

# 2025

volume 22 | issue 2

# ENQ

The ARCC Journal for Architectural Research

## Opportunities Of Nomadic Space: Sound of Paper Collectors In Istanbul

Pınar Geçkili Karaman<sup>1,2</sup>, Mehmet Emin Şalgamcıoğlu<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The metropolitan city is characterized by a state of perpetual transformation, fostering a nomadic existence shaped by spatial mobility. This ongoing cycle of destruction and reconstruction generates “nomadic spaces,” where urban landscapes remain in flux. Beyond its spatial dynamics, the metropolis is also defined by the direct migration of people, particularly marginalized groups, who navigate and reshape the urban environment. Among these groups, paper collectors in Istanbul play a critical yet often overlooked role in the city’s recycling system. Despite their substantial contribution to urban sustainability, their work remains largely informal and is usually coded as illegal, positioning them as subaltern actors within the urban fabric.

This study examines the spatial practices and lived experiences of paper collectors, framing their activities as a form of urban act embedded within the ever-evolving nature of the metropolis. The primary aim of this article is to explore the mechanisms of existence in the nomadic city by deconstructing the language of paper collectors, who are represented as subalterns, using verbal and spatial instruments and deriving, multiplying, and articulating the subaltern, making their voices heard. Employing a mixed method approach that integrates ethnography and grounded theory, the study utilizes qualitative data collection techniques, including participant observation of daily routes, in-depth interviews, and spatial analysis of warehouses where collectors work and live. The analysis and diagrammatization of the data were conducted using MAXQDA software. Through this multi-layered analysis, the paper collectors deconstruct the spatial and experiential dimensions of subaltern urban actors, offering new insights into the intersection of informality, mobility, and sustainability in the contemporary city

**Keywords:** nomadic space; paper collectors; waste pickers; subaltern; ethnography; grounded theory.

Stable URL: <https://arcc-journal.org/index.php/arccjournal/article/view/1269>  
DOI 10.17831/enq:arcc.v22i2.1269

Corresponding Author: Pınar Geçkili Karaman\* < [geckili@itu.edu.tr](mailto:geckili@itu.edu.tr) > and < [pgkaraman@ticaret.edu.tr](mailto:pgkaraman@ticaret.edu.tr) > <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7972-7349>  
<sup>1</sup>Istanbul Technical University (ITU), Istanbul, Türkiye; <sup>2</sup>Istanbul Commerce University (ICU), Istanbul, Türkiye.  
Mehmet Emin Şalgamcıoğlu ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7218-8044>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION: "CAN SUBALTERN SPEAK?"

Is it possible to communicate with the mass defined as the stranger, the other, the subaltern of the city through space? Do the smooth spaces of the metropolitan city reveal the state of othering in the city? Does the subaltern, categorized as another, reassert itself through space? These questions constitute the main questions of the research.

The concept of deterritorialization, as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), can be associated with the state of otherness, which encompasses ways of opposing and undermining the hegemonic structure produced by power. Nomadism is a state of deterritorialization. It is the rejection of "things" by their boundaries and ties to become rooted. Consequently, rhizomes can now be used to read the network of relations roots describe. Rhizomatic forms generate new intervals and are always in motion since they allow for different collisions, which makes them allocentric. Additionally, they lack a defined beginning and ending. For instance, they define heterogeneity. Variations found in a heterogeneous entity are related to one another. The state of being different in this relationship disrupts the condition of being other. While distinct from one another, each difference does not surpass the other. As a result, status has no defined meaning. There is no longer any power. Disconnected from the ground and the root system, the rhizome trembles as a vagrant, constantly redefining the connections it makes and shattering them along the way (Deleuze 1994). The variations in the rhizomatic structure at this stage are all alien and imminent to one another.

In this very form, it is immanent with the potential brought about by the word meaning of the concept of the other. The other reveals spatial distance. It triggers the act of crossing an obstacle or border, of going beyond, and requires a sense and desire for the new, which symbolizes a return to the present. It is the construction of the present again and again through different channels. With this powerful act, every "beyond" is desired (Bhabha 2004). This state exhibits the liberating and new-calling side of being beyond.

The other reveals the destructive and disruptive yet productive attitude that is outside the order produced by the system and that criticizes the order directly or indirectly with its existence. With globalization, the position and boundaries of the other within the metropolis have become blurred. In a world where movement, mobility, and transformation are essential, it can be thought that the other has also become fluid. But all these factors are also an imposition of modernity. In other words, the order called modernity is Eurocentric. Therefore, even though it seems to have a heterogeneous structure, the city harbors others from a post-colonial perspective. These others can be called

synonymous with the mass that Spivak (1988) calls the subaltern. The subaltern defines the other who cannot express himself, is outside the truth and power defined by the order, and lives a life in opposition to it. In this sense, historiography is also a structure that excludes the subaltern, is shaped around a certain side, and is written in the language of the founders of order with a dominant and hegemonic base. Spivak's (Spivak 1988) question comes to mind at this point: "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

The answer to this question is sought throughout the article through space, which is the subaltern's own production. Therefore, the concept of the other, which is on slippery ground in the literature, is specialized under the concept of 'the subaltern.' The hybrid identity and double consciousness of the subaltern within the city lead to reproducing spaces that can be described as intermediate and nomadic. Therefore, it is possible to search for the language of the subaltern not through the speech of others but through the spaces produced by them as nomads and in-betweeners. The main aim of this article is to produce a language dismantling for the voiceless subaltern through space.

This situation evolves into a form of spatial translation. At this point, the element of space works as a language generator. Therefore, it is both a translator and the translation of the text itself. Such articulability of language and the phenomenon of translation causes the subaltern, the main producer of the city, to endlessly derive and sustain itself through translation.

## 2. SPATIAL FORMATION

The in-between spaces, which were produced from the hybrid identity of concepts such as the subaltern, the other, and the foreigner, were fading under the substratum of nativity and sedentariness with an Enlightenment attitude before gaining their nomadic identities. In this sense, wayfinding studies constituted an important field of research in the 1960s. Map-making and reading were the domain of both anthropologists and geographers. The restraint of the nomadic within the framework of certain systems and its reduction to the framework of cartographic maps were among modernity's primary means of understanding. Therefore, the settled and rooted were brought into focus, and the out-of-order was trivialized (Mouffe 2005).

Since the early 2000s, with the cultural turn, which is a branch of the spatial turn movement, the conventional concepts of culture have been debated and even rejected, especially as Marxist geographers have taken up social construction. In the cultural turn, the socially constructed side of space is addressed. Thus, the importance given to the subject and subjectivity and the "other" began to increase rapidly (Miguelbrink and

others 2013). Spatiality, on the other hand, remains more flexible, coexists with the other, and bears traces of what it contains.

The in-between space and its derivatives produce a trans-spatial discussion. “Beyond” refers to spatial distance, signifies progress, and promises the future, but our allusions to crossing the barrier or boundary—the very act of going beyond—cannot be known, cannot be represented, cannot be returned to the present, which becomes disconnected and displaced in the process of repetition. The imaginary spatial distance relieves the temporal and social differences that interrupt the sense of cultural simultaneity. If the discourses of the time discussed with the word ‘post’ (postmodernity, postcoloniality, postfeminism) have a meaning, it is not for the popular purpose of taking the negative of its antecedent (Soja 1989). These terms, which insistently point to the beyond, only embody their restless and revisionist energy when they transform the present into an extended, exocentric space of experience and empowerment. To be “beyond”, then, is to inhabit an intervening space. But to dwell “beyond” and simultaneously be part of a revisionist time is to redefine historical commonality, to touch the future from this side. In this sense, the reproductive space has also become otherized and even appropriated. It has become a field of intervention in the here and now. It does not define itself with a finished sterile state; it does not avoid being disrupted by a constant phenomenon of destruction and reproduces every time. It not only criticizes the existing order but also develops on a political ground that discusses and sometimes even disrupts its own existence. It is nomadic, other, different, spatial, and transformative. It is the only space where the subaltern can express itself and do so through space. With this attitude, it is not possible to think in isolation from the city and urban concepts. What is sought in the study is the spatial manifestations of the subaltern in the city. Therefore, while searching for the space and discourse of the subaltern, the metropolis is read through nomadism, and the potentials of the space as a “manuscript space” are discussed.

Each manuscript is the translator of the one who produced it and, simultaneously, the one who includes the reader in the translation. Translation is the rhizomatic relationship of the highlands. Therefore, when we return to the relationship between the subaltern and the city, it can be thought that the metropolis, the subaltern, and the manuscript space are rhizomes connected by the phenomenon of translation on the same scale.

### 3. ABOUT TRANSLATION

Attempts at language resolution regarding the subaltern work shoulder to shoulder with the phenomenon of

translation, which can be addressed on different axes. Within the scope of the study, the state of translation is discussed through the postcolonial perspective, which is the origin of the concept of “subaltern,” and the poststructuralist perspective, which derives and multiplies the subaltern.

#### 3.1. Post-colonial Perspective: Translation as a Practical Problematic

In the first half of the 1990s, during the period that emerged as a cultural turn, the phenomenon of translation was socialized and critically grounded with the concept of the other. Lefevere (1992) defined the phenomenon of translation as “a re-creation that takes place under ideological and political conditions,” thus addressing it from a political and subjective perspective. The fact that translation reflects the translator’s point of view rather than the source has been to the advantage of dominant cultures and ideologies, creating gaps for the marginalized. “Rewriting is a kind of falsification; rewriting has the possibility of suppressing, limiting and perverting innovations, and studies on the effects of literary works on the processes of falsification create a great awareness of the world we live in” (Lefevere 1992, vii).

While the subjective and interpretive state is seen by theorists such as Bassnett (2011) as an intercultural, kinetic, and multiplicative act, in the same period, with the emancipation of colonial cultures in Africa and Asia, some theorists stated that historiography and translation texts were Eurocentric and did not reflect the oppression of the colonizers. Drawing on Spivak, Bhabha argues that the fate of the translator of colonized societies is to reconstruct representations of colonial power (Bhabha 1994).

The aforementioned situation has been an impetus for the emergence of the phenomenon of the ‘subaltern’ as an ‘other’ that has difficulty in expressing itself and thus existing, and for the emergence of the post-colonial debate, by explaining the phenomenon of translation. However, although it has an intercultural bonding aspect, it is still power-centered.

Rejecting the essentialism of the genealogical tracing of cultural origins or the representational act of cultural translation, Homi Bhabha, like Spivak and Said, posits a third space that explicitly challenges hegemonic historiography. Against the delimitation of cultural difference, she introduces the notion of hybridity and situates it in a further test case of other-as-other-territorialization. All forms of culture are constantly in the process of hybridity. The significance of hybridity, however, is not in tracing the original moment in which the third emerged but rather in producing a “third space” that allows other positions to emerge. The third space displaces the histories that constitute it and establishes

new structures of authority and new political initiatives. The process of cultural hybridity produces something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new space for negotiating meaning and representation (Bhabha 2004).

### 3.2. Post-structuralist Perspective: Translation as an Object of Articulation

The focus of post-colonial translation debates moves beyond the object of translation to the translator. According to this view, the ongoing Eurocentric view of the translator and the act of translation cannot take the issue beyond a vicious circle. Benjamin (1989, 203) approaches the debate from a different angle, focusing not on the task or problem of translation, but on the translator as an indebted subject. The translator is charged with a duty, already heir, already entered into genealogy as a survivor or representative of survival. But this refers to the survival of works, not of authors. It is the survival of authors' names and signatures, but not the survival of the authors themselves. Such survival is more than a continuation. The 'thing' in question not only lives longer, but it lives articulated beyond the possibilities of its author (Benjamin 1989).

Here, it is understood that the discussion shifts from the translation connection with the origin to the state of translation itself. According to Benjamin (Benjamin 1989), there cannot be a finished, holistic, closed original work. Each act calls for its own translator. It is a call that is necessary for it to fill the gaps, be reproduced, reach a state of infinite motion, and thus survive. No discourse, work, production, or text is complete. Every text allows a new text to be born from within itself. This is how it continues to live. In such a construction, it is not from an essential place but from a deconstructive field, where the borders are not fixed but in a state of endless under-construction that is constantly redrawn. The situation that Deleuze (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) metaphorizes as 'stuttering in one's own language' is precisely the phenomenon of translation against holism. Structure or discourse does not embody a pure whole but multiplicity and becoming. From this point of view, the structure stutters and produces holes that are filled and reproduced by a different subject every moment. In this sense, it is not possible to speak of pure structuralism.

Derrida's (Derrida 2003, 201) quote is seminal: "How does one translate a text written in several languages at the same time?" The question is a rhizomatic attitude towards language. This rhizomatic situation shows that language and translation can be viewed with a nomadic substratum, just like the discussion on space. Translation can no longer be discussed from a purely verbal place but from a spatial, imaginary, experiential, and temporal trajectory. Therefore, it makes sense to look at the act of translation from the architectural side, through the city and its interfaces.

### 3.3. Translation as an Intermediary

It is no coincidence that the first reference to architectural literature is the "Tower of Babel", an object of translation. Translation, as an in-between form, suggests that modes of production are themselves a kind of translator. As such, the Tower of Babel is a translator because of its mythological underpinnings and the mental and never-ending construction site it embodies. The Tower of Babel shows not only the irreducible multiplicity of languages but also incompleteness. It reveals the impossibility of finishing, integrating, and saturating: the impossibility of completing something in its architectural structure, system and architectonic order. What the multiplicity of words limits is not only a "correct" translation, a transparent and adequate expression but also a structural order, a coherence of fiction. In this sense, it would be the myth of the origin of the myth, the metaphor of the metaphor, the narrative of the narrative, the translation of the translation (Derrida 2003, 217). Such a view expresses the potential of language, text, the other, or the subaltern to multiply and grow through multiple channels constantly. Therefore, translation both produces the subaltern as problematic and liberates it as a possibility of derivation (Figure 1).

The rhizomatic relationship produced in Figure 1 on the state of translation reveals different forms of translation. The two phenomena are often intertwined in the relationship between the translator and the translated, and as translation practices proliferate, so does the translation. Although there is no linear reading logic, if the diagram is followed in a traditional context, it can be understood that there is a translation trajectory starting from the actors. The first translation involves a verbal or actional/spatial manifestation. It refers to direct translation through the actors' discourses or productions.

'Translation 2' is a more indirect form. The translation of the translation makes a Derridian reference to the retelling of the narrative. The space produced here is considered a kind of translation of the actors. The space carries traces just like a manuscript paper and acts as a translator. Disclosing this situation is a new translation. Therefore, it is coded as re-translation.

A third situation is to create a new system of reading and interpretation through all translations. Producing a new and actor-specific language, re-discussing the usual situations through this language, and evaluating them from that point of view take their place in the fiction as a post-translation. This situation continues in an infinite loop (translation n), one within the other. Therefore, what is sought here is not a starting or ending point but the opening of a system of multiple possibilities.

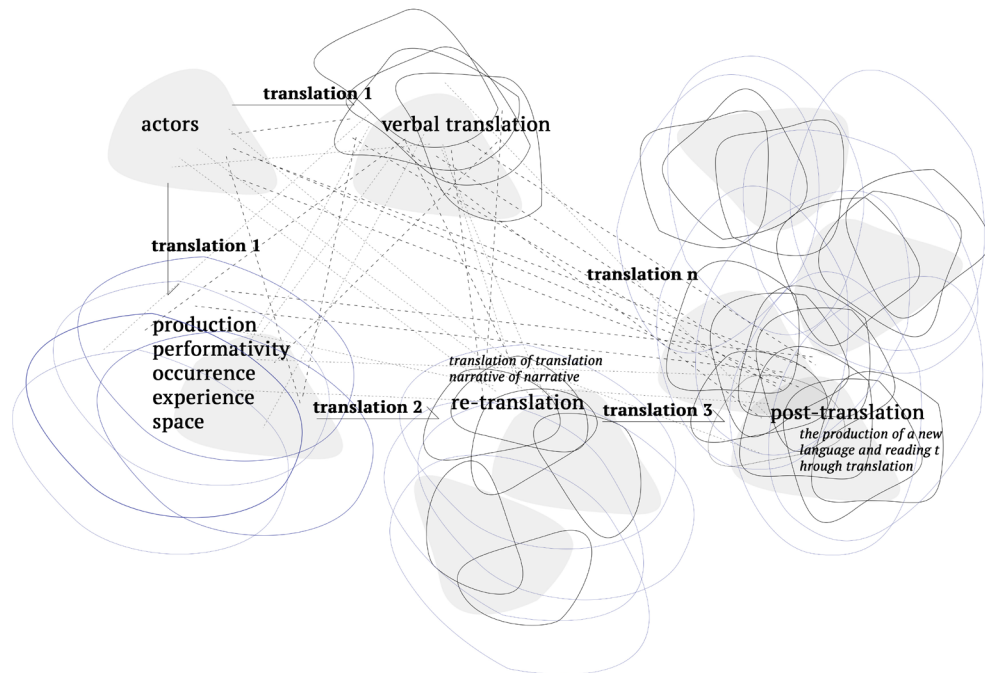


Figure 1. Translation, re-translation, and post-translation, Source: Author, 2025.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

As a result of the a priori research and pilot studies about subalterns and the way of space production in the city, it has been determined that the “paper collectors” existing in the town are a subaltern group that maintains a rhizomatic daily life cycle in the manuscript spaces and has no place in written urban history or current research. Therefore, the sample group focused on paper collectors. As an informal business production, paper collecting follows a specific route through the city (about 40 km) and concludes in a warehouse. Materials such as paper, plastic, and glass are collected from the street garbage containers and placed in huge mobile bags called “rickshaws”, which they carry on their backs. When the rickshaws are full, they come to the warehouses for sorting, counting, and fee allocation. In most warehouses, individuals from different ethnic groups also live illegally. The study focuses on these illegal warehouses.

The confrontation with the urbanite generally takes place at garbage stations along the mentioned routes. This confrontation sometimes produces actions such as retreating, ignoring, crossing the sidewalk, and even harassment and assault (Dias 2016). Working as the shadow and the absolute other of the city, the paper collectors, although contrary to the order, become the main factor in operating a different order in line with

their contribution to the recycling system, breaking the subject-power pact (Foucault 1982).

Since the studies in the article are carried out on a specific ethnographic group called “paper collectors”, ethnography is the fundamental methodology of the research. Grounded theory has technically supported the methodology revolving around ethnography, and a mixed method was chosen.

The general characteristics of ethnographic research, including a holistic exploration of a setting with context-rich details, reliance on unstructured (i.e., not pre-coded) data, a focus on a single case or a small number of cases, and data analysis that emphasizes the interpretation of the “meanings and functions of human action,” can align with the general principles of grounded theory. Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of ethnographic fieldwork is its tendency to rely on “observation” as the primary data collection method. While observation is common in qualitative and other research strategies, ethnographer Giampietro Gobo (2017) argues that what distinguishes observation in ethnography is the “more active role given to observation.” This means that the researcher uses participant observation. This approach entails the active engagement of the researcher in the context of the studied society, aiming to discern the latent meanings inherent in its quotidian life. This is complemented by implementing in-depth interview

techniques employed in conjunction with observational methods (Groat and Wang 2013). This multifaceted strategy is instrumental in supporting grounded theory, which was used as a method of analysis during the study's methodological framework. The framework emphasized the collecting of empirical data through ethnographic methods and its subsequent analysis with grounded theory to generate theoretical insights.

The constructivist approach within the grounded theory is employed when conducting a simultaneous literature study and data collection process for grounded theory. In this instance, the process moves forward with inputs; the theoretical research does not remain in the background. Considering their interaction-oriented design, "theory" and "meaning" are thus not passive, inert objects waiting to be discovered but are subject to ongoing disruption and reconstruction (Charmaz 2006).

Grounded theory is where the constant comparative technique is initially used, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998). Here, the first pillar of constructivist grounded theory—open coding—comes into play when data are classified through ongoing comparison. Upon a specific arrangement and classification, the initial codes become visible. The information gathered from in-depth interviews was analyzed using event, paragraph, and sentence-by-paragraph coding techniques to create the codes.

The system was further elaborated into axial coding, theoretical coding, and selective coding. The entire coding system was created with the help of the MAXQDA program, which is critical for grounded theory and qualitative data analysis (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2019, 93-106).

During data collection, the researchers dressed as paper collectors and employed ice-breaking techniques to experience the routes firsthand. They gave "an active role to observation" (Gobo and Molle 2017, 54) during in-depth interviews (Groat and Wang 2013), one of the techniques common to both ethnography and grounded theory, and observed daily life in the warehouses as participants. The entire process was approved by The Social and Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

After open coding, the axial coding phase is formed with various categorizations. The theoretical codes were generated by identifying the conceptual situation behind the focus areas identified during axial coding.

Researchers paired the theoretical coding phase with spatial translation, which is linked to the re-translation part of the study. This supported the emergence of new codes that work as translations of the translation. Here again, theme and model generation techniques were utilized, which are ethnographic research techniques. The production forms of the manuscript space expanded

and transformed the theoretical codes.

After the axial and theoretical codes, the system is further deepened and refined; the core codes are formed, and the selective coding phase begins. The core codes are a sanitized state of all productions and reveal the embedded theoretical phenomenon that the article seeks. The way the reader produces the subaltern infinitely through the kernels here corresponds to a kind of post-translation.

In the methodology, particularly in the theoretical coding phase of data processing, diagrams were deliberately employed to analyze verbal and spatial data (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2019, 231-252). This is because it supports both the aforementioned dynamic nature of grounded theory and the non-stationarity required by the phenomenon of nomadism.

## 5. WAREHOUSE X

First, top-scale research was conducted to decipher the urban perceptions, daily life practices, and spatial construction tactics of the paper collectors who are coded as subalterns. As a result of the research, the X warehouse in Istanbul was selected. It is the most comprehensive among the possible warehouse sites, containing the act of living and providing the clearest reading of the drafted space. The reason for not naming the neighborhood and the warehouse here is that the group of paper collectors interviewed did not want the location of their warehouses to be known.

### 5.1. Reading through Verbal Forms of Expression: A Translation

Three paper collectors in the study area—whose names were changed to X, Y, and Z—were interviewed in depth while collecting paper. Open coding was initially created using a tool called MAXQDA (Figure 2). We conducted the analysis using an inductive approach based on the discourses of X, Y, and Z.

Axial codes were created by meaningfully grouping open codes and excluding codes deemed irrelevant (Figure 3). We then combined them with the theoretical base, observations, and memos to derive semantic equivalents and theoretical codes (Figure 4).

Figure 5 shows the correlations of all codes, categories, and themes analyzed in MAXQDA. The codes for all categories are connected to the category "relationship with official institutions." This connection situates the nomadic space on a political substrate, triggering the tense relationship between subject and power.

### 5.2. Analyzing the Space Production Tactics: A Retranslation

While deciphering the space-related codes, researchers observed the warehouses, the common living spaces of

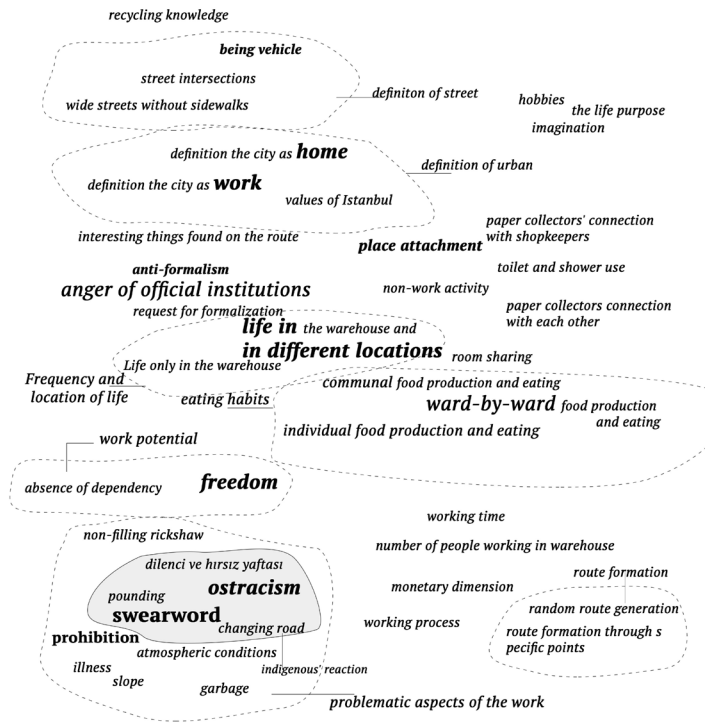


Figure 2. Diagram of open coding. Source: Author, 2025.



Figure 3. Diagram of axial coding. Source: Author, 2025.

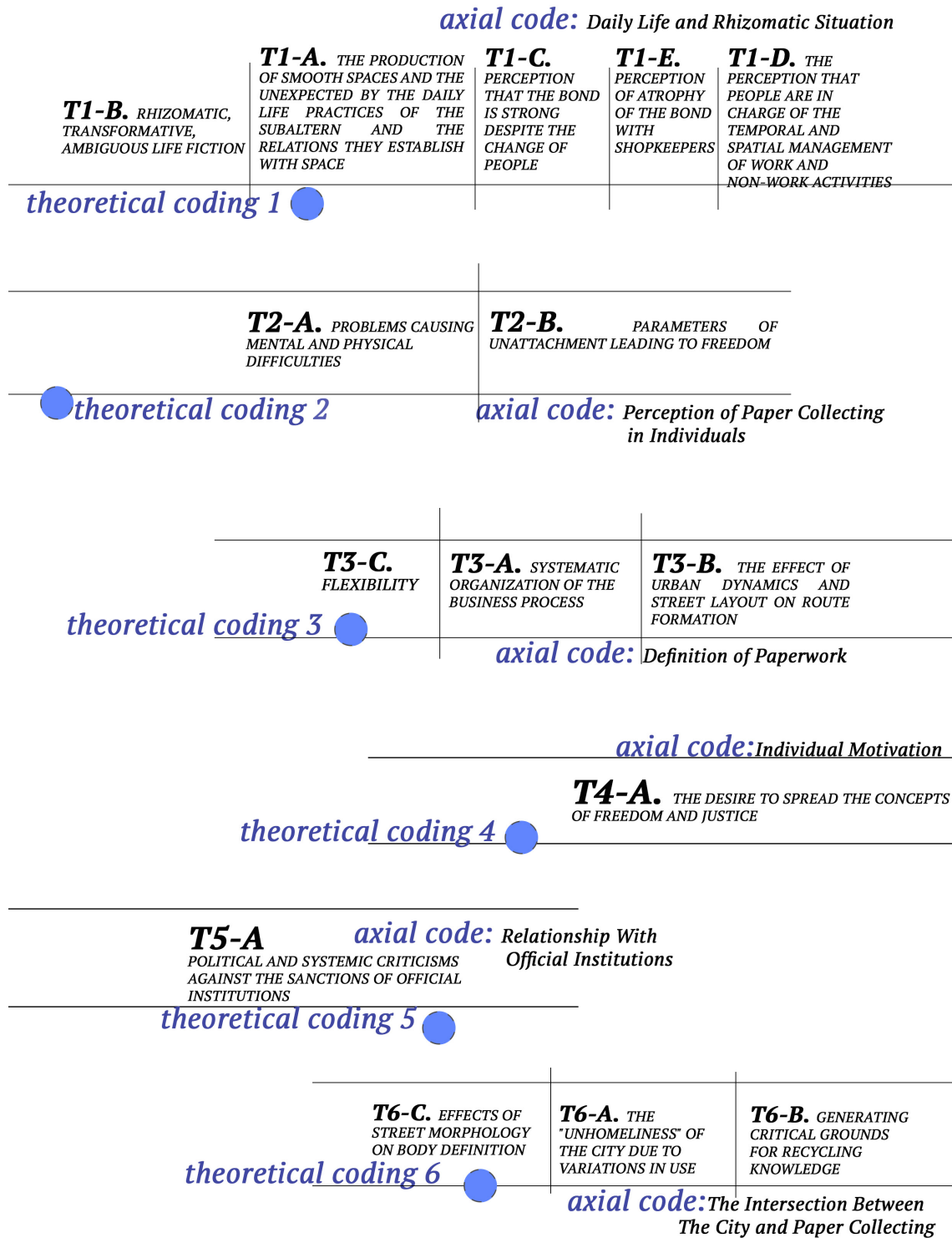


Figure 4. Diagram of theoretical coding. Source: Author, 2025.

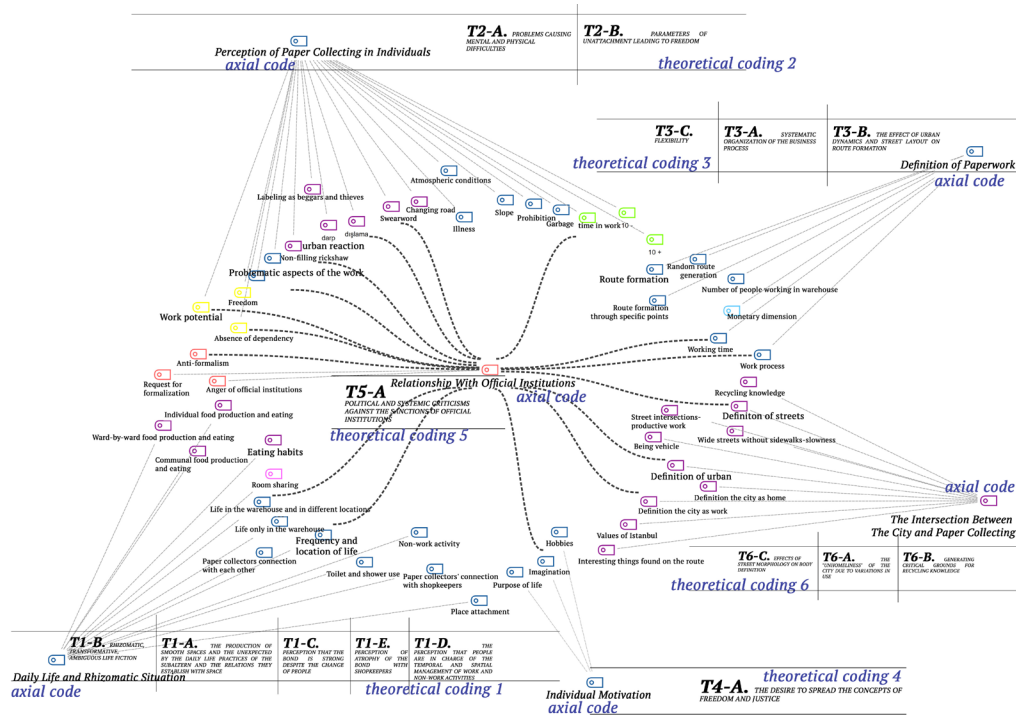


Figure 5. Diagram of the relationships between categories, theoretical and open codes. Source: Author, 2025.

the. Memos played an important role in this process. Figure 6 shows the deconstructive section of the warehouse space formed by the informal use of an idle building consisting of wards, a storage and sorting section, a common bathroom, an office, an accounting desk, a weighbridge, and a backyard. Each unit is produced by a paper collector.

Spatial coding was used by the previously indicated preliminary data gleaned from the memos and observations. In this way, a sort of spatial translation resulted from the confluence of theoretical and spatial codes (Figure 6). This translation functions as a re-translation . and the manuscript appears in the narrative as a re-translation manifested in space. However, each section required separate handling and retranslation. In this sense, the fragmented section has been dismantled again.

In the first fragment (Figure 7), the area considered to be the backyard of the warehouse is analyzed. Here, it is observed that paper collectors engage in activities such as socializing, storing items, and drying laundry. The space is constantly transforming, similar to other areas. Each visitor creates a space of their own. The table marked in yellow in Figure 7 serves as a divider for the storage area used by a paper collector. Before the specific paper collector arrives at this storage space, the table is used as a surface for another collector to stack

their belongings on. Thus, it can be understood that a single element creates and shapes space in different ways for each person. Consequently, one of the codes produced for this place is “each visitor’s spatial intervention.” This particular code is a translation that corresponds to the theoretical code T-1B (rhizomatic and transformative ambiguous fiction of life) derived from verbal translation.. The manuscript space and the theoretical foundation formed by the themes complement each other to create a new whole.

Another observation in section fragment 1 is that this space holds significant potential for socialization. Here, paper collectors engage in their daily activities, such as drying laundry, which are domestic rather than work-related, while conversing or playing various games. Even if the people change, this situation remains the same, and newcomers adapt to the performativity. Therefore, another code derived from this is “socializing space + rickshaw storage + laundry drying.” Theoretically, it corresponds to the theoretical code T-1C (the perception that the bond remains strong despite changes in people).

Section fragment 2 reveals the interior of the wards. The first trace read here was on the entrance alcove. The paper collectors residing in the upper-level ward accessed the ward through an alcove on the floor. The part that can be accessed from outside through a door is used as a storage area. The Figure 8 bottom image



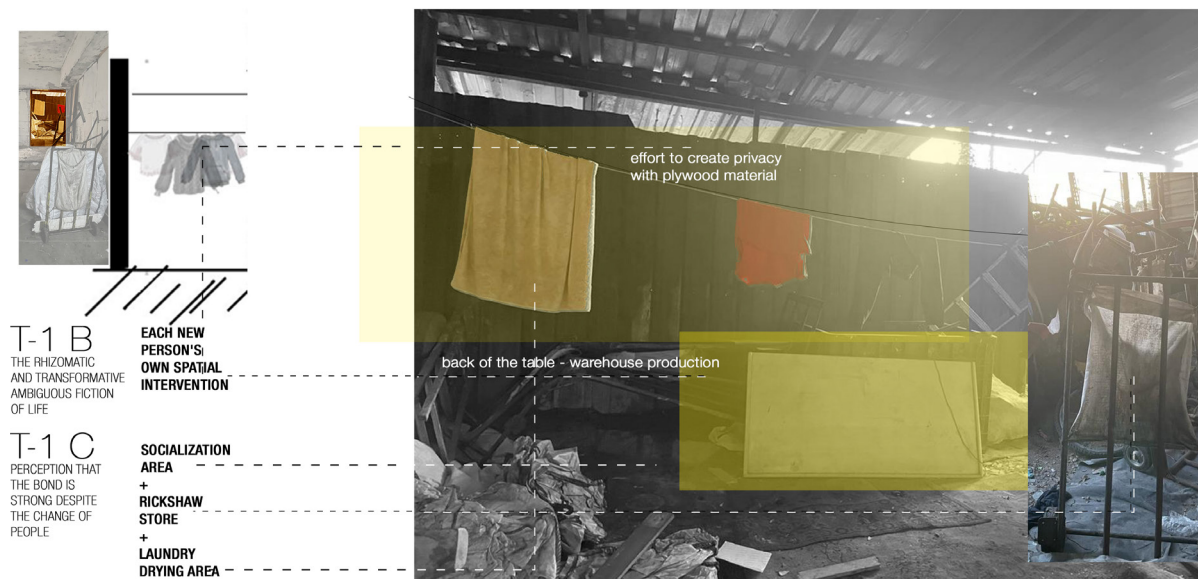


Figure 7. Section fragment 1. Source: Author, 2025.

expresses this situation. Here, the usual forms of use are broken, and smooth spaces are reproduced around the theoretical code T1-A.

The use of beds in the ward re-emphasizes that each user can have a different usage pattern. Therefore, the spatial codes work with the themes of T-1B (rhizomatic and transformative ambiguous fiction of life) and T-3C (flexibility).

The capacity to intervene at every point in the wards supports the theory that the bond established is strong even if people change, which is the T-1C theme. The change in the use of bunk beds, the differentiation of entrances according to individuals, and the specialization and marginalization of storage areas indicate that every part of the warehouse is open to spatial intervention (Figure 8).

Another issue observed in the wards is the practice of keeping belongings in suitcases or packed items, such as rations, indicating a mode of temporary inhabitation. The photographs in Figure 8 reveal and emphasize this. Here, the potential to penetrate another part of the city at any moment brought about by nomadic fiction—in other words, the state of “liberation,” as the paper collectors call it—is read. Therefore, in T-2B, the theoretical code titled “the parameters of unattachment leading to freedom” can be read.

When analyzing the third section in reference to Figure 9, various typologies, usage, and privacy preferences concerning entrances are brought into the discussion. First, the entrance to the upper ward is perceived through a void in the ceiling slab of the lower ward. The position

of the vertical ladder, which can be pulled up, allows the entrance to be fully closed to ensure privacy or to evolve into a completely open space when desired. The top left photograph in Figure 9 illustrates this scenario. The bottom two photographs depict wards with and without doors. The lack of an entrance door, highlighted by the presence of a coat rack, and the minimal privacy level are mapped again with codes T-1A and T-3C. However, even the rhizomatic approach, the plane of immanence, and the privacy phenomenon introduced by these codes should not define transcendence.

The material differences that arise from user interventions, the daily life parameters evident in the plumbing pipes, and the arbitrary positioning of the stacked water carboys, playfully arranged to form an improvised entrance that limits access to the ward all recall themes T-1B and T-2A. This reading indicates that even the entrance areas are specifically designed for each paper collector. The manuscript evolves and derives from the impressions it creates in the space.

Section fragment 4 presents the cross-section of two wards (Ward X) that were added later. What stands out in this section is the ward's constantly changing activity, interior organization, and architectural interventions. In this context, three plan constructions of Ward X are illustrated in Figure 10. Each plan is designed for a different number and audience of paper collectors. The spatial organization varies in each unit. As shown in the figures, in some instances, the kitchen is situated in a niche, in others, it is placed on top of a bunk bed, and in a few cases, it is even positioned on the floor within a space. This situation reflects the adaptability of

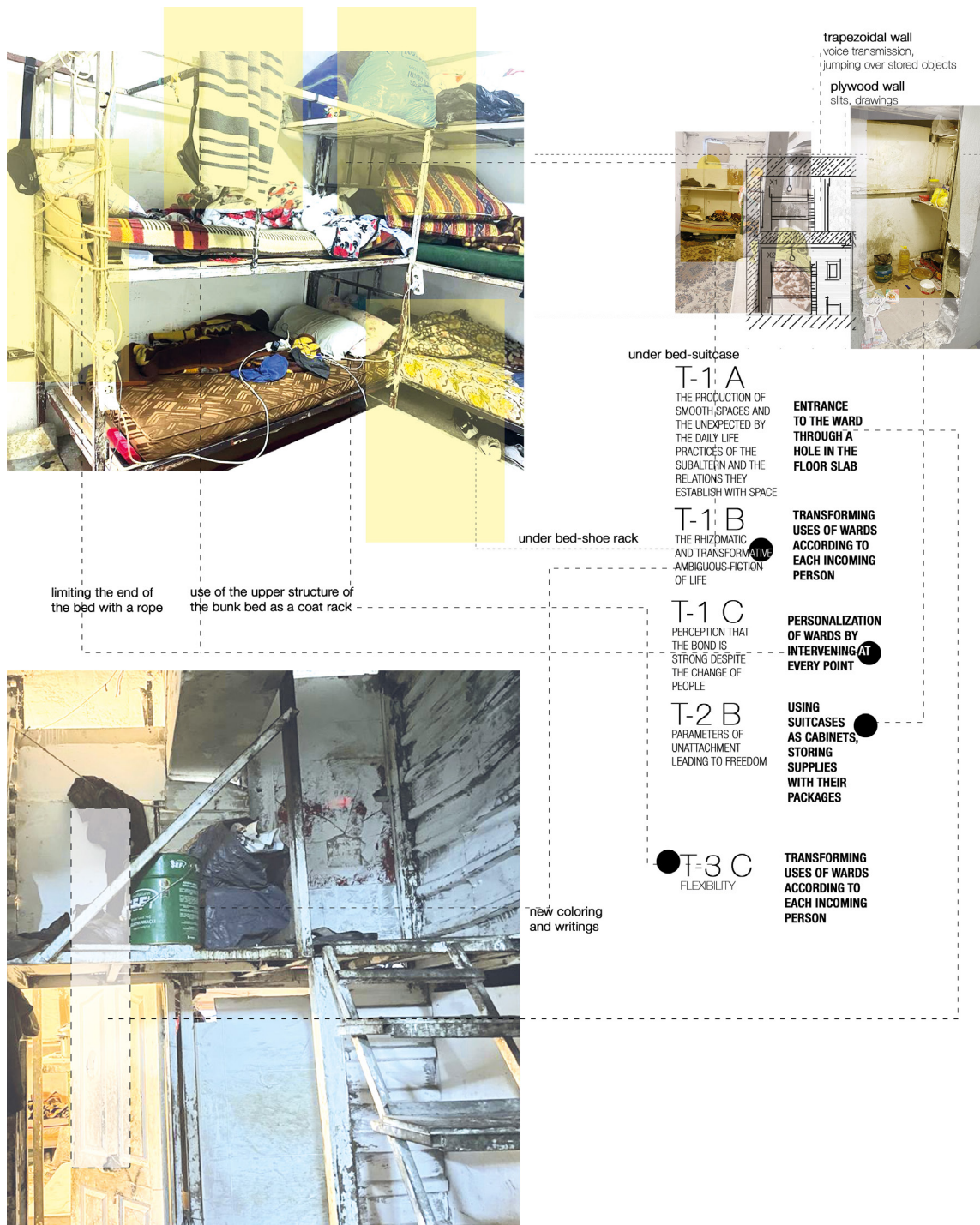


Figure 8. Section fragment 2. Source: Author, 2025.

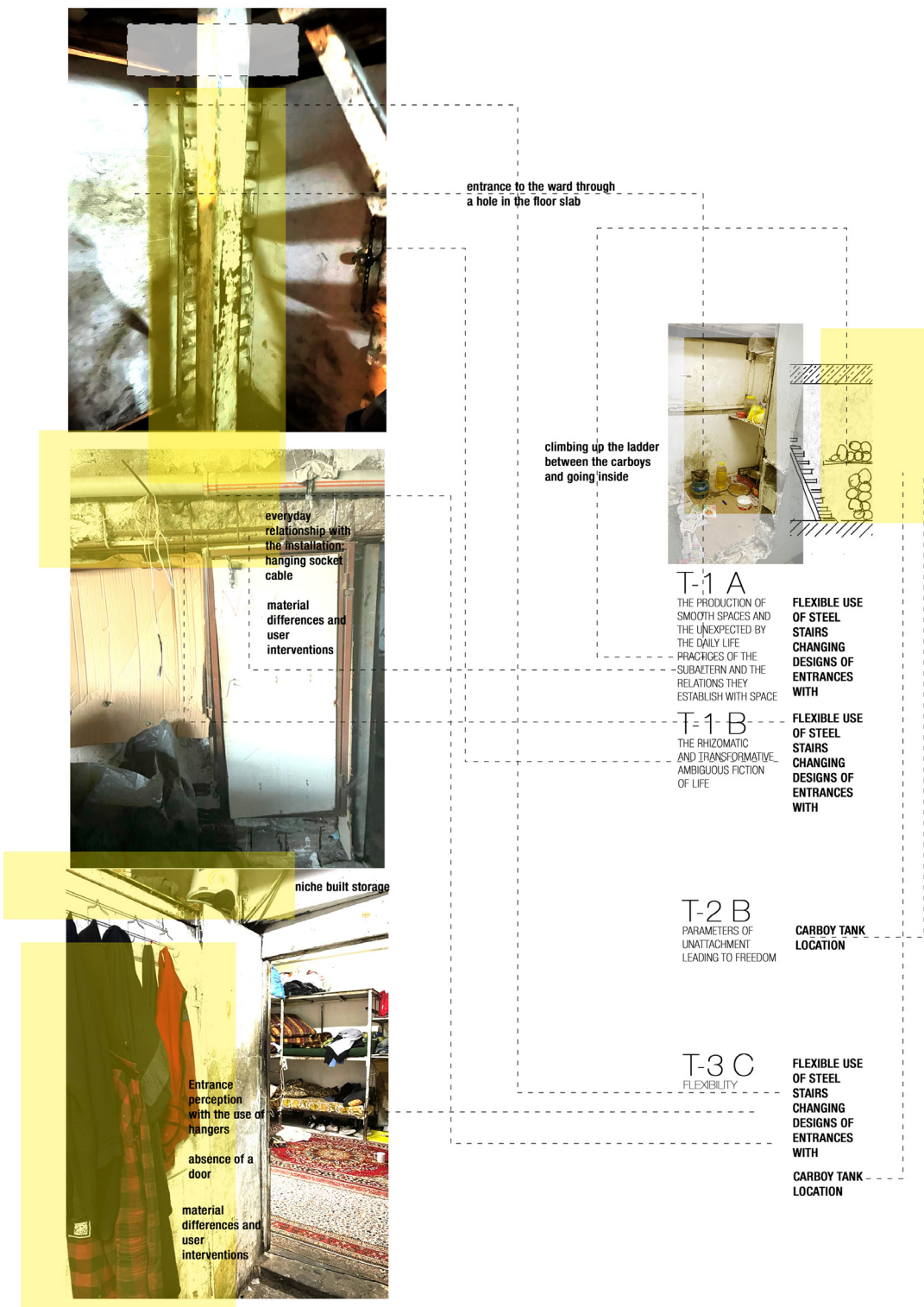


Figure 9. Section fragment 3. Source: Author, 2025.



updating of wall and floor coverings by each newcomer, as well as inscriptions, various paint applications, and hanging photographs, strengthen the connection with the space and invoke the T-1C code.

In section 5, the area of work production was analyzed (Figure 11). In this region, where the rickshaws, collected waste, weighing tools, and the office are situated, all the paper collectors working in the warehouse gather. Each paper collector has a specific task. Some sort the incoming garbage, some weigh the sorted items on the scale, as shown in the photograph in Figure 11, while one person keeps records. Selected collectors load the separated paper, metal, and plastics onto carts and transport them to recycling facilities. Even when workers change, newcomers are immediately given tasks, allowing the workflow to proceed without

interruption. All paper collectors utilize a designated area of the space, which is not divided by barriers, according to their tasks, ensuring that the workflow continues smoothly. This demonstrates the systematic organization of the work process and aligns themes T-1C and T-3A.

The area in question is not covered with different materials as in other parts but only covered with plastered. Mostly, the concrete wall behind the plaster is visible, and this wall is marked with inscriptions. The re-plastering is done not to cover the concrete wall, but to renew the inscriptions. Accordingly, the walls work as a meaningful signifier and expression space. Therefore, as observed in urban contexts, this space is approached not only as a workspace, but also with the awareness that forms part of their daily lives, or more precisely,



Figure 11. Section fragment 5. Source: Author, 2025.

their lives. This situation invokes open-ended variations of the manuscript space and layered derivatives of translation, produces a critical ground. Especially each expression that comes with writing contains a different political critique, as the T-5A theoretical code says. In this way, the space-actor dichotomy—understood as the separation between spatial form and human agency—dissolves and turns into a space where the translation also multiplies

## 6. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION: A POST-TRANSLATION

The analysis of area X has revealed that paper collectors, through their rhizomatic lifestyles, contribute to multiple forms of translation at various scales and with different tools. Their existence demonstrates how the subaltern's spatial practices extend from the urban environment to their personal living units. In this context, it has been shown that the daily lives of the subaltern unfold in "strange spaces" (Bauman 1990), including manuscript spaces that reflect the nature of the metropolis and the nomadic spaces they create. These spaces support the subaltern's ability to communicate through the traces they leave behind.

Each phase of the research revealed the subaltern's spatiotemporal multiplicity along different axes, effectively shifting the role of the translator away from the researcher. In this dynamic system, humans and non-humans can act as translators, creating an open system. Through a Derridean lens, this disrupts traditional perceptions of hierarchy and class, reframing "subaltern" as a marker of difference. As a result, each reader of the subaltern's narrative participates in reifying their existence, marking this process as post-translation.

The final stage of the grounded theory methodology has identified the selective codes as "perception of freedom," "manuscript space," "rhizomatic life fiction," and "political position," which function both as outcomes and producers of these phenomena (Table 1). This core code system—emerging from the analysis of open, axial, and theoretical codes—places the nomadic nature of the paper collectors on a critical ground. It highlights how they are othered and transformed, thereby disrupting the traditional subject-power dynamic. This, in turn, fosters a sense of "freedom" as articulated by the paper collectors themselves. The othering phenomenon, critiqued by post-colonial theory, becomes a chosen state, and spatial production is embedded within political discourse.

The fluidity of this spatial production has created a "draftsmanship" state—a space that can be constantly rewritten, with traces of the past left intentionally intact. This manuscript space fosters critical communication, manifesting a new face of the city that triggers a

rhizomatic structure in everyday life. This rhizomatic axis allows the paper collectors to break from the systemic structures imposed by power continually. The four core elements of the coding system—freedom, manuscript space, rhizomatic life, and political stance—are interrelated and reinforce one another. The analysis of these core codes shows that the political stance underpins and influences the other codes. As shown in the MAXQDA analysis (Figure 5), all categories are linked to the "relationship with official institutions," further reinforcing the centrality of political stance.

Ultimately, the subaltern's existence within these spaces is inherently political. Their state of otherness, the draftsmanship of their spaces, their nomadic urban phenomenon, and the rhizomatic nature of their daily lives all converge on a political base. In this sense, translation—which leaves things unfinished, continuously derives meaning, and brings them into existence—is also political. Freedom itself is political.

At this stage, the subaltern's mode of communication has shifted from verbal expression to spatial and experiential communication. As nomadic urban dwellers, the paper collectors are recognized through the traces they leave behind within the city. These traces, born of their nomadic nature, enable them to "speak" to the entire city, permeating every aspect of the urban.

Like the unfinished Tower of Babel (Montero Fenollos 2011), the metropolis exists in a perpetual state of becoming with subaltern. This ongoing incompleteness sparks its own counter-narrative one not rooted in the static preservation of urban form but in the continual transformation, mobility, and nomadism. This viewpoint redefines urban as a dynamic principle, where survival and contribution to the urban ecosystem stem from continuous adaptation. As Derrida (1982, 22) says: "The construction of philosophy continues, but its completion has been postponed indefinitely."

## PATENTS

**Funding:** This research received no external funding

**Data Availability Statement:** The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Acknowledgments:** Our endless thanks to the paper collectors in Istanbul.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

**Ethical Declaration:** Approval of the whole process was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. Project Number: 477

	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Theoretical Coding	Space Codes	Selective Coding	
	Recycling knowledge	The Intersection Between The City and Paper Collecting	T6B-Generating critical grounds for recycling knowledge		Political Position	
Definition of streets	Street intersections			T6C-Effects of street morphology on body definition		
	Wide streets without sidewalks					
Definition of urban	Being vehicle			T6A-The "unhomeliness" of the city due to variations in use		
	Definition the city as home					
	Definition the city as work					
	Values of Istanbul					
	Interesting things found on the route					
	Hobbies					
	Imagination					
	The life purpose	Individual Motivation	T4A-The desire to spread the concepts of freedom and justice		Political Position	
	Paper collectors' connection with shopkeepers	Daily Life and Rhizomatic Situation	T1E-Perception of atrophy of the bond with shopkeepers			
	Paper collectors connection with each other			T1C-Perception that the bond is strong despite the change of people	The capacity of sections such as socializing area, rickshaw storage, and laundry drying to evolve with each newcomer, creating interpersonal bonds and personalization	
	Non-work activity			T1D-The perception that people are in charge of the temporal and spatial management of work and non-work activities		
	Toilet and shower use					
Frequency and location of life	Life only in the warehouse			T1B-The rhizomatic and transformative ambiguous fiction of life	Personalization of wards by intervening at every point	Rhizomatic Life Fiction
	Life in the warehouse and in different locations					
	Place attachment					
Eating habits	Room sharing			T1A-The production of smooth spaces and the unexpected by the daily life practices of the subaltern and the relations they establish with space	Flexible use of steel stairs changing designs of entrances with  Transforming uses of wards according to each incoming person	Rhizomatic Space Production
	Communal food production and eating					
	Ward-by-ward food production and eating					
	Individual food production and eating					
	Anger of official institutions	Relationship With Official Institutions	T5A-Political and systemic criticisms against the sanctions of official institutions	Street writing	Political Position	
	Request for formalization					
Work potential	Absence of dependency		T2B-Parameters of unattachment leading to freedom	Using suitcases as cabinets, storage of supplies with their packages	Perception of Freedom	
	Freedom					
Problematic aspects of the work	Non-filling rickshaw	Perception of Paper Collecting in Individuals	T2A-Problems causing mental and physical difficulties			
	Pounding					
	Ostracism					
	Swearword					
	Changing road					
	Illness					
	Slope					
	Atmospheric conditions					
	Prohibition					
	Garbage					
Route formation	Random route generation		T3B-The effect of urban dynamics and street layout on route formation			
	Route formation through specific points					
	Number of people working in warehouse					
	Monetary dimension					
	Working time		T3C-Flexibility	Ways of using the wards that transform according to each incoming person	Rhizomatic Space Production	
	Work process	Definition of Paperwork	T3A-Systematic organization of the business process	Seamless space sharing in a zone not separated by dividers		

Table 1. Table on the selective coding system reached as a result of the whole coding system. Source: Author, 2025.

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