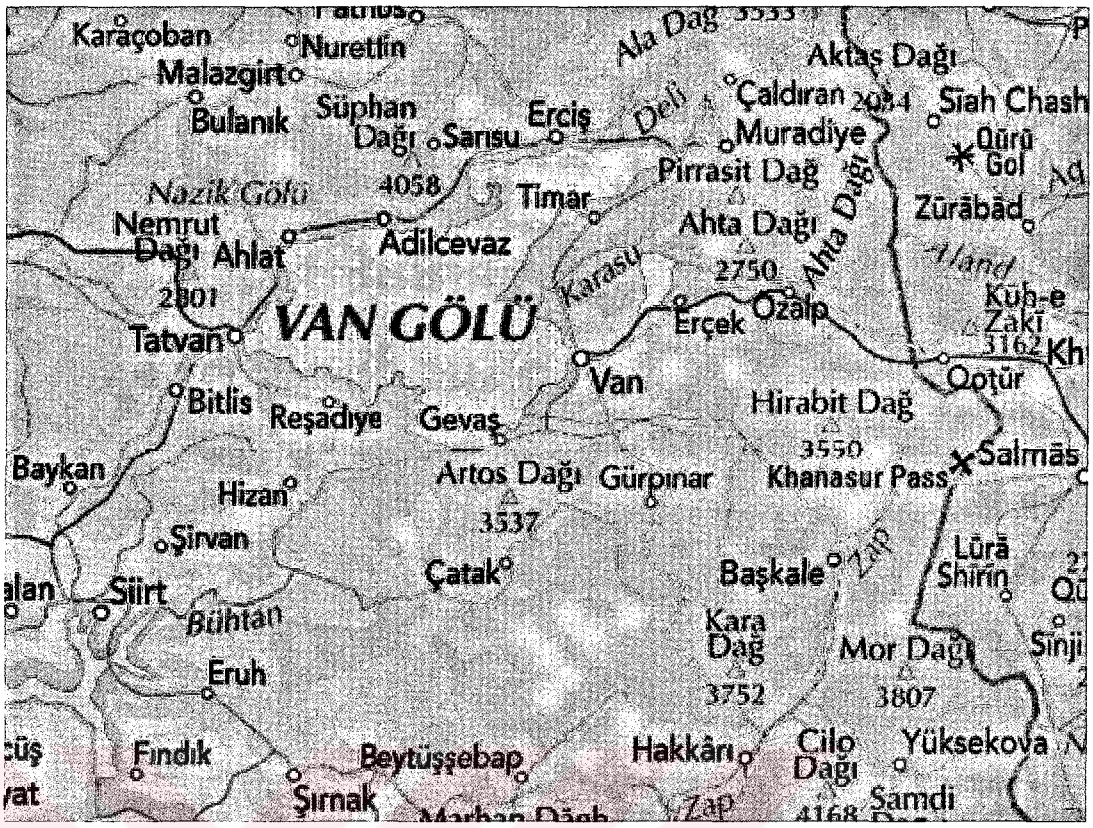


Figure 1. Map of Van
Source: www.maponline.com



Figure 2. General view from city of Van.

After Urartians, being ruled by İskits, Meds, Persians, Van has met with Hellenic culture by the invasion of Great Alexander. Then the city has been ruled by Seleucids, Romans, Parthians and Byzantines. Sasanian rule which was between 2nd-7th centuries has ended with the arrival of Hazar Turks. By the arrival of Turks to the province, in 11th century Van has been respectively under Ahlatşah, Anatolian Seljuks, İlhanlı, Karakoyunlu, Akkoyunlu and Safevi rules. In 1548 Van was included to Ottoman territory and promoted to province status. By the end of 19th century some clashes between Armenian and Turkish residents started in the city and in 1915 the city was invaded by Russian troops. After Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, Van became one of the provinces of the Republic.

Today the city is a center for peripheral cities such as Hakkâri, Bitlis, Ağrı, Siirt and Muş and for some peripheral districts in the sense of educational, cultural, health, transportation, public services and commerce. Some social, cultural and commercial institutions such as Van Yüzüncü Yıl University which was founded in 1982, Research Hospital of Faculty of Medicine, four state hospitals, many private hospitals and polyclinics, regional administrations of public institutions, private preparation courses for high schools or universities, Van State Theatre, Cultural Center, three cinemas, shopping and commercial centers provide a central status to Van.

In Van there is an import-export trading through Turkish-Iran border. It is possible to mention a human circulation between Van and Iran because of some facts like trading etc. Being a city at the border makes Van a crossroads for drug traffic. Besides, Van is a city, which some products like diesel etc. are smuggled to Turkey. There is an airport in the city. Turkish Airways and Atlas Air have flights to the cities such as Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir and Antalya. Railway connection between Turkey-Iran is through Van-Tatvan ferryboats via Van Lake. Also there is passenger and cargo transportation by ferryboats between Van Pier and Tatvan Pier.

### 4.1.2 Demographical and Social Structure

There is not any sufficient information about the population of the periphery of Van Lake before 19th century. According to Ottoman annual reports, the population of Van Province, consisted of Central Sanjak of Van and Sanjak of Hakkâri, which today correspond to provinces of Van, Bitlis, Muş, Ağrı and Hakkâri, was 430.000. Again according to Ottoman annual, in 1889 the central population of Van, was recorded as 35.000 (Van Valiliği..., 1993, 63).

During World War I., by the period, which has been started with the Russian invasion, remarkable decreases have been observed in city's population. After Turkish and Armenian residents have left the city, central population which was 35.000 before, has been decreased to as low as 7.000 (ibid, 65).

The population of Turkey has grown approximately five times in 1927-2000 period. In the same period, the population of Van has grown 11.6 times of its initial population and increased to 887.524 in 2000. The annual population growth rate of Van has shown its highest value with 46.9 % in 1960-1965 period, and has taken its lowest value with 17.4 % in 1935-1940 period in Van. The annual population growth rate of Van is 32 % in 1990-2000 period (DİE, 2002, 25). While the population of Van had a share of 0.55 % in the population of the country in 1927, its share in the total population of country was 1.3 % in 2000. This indicates that the annual growth rate of the population of Van is above that of the country (ibid, 26).

The population growth of province center, which is the main issue of our case, has happened in the period following the year of 1960. The urban population which was 155.623 in 1990, increased in a rate of 60.3 % in 2000 and reached to 284.464 (Table 1). In the same period growth rate of Turkey's urban population was 26.81 %.

*Table 1: City-Village population of province center of Van*

| Year | **1990** | **2000** | **Annual growth rate of population %** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **City** | 155 623 | 284 464 | 60.30 |
| **Village** | 52 247 | 72 030 | 32.10 |
| **Total** | 207 870 | 356 494 | 53.93 |

Source: DİE

While 79.79 % of the province center population of Van constitutes urban population, 20.21 % of it constitutes the village population (Table 1.2).

*Table 2: Urbanization rate of Turkey and Van in the year 2000*

| | **Turkey** | **%** | **Van** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **City** | 44 006 274 | 64.90 | 284 464 | 79.79 |
| **Village** | 23 797 653 | 35.10 | 72 030 | 20.21 |
| **Total** | 67 803 927 | 100.00 | 356 494 | 100.00 |

Source: DİE

In the Table 2, it can be seen that the urban population of province center of Van, is above Turkey average. But it will be a mistake to consider that province center of Van has become more urbanized than Turkey average. Because, urban cannot be characterized with the number of the people who are residing in it. An urban is characterized by some signs like urban cultural practices and life styles. Putting aside this issue to be discussed later, we continue with quantitative indicators.

Considering the size of households in 2000, while the household size in Van is 7.4, in the province center it is 6.4. Again in the province center the share of the houses consisting of 10 or more households, is 15.14 % in total. The

share of the population living in the houses consisting of 10 or more households, is 23.91 % in total (DİE, 2002).

While the urbanization process leads to an increase in the number of the core families which reflect urban life style, this process operates in Van as a flow out of population from the villages to the cities. The shares of the houses consisting of 10 or more households and the population living in these houses in total, are high. We can say that migration from villages to city brings about wide family forms and relations also to be sustained in the city. In spite of the general tendency to have less children in Turkey, in Van to have more children is also being sustained as a dominant value.[1]

Population of Van consists of the people who have different ethnic origins. The ethnic groups are Kurds, Turks, Acems, Azeris and Mıtrıps (Gypsies). The majority of the population consists of Kurds. Moreover, a part of the population is consists of the people who have come from west and work in various public institutions in the city. These people generally work as soldier, police, teacher and university academician.

Contiguous area of Van is approximately 15 thousands hectares. Only 4 thousands hectares of this area is the legal built up area. Inside the municipality boundaries, there are 27 districts. Kurdish migrants have settled mainly in the east and the north sides of the city, they are living in the districts which have been founded after the migration and far away from city center. In the protected area which surrounds Van Castle, there are some districts where Kurdish migrants and Mıtrıps are living.[2] The people who have relatively a good income, generally live in İki Nisan, Kâzım Karabekir and İskele Streets and surrounding blocks.

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[1] For the literate ratio, employment, characteristics housing unit in province center see: DİE, 2002, 2000 Census of Population, Province: 65-VAN, Ankara: DİE Publications.

[2] This information has taken from Directorate of Development of Van Municipality.

Directorate of Development of Van Municipality has planned to build a recreation zone in the city center and has announced a project competition for it. But it has been stated that the project has been postponed because of some inadequacies.

### 4.1.3 Migration

In general, Van is a province, which is at the lowest ranks (75th) in the list of developed provinces of Turkey. As of year 2000 purchasing power in the city is 10 (the purchasing power of the most developed province Kocaeli, is 53).[3] Between the years 1995-2000 in-migrate ratio of the province is 4.82 %, out-migrate ratio is 9.28 % and the net migration ratio is -4.46 %.[4] When we look at province center, in 1990-2000 period, urban population increased in a rate of 60.3 % and reached to 284.464. One of the most important reasons of this increase is the migration of many people to the city leaving their homes because of the clashes which has been occurred in the region since 1990. The people who came to province center of Van with forced migration, encounter with many social problems such as unemployment, housing, health and education problems.

> The 'armed conflict' at East and South East Anatolia caused migration of the villagers, who both rejected or accepted to fight against PKK. The migration of the first group was 'natural', but the second group's was compulsory. To eliminate villagers being 'together with the army during daytime and with PKK at night', 2500 settlements were abandoned and at least 3,5 million people migrated to the cities. Van became the second most migrant accepting city after Diyarbakır and the rate of increase of the population has reached up to fourfold within five years after 1991. According to 1990 census, population of the central Van was 153.000. According to the estimation of State Institute of Statistics, the population will have been around 185 000 in the year 1995. But today, including the migrants, it is estimated to be around 600-700 000 (Quoted from TMMOB., 1996, by Al, 1998, 107).

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[3]Radikal newspaper, 1 September, 2005.
[4] (www.die.gov.tr)

Migrants usually come from the villages and districts of Van, Hakkâri, Muş, Ağrı and Bitlis. The migrants who came to Van before 1980, mostly settled in Akköprü and İstasyon quarters. These migrants were mostly the people from the villages, which are close to the city. They were more literate people, parliamentarians of different political parties of different periods and people of Burikan tribe. The people of Giravi tribe who came after 1991 mostly settled in Gölbaşı, Abdurrahmangazi and Pembeci Mirza quarters. People of Helan tribe have settled in the area behind Gölbaşı and YSE. A part of Milan tribe who has not been subjected to forced migration has settled in Akköprü and another part of them has settled in different quarters of the city. In Karşıyaka and Haçort quarters, Gevdan tribe who has rejected to be rural guard and the broken off members of rural guard tribes such as Jirki, Izdıran, Mamhuran (Arslan, Al, 1998, 149) have settled in. Haçort quarter is considered as "vote stock of DEHAP and Bekaa Valley" (Al, 1998, 79). The villagers of Uzundere in Hakkâri's Çukurca district (Hertoşi tribe) who has been subjected to migrate, have been placed to Beyüzümü (Arslan, Al, 1998). These villagers who have been settled to Beyüzümü, later was placed to Yalım Erez quarter in 1996 with the contribution of TMMOB (UCEAT-Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects of Turkey) Ankara Branch of Chamber of Architects, Van Representation of Chamber of Architects, Van Governorship, Van Municipality, UCEAT City Coordination Committee. The migrant houses in Yalım Erez quarter were built for 258 families (TMMOB, 1998, Van Valiliği, 1998). The migrants who came after 1990 have been placed also to Hacıbekir, Seyit Fehim Arvasi and Yenimahalle quarters (Figure 3).

To neglect the balance between different regions during industrialization in 1950's and not to make a land reform are the other reasons of the migration. All these reasons have brought along the migration of the villagers to Van, and the flow of the capital to the western cities. As there is no investment to industry in Van, the job opportunities are restricted with public and construction sectors. Public and private sector do not make investments to

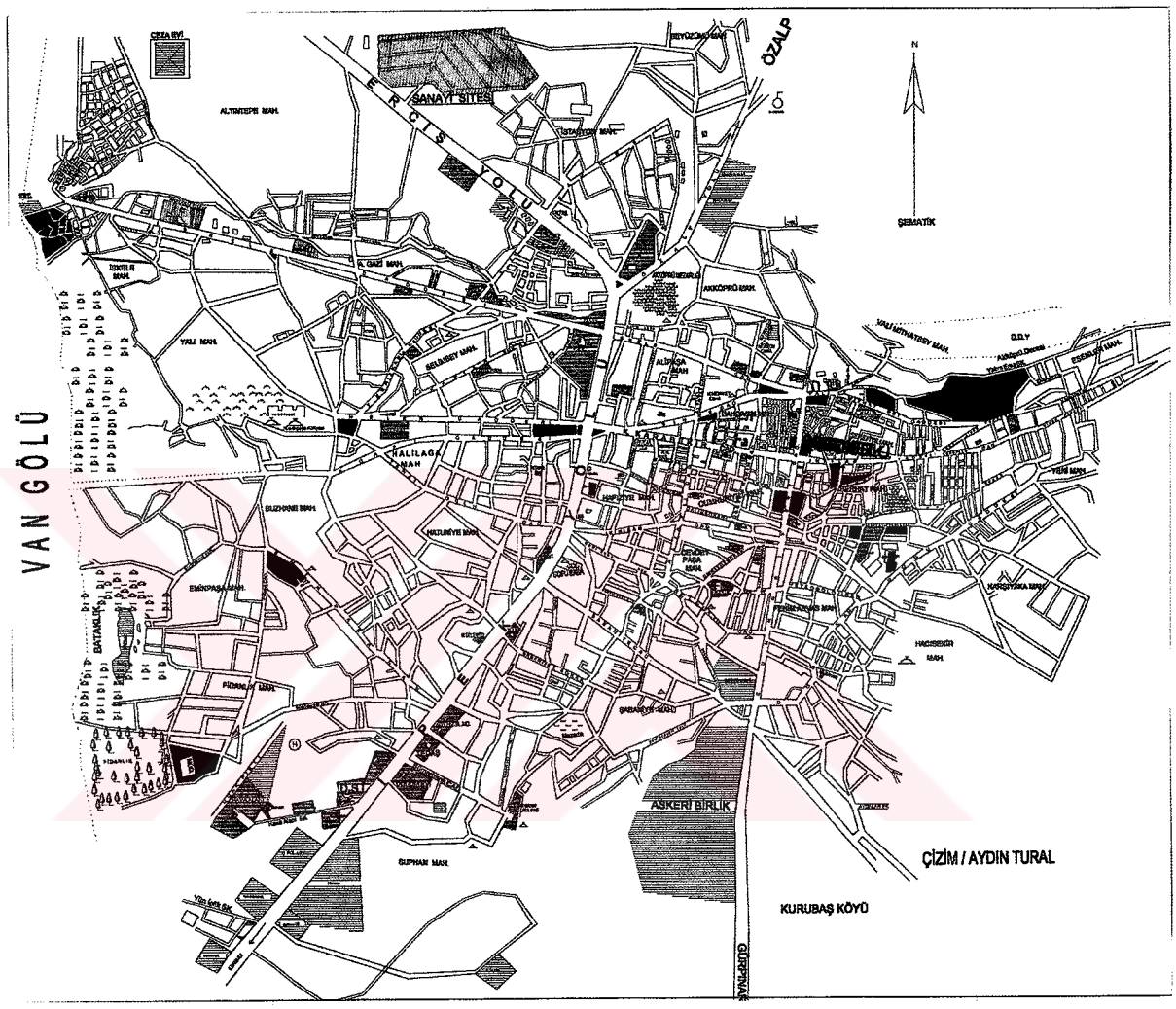


Figure 3. City Plan of Van

Source : Directorate of Development of Van Municipality.

the city because of security conditions. Besides, Van's locals who own capital, migrate to big cities and therefore capital becomes distant to the city.

Migrants become nonfunctional in the city. As the employment possibilities of the city are restricted with the public and construction sectors their job possibilities are also restricted. The jobs which migrant can do are; to peddle, to make transportation with three wheeled porter carts and to work as a construction worker. Because of the intensive unemployment as a result of forced migration, the streets of city center are full of peddlers and beggars, many coffee shops are full of people waiting for job opportunities. The trading made with three wheeled porter-carts has negative effects on city tradesmen and on the traffic of both pedestrian and car traffic. After the municipality banned trading with three wheeled porter-carts at the end of 2004, the number of these carts decreased.

Migrants have encountered with many problems such as unemployment, housing, health, education problems. Health and education problems in Van are not new and are not only because of intensive migration. The hospitals of the city are not sufficient in many aspects. Besides, migrants' opportunities to benefit from health services are restricted. The city breaks off women's connection with production and renders them nonfunctional. While women directly participate in production in the village by farming, animal care, household production, in the city they are fully repressed from production. Except gender based division of labor, working of women is not assented traditionally. Besides, most of the migrant women do not speak Turkish. To use urban spaces, to go the city center for shopping or health problems or only to wander about is not much possible. In this way, traditional constraints and language handicap exclude women from the public space. Only a few women who speak Turkish can work. House keeping, baby sitting, carpet weaving are some of the few jobs, which these women can find.

Most of the children of the migrant families do not speak Turkish until their school age. They also encounter with language handicap when they reach to school age. Both economical insufficiency and traditional point of view restrict the education possibilities of the girls especially. Because of this, it is possible to see many child beggars or shoeshine boys at the urban streets.

But the locals of Van complain about the peddlers, beggars and unemployed people. They lament that "the newcomers" returned the city to a big village and the city have become an inconvenient place to live.

## 4.2 PLACE AND IDENTITY

### 4.2.1 The Meaning of Place

Negligence of space and conceptualization of space as a secondary category in social theory has been criticized by many social scientists (Lefebvre, 1974, Harvey, 1989, Soja, 1989, Massey, 1994). Instead of conceptualizing space and society as separate entities, the efforts of including space in social theory focus on the complex relation between two. Thus, space is accepted as an explanatory category in comprehending social relations and processes. In this context Lefebvre's argument of socially produced space is remarkable. Lefebvre states that (social) space is a (social) product. He also points out the connectedness between the social processes and power relations.

Massey (1994) states that space is constituted socially and formed in stretched out social relations. In other words, according to him "social space consists of all the networks and complexities of social interaction and interconnection whether these be very small-scale or global in their reach" (Massey, 1995, 54). She interprets place as a certain set of intersections of social relations. Another social scientist, Chaney emphasizes the cultural characteristics of space. According to him, rather than to be a fixed terrain, space is a sphere that can be manipulated for social action (Chaney, 1994).

"Space is a process of engagement, a strip of interaction, rather than a stable context for social action" (ibid, 152). Chaney states that abstract space needs to be structured in a way, in order to make a sense. Thus, space is defined by its own (economical, agricultural, religious, public) organization form. Also he refers to space-place relation: He defines space as an abstract and symbolical organization and place as a location where practical relations of everyday life occur and become concrete within this organization (ibid, 149).

Massey concerns with how place can be conceptualized today According to him the definition of place as "a settled community, a locality with a distinct character" should be rethought in the "era of globalization". Because, worldwide communications, time-space compression, major flows of international migration distort the previous meanings of place. He states that "everywhere seems to become a melting-pot" (ibid, 46). The simple examples of this situation are that; the goods which are sold in the shops are produced by the producers in different continents or the films in a local movie or in television come from USA, etc. Massey states that the today's economical and cultural flows are not new, but their speed and intensity have been dramatically increased.

At this point Massey focuses on how notion of place can be conceptualized in these global, mobile times. Do the individual places still have their distinct characteristics in "the global village"? If they have, are these distinct characteristics formed with the same previous styles? Does "notion of distinct local places" make any sense in this era of mixing cultures, migrations, increasing internalization of economical structures? According to Massey these questions and their answers are the issues which should be considered in a political and practical attitude. She states that place is the product of the society we lie in. Our understandings about place vary over time and differentiate from a society to another. Massey mentions two different understandings about place as settled and coherent, and as endless mixing of people, of cultures, of economic activities. The first one is an

exclusive understanding of place which asserts who owns the place and who doesn't. In the second one, individuality has been disappeared. She says that place issue should be discussed in different approaches. According to her, the idea saying that places are constituted socially can be understood by looking at the groups who have different place ideas in the society (ibid, 51). Thus Massey emphasizes that people make places both in their imaginations and in practice. Moreover, the physical environment of the place is an important element in the characteristic the place but it is also interpreted socially.

Massey states that there is a dynamic relation between space and place. Referring to Giddens, she explains how modernity transformed the relation between space and place. Giddens (1990) discusses that localized activity dominates the spatial dimensions of social life in pre-modern societies, thus space and place coincide. But Giddens says that "modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absents' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction" (Quoted from Giddens, 1990, by Massey, 1995, 50). Massey says that, Robins and Harvey explain the constitution of the meaning of the place parallel to certain social changes and developments, like Giddens. All of these views discuss that the global flows of people, data and products have accelerated in recent years and thus spatial movement, interaction, influence and communication have been expanded. Taking all of these into consideration the notion of place must be considered again. Referring to Allen and Hamnett (eds. 1995), Massey explains space as "the complexity of stretched-out social relations". Space includes all the network, complexity and interconnection of social interactions in every scale. In this context, to mention a coherent, bounded and settled place would be problematic today. In this case, Massey suggests that place can be conceptualized as the subset of complexity and a certain location of intersections and interactions (Massey, 1995, 172).

The point, which Massey emphasizes in this context, is the relation between place, culture and identity. It is possible to talk about a challenge to a settled, coherent place notion today, since the places are open to wider processes. The continuous interconnections between the places, mark that to sustain the internally produced notion of "uniqueness of place" would not be easy any more. The point is that there is a continuous mixing of the cultures through the interconnections between the places. Moreover, the relation between (local) culture and (local) place cannot be interpreted simply. The construction of the meaning of the place should be considered as well as the physical construction of the place through interconnection and interdependence processes. In these processes "identity" issue is in a central position. The meaning of the place may vary along different groups in society. The same place may be interpreted differently by different groups and this may cause conflict. These claims which include the past and present interpretations about place are in a contestation over the identity and material future of the place. All these processes should be considered in the context of wider social relations and power relations. As a result, "the construction of meanings of place, the contests over the identity of places, battles over the future of places, claims to rights over place, all occur within an already constituted social and geographical unevenness" (Massey and Jess, 1995, 4).

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This research focused on the meaning and conceptualization of the place. Regarding this, answers will be sought to questions like; what people think about the place they live in, what kind of a sense of place they develop, what kind of contestation they experience on the identity and representation of the place, can the places keep their originalities today, in a time that rapid and fundamental social changes are being experienced?

The informants whom I have interviewed with, have made different place definitions for Van, where they live in. The differences are generally based on gender, class and religion. Also there are differences between the definitions which are made with the local people of Van and the ones who have come from the other places to Van for some purposes such as work, education etc. Additionally we see some definitions which consider place as a social product or physical/natural environment as well as some definitions which consider place according to regional scale -that is established in east-west opposition.

In his work "The Condition of Postmodernity", David Harvey (1989) argues that spatial mobility which is caused by today's increasing globalization and time-space compression, on the one hand makes the place notion difficult, on the other hand because of living in a unstable and uncertain world it causes a feeling of a more stable and secure place. Massey states that in such a situation "a place called home" can be sanctified as a shelter protected from an uncontrollable world (Massey, 1995, 48). According to her the need of a settled place carries the feeling of continuity and coherence. Pointing out the globalization of capitalist economical relations, Harvey states that people become more immobile against the global fluidity of the capital and this forces people to be bound to certain local places. For him, people constitute "place-bound" identities in a fast changing world. In our case for some informants Van has a stable and secure meaning.

For a 23 years old, female, jobless (graduated from university, attending master degree) informant (20) who is a local of Van living with her family (mother and father are teachers) Van is a place to live in peace.

> I love Van very much, life is really easy here. You may reach to the place you want very easily. You can walk anywhere you want in five minutes, remotest place is our university campus and it lasts about twenty minutes to reach there. Therefore it is good and also it has natural beauties. It is green and its landscape with the lake is really beautiful. Also all our

> neighborhood, our friends and some of the relatives live here. I wish to live all of my life here. (20)*

This informant mentions that she sees very warm relations in Van which she couldn't see in western cities and adds: "Human relations are very nice here, everyone is aware of each other. If you need anything there are many people who eager to help you, both in good times and bad times. We are living in a block with 70 residents. From the youngest to the oldest everyone in the block knows each other, they say hello to each other."

25 years old male informant (2) defines Van in regional scale. Also he mentions that Van is an economically convenient place for the people in east. Emphasizing the uneven development in the region, the informant mentions that the people of the east are "poor", and Van is an "inexpensive" city for this kind of people who are included in lower groups:

> Van is the most precious of East, in terms of natural beauties, historical places. There is unemployment but still it is not too much comparing with other cities, I don't mean the western cities of course. I have visited most of the cities of Eastern Anatolia. The life style here is different from the other cities. Here is a more "social" place, its citizens are more "social". As I have mentioned, I don't compare it with west. I prefer Van among many places that these places can be in west. I've born in Hakkâri and continuously visit Hakkâri. But after 24 hours I get bored in Hakkâri. I like here, I like the atmosphere in work and with friends. My job is good, I'm engaged in trading. It is very convenient and very comfortable place in many aspects for me. (2)

This informant is graduated from secondary school and in the day time he works in his own shop and at nights he works as a taxi driver, he is married and has two children.

Likewise, defining the city in the scale of East Anatolia region, a male informant (3) who is a waiter, says that Van is a developed city comparing to

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* See Appendix A for the ages, education, job and gender of informants.

the other cities. He mentions that, as in every city there are some inconveniences.

> There is not a night life and the people are not easy in their behaviors in East Anatolia. But solidarity is still strong here, I like this. Sixty percent of my relatives live here, we live in eight houses in a field, we are all a family, we have the same surname. (3)

This informant says that a convenient city should be like Antalya, not like Van. He mentions that, comparing with the big cities Van has a more clean air and nature, except these it has nothing different from other cities. "I don't say, I live here by all means, it can be another place".

Generally, the ones who consider Van positively, emphasize the natural beauties of the city and the close human relations which they think that they cannot find in big cities. They say that there are not any problems which come along with big city life, such as traffic, weakening of primary human relations, alienation, isolation and individualization. It is considered that its natural beauties are much more than the other regional cities but there are less social activities than the big cities.

26 years old female informant (21), who has come to Van 7 years ago, has completed her master degree, is living with her jobless elder sister, her sister's husband and her two nephews, defines Van as a convenient place:

> Diyarbakır or Gaziantep have more advantages than us but Van is not bad at all. I consider Van superior and different than the other countries in terms of its natural beauty and geography. In terms of infrastructure -electricity, water etc.- it is also not bad. Of course there are some deficiencies, for example in terms of cultural activities. Some activities like cinema films, theatre plays reach here lately than İstanbul, Ankara or İzmir, but they reach at the end. (21)

The female informant (16) who has come to Van from "outside" as a teacher gives a more negative definition. According to her Van is not a place to live in continuously. She does not feel herself belong to Van, it is place where she has to live contemporarily.

This informant says that Van does not remind good things to her, it is not a convenient place to live in. The informant who is working as a teacher in the city for five years, says that the things come to her mind are only the harassments and cheatings. She wishes to leave the city at once. She emphasizes that to live in Van as a woman is very hard and she adds that economical situation affects the quality of life in the city.

> It is a city which has a potential of development. The city develops but the people never develop. They are too conservative. They look very hospitable to outsiders and try to be helpful, but at the same time they are thinking to cheat you. It is a very expensive city. You can't find the thing you are looking for, whether you have to order from the internet or buy from the other cities. It is far away from big cities. Ok, it is not far away for ones who have money. Ankara is one hour from here by plane, it is not a problem for them. But for us, for the middle-class it is a very big problem. In order to visit your family you have to travel a thousand kilometers. (16)

Likewise, 24 years old, university student, male informant (7), establishes the image of Van through some traditional and conservative features that he attributes to the people of Van. He says that in Van he feels like he is not alive, and the life is very monotonous. Comparing the city with Mersin where his family live in, he says that he does not feel comfortable in Van.

> For me Van is a terrible city. I have come here from Mersin. In Mersin there are more places to have fun, and more social activities, when you go out you feel easy with the people. I can't see this in Van. I don't feel myself comfortable in the city. You can't go out with your girl friend, all the eyes watch you. The men with a round beard, long hair or an earring would be annoyed with insolent remarks. Though today it is not much as

> before but you can't prevent the eyes. It s a society which is closed to the development, they never intend to develop. (7)

The same informant mentions that university has not made much contribution to the cultural-art activities or sight of the city. He says that he has become atrophied because he has not any cultural communication with the people and psychologically depressed because of the city and its citizens.

As it is seen here there are many kinds of definitions and representations of the place. These definitions and representations are constituted socially. Shields states that representation of city is a paradoxal process, which is based on continuous changes (Shields, 1996). According to him in this process the particular sides of the places become visible and other sides become invisible. Massey states that the identities of the places are not fixed and constant. The meanings and representations of the place are constituted in a continuous struggle. For she, in this struggle, while certain characteristics of place is emphasized by different groups, other characteristics are neglected.

Another remarkable point is that the gender based definitions are in majority in the place definitions related with Van. Female and male informants from different groups point out the difficulties of living in Van as a woman.

Female informant (1) who is a research assistant in the university says that she has been living for 9 years in Van and gradually she has become adapted to the city. This informant also stresses that she comes out of Van and says that the life style of people of Van is far away from hers. She mentions that dominant feudal relations of the city determine everything related with woman, from clothing to daily life practices, and this situation affects her like every other woman, she doesn't feel free in the city.

> They are a little bit more closed, conservative. There is nothing to do for a woman in this city. A working woman only goes to

> her work, comes back to home and the housewife only stays at home. There is no life except this for a woman. This situation has changed now comparing to my first years but the people thinking in this way are too much. They have customs, feudal relations are dominant. The ones coming from out, like us, has become adapted to them with time. We are careful with our clothing when we are with them. But still, the women who have come here to work or for education have more opportunity than the local women, they can feel more comfortable, at least they ignore the gossips. (1)

This informant says that this point of view annoys her, and hopes that may be after 30-40 years Van would be a city where women can live more comfortably.

Another male informant (18) says that the nature of Van is beautiful but the social activities are not sufficient, though it is a developing city in the east. He adds that except of being a center for other cities of the region and representing the region with the university, its geography, Van is not different from other cities. The informant says that city had a rapid development in recent years but he thinks that the point of view relating with women would not be changed easily.

> The point of view related with woman in Van is disgusting, I get sick. A university graduated and a villager, almost have the same point of view. The mind does not change. I think that the feudal and primitive structure of the region is effective. The contribution of woman to daily life is much more than man. I don't think a daily life would be productive unless the women would be fully active. (18)

Pointing out that the minority of women in urban space, another female informant (11) adds, "it is men's city not women's". She stresses that women are molested in the streets and the city has become the space of men. Informant says that the men who molest women do not let their own wives or daughters to go out because "the ones who molest are themselves and they think that other men would do the same thing to their wives or daughters". She points out that this mentality prevents women to participate to life.

The informants mark out the relative and tribe relations as the important reasons which prevent women to participate in social life of the city. The most important problem in daily life is that the social control of relatives depends on women's position in social structure. This social control is experienced as a kind of repression. For example, a bride of a known family should absolutely avoid from certain behaviors. A 32 years old, female informant (13) who is a university graduated, married employee, explains this situation relating it with tribal relations and feudal social structure and tells the difficulties she has experienced as follows:

> It is not easy to be a woman in this city. I have many relatives here, we experience feudal relations intensively. Thus, I cannot say that I can go easily everywhere I want. If I didn't work, repression would be much more, I'm luckier than other women because I work. I feel like my relatives have a continuous control upon myself. There is a fear also, generally everyone knows me, I afraid to have a reaction because of doing a wrong behavior. First time I have come here, when I wear trousers it has appeared strange to them. My father-in-law is one of the important people of the tribe. They said that agha's bride wears trousers, and I told them this is my life style. After three years, I saw that all the ladies of the family wear trousers. I work in a NGO, they have begun to visit me there. I think that I have become a model for them and this makes me relieved. (13)

Another female informant (21) who stresses the exclusion of women from public life in Van, says that she is physically handicapped and this multiples the difficulties for her to live as a woman in the city. She says that she is disturbed with the people looking at her while she is walking in the streets and adds:

> They want me to close myself to home not to go outside because of my handicap. There are many men in the streets. I saw a very few women, I don't think that the number of handicapped women is less. Where are these women? These poor women sit at their home. The number of women in the streets is less anyhow, there are not so much women who go out and make shopping. When I go to a bank, you see many

> men, you stand there as a woman sample. Both to be handicapped and a woman make to go out difficult. (21)

Same informant complains about lack of a planning for handicapped people in the city and to be treated as "normal people" in public transport, shopping etc. But on the other hand in spite of negative facts Van is relatively a small city and this enables daily social activities to be done with a few effort and money. From this point of view Van is a convenient city to be lived in for this informant.

> Anyway, this is a small city, there are many places to go on foot without using public transport. If it would be a big city and has these same shortcomings, I could not live here. (21)

55 years old, retired female informant (22) who lives with her two children says that women cannot sit in the parks like they do in the big cities, "there is a city park, they divided it into two parts separately for women and men, no one can go and sit."

With the migration which increased after 1995, the women who has come to the city, is the section which experience the exclusion from public space most. These women mostly reside in the neighborhoods which are located in the outskirts of the city (Karşıyaka, Yenimahalle, Seyit Fehim Arvasi etc.). They cannot participate to the city life because of some reasons such as feudal repression, language handicap -most of them don't speak Turkish-, economical problems etc. A female informant (25) who doesn't know her real age but supposes it as 18 or 19 works in a carpet weaving workshop. She says that she has migrated from Bahçesaray to Van with her family when she was 8-9 years old. She hasn't known Turkish until they have come to Van. Before she has worked in another workshop, for five years she has been working in this workshop. She has learned Turkish, reading and writing in this workshop, and still she is attending to seventh grade of open primary school. Telling the difficulties of this process informant says that until one or two years before she had being beaten by his elder brother because of working in

the workshop. She is living with her family of 13 people. Her sister also weaves carpet. She says that her family has not let her to go to the city center -to go out- before, but now as she has become literate and know Turkish, her family needs her and she makes "outside works". Informant mentions that this same process is same for all the young women who have migrated to Van in recent years.

Another 17 years old female informant (27) who also works in the same workshop adds:

> My mother complains that, "if only I knew Turkish, if I were literate". She cannot go to the hospital by herself when she gets ill, she cannot tell her complaints. It is very hard for her to learn Turkish hereafter. (27)

Informants mention that their close circle does not assent their work in carpet workshop, thus being depressed from this repression sometimes their families do not allow them to work in the workshop. But to work in the workshop is considered differently from to work in another place which is also "out" of home. Because, the girls who work in the workshop usually come from the same neighborhood or circle and men are not working there. So, on the one hand girls economically contribute to their families and on the other hand they don't have relations "as dangerous as their family fears from". Accordingly, even though their work in the workshop is not considered very positively but it is not considered to be too bad also, at least it is tolerated.

> In our neighborhood they say that, these are young girls, where are they going, where are they working, who knows what they are doing while they are out. So our families are annoyed by these words and tell us not to work any more. (27)

These informants who began to work in their childhood mention that they have learned too much things in the workshop and saved themselves from being "ignorant", and keep working in spite of the repression of their neighborhood. They see themselves different from the other girls of the

neighborhood and emphasize that most important reason of this is economical. "We are now influential in our families, because we work."

60 years old male informant (23) who is the manager of the workshop says that workshop functions as a "school" for the migrant girls, the women who have become defunctionalized in the city participate to production by working here. According to him while the weaver girls were producers in their villages with their families, they suddenly become consumers in the city. He opened this carpet workshop with the support of the municipality and governorship of the city. He says that he hadn't any aim for profit while he was opening the workshop, his aim is both to have these girls to participate to production and to educate them as they are far away to reach any education possibilities. There are courses in the workshop to teach Turkish, reading and writing. Volunteers give the lectures. About sixty girls are working in the workshop, three of them have graduated from open secondary school, sixteen of them are attending to open secondary school. Informant says that, daily works in the workshop such as cooking and washing dishes are all made collectively. According to him while the girls are humiliated in their families and their neighborhood, in the workshop they learn to be individual, to stand on their own foot and to participate to life. Emphasizing that the population of the city has doubled in last few years, the informant says that "If Van was paradise before, now it is hell".

> A man is forced to migrate because of several reasons, sells his land in the village and comes to these outskirts of the city. Builds a room, than a bigger one and than adds the rooms. They live ten, fifteen people in a house. They don't have any job, anything to eat. Women's situation is much more grave here. While she was in her village she was productive, she was making cheese, working in the filed, baking bread, namely she was doing something. When she came to the city she became imprisoned to her home. The other day father of the one of the girls in the workshop got ill, he was under intensive care. She couldn't go to the hospital, she doesn't know the place down from here, she has never seen the down part of the street, she doesn't know. I took her to the hospital. (23)

One of the weaver girls tells about the imprisonment of women to their homes after coming to the city in a witty way:

> While they were in the village our mothers were in the fields from morning till evening. When we came to Van, at home they sit in the morning till evening, they go sleep in the evening and sleep till morning. (27)

Another weaver girl says that there are many women who have migrated to Van long time before but still have not see the city center, "families do not let their daughters to go to downtown, they say there is nothing to do in the downtown for a girl". (26)

These informants say that their fathers and brothers do not let their wives to go out, "gentlemen think that their pride would be hurt". Weaver girls remark that any women in their neighborhood, including themselves, haven't seen the "sea" (Van Lake) and Isle of Akdamar, but they desire to see.

Our informants mention that workshop is a space for them to express themselves and "to take a breath" more or less. According to their explanations workshop can be considered as a middle space between "private" and "public". Workshop is a social context where they can contact with the "outer world" and hear news from the country and the world through workshop manager. It is a space where they can make contacts with various international and national NGOs. According to them workshop is at the same time a place where they can be free from the repression of their families and the society. They emphasize that in the workshop they can easily share some of their private feelings which are criticized when they tell or experience publicly, they are not condemned. For example they say that it is possible for them to tell about their sentimental relations, desires and disappointments in the workshop. They point out that to read book is possible through the workshop. As a place Van is almost identical of the workshop for them. Workshop is -consciously or unconsciously- perceived as a way to participate

partly to public sphere. Furthermore, to be able to gain money and to provide economical support to their families, expands their "permitted" activity fields within the social sphere. They emphasize that, to gain money lightens the repression of family. While the families do not accept their daughters to work before, they tolerate in the case of economical benefit, thus the repression of families become less. Generally for the workers of the workshop Van is not a place to live in without the workshop. Workshop is considered as a place where small strategies are founded to be able to live within dominant values. In this sense their perceptions about city become relatively more positive. In the workshop they establish a social space where they can share their feelings, tell about daily gossips, to support themselves mutually in social, psychological, economical terms. It can be seen that, by this way they can develop small strategies against every kind of difficulty stemming from daily life.

It is possible to speak about religion based definitions about Van. 30 years old male, married, university student informant (6) says that when he came to Van, at first many things have seemed him to be unfamiliar. He mentions that in this city university student is considered as coming from a "degenerated culture, sub-culture". He connects this situation with the closed religious social structure of the city and says that he has been thinking to leave here until he arrived.

> Van, cannot be called a cosmopolitan city. The people living in here are generally the people of this region. Except some groups, most of them have the same point of view. May be all of them are not from Van. There are people who have come from Siirt, Hakkâri, Mardin, Bingöl, Bitlis and Diyarbakır. They are all from the same culture, they feed from the same religion they have the same religious sect. You look to the most beautiful part of the city, you see that a huge mosque has been built there. A different point of view is brought here by the people coming from west or the places where Alevi people live. We live an extreme conflict of religion here. (6)

A female informant says that people in this city are religiously very fanatic and they are too much under the influence of religion. She adds, "Only thing they have is fast and praying (namaz), nothing else." (13)

23 years old university student, female informant (12) mentions that she has come from a smaller city (Hakkâri /Yüksekova) but she has encountered with more strict and conservative people in Van. She thinks that religion organizes the daily life completely.

Pointing out the influence of religion on daily life of the city especially in Ramadan, a female informant (21) says that she feels uneasy as she doesn't fast. Informant says that in Ramadan, Van seems to be as if consisted of a single group of people who share the values of a single religion-order. She adds that she knows many individuals or groups who don't share these "strict religious values", but in Ramadan all these people become invisible. Informant remarks the significant difference between Ramadans under previous municipality (HADEP) and under present municipality (AKP) and stresses that city had different views in these two separate periods. She says that she feels more repression in the present period and adds that at the time of breaking fast (iftar) city seems like a dead city, even the ones who don't fast are careful not to be in the streets and try to hide in some places.

> In Ramadan most of the cafes are open but they string up their curtains in order to not to be seen. When I came Van, I felt very bad as if I committed a crime and could be attacked in any time. Anyhow you make yourself a target by sitting there. Frankly I was sitting in the café but I was in fear. (21)

Another female informant (9) points out that religion has very much influence on daily life: "On Fridays, during prayer time at noon or in Ramadan, life stops significantly, most of the shops are closed. Therefore religion is very binding here." An informant who is a university student (7) says that this is felt not only in city center but in the university campus also. He mentions that especially on Fridays the rhythm of life becomes slower, many teachers stop

giving lectures in order to go to prayer and many people from university staff don't work in the afternoon on Fridays and adds:

> In Ramadan course times are arranged according to fast breaking time. I am very much surprised to see that Ramadan or Friday prayer influence the life so much and make it slower. (7)

Regarding the case, it will be better to mention Lefebvre's emphasis about the constitution of the meanings of the cities. Lefebvre states that people give meanings to places through social and cultural processes rather than through built environment. According to him, space is commodified in an instrumentalized form and rather than its use value, its exchange value has been brought in the foreground. This situation causes the spatial differences be demolished and make the space become abstract. At this point Lefebvre points out the images of the places. In order to make the places attractive for the capitalist entrepreneur the meanings of the places are symbolically reconstituted. He states that cities are not only constructed by cultural images, it is also constructed by the actual place experiences of the people. According to him, in the constitution of the meaning of the place the dialectical relation between the three dimensions (the lived, the perceived and the imagined) of the space is also important (Lefebvre, 1974). Shields (1996) also emphasizes this dialectical relation and states that "the lived" and "the imaginary" dimensions of the space cannot be considered apart from each other. He explains the concept of "social spatialization" through social imaginary by focusing on social constitution of the space: "Social spatialization includes not only habitual practices and representations of environments but also subtle spatial structuring of the social imaginary" (Shields, 1996, 281). Through spatialization he tries to overcome the polarization between the practice and the discourse. According to him the city cannot be considered only as a reality. At the same time only to emphasize the representations of the city is also problematic.

As it is seen in the exemplary, as a place Van is established both materially and imaginary according to individuals' social classes and status, to economical and cultural capital which they have within the social structure and their positions which they belong within social structure. First of all, individuals constitute a definition/meaning about Van, departing from this point they establish their ideas and politics about how Van should be in the future. These different meanings about place, continuously change and are reproduced within power relations. While some of these definitions become dominant in certain times, others become subjected to them. We see that there are very different social groups with very different cultural practices in Van, and they have different definitions about place.

### 4.2.2 The Senses of Place

Gillian Rose (1995) studies the shapes of people's thoughts and feelings about place by focusing on the concept of a sense of place. Rose says that many geographers use the concept of a sense of place in order to emphasize the importance of certain places for people. According to her feelings about place, feed from every dimension of life experience and cover everyday life and experience. A sense of place is the way to show that places are established through meaning and feeling. Pointing out that the place is created by people, Rose relates the connection between place and people with the concept of identity. For her, identity is how we make sense of ourselves. Many social scientists, discuss that the meaning which is given to place may be very powerful and the meanings may be a part of the identity of the people who experience them. Rose mentions that there are specific connotations of identity and defines identity as subjective experiences and feelings which are related with daily conscious. Moreover identity embraces "such experiences and feelings which are embedded in wider sets of social relations" (Rose, 1995, 88). She underlines that identity is not only an experience and emphasizes that a sense of place is important in terms of wider social context of identity.

> Experiences, everyday life, is not seen as an adequate basis for the construction of knowledge. The existence and the importance of structures, mechanisms and forces beyond immediate observation must be accepted. (Quoted from Eyles, 1985 by Rose, 1995, 89).

Rose clarifies that a sense of place is not completely the personal feelings but these feelings and meanings are also formed by social, cultural and economical situations which the people live in. Namely, these feelings are not only individual but also social. Moreover, feelings about place are related with the processes of power, in equality and resistance which structure our life. People interpret places from their certain social positions.

Departing from the relation of place with identity, Rose points out the different ways of developing a sense of place. First one is identifying with place which means that people feel that they belong to a certain place. People may feel belonging to a certain place where they feel themselves at home in security and sheltered. A sense of belonging to a place can be established in different regional, national and supernational scales and these may intersect with each other. (ibid, 90).

In the case of Van, where is my research field, we observe different senses of place which are established in different geographic scales and related with identity. Some of the informants identify themselves with the place, in regional scale and in connection with ethnic identity. For these informants the feeling of belonging to a place is established upon east-west opposition.

26 years old female informant (11) says that even though she gets bored in Van, she misses the city when she is far from it. She expresses that the feeling of belonging to Van becomes strong because of her "ethnic identity" and the underdevelopment of East in comparison with the other regions, so because of this she feels herself belong to this place.

> I love my city. I belong to this land but I want to leave. Because I want to see and live in different places. I wish to be buried in Van when I die because I was born here. If you burry me in graveyard of Karacaahmet in İstanbul (here she uses a popular phrase in order to express her own feeling), I will revive even if I am dead. I was born in this land and I have to die in this land. (11)

Another female informant is also a good sample for the relation of a sense of place with cultural identity. The informant says that, "I am from Hakkâri but I live here more comfortably. At the end here is my own region, my own language, my own culture." (13)

Senses of places may intersect in geographic scales. For some of the informants, Van does not only represent a certain place but also the whole region, the east. As well as emphasizing the identity of local place, the image of Van also emphasizes the identity of East.

Feeling of belonging may focus on places in smaller scales. As we see in the case of the weaver girls who work in the workshop, workshop is a place where the feelings of belonging are intensified. For the girls, workshop represents a place where they are far away from the repression of their families and the society and feel themselves belong to it. For example, even Friday is the off day of the workshop, some of the girls still come and work. In this sense, workshop is a safe shelter for them and can be considered as a place where they are identified with. Workshop means Van for them, the place where they identify themselves with is the workshop.

In the research we especially observed that informants identify themselves with East as a place because of their ethnic identity. 33 years old male informant (5) who is a bookkeeper and lives alone, mentions that Van has a social structure which is formed of different ethnic groups and is the place where people from different cultures can live together. He says that the ethnic groups are Acems, Turks, Mıtrıps (gypsies) and Kurds. But he

emphasizes that majority of the population consists of Sunni Kurds. Besides he mentions that he is also Kurdish and considers Van as "a place where can be lived in cultural and political terms". The informant compares the city with İstanbul in terms of the juxtaposition of different groups. But he says that the people who have settled in İstanbul have more economical concerns rather than to reproduce their own cultures: "In Van people struggle to keep their culture alive." (5) For him to have Kurdish identity means to be identified with East, namely he develops a sense of place in regional scale. Similarly a 29 years old, female informant who is a research assistant, define place by relating it with the ethnic identity. According to her Van "is an eastern, Kurdish city."

The male informant (8) who is a teacher living in Van for 7 years says that Van is more suitable for him in economical and social terms. He mentions that, as Ankara is a big city, the life is economically more difficult there, thus he cannot utilize the opportunities of the city.

> In the holidays when I go to Ankara, I cannot go to cinema and theatre so much, because they are too far. In order to go to a café you need to take a bus at least. It is economically constraining and also you spend too much time on the way. Van is a small city but you have all the opportunities ready. I consider this as an advantage. Moreover I have a very good friendship here. In somewhere else I feel myself like a foreigner, I cannot feel comfortable. (8)

This case reminds us the thought of Rose (1995) that a sense of place is constituted by the social, cultural and economical situations which people live in.

40 years old, male informant (4) who is a married teacher, interprets place through his social position and identifies himself with the place: "As my family, my people, my tribe is here I feel myself belong to here. I feel, I am more influential here."

He says that in Van, tribe relations are effective on every day life and people determine their attitudes to each other according to the tribes which they belong.

> In Van when you meet with someone, first you ask his or her tribe or where he or she comes from. If someone who needs your help is from your tribe, you force all of your possibilities in order to help but if he or she is from another tribe you don't force yourself so much. I am from Buruki tribe, we consider each other as first degree relatives within our tribe. If anyone is asked of his or her tribe, he or she may feel uneasy and foreignness. (4)

It can be said that the feeling of the informant about place is connected with the power relations, which constitutes life. For example this informant emphasizes that tribe and family relations provide him with an extra power and enable him to solve little daily problems as well as the issues in public organizations. His feeling about Van is a feeling constituted together with his devotion to his tribe. He expresses himself as a Buruki from Van. He describes Van through social relations and connections, and in the context of power relations.

Considering the above cases it can be said that cultural identity is interpreted through local culture, construction of national identity etc. depending to the place. We see that some informants constitute their personal identities by identifying them with the home-place. The way they define themselves is symbolized through the certain characteristics of the place.

The relation between identity and place is not constituted only with people's feeling of belonging to place. "People also establish their sense of place and of who they are by contrasting themselves with somewhere they feel is very different from them" (Rose, 1995, 92). Rose calls the senses of place which are developed in this way as "identifying against a place".

In Van case, we see such samples of a sense of place developed in this way. 41 years old, civil servant female informant (17) who lives with her mother, her son, her brother and her brother's wife defines herself as a local of Van and says that Van was a more orderly, planned and modern city before. She claims that before only the Turkish locals were living in Van but the people who migrated from rural areas and the University have spoiled Van.

> I am telling as a local of Van, the life style here is in a level that a family can live, it is modest and not freak. Before there was no one migrated from the villages, the population of the locals of Van was the highest. Rich ones have gone to West, to the big cities. Now in the street you are facing with the ignorant people, you can't see a local of Van. (17)

Informant says that students have come from the rural areas to the city after the university has founded in 1982 and these students have distorted the character of the city. Moreover she mentions that the migrants coming from the countries such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, cities such as Hakkâri, Bitlis etc. and some districts of Van, have formed a "mixed culture". Informant emphasizes that "real" Van is different from present Van and she is a "real" local of Van by referring to the people she positioned against herself.

"In Van, the culture of us, the Turks, has not left any more, this makes me annoyed. I don't like present Van but I am a local of Van, this city is mine." (17) According to her Van has a negative image in West, it is considered as a place where "ignorant, rural people are living". She develops a sense "identified against a place" by making her "real" Van definition comparing the past and today of Van.

Similarly another female informant (20) mentions that the "real locals" of Van are "pure Turks", no "real locals of Van" has remained in the city and she is very sad because of this situation. According to her in today's Van, streets are full of "villagers" and these villagers have carried their "reactionary, bigot thoughts" to the city. She adds that she cannot dress up as she likes

because of this. Informant underlines that there are "unnecessary people" in Van.

> These are a group of people who spoil the atmosphere, the peaceand tranquility and make politics. We live in Turkish land, here is Turkey and we are Turks. The ones who don't give us any peace are intriguers, traitors. Everybody think that we are same with them. When I go to İzmir or Balıkesir for holidays, I have been disdained many times because of coming from Van. The blame is laid on whole of the people because of a minority. (20)

Rose underlines that a sense of place can be considered as a result of the meanings which people give to their lives. According to her, a sense of place is a part of the meaning systems which people give a meaning to the world. Namely a sense of place can be the way to establish the difference between the groups in the society. The groups in the society can see their differences from the other groups and want to mark these differences. This is a multi dimensional process which is operated by asserting to be the insiders of a certain place and others to be the outsiders (ibid, 1995). But it is not clear who is the insider and who is the outsider, the relation between them is not stable. These fictions and scales can change in every event according to the social context. For example, while another tribe is considered as outsider in a tribal relation or event, all the tribes are considered as "easterner" in an encounter with the "western". Similarly, a Kurdish city-dweller who place himself against Kurdish villagers who have migrated from rural areas, may identify himself with these villagers in a another context only for being from the same ethnic origin.

We see that this multidimensional process operates in our exemplar cases. Some informants claim that the migrants (Kurds, Iranians) coming from the districts of Van or from the neighbor cities do not belong to this place but themselves (Turks). On the other hand, some of the informants claim that there are not Turks as locals in Van and the great majority of the population is Kurdish. These different groups say "this land is our land". As I have

mentioned before, the claims and oppositions about belonging or not belonging to a place are not established only on the basis of ethnic identity. Many female informants consider the men spitting, harassing, making rude remarks on the streets as outsiders. Again in this context it is possible to discuss the claims of belonging which are based on the opposition of easterners (insiders) and westerners (outsiders). Or it is possible to state that the urban identity which is established against the villager identity can be effective in developing a sense of place. 55 years old, female informant (22), who defines herself as a local of Van, says that villagers cannot adapt to city life.

> Alleys of the city became the places of the villagers. Everywhere in the village belong to them, they are get used to be relaxed. But in the city this should be stopped. The real local of Van does not behave like this. (22)

A female informant (11) who is a university student states that, in the city center, the alleys just behind the Cumhuriyet Street are very different. She says that in these alleys she feels like she is in somewhere else and adds:

> When I see that clothes, dresses are hung out of the shops, I feel like I am in Morocco or Algeria. We cannot walk there in peace. Most of the people in those alleys are the ones coming from the villages and the tradesmen. (11)

Cumhuriyet Street which is in the center of the city is the most lively and central street of Van. The alleys just behind this street, form the area which can be considered as the former trading and business center of the city (Figure 4-5). In these alleys there are street hawkers who sell fruits and vegetables, greengroceries, shops selling authentic fabrics, clothes and dresses, migrants children who sell paper towels, biscuits etc., grocery wholesalers, some shops such as tailors, dressmakers, shoe repairing shops which are manufacturing by traditional methods, porters with their three wheeled carriers, dress and shoe shops, furniture shops, the stations of the minibuses which carry people between Van and it's districts etc. Especially



Illustration 4. An alley behind Cumhuriyet Street

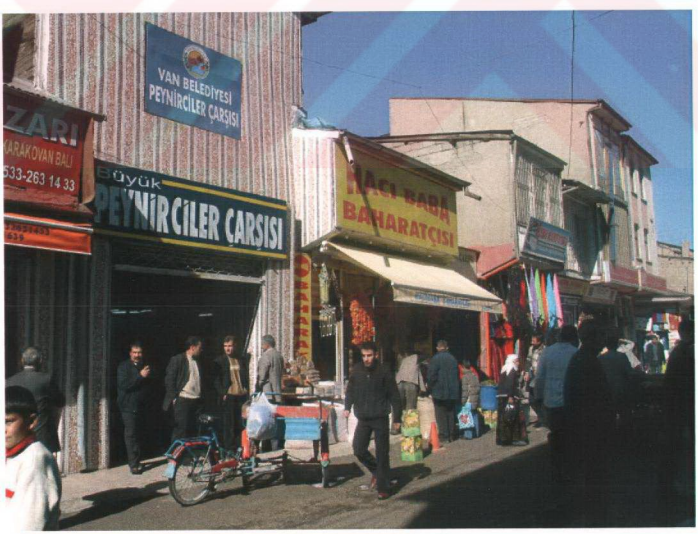


Illustration 5. An alley behind Cumhuriyet Street

the female informants who define themselves as the locals of Van complain that they cannot enter to these alleys and think that these places spoil the image of Van. For example an informant points out that "Should a tourist, an European see us like this?" (22)

Here it is important to note the emphasis that Rose makes in regard to the importance of the boundaries in sense of place. According to her, territorial sense of place constitutes the social difference by establishing spatial boundaries. Thus it becomes clear that the senses of place are the part of the wider social processes. Boundaries have binary roles: They function as the constituters of both the insiders and the outsiders. While defining who belongs to a certain place namely the insiders, boundaries also define who does not belong to that place namely the outsiders. Stating the importance of heading towards the relation between social inequality and senses of place in this context, Rose asks some questions: "Whose sense of place is more powerful in a particular situation? Whose sense of place has to fight to be expressed? Why are some senses of place negative for some people?" (Rose, 1995, 99). Sense of place is both a part of different and unequal social relations. Some theoreticians emphasize that belonging to a certain place is related with the dynamics of power relations. Sack states that "territoriality is a primary geographical expression of social power. It is the means, by which society and space related" (Sack, 1986, 5). All the senses of place and power relations are somehow connected to each other.

The ones who think that they belong to a certain place may expect the ones who are excluded because of not belonging to that place, to comply with the practices of the place. 34 years old male informant (10) who has come to Van from Kayseri as a teacher seven years ago says that Van is a "warm and intimate" city in terms of human relations. But he states that he can establish relations only with the ones coming from out of Van, because locals of Van expect him to behave and think like an "easterner". Informant adds that "whatever the issue is, they say that 'it is so in west but it is so in the east, we

the easterners are different", namely they imply that only the one who has power and only their values can be dominant". University student, male informant (7) emphasizes this expectation by telling an event which he has experienced:

> Formerly I was staying at students' dormitory. The window of my room was seeing the minibus stops. At one evening, it was about 21:30, showing the ones who were getting off the minibus, my room mate has said that 'look, all of them are girls, their mothers, fathers send them here for school, but they are wandering about on the streets'. We have argued because I was not thinking like him. The people of the city also think in the same way. They say that these are not acceptable for their culture and we have to accept this unwillingly. (7)

In a case which I have mentioned before as an example, the female informant has stated that villagers should adapt to city life.

Rose states that in some situations a sense of place becomes dominant and covers the others. This view clearly reveals that power relations constitute the sense of place. Briefly, senses of place should be considered in the context of wider social relations and power structures. In addition, whether identifying with a place or establishing personal or group identities against to a place, this process developing along the power relations, always embraces an "othering process". As it is seen above, for some, other means "coming from west", for another it means "member of another tribe", "coming from rural areas", "not local of Van", "Turk", "Kurd" and so on. In this othering process the crucial point is; if once, the "real" characteristics of a certain place is defined and to whom these characteristics belong is determined, to legitimate the claims on that place would be more easy. In this sense, I can give the migrants living in Van as an example for the people who live such a single directional othering process. As they have been located to the outskirts of Van "invisibly" and rarely encounter with the public life, they are not noticed by the most of the residents of Van. In this respect many people do not refer them clearly as other. But when the social, economical and cultural

conditions they experience are considered, we can say that, being isolated they are exposed to an othering process in its real sense. On the other hand it is seen that they don't refer to any other group as other. We can understand through their statements that they have internalized very well that they are not the "owners of this place".

In such a case the feelings of the people about the place may not be too strong. Because they consider themselves as foreigners, so that migrants manifest this feeling very clearly. The migrants who have left their own places unwillingly cannot develop so much sense of place about the place they have arrived. Moreover Rose states that, the migrants who feel to be not welcomed in their new homes, may develop a hostile feeling against the place. (Rose, 1995, 96). Beginning from the early 1990s, many people from Van's districts and neighbor cities have willingly or unwillingly migrated to Van. Some of them have settled in their relatives' places, some of them have built their "shanties" (kondu) and settled in with their own sources, very little of them had the support of the government. It is a known fact that a great majority of them are living in improper conditions. The people I have interviewed with in the east side of the city, Karşıyaka quarter are the poorest people living in the neighborhood. In 1995, these migrants have unwillingly migrated to Van from Uzundere quarter of Çukurca district of Hakkâri. After they have arrived they have lived in the tents for a long time. Other migrants who have come from Hakkâri like themselves, have been located to the residences built in Yalım Erez quarter. But these migrants have not been located to anywhere on the grounds of not having enough residences. A "barn", where formerly has been the breeding station of Directorate of Agriculture has been assigned to them as residence. For about ten years, ten families have been living in this barn together. Several families have built some sheds in the surroundings of the barn, but when the construction of a school has been started these sheds have been pulled down. Now only the shed where they bake their bread stands. 37 years old, unemployed, male

informant (24) who is living in this barn with his family says that they cannot accept this place as a home.

> Even the animal cannot live, but we have been living here for ten years. We don't have any other alternative. For many times we have applied to the governor asking a house to live in. They haven't heard us. No one helps us, we have no job, no house, all of us are living in a miserable state. They have come when we were in Hakkâri, they have said that we had to evacuate the village in 24 hours. We even couldn't take our belongings, we have hardly arrived here. We had our cattle, fields and walnut trees, all of them have stayed there. They don't let us to return. If they don't want us, then let them send us to Iran, Syria, Iraq, somewhere else or throw all of us to the sea (meaning the Van Lake) so that we die and relieve. We also want to live like human beings." (24)

Showing two old women about 70-75 years old who bemusedly sit and watch Erek mountain, the informant says that "they never talk, they sit and think of the village, their minds are still there". Through the statements of other informants we can hardly understand that these women accept the place where they have left as their homeland, and they never accept Van as their own place. It is clearly seen that migrants cannot feel any belonging to Van. Some of them still have a feeling of belonging to the place they have left, and their perception about their own identities are manifested in connection with this place. And some of them cannot establish a strong relation neither with the "former" place nor with this new one, and their definitions, perceptions and demands about the place are expressed through rather flu/unclear sentiments. As it is seen here it is possible to establish a relation which is not strong, between a certain place and the identity.

Through these exemplars we see that the sense of places are constituted by the social, economical and cultural conditions of the people. Sense of place can be expressed by various means. In addition, the same location can be interpreted through different senses of place. Also we see that senses of place are manifested more strongly and intensely when people feel themselves unsafe and under threat.

### 4.2.3 The Contestation Over Place

Jess and Massey (1995) state that places are the products of social actions and people constitute their own representations for certain places. According to them people make place but this does not always happen as they want. Smith (2001) says that places are not only singular but they have multiple and contested identities, and in this context place making is a complex process.

> Place making is shaped by conflict, difference, and social negotiation among differently situated and at times antagonistically related social actors, some of whose networks are locally-bound, others whose social relations and understandings span entire regions and transcend national boundaries." (Smith, 2001, 107)

As "rival claims to define meaning of places and, thereby, rights to control their use or future" to define the meaning of the places is important (Jess and Massey, 1995, 134). Each of the different sides defines the different characteristics of the place. In other words, different groups have different geographical imaginations and each of these groups struggles to make their own place representations victorious. There is a close relation between the geographical imaginations and the cultural and personal identity which is a process of differentiation from others (ibid, 172). The representations and images of the place are related with how people interpret the place. Individuals or groups struggle to make their own place representations victorious. This contestation over place, happens within different constitution processes of place. Briefly, there is a contestation between different groups over the identity and representation of the place, namely over the cultural meaning of the place. Jess and Massey state that, contestation is a process, it is not merely a battle which happens now and then but it continuously happens within all geographical scales.

Claims over the interpretation of the present identity of a certain place, also embrace the past interpretation of the place. Such a historical interpretation of place paves the way for the justification of "what should be the future of place". Jess and Massey state that the interpretation of place which exist along the time can be considered in terms of "an envelope of space-time" (ibid, 170). Different sides within society, contest over the issues such as what should be in that place, what kind of developments should be allowed or not allowed. It can be said that the future of the place depends on whose interpretation of place wins.

When we look at the case, we see that different groups contest by different claims. As it is mentioned above the meaning given to places have an important role in the control of the future of place. Because of this, in order to understand the contestation over place it will be useful to look at some conflicts in Van. The point which is remarkable in informants' interpretations is the emphasis made on the changing of the city. This change means development for some informants but for some informants it means corruption. The intensive migration after 1990s is shown as one of the reasons of this change. But the informants have different views about the "newcomers" who have settled in city with the migration. This difference also includes the claims on the future of the place.

University student female informant (11) says that the population of the city has increased after the migration and the homogeneity of the city has spoiled, and adds:

> I don't tell this in order to humiliate them, because they have come here unwillingly. Nobody wants to leave the homeland. While living easily in their villages, here they have begun to live in poverty. All of them have become street peddlers. Their children beg and sell paper towels on the streets. (11)

The informant stresses that something should be done in order to provide the migrants with "proper" conditions in the city and she wants to contribute in this.

28 years old male informant (18) who is a teacher, states that migration has negative influences on the physical development of the city, but the government has not given the necessary support for the "settlement" of the migrants who has come to Van. Stating that theft and prostitution have increased in recent years, this informant shows the social inequality as the reason of this.

> The villages of these people have been burnt and evacuated. Who has evacuated? Government has evacuated, but did not apply an infrastructure for this. Theft has doubled in Van. Because the boy comes here, his village has been burnt, destroyed, he sees the ones driving Mercedes. If I was in his shoes I would do the same. I am a university graduate but I can't guarantee that I would not do it. (18)

Referring to the relation between ethnicity and geography, a university student, male informant (30) states that Van belongs to "their own territory" and "naturally" the migrants are also "insiders". Claiming that the ones except Kurds do not belong to the place, he stresses that Van is the second big Kurdish city after Diyarbakır. Thus, while defining what the identity of place is, the informant at the same defines what the identity of place is not.

Another male informant (5) who is 33 years old, similarly states that the locals of Van are not Turks, in the past Armenians, Kurds and Acems were living in the city. He says that present ethnic structure of the city "completely" consists of Kurds, and with the people who have come because of mandatory migrant, Kurds are struggling to protect this structure. "Here we are struggling to keep our own culture, our own political structure alive." (5) Moreover the informant says that he want to live in a "free milieu" where he can easily manifest his own political identity and his own culture.

Many cafes, restaurants, cultural centers and various shops are named in Kurdish, this can be interpreted as the concrete signs of the informants' claims upon the place.

On the other hand, some informants assert that the migrants whom they exclude as outsiders, spoil the physical and cultural structure of the city and they emphasize that they don't want to see them in Van. "We are living in Turkish land, and we are Turks" (20). This informant asserts that Kurds are in "minority" in Van, and there is a group of "traitors and intriguers" among them. Stating that he is living in Turkish land, informant says "if it is necessary I fight and die for my homeland and for may flag". This female informant is 23 years old, attending to master degree and living with her family.

55 years old, retired female informant (22) similarly states that, everyone in Turkey is "Turk" and adds: "If our blood is not degenerated all of us are Turks." It is possible to state that these informants develop a sense of place through constituting the national identity, thus having claim upon the future of the place through this identity. Implying the Kurds, informant says, "If you claim to be minority and repressed than you should break away before, in Ottoman era. You have never been able to found a state, and you will never be!"

Referring to Allen and Hamnett (eds. 1995), Massey defines space as "a complexity of social relations stretched out and meeting and intersecting with each other" (Massey, 1995, 54). According to her, to consider space like this entails the notion of a coherent, bounded and settled place to be thought of again. In this context place can be considered as a certain location of intersections and interactions (Jess and Massey, 1995). Massey also remarks the variety of the activity spaces in the place as "meeting place". All the agents in society have activity spaces and today the variety of activity spaces increase, their range and shapes expand. This shows that the

differences between different social groups also expand. At the same time this can be considered as the variation of social inequalities. According to Massey, today especially anyone in the first world does not have an everyday life which does not affected by globalization and time-space compression. This means that; even the places which are considered as local are connected with wider geographic areas and affected by wider events. For she, this does not mean that the importance of place is increased.

Massey states that different lives which can be adverse, are in contact with each other within the activity spaces. While on the one hand these different lives intersect and interact, on the other hand juxtaposition of different groups brings about conflicts.

> These contrasts mean also that different groups have very different views of place, very different senses of its identity. And they have, too, very different ways of participating in, using and contributing to the place (Massey, 1995, 61).

Thus Massey emphasizes that place is "a unique mixture" of the relations which structure the social space. It is possible to consider anywhere as a site where global interconnection lines encounter and intersect. In this situation, new elements are added to the present character of the place through new connection sets. As a result, Massey underlines that space and place cannot be considered as naturally bounded.

Before we have mentioned that, the juxtaposition of different intersecting and interacting groups within the variety of activity spaces causes conflicts. In this context, the university in Van which was founded in 1982 can be given as another sample for the contestation of different groups over the identity and representation of place. For many informants, university is another reason of the change in the city. Some of the informants consider the existence of the university as a dynamic which paves the way for the cultural development of the city. According to these informants, the "westerner culture" comes to the

city through the university. Informants consider this as positive in terms of the future of the city. 36 years old, secondary school graduated male informant (3) who is a waiter, interprets the identity of the place which changes with the university by comparing former and present Van.

> We are fond of present state of Van. With the university the thoughts of people, human relations also have changed. Cafes, bars were opened, women began to wander in the city more easily. We became a little more westernized. At the years when the bars have begun to be opened, bombs were put. By the increasing number of the university students, more cafes and bars have begun to be opened. Thanks to the university the reactions against the city have decreased. I hope in the future the city will develop more, through the university. I want Van to be a city where everybody can wander freely and make whatever they want to, I work for this in my own circle" (3)

According to him these developments show that Van can be categorized as a "big city".

In a similar way, 40 years old male informant (4), points out the role of the university in the development of Van.

> With the influence of the university a more social milieu has been formed. People have begun to think more democratically. We want Van to be the cultural center in the region with the contribution of the university. The people who have come to Van to work or to have education have introduced new and different life styles to the residents of this city. Namely, the atmosphere of Van has changed, this a very good improvement for us. But this must continue, university should be more close to the city, there should be more cultural activities. Thus, Van would really become a beautiful and convenient city. (4)

Many informants mention that especially in recent years there is an increase in the numbers of cultural activities -film screenings, plays, concerts, exhibitions, conversations- and in the numbers of the activity venues -cinemas, exhibition halls, cafes, cultural centers etc.- in the city. They state

that some of these activities take place in the university campus. In spite of this increase they found the activities insufficient. They underline that they contact with the outer world through the university. In this context university has an important role in their participation to city life. These informants especially stress that university should perform more activities in the city. For most of them only through this way the city can get rid from "a religious atmosphere" (4).

But on the other hand, it is claimed that another group who think that university symbolize "western mentality", "don't want a university which gives such a kind of education". Some of the informants mention that this group consists of conservative and even fundamentalist people. 34 years old, female informant (15), who is a contractual worker, states that her relatives don't want the university in the city saying "distorts our family manners, traditions and our morality". Informant says that her relatives blame the university, for every negative thing that they don't want to see in the city. According to the informant, for these people the money spent for the university is wasted, this money should be spend for more "useful things".

34 years old, male informant (10) who is a teacher gives another example in this context:

> We ask them why don't they send their daughters to school, they answer "what is the use to send them, when they go to university they will make our daughters to take out their scarves from their heads. Even if they don't open their heads they will learn many bad things, their behavior will be spoilt." They are also anxious about the togetherness of male and female students. They are against to send their daughters to school in these conditions, even in any conditions. They think that there is no need for their daughters to go to university. (10)

Attributing to the conservative group in the city, a university student male informant (6), mentions that "they cover the heads of their 5-10 years old daughters with white scarves. They send them to Koran courses, if we tell

them to send their daughters to normal school they try even every trick not to send." The informant underlines that this group side with religious education.

26 years old male informant (8), says that without the university and university students "everyday life would be organized in a different style" in the city. He states that in the past religious groups such as Hizbullah were very affective there was nowhere to drink alcohol in the city seven years ago. With the fear of to be bombed and because of the repression of religious groups no one had the courage to open such a place. Informant thinks that "despite the university" radical religious groups still have an influence in the city.

> Even there are students in the university who are supported with the grants provided by such groups. As they have noticed that university changes the city and now on the contrary they are trying to change the university. (8)

According to this informant, the people who consider themselves as religious, "fear" that Van will change in an unwanted way with the influence of the university and think that some measures should be taken against this situation.

43 years old male informant (19) who is a tradesman and one of the leading members of the tribe is somehow aware of that the university has an influence in the urban life and change says that:

> In the past we couldn't talk in the presence of our father, it was impossible especially for the girls to talk in the presence of their fathers, to cross legs and to wear jeans. Now some go to university, it is not clear what they learn, what they do there. Also there is this disease of television, they see and learn perverseness from it. I see many girls on Cumhuriyet Street, wearing the jeans, they wander about without a purpose till evening, this is not good! (19)

This informant mentions that he wants his son to go to university and even he is preparing for it. He keeps silent whether university may change his son's life negatively or not, and says that sons and daughters are different. This informant stresses that he doesn't consider himself as "more religious but a Muslim like everyone else". As we understand from the interview this informant essentially brings his tribal membership in the foreground and his thoughts about university are seemed to be established on the basis of his tribal relations rather than the religion. This informant says that it is not for women "to be seen" too much within urban space and "to engage with men's work". As an example he stresses that one of his wives cannot sit and eat or drink together with other people in a public space like a café, restaurant, patisserie etc. According to this informant, appearance of a woman in the public space can only be accepted in certain conditions such as wedding, feast or relatives' meeting. He says that if his wife is seen by the relatives while she is wandering in a shopping center this would be a "scandal" and a "shameful" situation.

Briefly, negative or positive reactions towards the university, imply possible effects of it on cultural, social life and everyday life practices of Van and its residents.

Municipal administrations are important agents in the process of the constitution of the identity of place and contestation over different representations of place. The last municipality elections in Van, was won by AKP which is a political party considered as conservative Islamic. Previous mayor was from DEHAP which is a political party supported mostly by Kurds. It can be said that these two different understandings which are based on conservatism and ethnicity are in a continuous contestation and competition in local scale. Some of the informants assert that the municipal administration of AKP affects the development and the "identity" of the city in a negative way. Because they think that all the resources are spent for "constructing mosques, founding Koran courses and religious activities". (7)

An informant (5), states that along with the excessive migration many economical, cultural and social problems have arouse in the city. According to him much more resources should be transferred to Van because of increasing population, but political reasons prevent this.

> This place (intending the region) has been neglected. The reason of this negligence is, the administration of municipality (intending former municipality administration of DEHAP) was not from the party in power. Now municipality is from the party in power and they transfer resources, but we cannot see the outcomes of these resources. They have given monetary supports to many people during election period in order to get votes. (5)

The informant mentions that he feels annoyance, because in the last elections people "couldn't make their choice with their free will". This informant who is a bookkeeper and also a café owner mentions that "in order to keep their own culture (Kurdish culture) alive" he is planning to open a cultural center with his friends. Moreover he says that if he would have more possibilities he wants to make some other investments in Van and adds: "I will do my best to contribute to the industrialization of Van and the elimination of the poverty".

22 years old male, university student informant (30) who is a member of DEHAP, emphasizes that they will struggle to gain back the municipality. Additionally he says that in the last elections tribes couldn't agree with each other about the political party to be supported and as a result AKP has benefited from this situation; using religion, The Koran in their hands, some politicians granted groceries to people in return for votes and have asked people to give oath. He adds "If you have made our people gave oath, they cannot vote to another party even you kill them, they fear".

For these informants the municipalities function to maintain and keep their relative autonomous positions. Thus, they would have the right to control the

developments in the place. In another words, they are in contestation with other competitive claims on the future of place.

Another group of informants, who are generally university students or graduates and Kurdish women, say that in the future Van should be a city where every ethnic group could express themselves, learn and experience their own cultures. At the same time they believe that the people coming from out, -from west, not Kurdish but democrat- in order to serve, will contribute to their cultural and social lives. They think that both with their own efforts and the efforts of the people coming from out, some patriarchal, religious or "traditional" models which prevent the constitution of democratic society, would be able to be demolished.

Briefly, the social imaginary of Van as a place is a process which is continuously constituted by different actors. This process is produced, changed and reproduced by particular interests of social groups, conflicts and struggles. This process refers to the struggle of specific social groups for cultural, social and political power. Hence, it is crucial to consider space within/along power relations. As Massey (1994, 1995) and Rose (1995) state, any place or meaning of place is constructed by juxtaposition of conflicting social relations and political practices.

Different representations of place which we see in the case are in a continuous contestation over the future of place. On the one hand there is a claim of place which defines the identity of Van as purified, exclusive, enclosed category. Massey states that such an understanding of place is problematic, no place can have a pure identity. The identities of the places are constituted along the history in their relations with other places. On the other hand Van is a city with various dynamics of change. Togetherness of many ethnic origins, different religious, traditional structures and practices, and social facts like modernization, migration, various socio-economical forces form these dynamics of change. In such a dynamic structure, agents

with various social positions produce different definitions, perceptions and meanings about the city. These meanings encounter, intersect, overlap or conflict with each other within the urban life -specifically in activity spaces. Continuously new combinations of meanings are constituted in this process which is interweaved with political relations. Articulated with the fabric of the meanings of the past these new meanings have important roles in the decisions about the future of place.

## 4.3 PLACE AND CULTURE

### 4.3.1 Everyday Life Practices

Stuart Hall points out that, the notions of culture and cultural identity need to be reexamined and thought in new formations, in the context of social, economical and cultural conditions (Hall 1991, 1995). According to him cultures are systems of meaning:

> By culture we mean the systems of shared meanings which people belong to the same community, group or nation use to help them interpret and make sense of the world. (Hall, 1995, 176)

Hall states that these meanings are not "free-floating" ideas but they are embedded in material and social world. Culture embraces social practices which contains meaning. Also, it embraces the practices which are organized by these shared meanings. Peter Jackson (1989), also states that to consider culture as a means of expressing meanings would be proper approach. According to him, culture refers to the codes, through which meaning is constructed, transferred and understood. He emphasizes that culture is not simply the meaning systems in people's mind, it is materialized through social organization models. Using the same metaphor with Hall and his colleagues, Jackson states that culture is "maps of meaning" and people make sense of the world through these maps of meaning.

According to Hall to share the same "maps of meaning" creates a common bond and a sense of belonging to a culture. In series of shared meanings, to possess a position gives people a sense of identity. He asserts that culture is a means which mediates the construction, maintenance and transformation of the identities. For him like language, culture cannot be considered as stable and fixed, because, as he emphasizes, it gains new meanings in different contexts overtime. Namely, the meanings, change and they are open to interpretation (Hall, 1195, 179). Along with language, religion, tradition, custom and place are the other systems which produce culture.

Referring to Rose (1995), Hall mentions that "a sense of place" is a part of meaning systems and it is produced by the meaning systems which are open to be reshaped transformed. In other words, a sense of place is not natural but cultural. According to Hall place is one of the major meaning systems. But place is not inevitable for culture. Because culture can be sustained by the people who don't live in the same place or have never met before. Through globalization these possibilities are increasing today. Hall says, that in spite of this people continue to think cultures as "placed" and to landscape them in their minds. According to him these are imaginary communities. Place has a function of stabilizing the culture and fixing the cultural identities and through this cultures are considered as well-bounded, self sufficient and unified. People associate their strongly bounded, homogeneous identities with a certain place where they consider as homeland. Hall asserts that this point of view which sees place as a symbolical guarantee of cultural belonging, is problematic. Because this point of view, establishes symbolic boundaries around culture by marking who belongs and who doesn't belong to that culture (ibid, 181). Hall states that this process operates in the construction of nation and national cultural identities. According to him, in fact national cultures are not placed, well-bounded or internally unified as people imagine. Because most of the nations are the results of invasions, conquests, settlements and empires and within their boundaries people from different cultural and ethnic origins live.

Hall states that there are two contradictory tendencies in the context of social, cultural, economical and political processes: "The attempt to secure the purity of a culture and the hybridity of most culture" (ibid, 1869). He suggests the culture to be reconceptualized in a new way and to be considered as a "contested concept". He refers to Massey's and Rose's views about place and emphasizes that these would be helpful in explaining the relation of culture and place. In this context, Hall states that culture is not settled, enclosed or internally coherent, but it is a meeting point like place where different influences, traditions and powers intersect. According to him culture is constructed through the juxtaposition and co-presence of different cultural powers, discourses and their influences. Culture is not formed of fixed components but of changing cultural practices and processes of meanings. Also he states "the identities which culture helps to construct are not guaranteed in their 'sameness' by some simple origin or fixed in their eternal belongingness to shared values and meanings." (ibid., 187).

Defining culture as not settled, not enclosed, not internally unified, Hall points out the hybridization of culture and explains this with the concept of "transculturation". According to him "transculturation" defines a process where elements from different cultures are melted. In transculturation process as a result of the encounter of different cultures a culture obliged to negotiate with other another culture and they establish a co-presence. Thus, through this process different elements of different cultures are combined in order to construct "new cultures".

This process is never-completed and complex. New culture is related with the cultures included in this process, but it is not completely similar with these cultures. Hall points out the importance of the production and reception of meaning in transculturation process. According to him meaning is not received by accepting the imposed codes passively. This is at the same time an active and creative process. Like act of production, the act of reception also has peculiar mechanisms. This process operates within power relations.

Besides, Hall stresses that there is a constant contestation upon meaning within the production process (ibid., 197).

Hall remarks the importance of considering culture within this approach in today's conditions. This approach emphasizes that meaning cannot be fixed, cultural forms and practices cannot be pure and these are the combinations of the elements of different cultures. Within these combinations, identities are not stable, they change depending on their origins. Identities continuously reproduce themselves in different forms, in different places and from different combinations of meaning.

In this chapter, accepting the idea of Hall, which says "meanings are embedded in material and social world and culture embraces social practices which contain meanings", I will discuss the everyday cultural practices of different groups and the production of meaning through these practices in Van case.

Most of the informants live a everyday life in a restricted sphere which embraces home-workplace, home-school and some spaces of urban services. It can be said that gender and social positions have significant influence in terms of use of city. Informants' gender, professions, ages and economical incomes determines the boundaries of their deployment in the urban space. Considering in terms of personal identities, to say that the social groups have a homogeneous structure would be problematic approach. Different identities of the individuals in different groups can intersect. For example, two women from different ethnic origins stressing these identities can meet at the common denominator of gender and can perform similar cultural practices. When we look at women on gender basis, their positions like student woman, working woman, housewife, jobless woman, woman coming from out or local woman and their social, economical and cultural conditions differentiate their everyday life practices. Taking account of that the city embraces people from different ethnic origins, it is

necessary for a cultural analysis to consider the ethnicity and religion as well as the social classes and statutes. Therefore, in order to understand citizens' everyday cultural practices and participation to urban life in urban space, the interrelation of these elements should be thought and conceptualized in wider social and power relations.

Women informants, having different social positions, generally mention the difficulties of living in Van as a woman. Dominant "traditional" point of view about women seems to prevent or to restrict women to participate in social life of the city. This situation reinforces the feeling about the everyday life as "ordinary, boring, routine and repetitive". A university student female informant (11) experiences this situation which is emphasized by many female informants as follows: She says that, she spends most of her time in university campus and she feels disturbed while walking on the streets because of the glances upon her.. She mentions that she is more advantageous because of being a university student and could go the cafes, cinemas or theatres together with her male friends. But the cultural activities in the city are not sufficient for her. She says that, because of this she cannot find anything to do and spends most of her time at home.

> Van does not promise anything to you, does not let you to participate to an activity. It is up to the individual to create such activities. Everyone has to create his or her own conditions and activities. Of course this is very difficult. (11)

41 years old, female, civil servant informant (17) defines herself as the local of Van and mentions that she should be careful about her behaviors even in the work place since she is "from a local family of Van". She says that she does not have a "social life" as she controls herself in doing the things she wants because of the possible reactions from her circle and fears from being misunderstood if she speaks and laughs in a relaxed mood.

> I cannot behave relaxed fearing to hear unwanted words since I am a divorced woman. Even in my workplace, I don't buy a

> bottle of water from the kiosk without my women friends. You may ask, if I am afraid of people, no but you are from a local family of Van you have to carry this burden. Therefore certain people come to my working room, I am very sensitive at this point (17)

Saying "to live in Van as a woman is difficult, it is easier to be a single", this informant goes out for shopping only with her mother or with one of her relatives. "They gossip even they see me with my son on the street. She visits the castle and Edremit[5] in the weekends with her mother, brother and son.

Female informant (13) who is a household economist, living a everyday life between workplace and home, busy with household activities, similarly stresses that tribal relations and feudal relative ties determine the boundaries of everyday life. Being the bride of one of the important people of the tribe this informant states that in spite of being a working and educated woman she cannot go to the place she want since she is the "bride of agha".

> I feel like my relatives have a continuous control upon my life. There is also fear, generally every one knows me... I feel uneasy as if I would misbehave or take a wrong step. If I go shopping twice a day, they ask why, they seek for some other reasons. (13)

This informant defines herself as a "political and sensitive" person. She is a member of KESK, a union of civil servants and IHD, a NGO. She mentions that she doesn't stay at home in the weekends and go to İHD to participate in its activities.

Having different cultural practices these female informants are advantageous for being student or working women. Namely, at least they go outside in

[5] Edremit, is a district of Van, on the lake side, approximately 20 kilometers from the city. A place for vacation with summer resorts, camping and picnic facilities.

order to go to school or to work place. Even though with their relatives, they have some relative opportunities such as going to shopping, to a café or recreation areas and to participate in certain cultural activities etc. Still, they complain that they have to live "invisibly" in urban and public space. Another remarkable point is that, even though the social positions of the informants are different, they similarly feel uneasy because of the negative influence of the dominant social repression upon their everyday lives. Almost all female informants complain that their activities within the city are restricted because of the social control mechanism.

However, exclusion of women from the social life within the city because of religious or traditional repression increases in direct proportion with their social class and statutes. For example the migrant women and the women living in a conservatory community which we mentioned in previous chapter can be considered in a sense, as being completely excluded from the urban life. Among these women whose everyday life practices are restricted within their homes, the weaver girls in the workshop represent an exceptional situation.[6] While it is impossible to go out for the women in their neighborhood these young girls can work in the workshop. Most of the families do not willingly approve their desire to work. But as the poor life they live and the money their daughter earn come together they keep silent. For the girls the workshop does not only mean a place where they work and earn money. They learn Turkish, reading-writing there and attend to open primary school. Beyond of being a work place, for them workshop is a social context where they can communicate with the "outer world". Since they know Turkish and reading-writing they act as an interpreter for their families especially for their mothers in the hospital etc, they make the outdoors works of home. Some of them, though rarely, can go to the city center for such works and for shopping. In addition to all these, as daily practices they read books or newspapers, whilst their only practices would be family household if they

[6] See the subchapter 4.1 "The Meaning of Place" of this study for the detailed information about the workshop and the migrant girls.

wouldn't work. Briefly, for them workshop is a place where their "permitted" activity sphere in the social life expands. Thus, through the workshop they develop various micro strategies to cope with the social repression upon them, even though they cannot openly challenge to it.

On the other hand, the women coming from out of Van, in order to work or for education, state that they are relatively "tolerated" to participate in social life of the city. These informants can follow up the activities such as cinema, theatre, concert etc. Even though rarely, they go to few amusement places and do shopping. A female informant (1) who is a research assistant in the university tells about her everyday life as follows:

> After the school I usually go home. But there some cafes which I go occasionally, I go to one of them and play cards. In special days we go to bar with friends. At the weekends I go shopping or only watch shop windows. But except working I usually stay at home. Sometimes I want to do something different but there are not much alternatives here. (1)

Feeling relatively less repression, this informant states that the people coming from out, somehow adapt themselves to the city and adds that she is careful not to be out in late hours, and dress up in a way that "this place can bear". She stresses that, otherwise she would be exposed to the reactions - from criticism to harassment- of the society.

Female informant (31) who has come from Ankara and living in Van for five years working as a teacher states that she cannot perform her familiar everyday life practices here, and except school she spends almost all of her time at home with a consciously made choice.

> I go to cinema occasionally. I like to walk and to sit and read book in a park. But as though there is not enough parks here it is also impossible for a woman to sit alone in a park. Only with a man you can go to a park. I also cannot wander about on the streets in city center, it is very crowded, people walk on over

> you, even they shove you. So, I rather don't go out, I buy VCD and watch at home. (31)

Same informant states that she does not contact much with her neighbors and her colleagues in school, because close relations with these people has two meanings: First they began to see you not as a foreigner and they help in order to easy the daily doings, second since they consider you as "one of them" they began to dominate you and establish a social control. She tells another situation which is interesting for her:

> If I go out for shopping or for another purpose, the next day students or teachers in my school asks "yesterday we saw you on Cumhuriyet Street, what were you doing?". Even a woman passing by alone is considered as strange and they immediately record this on their minds. (31)

For the informants who have come from out of Van to work as professionals, especially the weekend shopping is a very important social activity. One of the places where these informants prefer to go shopping is Migros department store. Migros is distinguished from the other department stores with its inner design and the variety of goods. While other department stores in the city do not sell alcoholic drinks, all kinds of them are available in Migros. Only a few kiosks sell alcoholic drinks in the city. Migros makes people to feel like they are in a big city. At the same time this is a place where they have the opportunity to meet with the people whom they think that they are also "modern and coming from out" like themselves. This place sometimes functions as a place where people display certain statutes, tastes and life styles. Female informant (16) who has come from İzmir to Van as a teacher says that for shopping she goes to Migros with her husband. "As you know, here Migros means civilization for us. We say let's go to the civilization".

Migros is not a place where only the people who have come out of Van go shopping. Van's local people, who have good income also prefer this place

for shopping. For the informants, primary reason of preferring here is its social atmosphere, it refers to their statute signs. Additionally they note that they have the chance to find safe and healthy products in Migros.

Shopping which is considered as a social activity among certain groups in Van, does not have the same function for a great majority. One of the reasons is that, no matters which economical group they belong, women cannot go to the big markets because of not being tolerated or not allowed by their communities. They buy some small necessities from the nearby groceries, green groceries and butcher shops. In such families generally men make the shopping. Another reason is economical inadequacies. For example, divorced and retired female informant (22), who lives with her two children, states that after paying the rental fee and the invoices, an amount of money remains which would be enough only for indispensable necessities. Therefore she makes shopping from the less expensive green groceries and wholesale shops. She says "wherever is appropriate for our pocket and inexpensive we buy from there".

We can say that one of the important ways to participate in urban life in Van is the act of walking. While women do not define walking as a everyday life practice, for men from different social groups walking is an important practice. The liveliest street of Van, Cumhuriyet Street can be considered as an activity space where men from every age groups wander till late hours. It is possible to see men from any social group who "stroll around" on this street as a leisure time activity. Cumhuriyet Street is almost the heart of the city; there are branches of many banks, big stores of the city, Municipality building, Telekom Building, travel agencies, THY office, offices of various bus companies, many cafes, restaurants, patisseries, breakfast houses, internet cafes, stationery shops, exchange offices, offices of lawyers, bookkeepers, markets and various business offices (Figure 6-7). On the both ends of this street there are stations for the buses and minibuses of public transport. For women this street only represents a "passing by area". 23 years old



Illustration 6. Cumhuriyet Caddesi




Illustration 7. Cumhuriyet Caddesi

female informant (20) who is attending to master degree says "it is connected to every place, wherever you want to go you have to pass that street. Anyway it is the only big street we have". Civil servant informant (15) has the same opinion:

> I cannot stroll easily on Cumhuriyet Street but I pass to go my work. For example I pass in order to go to a shop. But my eyes are almost closed, I don't see any one, really I don't see. (15)

People call this street "Obligatory Street" (Mecburiyet Caddesi). 34 years old male informant (10) who is a teacher states that center of Van is "this street" and says "we spend all our time on this street". He tells about the joke they make with friends:

> For instance we eat at somewhere else than we say let's go to Cumhuriyet. We start to stroll from this end till the other end, Beşyol and than return back. When we repeat this for five times we called it "bingo". (10)

At this point, Michel de Certeau's (1984) emphasis on "walking" as an everyday life practice is remarkable. De Certeau compares city with the prose. He explains subject's relation with the city through walking by referring to the relation between language and speaking. According to him "walking" is to feel lack of a place, it is the process of a research for a proper place.

> The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place -an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacement and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City. (De Certau, 1984, 103)

According to Certeau the identity of this place is symbolical. Because the in spite of the inequality of their social positions they have the images of nowhere and dreamed-of-places on their minds. In Van, on the one hand the

insufficiency of cultural activities and spaces, on the other hand dense unemployment, force men to use the street by appropriating various strategies. For some the street represents socialization, for some it represents flirting with the girls and for some other it represents to stand and watch the passerbys.

On the other hand, there is almost no movement in the lives of the migrant informants who can be given as an example of poorest group living in Van. In the chapter "The Senses of Place" of this study we discuss the lives of these informants. We can say that their only living/activity space is the barn and a few square meters area in front of this barn. This barn does not represent a home for the ten families who live in it. These people who live in the threshold of starvation, not mention to participate in urban social life, they even cannot move out of their living area of 100-200 square meters. For women, daily household doings do not mean anything. When we ask, what do they do in the day time to the women informants, an informant (32) who does not know her age and has 6 children answers, "Nothing, do we have a house to clean, do we have a kitchen to cook? We only sit without doing anything, we wait". Another female informant (33) who mentions her age as 29 or 30 says that from time to time she cleans the stairs of the apartments and gain a few pennies, and states that sometimes she cannot even find this job also. A male informant (24) states that he goes to city center and waits for a job in the coffee houses, sometimes he works in construction yards. The case of to stand without doing anything and wait is a case which I have also observed during the interviews, and this can be interpreted as a fact which defines these people's lives and their hopelessness about their lives. They cannot establish any economical, social and cultural contact with the city since they cannot participate in urban social life. This lack of contact is also valid in the barn they live in. On the other hand, since they are not allowed to return to their villages where they have left unwillingly, their former lives also does not mean a life which is always standing there and someday they will return back. Some social scientists defines our present time as a huge

flexibility and fast movement time, but the case of inability to move, as experienced with these people, is opposing with these views and displays the most clear and dramatic picture of the urban conflicts. This may also considered as a sample which shows at what degree the economical life influences the course of social and cultural life. We can say that all of these informants' perceptions about life are reflecting such feelings as hopelessness, insecurity, unhappiness and fear.

The case of to stand without doing anything and wait, which we have mentioned above as the cultural practice of migrants, can also be seen among the other groups of poor people in the city. During the research, I have observed that there many men standing, waiting or sitting on the streets, in front of or in the shops or tea houses. It is possible to see men who are sitting on the stools or standing in front of the shops almost in every street. There are widespread tea houses in the city, they are full of men and women cannot enter. We can consider unemployment as one of the most important reasons of this state of "standing without doing anything and immobility". Especially with the evacuation of the villages in 1990s, an intensive flow of people to the city has occurred. Employment fields of the city are restricted with public sector and construction sector. Therefore the migrants who have dealt with livestock and farming in their homelands, become "unqualified" in the city. The ones who have opportunity become street peddlers. A male informant (30) states that most of the men who are sitting in the tea houses or coffee houses are "waiting for job " and some of them can only find temporary jobs as workers in construction yards. These people, waiting all day long cannot have a chance to participate in urban social life.

Another point which should be stressed here, that these groups have difficulties to keep pace with the flow and rhythm of the everyday life of "modern" city. In this context it would be useful to mention Lefebvre's (1971, 1983) emphasis on the monotonous, repetitive movement of the everyday

life. According to Lefebvre the monotonous, repetitive movement which characterizes everyday life in modern world is a planned movement. Everyday life brings about two kinds of repetition: Cyclic and linear repetition. In pre-modern societies everyday life rotates around the circle of nature. Time use of the individuals are adjusted according to the seasons, night and day and relatively it is determined and controlled by their own will.

But Lefebvre states that in modern societies, circles of nature which orientate everyday life are exposed to a radical change due to the needs of the dominant mode of production. According to him with the hegemony of capitalism cyclic time has been replaced with linear time. The time which define modern era is subject to measurability of clock and watch and to the routine of the working day. Lefebvre emphasize that in modern societies everyday life is organized due to the necessities of capitalism. This organization brings along the changes in use of time. According to him, in industrialized western societies, use of time has three modes:

> ... if the hours of days, weeks, months and years are classed in three categories, pledged time (professional work), free time (leisure) and compulsive time (the various demands other than work such as transport, official formalities, etc.), it will become apparent that compulsive time increases at a grater rate than leisure time. (Lefebvre, 1971, 53)

We can say that while compulsive time is more flexible in pre-modern societies, this flexible structure transforms to a strict formality in modern societies. Lefebvre also emphasizes that, like space social time is also a social product, time has also a use value, an exchange value in capitalist societies (Lefebvre, 1983).

In this context if we return to the migrants in Van, the everyday life in their villages rotates around the natural cycles. Therefore, for them it is not easy to get used to rhythms of the city's modern and organized everyday life. Besides it can be said that, because of the differences of use of everyday

time between the village and the city, this group of poor people are not able to participate in economical production in the city and to articulate to city's social life, they sit without doing anything. While talking about accelerating global flows of capital, people, products, data, and information today, the "inactivity/immobility" of this group is remarkable.

Besides the state of sitting without doing anything and immobility as a cultural practice of the poor people we can talk about an "activity" practice of a small group in Van. Some of the informants state that these people who have high income can go to Europe, they can send their children to abroad for education. 30 years old, male university student informant (6) tells about this small group:

> Here we can see many luxury cars, jeeps, 4x4s. There is no industry, livestock has been finished, no farming, so where this money comes from? You can see that the guy erects a building just in one year, a business center with a quality you would not be able to see in the west. Actually everybody knows where this money comes from. Here we have a saying "one kg. powder equals to a bus"[7] (6)

Informant claims that, these "rich" people smuggle drug or diesel and invest the money coming from this smuggling in construction sector. He emphasizes that in the society people consider this "normal" and for them smuggling drugs is "profession". He says that smugglers live comfortably and have respect from the people.

Intending this group, female informant (16) who is a teacher, says that various offices or shops are opened in the city but after a certain time they are closed and opened again for a different purpose. She claims that this is the result of converting the money coming from drug smuggling through such investments.

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[7] A saying implying that "if you have one kg. drug you can buy a bus" (*Bir kilo toz, bir otobos*)

> They open an internet café then close it and open a furniture store, after some time you see that there is another store is opened in the same place. Because they either smuggle diesel or powder and they have to acquit this money. (16)

As mentioned by the informants this group has a quite wide activity space and is in a state of activity on the contrary of the group of poor people. Informants say that for these people Van is not the only place to live in, they have connections with European countries and Iran.

### 4.3.2 The Production of Meaning

It will be helpful to examine how the informants perceive the events occurring around them and the life through their narrations in order to understand how they interpret social reality. How the informants perceive economical, social and cultural changes in local, national and global scale, and the influences of these changes upon their life experiences? What are their knowledge, sentiments, longings, expectations, fears, despairs, anxieties and strategies related to all of these?

During the interviews I have noticed that, an important part of the people living in VaN cannot speak easily about their sentiments, feelings and thoughts related with their private lives. We can say that these people do not have any practice of speaking without avoiding from the people they speak to. For some informants this stems from the anxiety of being misunderstood or being disdained, and for some other informants this is because of the anxiety generated by the negative images related with their ethnic identity. An informant (18) describes a dimension of this avoidance saying "This was OHAL (State of Emergency) region, these people have lived in OHAL conditions for many years, they have exposed to heavy ravages. They still live in a guilty conscience". Besides I have observed that most of the informants express their sentiments, thoughts and feelings using a different

discourse through an object, through television. Most of them do not read book or newspapers, being one of the media means, television has an important place within their everyday life. Therefore, in terms of examining my informants' perceptions about life I have also discussed the television programs which they watch, relating with their sentiments and thoughts about life.

Almost all of the informants stress that they feel insecurity and uncertainty about their lives and anxieties about their future. For example, 26 years old, university graduate, jobless female informant (21) states that, she couldn't find a job although she has completed her master degree and she feels despair and hopelessness because of this situation. She states that her dream is to be a sociologist and to have a job relating with women affairs.

> I didn't want to be teacher, but in these conditions I want to be a teacher, yet I cannot. I couldn't pass KPSS (Examination for Public Servant Nominees), now I don't have any ideals. Any job would be sufficient for me now. (21)

She says that in order to find a job she goes to internet café, since she does not have a computer at home, and searches for the job announcements in various web sites. This informant is physically handicapped and does not have any social security. She says, "My family cannot look after me all my life long, I have to have a health security, I have to earn money" and adds "if my health goes bad and I could not recover, and become good for nothing then life would be meaningless for me".

She states that while walking on the streets, she feels annoyed because of the people gazing at her. "As if they want me to go in and never come out again. They push me in such a psychology. While passing by my side 'what a pity!' they say"

She stresses that, if she lived in a big city at least people would not "gaze at" her. She says that since she is a jobless, a handicapped and a woman sometimes she feels that she does not have any chance in life and all her efforts are in vain. "Especially in this city I don't have any chance, since I am a woman it is very hard for me to find a job anyway, besides I am handicapped."

She states that she considers herself successful until this time but now she has a feeling of failure because of being jobless and being unsuccessful in the job elimination exams. Stressing that the changes within her close circle and within the world have a negative influence upon her life style, this informant states that whatever she does she feels like "she will not be able to break this vicious circle". She adds that, thus she has to believe that the things she does would not make any difference in the world. She mentions that, therefore she establishes practical strategies at short sight only in order to make her everyday life easier and to protect herself from various traditional and religious repressions.

She says that she watches news programs and show programs on television and also some serials about "actual, political problems and ethnic issues about Alevi and Sunni people, which she encounters in everyday life". She follows the serial "Çemberimde Gül Oya" which is about the times before September 12, 1980 coup. This serial "reminds her the university years and she finds resemblances between the events in the serial and her own life". She says that she likes the woman character called "Yurdanur" in the serial, because "in spite of being from the upper class she has a clear attitude". This serial is telling about the political situation before September 12 and its influence upon the everyday life and small group relations. Yurdanur is a type who is the daughter of a rightist member of parliament from the upper economical class, but she has leftist ideas and goes against with her father. 41 years old female, civil servant informant (17) also likes Yurdanur in the serial. The reason she likes this character is different from the previous

informant. She does not interpret the image of Yurdanur in a political context. She states that she identifies herself with Yurdanur because she represents the self-sacrifice of women which is attributed to woman in traditional common values.

> Yurdanur is a self-sacrificing woman, she abandons a luxury life for the sake of her love and prefers a destitute life. I like her, because she is a type of a woman who can be happy in such destitution. (17)

This informant persistently underlines that the most valuable things in her life are her virtue and her son.

Some informants have anxiety of unemployment but we can observe that this anxiety does not reflect a state of "hopelessness". 23 years old female informant (20) who is attending to master degree classes, living with her family which has a relatively high monthly income (2,5-3 billions) says that she wants to make an academic carrier, and even though she has won the exam she does not prefer to be a teacher. She states that she is a local of Van and it easy and convenient to live in this city.

> I have attended to research assistant exams twice, but I couldn't succeed. Then I have fallen into a big depression, because I want to be an academician. I want to complete my doctorate also here. Now, my only ideal is to be a staff member in the university. (20)

For this informant, to have a job is not evitable to sustain her living, it is a means only for raising her social position.

> Except school, I spend all of my time surfing in internet. There are not much things to deal with at home, I get bored. I don't want to be a housewife all along my life. (20)

She says that the most intense feeling in her life is the feeling of ambition and to compete. "I am in a constant hurry in order to pass over my competitors and to be one step before them".

A university student male informant (7) says that he will finish his school this year, yet he cannot make plans about his future. He states that because "you come here to be a teacher, but they don't make you a teacher".

> Not to mention being a teacher, you can't even find any job. Then you think, did I went to school for nothing? I have to work, I have responsibility to my family, because my mother send me to school by cutting the expenses of my sisters and brothers. (7)

This informant's family lives in Mersin. He mentions that he is an Alevi, he has grown up with Alevi culture and therefore he is modern and progressive. According to him, since the majority of people living in Van are "Şafiî"[8], they are "reactionary and bigot". He states that he is "in a psychological depression, on the one hand because of the domination of religion over everyday life and on the other hand because of the lack of a cultural environment he would improve himself". "This is a depression stemming from the people and the city. Then your ideals collapse and you feel disappointment."

Feeling like that "he is not alive at all" in this city, the informant underlines that his only aim is to "escape" from this city as soon as possible. He says that he dreams to see the different places of the world, and the lives of the people living there, thus he wants to be a member of the team of the program called "Haberci"[9] (Herald).

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[8] A sect in Islam.
[9] A documentary program presented by journalist, photographer Coşkun Aral.

We can say that social, economical, cultural and political conditions of Van, deepen the sentiments of the most of the informants, such as uncertainty, insecurity, fear and hopelessness. Female informant (11), who is a university student states that she can express herself easily in Van because of her ethnic identity, and she would not feel so convenient in the big cities of west. She stresses that in the present time there are not too much clashes in the region and there is a peaceful atmosphere, yet she has fears that these clashes may be restarted again and everything would be spoilt. She thinks that in the East, in this underdeveloped city, in these conditions it is hard to sustain a good life, even though she finishes the university she would not have any chance in the life. According to her, this city symbolizes "poverty, hopelessness and restrictedness".

> Not to be able to know what will happen tomorrow, prevents you from dreaming. I feel like, there is nothing to dream here. We all know the economical and political conditions of the region. This city promises nothing to the people. There is no investment, no business field, where would you work if you finish the school? (11)

Stating that she wants to live in "a city where she would be independent" this informant says that this city suffocates her "like a closed box". "I feel, like I would be able to breath if I manage to go out of this box".

We can say that same as these informants, the uncertainty of finding a job increases the fears and anxieties of the educated informants especially, even though they are graduated or graduating, they place "job" in the center of their lives. According to them "job" not only brings along a better life, at the same time it provides you "to be respected as a decent person" and a social satisfaction.

An informant (18), who is a teacher mentions that the most intense sentiment he experiences is unhappiness. He says that except school he also works in private preparing courses and also gives private lectures, his life consists of

working only. He emphasizes that his peers who are in the same situation with him, has the same "tragic" life.

> I see the people approximately in the same age with me, everybody is same. If people here are educated and had a job they devote their lives to their families. Actually this is a tragedy. I am unhappy because of this situation. Yes I am satisfied of seeing my brothers to be educated and to be successful but I cannot live my own life. (18)

The informant states that his relation with his tribe is not strong because he is against tribal, feudal structure. He says that feudal attitude of the tribe prevents people from being individuals.

> We have been brought up according to the family and tribe notion, they taught us the good or bad according to the manners of family or tribe. They have done their best for us not to be individuals, I have a grudge and want revenge for this. (18)

He says that he wants to live in a city in the west in order to escape from the repression of these feudal relations, but since it would not be convenient in economical terms, he has to live in Van for four or five years more. He stresses that the most he wants in his life is "to make a good marriage".

In spite of his complaints about not be able to be an individual because of family relations, he mentions that the most valuable thing in his life is his family and he would sacrifice anything in order to keep his own culture and language alive. He says that, thus at home he banned watching television since it "spreads a degenerated culture". To speak Turkish is also banned at home, only Kurdish is spoken. The informant states that he is very much surprised to see "somebody from A nation as a nationalist of B nation". He means the Turkish nationalism of Van people whom he thinks that they are not Turkish.

25 years old, married male informant (2) who has two children mentions that he works in two separate works in order to sustain living of his family. He says that he is afraid of loosing his job and anxious about the future of his children. As he states, he wants to be more optimistic but he is troubled from the "political instability" of the country and the region.

> It is really not certain what will happen in Turkey. Today we live in a war zone, we remember the things which have happened recently. You know there is Kurd-Turk problem. Anything can happen here, it can be a war field, a massacre can happen. (2)

Thus informant says that he does not want to experience the events which have happened in the past again and he wants to live in "a peaceful place". He underlines that nobody, even has a lot of money, would make investment in such a place where "it is not certain what will happen tomorrow". He states that his life is wasted in this insecure, confused atmosphere, and his only wish is to raise his children in a peaceful and secure atmosphere having a good education.

He mentions that nothing surprise him in everyday life, people have got used to extraordinary things and adds: "Just yesterday people have been shot just beside us, we haven't surprised, if anybody is shot today I don't surprise, we get used to it". He has lost his confidence to people because of the feeling that everything can happen in life. He emphasizes that in the past people were in a strong solidarity but today the economical and political conditions they experience destroyed this solidarity. "Not to mention solidarity, people think how to deceive others. People don't trust each other."

He says that he does not watch television too much, but he watches mafia serial "Kurtlar Vadisi" because it displays "the reality of Turkey today". In this serial he likes the character called "Polat", who claims to fight with injustice by illegal methods, because he "illuminates many things" and shows that "good wins".

Another informant (4), who is 40 years old and one of the important persons of his tribe states that he watches the serial "Kurtlar Vadisi" with admire. He identifies himself with the character "Karahanlı". "I like to see that Karahanlı has authority, I also want to be the one who says the last word in my tribe". He states that he also likes the serial "Gurbet Kadını" because it shows the "devotion of the members of tribe to each other". He stresses that he is also a member of a tribe and his tribe is the most valuable thing for him in his life. The informant mentions that he is happy in general and he only wish his children to be educated well and live a peaceful life.

Having a 3-3,5 billions of monthly income, a house and a summerhouse, this informant states that the economical and social situation of the country is not good and this may effect him and his family in the future. He says that he thinks to be a member of parliament and want to solve the problems of great masses. "I can afford the living of the people of my village, or I can help to the people who are in need". Besides, he states that he is very surprised of the "such high possibility" of Turkey's participation in EU, because the policy of present government "does not match" with the policy of EU.

A male informant (5) who defines himself as a leftist, states that he is pessimistic about the improvement of the political and economical conditions of Turkey, and he is anxious about the possible conflicts in the region. According to him, EU membership of Turkey is a very big opportunity for the democratization of the country and the freedom of the people. He says that his dream is "to live in a Turkey where everybody can express their own identity easily". But he stresses his basic ideal is to marry with his girl friend and to live a convenient and peaceful life. He mentions that his girl friend, his family and his few friends are the most valuable things in his life.

Stating that he watches news, debate programs and serials on television, he mentions that he likes the serial "Bir İstanbul Masalı". He finds the plot of the

serial interesting, which tells about two families living together in spite of their social and economical differences.

Some informants have a more intense fear of loosing their jobs. For example the female informant (15), who works as a contractual worker states that in her work place she has to sign a new contract for each year and since she does not have any guarantee for her job she is worried.

> Every year I began to fear while getting close to the renewal of the contract. Will they expand my time or will they fire me out, day and night I think of this. I really fed up with this, I want a regular job. (15)

This informant says that if she has the possibility she would like to live in a city like Antalya where she is not known by anybody. She states that her relatives have a big repression upon her, they even gossip when they see her with her son on the street. "They repress too much that I wish to be born somewhere else. I don't feel easy while walking on the street." (15) She says that she also feels uneasy because of the increasing theft events, since they are killing people for 10-20 millions. She states that she considers people with restraint in such a situation.

A female informant (1) who is a research assistant in the university says that she wanted to be an academician and working as an academician now. She states that if she loses her job, that she does not even want to think about it, she would be very much sad and "would lose her connection with the life". Her job is important for her for its social status rather than its economical return. Besides she says that she feels worried not to be able to follow up the developments and innovations in the world and in Turkey. She states that she "lives here unconnected with the world, and is worried not to be able to catch the innovations in every aspect of life and to miss them". "I feel as if, here is the last place where innovations reach". She says that, she goes to İstanbul or Ankara once or twice a year to make shopping.

We can say that the informants who have a regular job and an income, are worried because of the uncertainty of the future and of keeping their social positions, and they long for a more peaceful and convenient life. On the other hand the poorest people of the city do not have much expectations about their lives and cannot produce positive meanings. The male informant (24) which we have mentioned before, who has unwillingly immigrated to Van and has been living in a barn with his family for 10 years, states that life mean nothing for him in these conditions and "want to live like a human being".

> Can you call this living? These children sleep hungry every day. I blame myself, what a sort father I am ... I even cannot feed my children. I ask job, but they don't give. Government does not show concern for us. Former municipality used to help occasionally, but this one does not. I don't know if they consider us as animals or humans. If one of us dies, we cannot burry the corpse. This is our state of living, nothing has left to tell about! (24)

This informant mentions that he only wants "a house to shelter" and "a job to feed his children". He says that he does not watch television, because he gets angry to the people he see on television: "If I don't eat like them, if I don't dress up like them, why should I watch them?"

A female informant (32) says "what to expect from life, I even cannot find a morsel of bread to feed my children". She mentions that her little son is in 4th grade but he could not learn to read. "How could a child, living in these conditions, learn in the school, what can he do? If they become literate may be they can find a job, but it is not easy!" (32)

Showing her mentally handicapped daughter she says, "if we had money this girl would not be in this state". The informants mention that they do not have any hope about the future of their children. They state that, if they return to their villages at least they would be able to feed themselves. "If you cannot find anything, you pick herbs from the mountain and eat." Male informant (24)

states that government does not let them to return to their villages and adds: "If they don't want us then let them throw all of us to the sea (intending Van Lake), we die and relieved!"

These informants experience sentiments such as hopelessness, despair, insecurity, unhappiness, fear intensively and they want to live "like a normal human being".

As an example for another group of poor people we can mention the young girls who work as weavers in the workshop. But if we compare them with the above mentioned group they have relatively "good conditions" (at least they have a house to shelter). These girls state that their greatest dream is "to be educated and have a job" since their families have not send them to school. An informant (27), mentions that she has registered her sister and nephew to school in spite of her family's repression.

"I'd like to be a teacher but I couldn't" (27). Though they don't manifest but their biggest fear is related with marriage. An informant (25) states that she does not have any right to choose her husband, she has to marry to the man who is chosen by her family. "Here they don't allow us to meet with men before marriage and decide together about marriage. We are afraid to talk to men, if our family sees they kill us." (25)

Another informant mentions that families deceive their daughters as if they are marrying to a single man but they gave them to a married man as a second wife. When I ask them if they can object to their families in such a case, they only keep silent and don't answer. One of the informants (25) states that the man she would marry "should have a job and should allow her to work". Another informant stresses that she wants to work until she got married but "easterner men" would not allow this definitely. They mention that girls are got married in their early ages: "When she was 17, my sister had already 3 children". (27)

They state that they feel themselves like foreigners when they rarely go to the city center. "When we go to Cumhuriyet Street or Russian Bazaar, I feel like I am in another world. Those places have nothing common with our neighborhood." (26)

Another informant (25) says that the people they see in city center are very different from them. The informants state that some people make them feel that "they are villagers" and they add, "but we don't mind".

Some of the informants live in their own houses and some of them live in rented houses. Mentioning that the rental of their house is very high an informant (26) says "it is not even beautiful, its roof is made of soil, it does not deserve 35 millions". Most of the informants live in "large families". An informant (25) says that they are living 12-13 people in a house and only she and her father works.

These informants mention that they watch especially the serials such as "Aliye", "Aşka Sürgün", "Gurbet Kadını" and paparazzi programs. One of the informants (27) states that she watches paparazzi programs in order to learn "who is the chic and who is the frump of the week". Another informant (26) says that, she "is interested in private lives of celebrities but does not approve the life styles of models who are always in 'night life'", "What do they find in those places? Instead of wasting their money for alcohol they should go and help poor people". This informant says that she didn't even see isle of Akdamar and wants to see Bodrum, Marmaris etc., the places she sees on paparazzi programs. "Sure I don't want to swim at the sea, naked like them but I want see those places and to go to holiday". She states that there are very beautiful places around Van but "even their families allow them" they don't have enough money to go to those places. Mentioning that she is also from a tribe, the informant (27) says that she likes the serial "Gurbet Kadını" because "it is telling about tribal life". The informants mention that they like "charity" programs such as "Deniz Feneri" (Lighthouse), "Kimse Yok mu?" (Is

There Anybody?) which help poor people and supply their basic needs, and they want such programs to be widespread.

These informants say that they are happier than the people they see in paparazzi programs. We can say that poverty and otherness are accepted situations for these informants. But their greatest fear is to marry a person they don't want and "to be suffocated because of losing their breath" which they take through the workshop. Their hopelessness and fears about life increase, because when they get married, most probably they will become one of the women in their neighborhood "who didn't even see the city center".

We see that almost every informant follows up the world or country affairs through television. Most of them emphasize that many news programs broadcasted in various channels are "not objective and far away from being serious".

> Even in news programs they make discrimination between the regions. There are very few programs which broadcast news from this region, yet they distort the realities. All of them have Western orientated broadcasts. (11)

Thus, they watch national news channels like NTV or CNN-Türk. For them these channels are objective, well-qualified and enable them to watch the events of the region, the country or the world.

Following these quotations if we make an evaluation by taking the risk of neglecting certain differences, we can say that people of Van have not deep and great meanings, aims and expectations about life. The social differences between the informants differentiate the anxieties, longings and expectations they feel about life. Bu in a general consideration we can list some anxieties, desires and expectations as follows: fearing from not to be able to find a job or to lose job; fear from the possibility of the recurrence of clashes of past in the region; desire to live in a more peaceful and convenient place; desire to

have a job and a house; desire to have their children to be educated in better schools; desire to have a social security; desire to be successful in working life etc. Some of the informants mention that they have a social aim to keep their own cultures alive but they stress their main anxiety about the future of their families and their close circles. Attributing to the conflicts of the past differently (for some of them these are parts of an "independence war", for some these are "terror events" and for some these are "Turk-Kurd conflicts"), most of the informants emphasize that these conflicts had negative influences upon the people living in this region. Even though there is a relative peace in the region today, they say that they still "fear that all will be started again". A very important point should be noted that, except the people living in a high economical level and have important positions in tribal relations, people think that their decisions and actions will never be effective on the course of country and world affairs.

Another point which should be emphasized, is the role of television within their perceptions of the places they are living in and of the world. Television is the part of the life of every person from every section. Some phrases and discourses are extracted from television programs and they are recycled and reanimated in everyday usage. Besides we can say that television save them from the feeling of being isolated. Television functions as a way of communicating with the "outer world" for the people who do not have the opportunity to move physically and to go out from the city or even from the neighborhood. In this sense it operates as a mechanism which the values, practices and codes of the unknown world are received from. Thus, social circulation of television discourse, creates a kind of accessibility that is crucial for the production of meanings. Connected with the circle of socialization, we see a difference between the cultural code receptions of the people who watch the same program. We can say that informants choose the programs according to the reference outlines of the social group they belong.

At the same time television has an important role in mediating the recombinations of different cultural codes of modern and traditional societies in everyday life. I like to describe this case, referring to my observations about a family living in Van. This family is living in their own block which has one apartment in each flat. Mother, father and single daughter live in one of the flats, a son who is a research assistant, married and having two children lives in one flat, other son who is married and having children lives in one flat and another son who is single and a university student lives in one flat. Mother and the father who is an imam are very conservative, they have married their research assistant son off with a 16 years old girl who is one of their relatives without having their son's acceptance. In spite of living in separate flats belonging to them, each member of the family gather and eat their meals all together. Mother controls the management of the house, everyone give their earnings to her. The wife of the research assistant is also conservative. She reacts to some programs which his husband watches, thinking that they spoil the morality of her children. Moreover, this woman also cannot participate to the social life of the city, she cannot go out. Only in cases of illness she goes to hospital with her husband. To watch television is one of the important everyday practices of this woman. On the one hand she has a traditional life style in terms of internal conditions but on the other hand she receives the cultural codes of modern life style through the programs and commercials she watched on television. Home is decorated with modern furniture, there are various technologically advanced equipments and devices at home, such as television, computer, internet, refrigerator etc. This family still maintains a typical characteristic of a traditional large family such as eating the meal cooked in one kitchen all together in a room. But it is remarkable that, members of the family live in separate flats in a block which has been built in modern architecture, and they try to establish their own relatively private lives. In other words some elements of modern life are picked up and chosen. On the other hand everybody at home in certain ages are expected to perform ritual prayers and fast, and act in accordance with the traditional norms. At the same time one of the sons is having fine arts

education and his life style is in accordance with the modern cultural models in terms of woman-man relations. It is possible to define the life styles of these people as the recombinations of traditional and modern cultural codes. While eating the meal "cooked in one kitchen", this "large family" also adapts the consumption habits which are peculiar to modern society.

The music made especially by the university students can also be given as another example of the recombination of traditional and modern cultural codes. These music groups make music in Kurdish with the purpose of preserving their own local culture. While performing their music they use traditional Kurdish instruments together with western instruments. They also make compositions having western originated melodies for western instruments with Kurdish lyrics (for example, rock music with Kurdish lyrics). Their dressing styles, hairstyles, accessories and friendship relations resemble westerner rock musicians. They mention that their only aim is to be heard in the world and the music is universal. On the other hand, they define themselves persistently through their Kurdish identity. While explaining that they establish the meaning of life through music and culture, they only mention one culture, "Kurdish culture".

There is also another point which should be emphasized: Religion influences the organization of everyday life and daily practices in Van. It is known that religion is the bearer of symbolic meanings and authority in many cultures as of the meaning systems that produces culture. But it can be seen that most of the people living in Van apply religious beliefs to everyday life practices also. Beyond the beliefs which people carry o their minds religious knowledge produces practices elated with the life. For example On Fridays, holiday day in Islam religion, some shops are closed. Furthermore, even in public institutions many employees do not go to work or do not work afternoon. In the month of Ramadan, some working places, shops, public institutions arrange working hours according to "iftar" (fast breaking) time. Besides especially in public institutions, not to work on Fridays or not to work in

Ramadan because of fasting is considered as legitimate. A university student informant (7), states that this situation is not only experienced in city center also in the university campus. He says that, especially on Fridays life becomes slow in the school, many university teachers cut their lecture and goes to praying and many people from administrative staff do not work afternoon on Fridays, and he adds "class hours are arranged according to iftar time in Ramadan". Mentioning that they do not fast in Ramadan some of the informants say that some of the cafes or restaurants do not serve.

A female informant (31), stresses that in Van, aside of being a tool for act of worship, religion infiltrates to everywhere in life. She states that while shopping or traveling in public transport, most of the men do not take money from the hand of a woman with fear of spoiling their ablution and she adds:

> While walking on the street I often experience a case. Say, one man is passing by my side and unwillingly bumped me. He immediately turns and asks "did I touched to your hand?". He is afraid of his ablution would be spoiled. (31)

According to the informant, religious practices which should be limited in private life, are applied to public space in Van and other people also expected to comply with these religious practices. The same informant tells about some of her students who are accommodated in certain "houses". She says that high school and university students whose families live in districts or villages of Van and have economical problems stay in these houses. According to her students take religious education in these houses also religious beliefs are practically applied. She states that students who are staying in these houses are not allowed to visit their families and adds that these houses have a strict discipline.

> One of my students who stays in one of these houses once told me that he couldn't study his lessons. I asked why, he said that many people visit the house and he cannot study since he had to make non-stop tea service to the visitors. (31)

Another female informant (13) similarly states that a woman who lives in her neighborhood makes religious propaganda to the women. "This woman has come from İzmir to Van in order to organize the women in neighborhood". According to the informant her house is "the house of a religious sect". Every morning, on her way to work, she sees women entering to that house with books on their hands. She says that she is curious about what is happening in there and thinks to go there by covering her hair. She asked one of her friends if what was happening in that house her friend said to her that they are "learning Koran, reading religious books and discuss them". Informant mentions that, many packages full of clothes and food constantly come to this house from Ankara and they are distributed to the people in neighborhood. She stresses that there are many such kind of houses and student hostels in the city.

It is possible to see "haremlik-selamlık" application which separates men and women not to be in the same place, to be applied in many cafes, restaurants, card playing cafes and tea gardens etc. In these places men who are not with women should sit to the place which is designated to men. These special places are either in different flats or a single place is divided by screens.

We observe another practice which is peculiar to religious life in public transportation vehicles of the city. The men generally do not sit beside a woman. In the case that man and woman obliged to sit side by side, other passengers make an arrangement and by changing their places they sit men by men, women by women.

As it is seen in exemplars, we can say that religion is not simply a meaning system on people's mind, it is materialized through social organization, it organizes everyday life and infiltrates to every aspect of life by producing practical solutions concerning social life.

Briefly, we see that, many different groups with different cultural practices are living in Van. We can say that these cultural practices are determined by a process which operates through the dynamics effective on the construction of the meaning of Van. Dynamics of tribal order, religious structure, social class and ethnicity, determine the cultural practices of different groups and individuals within the space and organize the everyday life in the city. It would not be wrong to say that there is a religious movement, tendency or "revival" in Van, as almost all informants have clearly mentioned or referred in various occasions. This movement has different characteristics than the classical political movements. This Islamic tendency has been spread over the micro realms of social life, it seems to arrange and transform the social life in different aspects. For example it transforms dressing up, speaking and entertainment styles. It seems to influence house hold management, financial arrangements, neighborhood relations, charity styles and the organization and operation styles of various institutions. That is to say, we can consider this movement as the spreading and penetrating of religion to the landscape of socio cultural life. Many social activities serve as to distribute the religious knowledge, and some educational, medical and charity institutions have an important role in these activities. Religion both refers to an internal tendency and to a way of practical conduct. In general, the religion (orthodox Islam) is one of the main dynamics within the organization of the many activities of social life in Van. Some practical activities, which are assumed to be out of the classical definition of religion, are the duties of "real" Islamism for this tendency. Some of them are for example, to effect the construction of space by founding religion houses, building mosques; to found social welfare organizations or to work and serve voluntarily in these organizations; to constitute the social relations according to defined religious characteristics; and to arrange public discussions, conversations and behaviors according to the measures and standards of religion. All of these activities do not take place in certain realms as we wee see in the examples, they take place and are materially observed in coffee houses, "private education groups", government schools, workplaces, streets, consuming places, public transport

vehicles. In this context, we can say that the religious imperatives which are defined by a certain sect of Islam are dominant in public life of Van. Nevertheless, to state that certain dynamics are dominant in the implementation and transformation of urban life, would not mean that a single tendency or a group characterizes the city. Despite some dynamics have more power to transform urban space and culture, we can say that there is a constant struggle between different social agents in order to have the power.

As Hall states (1995), "culture is not settled, enclosed or internally coherent". In Van case wee see that, like place, culture is a meeting point where different cultural influences, traditions and powers intersect and interact. It is observed that, new cultural forms are created through the combination of different elements of the cultural forms of different ethnic groups, modern and traditional cultures. These forms operate in a complex and never-completed process. In other words, we can state that, like in the construction of the place, the process of construction of culture and production of meaning is exposed to external effects. There is a contestation between different groups in the city for the construction of the dominant meaning over culture like the contestation over place. Constitution of culture operates as an open-ended process. Meaning is constituted, is reproduced and changes through a constant struggle of different powers.

At first sight, the cultural life in Van seems homogeneous, enclosed and to have shared characteristics. But in Van we encounter with very different social groups and their different cultural practices. In this sense, it is possible to mention that there is heterogeneity in the cultural life of the city. Thus, we can say that, in spite of not being a big city, in Van as a place, there is juxtaposition of people who have different lives and different cultures. This juxtaposition and co-presence lead to conflicts at the same time. In this context, we can understand that the cities do not have a single homogeneous culture, and are not closed to the effects of external world and at the same time they are the sites of cultural mixing. When we consider the co-presence

of the traditional and modern life styles of different ethnic groups and different socio-economical groups, the city life in Van has a distinctive diversity.

## CONCLUSION

"Space is a social product" has been the starting point of this thesis. After 1970s, especially Lefebvre, Harvey and Massey criticized "the absolute view of space" and "the relativist view of space". They have pointed out the multidimensional relation between the spatial and the social. According to them -that is to say, according to relational view of space- spatial structures are the products of social relations, but space cannot be merely reduced to the social relations. Once space has been created by social relations, it produces its own particular effects upon social relations.

The aim of this study is to examine the dynamic and complex interaction between social relations and spatial structures with a particular emphasis on the formation of identities in and through space. As Massey asserts, cultural forms are the constructive characteristics of socio-spatial relations. She says that, space should be conceptualized integrally with time. Space is not an absolute independent dimension, it is constructed in social relations. Massey accepts the argument which says "space is socially constructed" and adds "social is necessarily spatially constituted too." All the social relations and activities have a spatial form and a spatial location. There is a spatial form in every scale and in every relation which connect community and these may change over time. Briefly, according to Massey, "the social is inexorably also spatial". Spatial organization of the society, is not only the result of the production of the social, it is also integrated with its production.

Massey states that, to think space in this way also challenges to some conceptualizations about place. She emphasizes that space cannot be considered as "statis", as well as the place cannot be considered as "bounded, singular and fixed". According to her, space is formed out of social

interrelations in all scales within space-time context and place is a certain articulation of these interrelations. Place is a particular moment in this network of social interrelations and understandings. In this sense, Massey underlines that, the identities of the places are "unfixed, contested and multiple".

Massey discusses diversified view of the globalization and its reflections on spatial dimension in this framework. She argues that some accepts, the flow of information, capital and people is accelerated by the globalization and accordingly they assert that globalization produces a single uniform place and culture. Criticizing this opinion, Massey claims that local uniqueness has not disappeared. According to her, while well-established localities are collapsing along/in global network, new local unique places and cultures are being constituted. While on the one hand, the complexity of interconnections is increasing under the globalization conditions; on the other hand the boundaries of the places become open. Within this approach, the notion of settled, enclosed and internally coherent place is replaced by the notion of place which is characterized by openness and porousness. This notion of place which is thought along with contradiction and multidimensionality, would no more consider place as a source of a stable and single identity. Place has a central role in the constitution of the identities, but the very same identity is not fixed in terms of its spatial dimension. Identities are constructed as contingent, social constructions within place.

I aimed at using this framework to explore the identity of a city, namely Van by dwelling upon the following arguments. These arguments were as follows: Place is social construction in the sense that it emerges as a result of conflicting interests of different actors located in a place. In this sense cultural identity is a constitutive part of place identity. Different actors attribute different meanings to a certain place. In this sense, it is possible to mention the construction of conflicting and contesting meanings rather than the construction of a single identity related to a certain place. Namely, meaning

of a certain place is constituted within the power relations as a result of these contesting place identities. Conflicting meanings are always attached to a certain place. Additionally, depending on changing context and power relations, the personal identities within the place and the identity of place change, both of them are not fixed. That is to say, both the meaning of the place and the cultural identities within the place are subject to an open-ended historical process.

Van is a city which has been shaped by various dynamics. Co-presence of many ethnic origins, different religious and traditional structures and practices, and power relations between various socio-economical and political groups constitute these dynamics of change. In this dynamic structure, as a place, Van has different meanings for different actors. Depending on social classes and status of individuals, meaning of Van as a place is constructed both materially and imaginarily according to the economical and cultural capitals of the individuals and their positions in social structure. For some of them Van is a place where they feel themselves at home and in safe, and for some others it is a place where they feel unsafe. Some people define Van as a "Kurdish" or a "Turkish" city in connection with the ethnic identity, some others define it as "a city of men not women". It is possible to multiply these definitions. This generates a question: Is it possible to attach a single identity to a place? According to the approach of this work it is not possible to assert that a single identity can be attached to the place. This research shows that there are many competing, contesting meanings/identities rather than a single meaning related to place. At the same time, as well as the contradicting definitions there are also complemented definitions within power relations. Also power struggle inevitably consists of various levels and layers.

First of all, there is a public perception towards this place, which is constituted by various experiences. A part of experience is the public experience which is the result of the interaction with place. At the same time,

to make sense of, to perceive the results of experiences is also important. Within the public the meaning of the place is constituted as a result of the contestation of different experiences. In most of the cases, the definitions of place which are constituted by various actors, exclude others. At this point it is important to see the connectedness between the constitution of the identities of places and groups. These change according to social and geographical contexts but they have close relations with each other. In the process of constitution of place identity, each group draws upon and appropriates the meaning of Van while they contribute to the reconstitution of the meaning of Van.

Another important point is that, place does not have a stable identity which is supported by activities and functions attributed to a certain place. In line with the changing contextual characteristics, Van is exposed to big changes which are attached to itself. The informants emphasize that Van has remarkably changed in last fifteen-twenty years. Many informants point out that the recent political conflicts and their outcomes have changed both the physical and the cultural structure of Van. For example, informants many times refer to the political conflicts which have been experienced in last twenty years when they are describing their sentiments, feelings about life and their life styles. Moreover, it is obviously seen that the migration eventuated due to this process has very much influenced both the public life and the individual everyday lives. In addition to the regional dynamics, influence of social, political, and economical changes in global scale make a stable identity of Van impossible.

While Van is witnessing profound changes, meaning of Van is constituted by each group in different scales comparing it with another place. Some define Van with a reference to the West, some others refer to the other cities of Eastern Anatolia. Each group defines place with a reference to a spatial location. These issues are related with geographical imagination. Therefore, it is important to understand the physical space ant the constitution of its

meaning. That is to say, it is important to point out the notion of sense of place. When we look at the senses of place of people living in Van, individuals' senses of place vary according to their socio-economical, cultural, political, ethnical, gender positions. Different social groups have different senses of place and these senses are reconstituted through the imaginaries and practices of the individuals.

If we think through Rose's formulation, there are different ways of developing sense of place in case of Van. One of them is that people identify themselves with the place. In some cases identification with place appears in regional scale and connected with ethnic identity. For example they define themselves as "easterner and Kurd", and define Van as "the East". In some other cases identifying with the place appears in national scale. For example some informants define themselves as "a Turk who is local of Van" and Van as a "Turkish city". There are also some cases that identification with the place appears by focusing on micro realms. As in the case of the weaver girls who work in the workshop, workshop is a place where feelings of belonging intensify. Most of the informants consider their own identity as identical with the identity of Van. As wee see in the study, cultural identity is interpreted in connection with the place through local culture, through the constitution of national identity etc.

Moreover, for some people, imagining, defining and representing Van are expressed by excluding the others. In this sense we can say that almost for every group there is another group which is perceived and considered as the other. In other words, we can say that; different definitions and representations of place are socially constituted and change over time. Another way of constituting a sense of place is to oppose oneself to another place or to another group. Consequently, people constitute their identities opposing to the others' identities by the notion of belonging/not belonging to a certain place. In this process, after constituting a certain identity of place, they constitute their identities by the references to the ones excluded from

this definition and they create strategies in order to reinforce their own definitions. Namely, the people, reinforce their own personal identities and self-confidences through an imaginary of a certain place. For example, some informants express that, Van is the city of Turks and the people from other ethnical origins spoil the essence of Van. But on the contrary some informants express that Van is a Kurdish city, and for some others Van is a "Muslim" city, the people except the Muslims and the people from the sects except the ones considered as legitimate do not belong to Van. For them these people who are out of legitimate Islamic understanding, "should be excluded, condemned, disciplined, punished and put in the right path".

Another conclusion is the meaning and the representation, because these meanings and representations are the basis for various claims in determining the future of the place. Therefore, there is a constant contestation and conflict over place. In this research it is notable that; while emphasizing some physical, social and historical characteristics of Van, the residents neglect some characteristics of it. Thus, particular people define "real" characteristics of a certain place according to their priorities. Various othering processes operate with reference to these characteristics. Sometimes this process generates violence. All of these are related with physical, social and cultural environment. For example in the urban life some people want to separate themselves from the other people by physical or social boundaries. These boundaries are sometimes constructed through the design of built environment. For example some spaces in Van are designated only to the men, some districts and streets are designated only to certain religious and ethnic groups. Women's participation to the urban life is restricted and they usually live in a private sphere limited with home. Some of the migrants live in an almost completely isolated situation in physical terms. Accordingly, different representations of place and various groups engender physical changes on built environment. Women are not welcomed if they wander too much in Cumhuriyet Street, the main street of Van. Moreover, some social groups does not accept others to appear in urban life and even claim these

groups to be prevented from coming to the city. Therefore it is seen that various social and/or spatial boundaries are constructed. For example some groups state that they cannot enter to the alleys behind Cumhuriyet Street.

The boundaries which are constructed within power relations, operate through spatial organization. Notion of purified space, in other terms closed place definitions are considered as the legitimate basis for the construction of social boundaries. Therefore, the social and the spatial should be analyzed in relation with each other. Spatial arrangements which reinforce boundaries mark various conflicts and specific interests of social groups. In this sense, we can consider the changes within the physical structure of the space not simply as products of time, but as a cultural hegemony of specific social groups. When we look at from this point of view, we see that Massey's argument, which says that a place is constituted with juxtaposition of conflicting social relations, is verified in my analysis.

Moreover the argument of Lefebvre and Shields about the constitution of space through cultural images and experience also verified. According to Lefebvre, space is not a passive geometry. Certain groups attempt to organize, to plan the space through certain claims. While experienced/used by the residents, these spaces are appropriated and are changed. Thus, the change of the space may not be in the way which the dominant groups intend. It would be more meaningful to mention that there is a constant dialectical contestation between the groups rather than to think that a claim upon the space would be fixed and constantly operates. That is to say, there is a contestation between the social actors who struggle to arrange and control the space and the groups who want to create their own agendas. Such a contestation is seen in case of Van. For example some Islamic groups try to organize the physical and the social space in order to provide the religious rituals to be practiced in a best way. In the month of Ramadan, the physical and social atmosphere of the city changes apparently. The individuals and the groups who react against this situation try to assert their

own cultural and spatial claims. The informants point out an apparent religious movement in Van. This Islamic tendency seems to spread all along the micro spheres of social life and to organize and transform the social life in different aspects. In general, the religion (orthodox Islam) appears to be the dominant dynamic in organizing many activities of social life and in the use, production, transformation and reproduction of the space.

In the case of Van, another dynamic which is effective in the constitution of the image of place is the tribal order and the relations between the relatives. Patriarchal order, determines the roles and the cultural practices of genders, individuals and groups in the space, within the construction and the use of the space. In this sense once the space is constructed, it forms, transforms and reproduces these relations. Woman has the secondary position in patriarchal order. As it is seen in the case of Van, the traditional view of patriarchal order and the religious structure about woman, prevents or restricts the participation of woman in social life in the city. Woman cannot fully participate in social life of city and she cannot perceive the city as a whole.

There is another point which should be emphasized that the groups who are living in poverty cannot participate to the social and economical life of the city. These groups have a restricted activity sphere and relatively they cannot move outside of their living space. In this sense, poverty is a dynamic in the organization of the space and changes people's perception of place. Particularly women are more influenced by results of poverty. The dimensions of exclusion of women from the social life of the city because of religious or traditional repressions, change according to their social classes and status. In this context, it is possible to state that the women who are living in poverty are completely excluded from the urban life.

As wee see in the case, within the constitution of the meaning of a place, the cultural dimension which refers to the development of related strategies and

the material dimension which refers to the physical organization of the space and the practices of individual are not separate processes. Namely, the imaginary and the real should be considered as two aspects of life, which influence each other mutually and are interweaved together.

We see that, many different groups with different cultural practices are living in Van. We can say that these cultural practices are determined by a process which operates through the dynamics effective on the construction of the meaning of Van. Dynamics of tribal order, religious structure, social class and ethnicity, determine the cultural practices of different groups and individuals within the space and organize the everyday life in the city.

As Hall states (1995), "culture is not settled, enclosed or internally coherent". In Van case wee see that, like place, culture is a meeting point where different cultural influences, traditions and powers intersect and interact. It is observed that, new cultural forms are created through the combination of different elements of the cultural forms of different ethnic groups, modern and traditional cultures. These forms operate in a complex and never-completed process. In other words, we can state that, like in the construction of the place, the process of construction of culture and production of meaning is exposed to external effects. There is a contestation between different groups in the city, for the construction of the dominant meaning over culture like the contestation over place. Constitution of culture operates as an open-ended process. Meaning is constituted, is reproduced and changes through a constant struggle of different powers.

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## APPENDIX

## INFORMANT LIST

**1.** 29 years old, female, Research Assistant, master degree graduate.

**2.** 25 years old, male, works in a windowpane shop in day time, and as a taxi driver at nights, quitted high school, married.

**3.** 36 years old, male, waiter, primary school graduate, married.

**4.** 40 years old, male, teacher, café owner, university graduate, married.

**5.** 33 years old, male, bookkeeper, college graduate.

**6.** 30 years old, male, university student, married.

**7.** 21 years old, male, university student.

**8.** 28 years old, male, teacher, university graduate.

**9.** 26 years old, female, teacher, university graduate.

**10.** 34 years old, male, teacher, university graduate.

**11.** 26 years old, female, university student.

**12.** 23 years old, female, university student.

**13.** 32 years old, female, civil servant (household economist), college graduate, married.

**14.** 27 years old, female, unemployed (profession is arts of letters), university graduate, married.

**15.** 34 years old, female, contractual worker, high school graduate.

**16.** 27 yeas old, female, teacher, university graduate, married.

**17.** 41 years old, female, civil servant, high school graduate, divorced.

**18.** 28 years old, male, teacher, university graduate.

**19.** 43 years old, male, tradesman (furniture seller), primary school graduate, married.

**20.** 23 years old, female, master degree student.

**21.** 26 years old, female, unemployed (sociologist), master degree graduate.

**22.** 55 years old, female, retired, divorced.

**23.** 60 years old, male, photograph artist, manager of carpet weaving workshop, high school graduate, married.

**24.** 37 years old, male, unemployed, literate.

**25.** Doesn't know her age, mentions that she may be 18-19 years old, weaver, female, open primary school student.

**26.** Doesn't know her age, mentions that she may be 17-18 years old, weaver, female, open primary school student.

**27.** 17 years old, weaver, female, open primary school student.

**28.** 24 years old, male, working in temporary jobs, quitted high school.

**29.** 46 years old, male, doctor, university graduate, divorced.

**30.** 22 years old, male, university student.

**31.** 33 years old, female, teacher, university graduate.

**32.** Doesn't know her age, female, unemployed.

**33.** Doesn't know her age, female, mentions that she may be 29-30 years old, literate.