

EZGICAN OZDEMIR

Documenting surrender:  
water privatization and  
governing dependence  
in north Cyprus

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On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014 then-Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Hamit Bakırcı, declared the de-facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC hereafter) state and its offices to be defunct and incapable to manage the water infrastructure. The water in question was/is to be provided by the Turkish Republic, flowing through a water supply pipeline, or the so-called Project of the Century. Funded by the Turkish state, the mega-infrastructure project is an agglomeration of an 80 km undersea pipeline that stretches across the Mediterranean, upgraded network pipes in the north of Cyprus, along with purification plants, dams, treatment facilities, and storage sites. And the transferred water was to be provided for the communities of north Cyprus who have been grappling with a water-scarce geography on a daily basis for decades. Bakırcı, in an interview for Kıbrıs Postası (Cyprus Gazette), a north Cyprus based newspaper, asserted that neither the State Hydraulics Authority, nor any of the 28 municipalities in the unrecognized state of TRNC have the technical, infrastructural capacity and adequate and skilled personnel to manage such a vast infrastructural project: "... it is obvious that [the municipalities'] existing system of operations does not render them capable of managing this water. I do not want this transferred water to go to waste just to hold on to an ideology" (Orakcioğlu 2014).

At the time of this interview and as the construction of the pipeline infrastructure almost came to an end, municipalities, politicians, and other state actors in the de-facto TRNC initiated the conversation of what was to be one of the most controversial topics to discuss in the public sphere—who would manage the transferred water, how, and with what kind of terms and conditions would the Turkish state "bestow upon the gift of water" to Turkish Cypriots? Just as any other Turkish aid—financial, infrastructural, or other—the question of which state body would manage the transferred water was imbued with political ideology. A mundane infrastructural necessity, therefore, became the front and centre as a fundamental indication of Turkish Cypriot sociality, their political positionings and TRNC politicians' leverage in domestic affairs vis-à-vis their so-called motherland Turkey.

Giving examples of several municipalities on their incapability to respond to infrastructural failure, Bakırcı later described the ideal scenario and resorted to a rhetorical question in the interview: "We should look at water management holistically. When you receive this water, your infrastructure should be in place, like the network pipes to households; there should be no seepage loss. Not only this, your sewerage infrastructure should also be in place.

We need to be able to treat the sewerage water and reuse it for agricultural production... There needs to be rainwater collection pipes and reservoirs. *Who will do all of these?* Is it going to be the [TRNC] state and its State Hydraulics Authority, which employs merely 4 engineers on temporary contracts? Or is it going to be the municipalities which clearly do not have the capacity in any way?" (ibid). And it is precisely this rhetorical question that unsettled the Turkish Cypriot public, media, and the political arena in general; once the question emerged, Bakırcı was quickly accused of being "disrespectful to the intellect and skills of the Turkish Cypriot society" and "looking down upon his people" (Kahvecioğlu 2014).

This newspaper interview with the Minister, throughout my ethnographic field research in north Cyprus between January 2016 and June 2017 has been a prominent reference point for my Turkish Cypriot interlocutors, who spoke to me about the events and heated discussions that unfolded after the Turkish state sent a bilateral agreement for the privatization of the transferred water and its management in the beginning of 2016. How can a TRNC Minister make such a sweeping judgment about the abilities of his people? The outrage followed by the breaking news of the forthcoming privatization of water infrastructure, exacerbated even further. And water became a protagonist in the politics of the de facto state. It not just entered into politics as a material and non-human actor, but also became a source of political contention in regard to the long-questioned sovereignty of the de-facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Pipeline that would deliver this "water of life"<sup>1</sup> from the Mersin region of Turkey to the northern Cypriot territories, is not a mere success of technological system; it rendered the deep and sensitive connection between two spaces more contestable than ever. It is the continuation and consolidation of a political project that dates back further than the 1974 coup d'état of Greece and Cyprus and the subsequent 'peace operation' by the Turkish Armed Forces.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many other symbolic names given by the Turkish government to the transferred water such as "peace water" or "gift water" and to the pipeline as "river of peace".

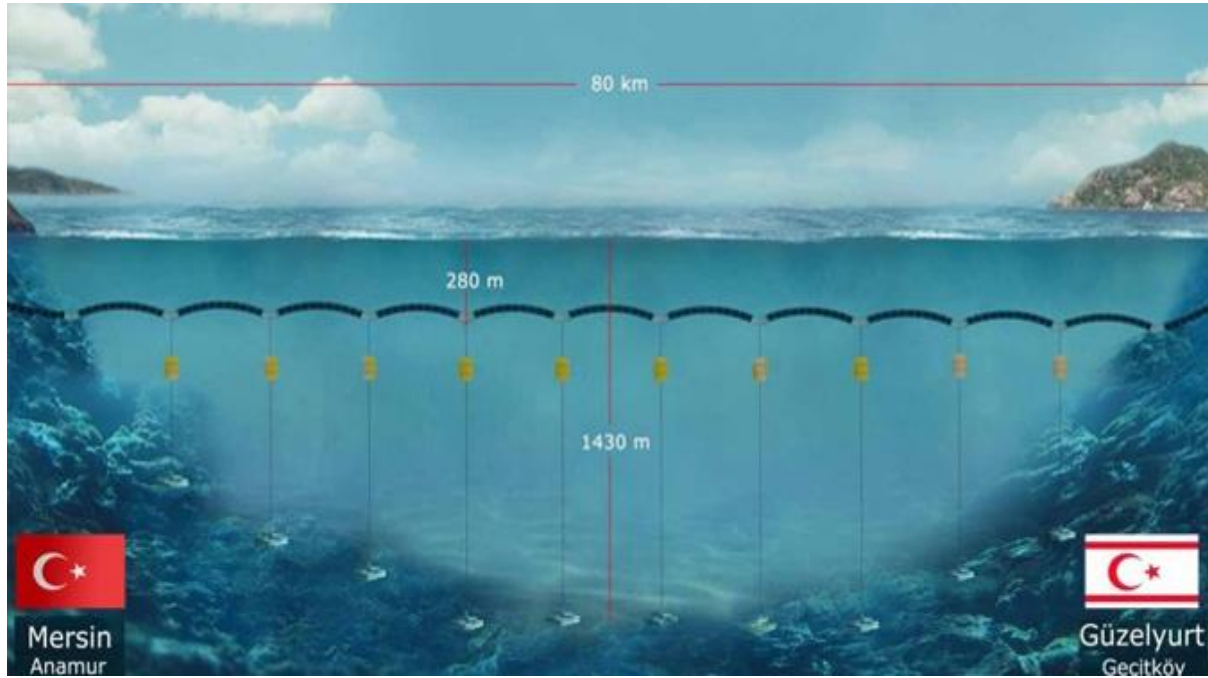


Figure 1. The pipeline between Mersin-Anamur and Gecitkoy. Source: <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/galeri/kktc-su-temin-projesi-basladi-456865>

In July 2016, the pipes and taps of north Cyprus communities started to flow with the transferred water. The main pipeline physically connects ‘babyland’ north Cyprus to its ‘motherland’ Turkey like an ‘umbilical cord’, providing the source of life itself<sup>2</sup>. For Turkish Cypriots and other communities in the north, the infrastructure project has come to embody what Harvey and Knox (2012) call “sublime enchantment” or reflect Schwenkel’s idea that “infrastructure’s material spectacle [as] ideologically performative” (2015, 525). The dams, transferred water, and pipes gave a new meaning to the spaces they traverse across the island and beyond through the sea. While the Turkey-TRNC pipeline infrastructure offers many insights on the ways in which people engage and interpret the transferred water socially and affectively, in this paper I focus my attention on how this social reproduction happens within the realm of policymaking. I explore how policy processes constitute certain professional subjectivities and collective meanings, reproduce ideologies, and create new hierarchies within the field of governance and policy implementation and interpretation. The paper explores what Antina von Schnitzler calls the techno-political terrain, where infrastructure and language around technology become locations of the political (2013, 673), where the professional and/or expert communities within the field of governance come to the fore as central actors of politics. I look at how the discourses of these actors and the multiple ways in which imposition,

<sup>2</sup> These terms are widely used for the de-facto TRNC and the Turkish state, respectively in both Turkish Cypriot and Turkish public.

negotiation, and contestation within the policy process of water privatization happen in relation to the de-facto conditions of the polity and its dependence on a patron state.

### Methods and the Field

I base this paper on the ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted between January 2016 and June 2017 in north Cyprus, mainly in Nicosia—the de-facto capital of the north. The ethnographic methods utilized in this paper are as follows. First, I take policy documents, agreements and protocols as ethnographic objects of inquiry while observing how these policy implementations are put into practice. Matthew Hull explains that “documents are not simply instruments of bureaucratic organizations, but rather are constitutive of bureaucratic rules, ideologies, knowledge, practices, subjectivities, objects, outcomes, and even the organizations themselves” (2012, 253). Following Hull’s idea, I explore the ways in which the imposed documents that I unpack in the next section, support and consolidate a patron-client regime that the TRNC polity tackle with and therefore render its dependence on an extra-state power deeper. These policy documents, I contend, reproduce the Turkish state’s established political agenda of geopolitical dominance in the north of the island.

Furthermore, policy documents show how dominant discourses set up certain political agendas and enforce systems of meaning-making. Following Gupta and Ferguson (2002), policy documents, the discursive articulations and political processes that emerge from them all contribute to the production of “spatial and scalar hierarchies” (984). As part of the representational practices that state structures put in play, policy work—its formulation, implementation, and interpretation—in the case at hand, can bring into focus how local structures of power are tied to non-local systems of domination. In the case of studying infrastructures, “discourses, narratives, and language give form to infrastructure as much as concrete, wires, or zoning regulations (Anand, Gupta, and Appel 2018). The bilateral privatization agreement and other documents that set certain policies into place and eliminate others are therefore, ethnographic objects that discursively shed light on how the Turkish state implements certain knowledge and practice and maintain a bureaucratic rule that reproduces the hierarchical relations between two polities.

Wedel et al (2005) explain ‘the field’ of anthropological inquiry as “loosely connected actors with varying degrees of institutional leverage located in multiple ‘sites’ that are not always even geographically fixed” (39). Thus, I follow this view in this paper, where I take the field of governance and expertise and analyse the discourses, actions, and attitudes of certain techno-political actors within the field of hydraulic and agricultural governance. Furthermore,

Shore and Wright (1997) argue that the field is "...not a discrete local community or bounded geographical area, but a social and political space articulated through relations of power and systems of governance" (14). Following this idea of power relations as a locus of inquiry, therefore, I analyze the case of water privatization in north Cyprus and how as infrastructural planning, its upgrade, and managerial and governmental arrangements come into play, the techno-political actors and their work are imbued with already established patron-client relations that encompass the politics between and around the two polities. Through participant observation and semi-structured individual interviews, the paper brings together several actors whose working lives all revolve around the water infrastructural upgrade and its governmental shifts and changes. The actors I spoke to and to whom I address my ethnographic interest in this paper hold significant positions with the field of governance; most of them, though not policy makers, implement technical and managerial work in the state offices of TRNC on a daily basis. As bilateral agreements are put into practice and protocols undertaken, especially Turkish Cypriot Hydraulics Authority officials, along with other state officials associated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, critically reflect on not just privatization in general, but also privatization within a polity of non-recognition and dependence on the patron state.

Keeping these in mind, I argue that meaning making processes through policy work and water governance practices for Turkish Cypriot officials are directly contingent upon their ways of relating to their Turkish counterparts, which in turn reproduces certain professional subjectivities engrained with self-ascribed inferiority and technical inept-ness. Throughout the paper, I utilize the term 'subjectivity' in line with how Sherry Ortner (2005) describes it: "The ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects" that are deeply culturally and socially embedded (31). In the case of water management in north Cyprus, professional subjectivities refer to the ways in which engineers and experts situate themselves socially, politically, and morally vis-à-vis a patron-client political structure. Also, Christine Bichsel (2016), in her synthesis of anthropological studies of water, infrastructure, and political rule, articulates that "subjectivity is understood to emerge through calculative practices and disciplinary effects, materialized entitlements, socio-material assemblages and specific knowledge practices" (368). The techno-political actors that I present in this paper, often vocal about their political views and Turkish intervention to the hydraulic system of the north, position themselves through producing certain knowledge through calculative and projective practices, while at the same time constituting professional subjectivities contingent upon political hierarchy and difference. The paper will explore these

emerging subjectivities by bringing forth policy documents and how they are perceived by these actors; how they interpret and reflect on the shift to a privatized hydraulic utility system for the north of the island.

For the rest of the paper, I first explicate how the problem of water scarcity in the island is not just a geo-physical one, but also one that is deeply (geo)political. I then lay out privatization as a neoliberal practice and its utilization in market/state alliances globally. Briefly explicating how privatization of water management occurs in north Cyprus, I contend that privatization as a part and parcel of a neoliberal economic rationality does not necessarily go outside the confines of already established political rationalities and that it can feed into certain rules of domination just as in the case of Turkey-north Cyprus. I argue that water privatization not only subjugates citizens into paying customers, but also constitutes subjectivities of its immediate actors within the field of governance and expertise. Later, I illustrate these arguments by first, delving into the realm of policy documents, rhetorical devices used in these texts. And second, I couple this discursive analysis with how techno-political actors within TRNC and Turkish state institutions, interpret and perform their responsibilities and evade the shifts and multiplicity of governing regimes through emphasizing their professional subjectivities within the already established hierarchical structure of hydraulic institutions.

### Water Scarcity in north Cyprus

Water scarcity and deterioration of natural resource quality throughout Cyprus has been a significant problem for the island's ecology. And this geo-physical fact has exacerbated since 1960s, because of unrestricted extraction, increase in population. Contamination of the resources and salinization of the coastal aquifers have had to be addressed (Gozen and Turkman 2008). As the island populations came out of a bloody ethnic strife between 1963-1974, having experienced loss of land and people, Cyprus became territorially divided following a military invasion by the Turkish Armed Forces, a population exchange, and the consequent self-declaration of the unrecognized TRNC state. The ethnic war and its social and political consequences have impacted the islanders and beyond on many levels and aspects and changing the management practices for water is one of them—though it may seem at first glance irrelevant. The diverging practices of water management and resource allocation between the TRNC and Republic of Cyprus, though not central to this paper, have proved that water scarcity cannot be decoupled from the island's political and social history and this conflictual history's geopolitical *and* geophysical repercussions for its water resources. As Hoffmann (2017) demonstrates, while the Republic of Cyprus built desalination plants having just come out of



the 2008 economic crisis, the TRNC on the other hand, put all of its eggs in one basket—that is of Turkish state. The Turkey-north Cyprus water supply project—“motherland umbilical water cord” (3)—not only became the single solution for water provisioning, but also divided the island territory even further in its efforts to solve a geophysical problem. In this section, I take a Turkish Cypriot geologist’s account in order to demonstrate that technical expert knowledge production in the case of Cyprus’s water scarcity problem is not just a geomorphological one, but one that is generated by the social and historical divisions, conflict, isolation, and dependence.

As the backbone of the economy for north Cyprus has been agriculture—mainly citrus fruit cultivation that requires proper watering, irrigation has played an important role in diminishing resources, as production increased over decades. Furthermore, rainfall over the years have greatly decreased not just in Cyprus, but in the whole Eastern Mediterranean region. The climate of the region is also a major factor in the sourcing of rainfall through aquifers, as most of the rainfall is lost through evaporation (Nachmani 2000). The Chamber of Environmental Engineers affiliated with the Union of Turkish Cypriot Engineers and Architects (KTMMOB) issued a “Proposal for Water Politics” in May 2016<sup>3</sup> that gives a background information on the state of freshwater resources and water potential of the north of the island. It says that while the quantity of renewable freshwater resources of north Cyprus is 90 million m<sup>3</sup>/year, the yearly extraction of these resources is 110-120 million m<sup>3</sup>—70% of which is for irrigation use (Su Politika Önerisi 2016). The proposal adds that for a 300.000 population, water requirement is a mere 35 million m<sup>3</sup>/year and that the over-extraction for irrigation and heavy evaporation has caused the water repletion for the north of the island (ibid).

As Hoffmann (2018) demonstrates, water scarcity and dependency on the transferred resources does not only arise from geo-physical factors, but also “have developed in relation to the geopolitical realities of conflict, isolation, division, and occupation” (3). Selim<sup>4</sup>, a geologist who works at the Geology and Mining Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources confirms this while giving a scientific account of the diminishing water resources. He said that the water problems of Cyprus stemmed from the geographical positioning of the island in the Mediterranean and the fact that it was a relatively small island, which would entail that water resources would never be enough as the population rose. He explained the geological structure of the northern territories in direct relation to the geo-political and politically uncertain structure of the island.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.yeniduzen.com/cevre-muhendislerinden-su-politikasi-onerileri-64575h.htm>

<sup>4</sup> The author uses pseudonyms for interlocutors in this paper.

“Water resources are collected in aquifers—subsoil freshwater basins. We are an island, so we do not have ongoing water flow from any springs, especially in the northern parts of the island. The south is better in this sense. Because they have the Troodos mountain, which has considerable elevation and is spread in a wide area. It snows up there and that turns into sources of water. They have rivers flowing year-round. We are not lucky like them. The Pentadaktylos mountain ranges do not have that much elevation. It snows up there every five or six years. The snow stays for a day and then melts and evaporates away. It does not feed into the subsoil water basins. It remains as a pretty sight only.”

His expertise about water scarcity and geological explanations to it, for him, cannot be decoupled from who is fortunate enough to end up on which side of the mass of land in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Selim’s expert knowledge, regardless of soil structure and characteristics of the aquifers then, is contingent upon the political history and its consequences for the island communities. He produces scientific knowledge about geology in direct relation to the north’s counterpart, the south. And as a geologist, his account is one that is politically ambivalent due to occupation and the north’s contested conditions of being a break-away state.

The two main coastal aquifers (subsoil water basins) of the island—below the Pentadakylos and Troodos mountain ranges—have become replete due to intense extraction over the years. Most of my interlocutors agree that the transferred water is direly needed because of repletion and salinization of the freshwater resources of the island. For technopolitical actors like Selim, scarcity and salinization, rather than being framed as geo-physical and technical matters, become notions that are directly tied to ‘state-space’ (Penelope Harvey 2012) and its socio-political effects. Just like Selim, my other interlocutors never spoke of geology, hydrology, and engineering as outside of the political realm. Their professional milieu is shaped and in return shapes politics directly. And this is precisely the case when the political conversation in north Cyprus steers direction towards the privatization of a state-run utility infrastructure as a result of a seemingly geo-physical condition.

#### [Privatizing the transferred water and its management](#)

As part of an ongoing global trend of private-sector participation in the construction and management of water infrastructures, the pipeline between the southern Turkish coast and north Cyprus is not different. In fact, it can be seen as part of this global trend of privatization of utility systems especially in the developing world. Kate Bayliss explains that the trend of privatization could be traced by looking at how the roles of the state and private enterprise shift and transform (in Fine and Jomo 2006). Such transformation is, according to Aihwa Ong (2006), one of the primary components of neoliberal political philosophy. It is “both a claim

that the market is better than the state at distributing public resources and the emergence of highly competitive individualism that often expresses itself in terms of consumption (Mains 2012, 5). As a policy shift, privatization entails a transfer of ownership of state enterprises to private operators. It is usually defended by its proponents by pointing at ‘state failure’. As the provision of basic utilities and services are taken over by private companies, “keeping economies competitive, become[s] the mantra of mainstream economists” (Swyngedouw 2005, 82). Eric Swyngedouw dubs privatization with the term that David Harvey has coined (a la Marx), “accumulation by dispossession” (ibid). What is more important however, is how privatization as a strategy for the purposes of rent-seeking private sector, is embedded in hegemonic, discursive, and ideological frames that render privatization not only legitimate, but normatively desirable. These discursive and ideological frames are operationalized with policy work and political processes through which state/market alliance, having blamed wasteful state spending, inefficiency, and sub-optimal results (83), pursues profitability and control. Same trajectory of capital accumulation followed in the case of water and its commoditization across the Global South. Swyngedouw and others highlight that water infrastructure, once a key component of a state-led social and economic policy, became part of the capitalist processes of accumulation. Kate Bayliss agrees to this that water, “from a strategic abundant resource delivered as a public service, came to be treated as a private commodity with an economic value” (2014, 294). Privatization therefore allowed water resources to enter into the global circuits of capital (ibid).

Just as multilateral organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank or the EU have been imposing on the developing world certain regulatory practices, the Turkish state, in the case of privatizing the transferred water and its management push for changes in legal and institutional frameworks and regulations that permit privatization through. These newly established rules, laws, and institutional/regulatory bodies imposed by the patron state externalize command and control, which Swyngedouw calls a new scalar ‘gestalt’ of governance (Swyngedouw 2005). In the case of Turkey-north Cyprus pipeline and its privatization go through a process with which new institutional bodies are established, agreements and legal frameworks enacted, and the neoliberal economic rationality of marketization and privatization reproduced. The State Hydraulics Authority (*Devlet Su İşleri – DSI*) of the Turkish Republic set up its office and a number of diplomats were brought to north Cyprus for setting up and managing the upgraded hydraulic system. Along with this, a legal framework was enacted, and a series of protocols and documents were signed among which is the controversial 2016 privatization agreement. These

multiplicity of institutions, actors, and procedural shifts all feed into the articulation of hierarchy.

Keeping in mind these shifts and changes that privatization brings, I contend here that water privatization does something much more complex than commoditization of water and the encroachment of state-run utilities by private enterprise in the case of Turkey-north Cyprus water pipeline. As policies change, frameworks put forward, and political process follows through, despite public contestation, privatization does something more than the grim yet neatly explicated picture, as a seemingly coherent neoliberal project, depicted by Swyngedouw. As the transferred water (along with the natural resources from the aquifers of the island) gets privatized, the same water becomes a matter of public concern. Nikhil Anand, in his anthropological study of water services in Mumbai, India, argues that “both publics and their states are brought into being *with* the discrete, partial, and compromised pipes and liquid materials of water infrastructures that form the city” (2018, 158 emphasis in original). Following his line of thought, I argue that Turkish state-imposed privatization of water resources, rather than simply subjecting Turkish Cypriot citizens as paying customers, also constitutes political and professional subjectivities and collectivities, in regard to actors within the local governmental field. With a neoliberal agenda of the privatization of water resources and facilities, its construction entails a furthering of patron-client relations not only within the financial networks in the Turkish ruling party elite, but also with the northern Cypriot political establishment<sup>5</sup>. The arrival of the privatization news created a momentary loss of trust in the idea that the Turkish state, i.e. motherland, acts as a nurturing state for the de-facto TRNC. The marketization (for the sole benefit of the Turkish national market) and commodification of a natural resource has become at odds with the historical and socio-cultural meanings with which the Turkish-north Cyprus relations were built upon. For many Turkish Cypriots, especially the hydraulic workers, the rent-seeking, neoliberal order that the Turkish government aspired to establish through privatization, did not seem compatible with the political rationality and its ethnic and historical ties. However, as Wendy Brown (2005) contends, rather than seeing it as a “bundle of economic policies with inadvertent political and social consequences,” neoliberalism is also part and parcel of “the political rationality that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the market” (38). As such, the economic policies and legal frameworks, however they may be neoliberal, also “[extend and disseminate] market values to

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed historical analysis of patron-client relations in north Cyprus, see (Sonan 2014).

all institutions and social action” (40) and shape the vicissitudes of the political rationality behind the very existence of TRNC polity.

The ‘nurturing’ Turkish state imposed upon Turkish Cypriots a stifling privatization deal under the garb of “bringing a river of life to Turkish Cypriot brothers and sisters.”<sup>6</sup> By focusing on the hydraulic governance, this paper suggests that hydraulic politics and policy work can shed light on how Turkish Cypriot techno-political actors discursively produce a professional subjectivity imbued with difference and hierarchy.

### Governing water through ambiguity and neutrality

As the pipeline’s construction came to an end in early 2016, activists and news media from various political factions started to take up on discussing and speculating what comes after inauguration ceremonies and all the spectacularity of ad campaigns of the Turkish government. The rumors of privatization emerged, and it was as if the Turkish Cypriot public had heard it for the first time. In fact, the frequently changing de-facto TRNC governments over the years of the pipeline construction had signed protocols with the Turkish state that all hinted at privatizing the transferred water and bringing forth a series of policy changes regarding hydraulic utility in the north. This section will detail the ways in which these policy changes carry with them seemingly neutral but deeply political meanings, which all point to the governance of dependence and reproduction of hierarchy between the two polities. I detail the clauses in several documents such as protocols, agreements, and so on, so as to you demonstrate how ambiguity and neutrality take shape discursively and become the central points of contestation for Turkish Cypriot techno-political actors.

#### *2010 Framework Agreement*

An agreement in 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 was already signed for the purposes of “ensuring necessary investment, protection and efficient development and management of the pipeline” and “considering the importance of constituting a uniform and non-discriminatory legal framework” (Çerçeve Andlaşması 2010). Specifically, the Clause 2 of the agreement caused a considerable political controversy and foreshadowed what kind of changes in the management and governance of hydraulic systems would be expected. It proclaims “the ownership of the land, the pipeline that would be built under the sea, and all the facilities constructed within the scope of the project to be transferred to the Turkish Republic as soon as the construction begins”

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<sup>6</sup> The Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan described the pipeline as such during the inauguration ceremony of the water pipeline in north Cyprus. For his full speech in Turkish see: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/35720/turkiyeden-kktcye-su-temini-projesi-gecittkoy-baraji-acilis-torende-yaptiklari-konusma>

and that “the transferred water sourced from Turkey, to be delivered by the pipeline to the TRNC territories commercially is owned by the Turkish Republic until it arrives to the point of sale, namely Geçitköy Dam” (Çerçeve Andlaşması 2010). With this agreement in 2010 then, the TRNC government submits from the inception of the pipeline project to expropriate land if needed and transfer all ownership rights of the upgraded hydraulic utility system to its patron state. The agreement further denotes that the Turkish Republic will hold the rights to sell the transferred water to third countries, which is also repeated in the bilateral privatization agreement in 2016. And some Turkish Cypriot news media picked up on this and pointed out that upon the sale of the transferred water to third countries, north Cyprus will not get any compensation for the water will be transferred via de-facto sovereign lands of the TRNC<sup>7</sup>.

The document, besides laying out the terms and conditions and legal regulations regarding the pipeline project, also foreshadows the coming of the 2016 agreement. It states that “upon consent of all parties, there might be implemented *alternative models* for the construction, ownership, and management of the land and facilities in question” (Çerçeve Andlaşması 2010, emphasis added). As Richard Jenkins (2005) highlights, policy not only governs action to a directed end, which makes policy work goal-oriented; but it also is not apolitical. Policy frameworks, documents and directives like this one revolve around and are surrounded by political negotiation. The ambiguity in the framing of the last quote above, shows the ways in which the Turkish state, with this framework agreement, consolidate a governmental hierarchy and a leverage to steer the infrastructure project according its own political economic agenda. The phrasing of ‘alternative models’ therefore, in its ambiguity, claims a hegemony and holds a determinate role in the continuation of the patron-client relationship. Sarah Green approaches that ambiguity can be, “as hegemonic and subject to disciplinary regimes as clarity” (2005, 12). The ambiguity in this particular document that initiated the implementation of a technological upgrade is a key site where the patron state maintains its hold of power upon the regulatory framework with which the pipeline project is implemented.

The Clause 3 of the 2010 framework adds to the ambiguity and open-ended phrasing of the document. It states that “the pricing of the transferred water is determined with an appropriate pricing formulation to be assigned by a ‘Host government agreement’. The price formulation will take into account the investment, financing, management, and maintenance costs and will have an *appropriate profit margin*” (ibid, emphasis added). Just like the phrasing

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.kibrispostasi.com/c35-KIBRIS\\_HABERLERI/n58689-TCden-KKTCye-su-getirilmesi-protokolunde-gorulmemis-muafiyetler](http://www.kibrispostasi.com/c35-KIBRIS_HABERLERI/n58689-TCden-KKTCye-su-getirilmesi-protokolunde-gorulmemis-muafiyetler)

of the previous one, Clause 3 also leaves deeply political economic matters open-ended and subject to interpretation. Policy-making as Richard Jenkins (2005) says, is intentional and aspiring for regulating orderly action. Again, the document, given the ambiguity and its normative wording, opens the avenue for specific terms of negotiation, while at the same time, shuts down others. The use of the phrase ‘appropriate profit margin’ therefore, leaves the decision-making of the pricing of the transferred water as an open-ended one.

The abovementioned ‘Host government agreement’ to be signed, refers to what was later called the bilateral privatization agreement document. Similar to the specific phrasings mentioned above, the naming of such an agreement falls short in explicating the precise nature of the upcoming agreement. Is it an agreement that the host government, namely the TRNC government puts forth a terms and conditions of the ways in which the Turkish state will conduct, construct, implement, and operate the pipeline infrastructure? Or does the ‘host government agreement’ simply expand on the 2010 framework agreement and remain a consolidation of the patron state’s economic agenda imposed upon the client state?

The 2010 framework document also commits the TRNC state to a series of obligations and duties. Clause 4 and 5 are other cases in point. It states that the costs for expropriation and access to all project domains will be handled by the host government; and that all permissions and licenses needed for the construction and management of the project will be provided. While the framework agreement binds the host government to enable the operationalization of the project, it also obliges the government to waive all taxes (customs, etc.) for the import of the outsourced materials, shipment and transportation of them and all the other services. The impositions of such obligations for the purposes of enabling the pipeline project were signed and implemented by the TRNC government, just as any other “Economic and Financial Cooperation” agreement signed annually, which brings a set of economic sanctions and recommendations for the financial year. In fact, later in 2012, the Economic and Financial Cooperation between the Turkish Republic the de-facto Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was signed, a document authorized to re-set and prolong the terms and conditions of Turkish state’s financial aid and provide an economic regiment for the de-facto state. The cooperation document also mentions that the Turkish government pledges to grant 3 billion Turkish Liras in the years 2013, 2014, and 2015, “excluding the projects for the provision of water and electricity”. Thus, the water pipeline project enters into another state document, being mentioned along with financial aid, as another form of aid. However, a later discussion in the paper will explicate how techno-political actors have perceived this ‘aid’ and how their interpretation has come to affect their hydraulic work.

The Economic and Financial Cooperation protocol document was issued in 2012 along with another one named “2013-2015 Transition to Sustainable Economic Growth Program”, which puts forth a three-year program of regiments and recommendations in order to “make way for a stable growth of a sustainable and competitive economy, increase employment, render the economic discipline sustainable and decrease foreign dependence, increase domestic savings, and enable their investment...” (2013-2015 Sürdürülebilir Ekonomiye Geçiş Programı 2013). The model, along with other sectors like culture and tourism, health services, education, and telecommunication, puts forth a list of action plan for what it calls the “environment sector”, which includes agriculture, husbandry production, and so on. The Goal 6 of the agriculture sector is subtitled “To ensure an agriculture sector focused on rural development and for the purposes of provisioning the needs of the country; one that produces observable products, providing opportunities for export”. The 6.1 section of the economic program goes into detail about subsidies for the dairy producers, enacting a ‘seed law’ for producing certified seeds, and so on. The 6.2 on the other hand, is brief and the phrasing is not unfamiliar. It states, “For the purposes of distributing the transferred water that is to be brought with the pipeline project, there will be established new institutions, networks for distribution, systems of waste water purification, and *appropriate* models of financing (Build-Operate-Transfer, Build-Operate, Transfer of Operating Rights, etc.)” (ibid, emphasis added). The phrasing once again, remains vague and ambiguity that comes with it, reinforces the terms of command and control imposed by the Turkish state. Besides its ambiguity, the word ‘appropriate’ and its usage in both documents imply neutrality and underline an apolitical connotation, yet dependent on technical and economic expert knowledge. Shore and Wright (1997) say that “a key feature of modern power is the masking of the political under the cloak of neutrality” (9). With the transition economic program, the Turkish state’s hegemonic rule over the TRNC as a patron state is consolidated; transition to a sustainable economy program remains to be a seemingly apolitical course of action that the Turkish state provides.

Not only this, the parenthesis of mentioning possible ways of financing the project, namely a Build-Operate-Transfer system adds to the wording of the Goal 6. BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) systems are widely implemented as part of privatization policies for utility systems across the developing world. In fact, according to Kumaraswamy and Zhang (2001), the BOT (Build-Operate-Transfer) as a term was first coined by the former Prime Minister Turgut Özal of the Turkish Republic in 1984, when key state economic enterprises were privatized as part of the Turkish privatization programme (Öniş 2004). Build-Operate-Transfer



schemes, though widespread around the world, has inherent uncertainties and risks; Kumaraswamy and Zhang (2001) argue that unless “the host government gives necessary support, prepares an adequate legal framework, ensures the right political and commercial environment...” (196), the BOT system could lead to underachievement or even complete failure. Even if the host government provides adequate legal and administrative support, they add, the host government “should play an active role in the whole process of the project circle to ensure quality, efficiency, and customer satisfaction” (197). The TRNC as host government, as hydraulic experts and officials have noted repeatedly in interviews, from the beginning of the implementation of a BOT policy for the pipeline, has been sidelined, which will be further discussed in the next section.

These documents mentioned above—the 2010 framework agreement, the 2012 Economic and Financial Cooperation agreement along with the 2013-2015 Transition to Sustainable Economic Growth Program—form the basis of the 2016 privatization agreement as the document itself states in Clause 3. The controversial document that leads to what many opponents of privatization called the “surrender of the honor of Turkish Cypriots”, denotes its scope as the management, distribution, accumulation, and purification of transferred water, and governing its allocation to household, industrial, and agricultural use (Özelleştirme Andlaşması 2016). The lack of consultation with the TRNC State Hydraulics Authority is speculated time and again, when asked about the ‘collaborative work’ that the 2016 Privatization agreement had directed both governmental bodies.

#### *2016 Bilateral Agreement*

The agreement document repeats most of the regulatory changes included in the previously mentioned documents above such as the transferal of ownership of facilities, expropriation of lands, the Turkish state holding the right to sell the transferred water to third parties and tax exemption. The agreement states that the Turkish Republic legally owns every facility, property, and all transferred and local water resources of the TRNC. The expropriation of lands, transferal of public property to the Turkish state and transferal of water ownership rights for not just the transferred water but also the local water resources were a few of the most contentious topics when the document surfaced on the Turkish Cypriot news media. From its inception, the infrastructural upgrade has been publicized as a much-needed material aid for the sole purposes of replenishing the natural water resources of the north of the island. However, when the political actors finally had the chance to hold the document in their hands, many commented on it to be ‘submissive’, ‘scam-like’ and a ‘big lie’.

One of the more contentious clauses in the agreement was regarding ‘the governance of water’ under Clause 7. The section takes as its premise that the TRNC State Hydraulics Authority is ought to treat the transferred water and the local water resources to be of one entity as a resource. It also assigns responsibility to the same office to supervise the management of the water to be done by the private company. The same clause also specifies that both parties—Turkish state and TRNC—are responsible to jointly decide where exactly the transferred water will be used for irrigation. Clause 7 then, instructs the TRNC State Hydraulics Authority to “pay attention to all the warnings from the Turkish State Hydraulics (DSI) staff in relation to management, maintenance and repair and other technical matters” (Su Temini ve Yönetimine İlişkin Hükümetlerarası Andlaşma 2016). And lastly, it remarks that “DSI will provide technical assistance to the local hydraulic authority *if need be*, for which the terms and conditions will be identified through a Protokol between two parties” (ibid, emphasis added). The clause not only puts two hydraulic authorities into a hierarchical relationship, but also produces specific assignments for each governmental body, especially for the Turkish Cypriot office. It is interpreted by many Turkish Cypriots to be ambiguous, who would decide when the local office would need technical assistance. Nevertheless, the clause is meant to render the upgraded system ordered and clear; as it notes in the beginning of the agreement, that the purpose of it is to establish an efficient and productive hydraulic management system. As policy work is never politically or ideologically neutral, Shore and Wright (1997) contend that “their political nature is disguised by the objective, neutral, legal-rational idiom” (7) and that they are portrayed as instruments that promote efficiency and effectiveness (ibid). The direct and hierarchical relationship in terms of the two governmental bodies’ technical expertise is cloaked under a normative language with phrases such as “ought to pay attention to”, “ought to review”, or “if need be”. Turkish Cypriot officials, like the ones mentioned in the next section, expressed their discontent with such language and further revealed how they interpreted the document, which will be discussed in the next section.

Further looking at the agreement, Clause 10 of the agreement mentions the pricing of the transferred water. It states that the tariff will be decided with an “implementation contract” signed with the operator, in other words, the private company through which it will establish a “tariff management system” (Su Temini ve Yönetimine İlişkin Hükümetlerarası Andlaşma 2016). In addition to Clause 10, Clause 12 also established terms for municipalities, described as “subscribers” (*abone*), for if they do not ‘subscribe’ to the new system and refuse to buy the transferred water, they will have to buy the local water resources with the same price as the transferred one from the south of Turkey. The “Proposal for Water Politics” document issued

in 2016 by the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Environmental Engineers agrees to such regulation, for the purposes of reducing the water extraction from the coastal aquifers of the north. Once the price is the same, the municipalities will be encouraged to subscribe to the system and aquifers will be replenished with minimal to no extraction. The technicality and purposive nature of this section in particular, was interpreted completely differently by many Turkish Cypriot officials and municipal council members. One Nicosia Municipality council member said that they are “condemning the municipalities to buy the transferred water” and that they are treating them as lab rats. The Proposal document however also adds that privatization of the water management along with municipalities losing their leverage over how much they can sell the water to the citizens, will result in an extreme increase of the prices<sup>8</sup>.

The agreement document signed by the Turkish state and the de-facto TRNC state in 2016, sets forth an upgraded hydraulic system for the north of the island as it regulates both the management and governance of water infrastructure. Along with the 2016 agreement, other documents comprising of protocols, proposals, and models that revolve around the pipeline infrastructure articulates the deeply rooted dependence of de-facto TRNC to its patron state. Policy work, according to TRNC officials, is a top-down imposition; documents, sanctions, and regulations come and go according to the political and economic interests of the Turkish state. Looking closely at the discursive devices that these documents utilize; they are at times ambiguous and at others use normative phrases and a language that in a not-so-vague manner imply hierarchy and who is responsible for what. Seemingly neutral phrases, as it is lodged into context and the people around it, bring out the embedded political dissonances they reproduce. In the next section, I discuss how certain techno-political actors make sense of these documents and policy changes, and analyze the ways in which policy, as language and power, shape professional subjectivities of these actors within their field which are expressed as and laden with ineptness, inferiority and difference.

#### Water management as “a fool’s errand”

The technical and managerial activities engaged within the hydraulic works departments and other involved state agencies and actors are never short of speculation, negotiation, competition, and ambiguity in a newly emerging governing structure. In north Cyprus, experts rely heavily on their loose recollections of the past knowledge they reproduce regarding water scarcity and unsustainability. For Selim and other experts from north Cyprus, having been governmental actors and experts in their occupational fields, which highly rely on scientific knowledge and

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.yeniduzen.com/cevre-muhendislerinden-su-politikasi-onerileri-64575h.htm>

numerical/technical information, justify their convictions of water scarcity and lack of sustainable consumption through their political positionings against loosely structured TRNC state—a state that is always becoming and “not-yet-proper”.

Laura Bear and Nayanika Mathur (2015), in calling for an anthropology of bureaucracy, put forth how “...new public goods generate fragmented governance, creating new sites of conflict. Different actors tied to the state...encounter one another and argue over what the labor of the state is and how it should be executed” (24). In the case of north Cyprus, the competing views and practices on hydraulic governance and techno-political bureaucrats’ dealings with the new pipeline and transferred water show that infrastructures are critical sites where bureaucratic processes, negotiations and conflicts are articulated through the actors’ discursive forms of expression and their ways of relating to each other, at times in conflictual terms, and at others, in instances of imposed collaboration. Therefore, the technical terrain in relation to water infrastructure in north Cyprus reveal new ways of political engagement and reflections on what kind of political collectivity Turkish Cypriots constitute and the kind of subjectivities that are reproduced in the field of governance.

Nikhil Anand suggests that “if documents, plans, and policies are important sites where publics are imagined, they are *materialized* through a series of social *practices*, such as the extension, management, and maintenance of water infrastructures” (2018, 156 emphasis original). As such, the discourses and practices of experts, engineers, and technicians that are embedded within such hydraulic system point to a rethinking of the larger de-facto state structure of TRNC. On the one hand, the pipeline and transferred water urges the techno-political actors to contemplate the de-facto state’s unfinished character, malleability, and how it is always in the making and unmaking as the Turkish state imposes sanctions, provides financial and material aid. On the other hand, these governmental actors like Selim, a geologist I mention above, work through these Turkish state-imposed policies and bureaucratic hierarchies while at the same time, reproduce self-fulfilling prophecies of technical incapability and an ethos of improvised public works.

In this section, I will explicate the ways in which such improvisation of day-to-day decision-making processes reproduces hierarchy and difference between two State Hydraulics Authorities and the actors involved with hydraulics and irrigation. I show that the governmental actors’ interpretation of policy work and technical expert knowledge they utilize are deeply imbued with their perception of the de-facto TRNC state as an inferior one. Looking at the work and ambivalent responsibilities that go into the effort of implementing and governing a new infrastructural arrangement illuminate the political dissonances within the northern Cypriot

polity and persistent hierarchies between TRNC and the Turkish state. It also highlights the ways in which infrastructural upgrade renders the taken-for-granted material dependencies and dysfunctionalities visible to the socio-political radar of technical experts and also to the Turkish Cypriot public at large. Thus, the transferred water, its privatization, and what this entails in terms of shuffling expert teams and establishing new offices within the field of governance, unearth Turkish Cypriot technical experts' and government workers' ways of ascribing incapability to themselves vis-à-vis the Turkish diplomats and State Hydraulics workers.

Harvey and Knox (in Bennett and Joyce 2013) point out that “a construction project is a complex social field, where rumor and gossip, speculation and secrecy swirl around the calculations and mappings of engineering science, planning and management” (124). Studying infrastructure and the various actors involved in it, therefore is vast and not limited to the operationalization of the state, corporate power, and/or capital; it also reveals the intricacies of everyday negotiations and moral contestations within the social field of experts. With the arrival of transferred water and along with a plethora of infrastructural re-arrangements and upgrade, water management and investment in north Cyprus has come to reveal how governmental actors especially in the State Hydraulics Authority of the TRNC, navigate their perceptions of dependence and hierarchy through their understandings of themselves as neglected experts and incapable of governing the transferred water. In order to understand the ways in which such negotiations occur, it is important to look at how the Turkish State Hydraulics Authority (DSI) has established an office since the inception of the pipeline's construction in 2010. While the components of the project were being constructed, such as the treatment plants, pumping facilities, etc., DSI acted as the responsible office that was merely accountable to the Embassy of the Turkish Republic. As Turkish Cypriot hydraulic experts expressed during interviews, the infrastructure of the north was crumbling and technical assistance, upgrade, and retrofit of the existent hydraulic mechanisms were needed. As I mention above, the natural water resources of the northern territories have been depleted due to evaporation, over-extraction for agricultural and other use, saltwater invasion, and also infiltration of hazardous sewage water into the aquifers (Elkiran and Ongul 2009). Not only this, the network of pipes has 40% of leakage across the north of the island, which renders the distribution of the water resources inefficient and unsustainable (Ergil 2000, 1213)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Even though the reference used for his percentage is from 1999, most technical experts interviewed in this research confirmed that leakage from the pipes remains today, to be one of the most significant problems for efficient water use and distribution.

During interviews, both the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish State Hydraulics officers did not provide any factual evidence or measurements for most of the leakage or the physical state of the pipes. But they instead took some knowledge for granted. For instance, Kemal, a DSI control engineer who worked in the Çamlıbel water purification plant—as part of the upgraded infrastructure’s facility—repeated many times that some pipes that bring water from the municipal storage to end-users are broken, which causes seepage loss and even contain asbestos. For Kemal, who is transferred from Turkey as an engineer to work on the pipeline project, this piece of information was a given; he neither provided any evidence, nor did he disclose how or from whom he got this information. In fact, Kemal expressed during the interview that measuring seepage and loss and even the water levels of aquifers were a difficult task in general. Besides this, Kemal laid out all the numbers in kilometers, meters cube and explaining in detail, how long the pipes are, different kinds of pipes used, and the geological bedrock between Turkish and northern Cypriot coasts. He also went on to describe how the cleanliness of water that they were transferring does not matter, because the infrastructure within north Cypriot landscape is obsolete.

The obsolete materiality and physicality of the pipes were the premise through which both Turkish and Turkish Cypriot experts made sense of the necessity of an upgrade. Kemal proudly declared that these obsolete pipes were planned by DSI (Turkish State Hydraulics Authority) to be replaced; 478 km of new technology pipes are already in place and 270 km more was due to be upgraded at the time of the interview in May 2017. The rumor of how the old pipes from the British colonial period were still being used was a commonplace information to repeat for Kemal, Selim (geologist mentioned above), and others. Despite the DSI’s presence and authority on the whole infrastructure project, Kemal confidently said that the office is not equipped to manage water of a whole country<sup>10</sup> on its own. Not having adequate staff, nor experience on it, DSI was supposed to finish construction and hand it over to the Turkish Cypriot authorities, as they would do in any other situation, he said. However, when asked about the public contestation over the pipeline, he admitted that DSI should have had a better public relations division with this pipeline project in TRNC:

We are technical department, as DSI. We had a difficult time understanding the situation here. Normally, we develop projects like for irrigation or potable water pipelines, etc... We do not have communication with media or people. We could not foresee that we need a serious public relations skill

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<sup>10</sup> There has been no census conducted since 2011 in TRNC. According to projections for the year 2016, the population is a approximately 350.000. DSI also operates, developing projects, in many other regions in Turkey, such as İzmir with a population of 4 million.

for this particular project. Both positive and negative interest was significant. So many rumors went around that we could not even think about, like the new pipes having asbestos, being unhealthy, or even bringing salvaged scrap pipes from China... We put all these brand-new steel pipes everywhere and they say that there is asbestos! We also cannot really comprehend the positive reactions. People go to the dam and stare at it or even try to swim in it. I should not say it is a mistake but, DSI should have handled these reactions better with some public relations skills. But then again, we are not experts in that. We would say something somewhere and then that would be twisted around, there is danger in that.

Here, part of what Kemal was referring to is the discontent amongst Turkish Cypriots about privatization and inflated prices of the transferred water. Kemal's conviction that DSI was/is not responsible for the social impact of such a vast infrastructural change goes in contrast to how the local experts discern their presence on the island. Kemal insists on how DSI is a mere technical office that deals with setting up an upgraded technology of pipes, facilities, and so on. At the same time, he finds it important that speculations and rumor regarding the quality of pipes needed to be dealt with by DSI. Throughout the interview, Kemal insinuated a few times, without saying anything explicitly, that the Turkish Cypriot authorities did not perform many of their responsibilities—feasibility research for upgrading networks, legal and administrative work on the tender process for choosing a private company, or measuring seepage and loss—which is why *DSI had to* do it. Even though he states that the two hydraulic authorities work together and in conjunction with each other, Kemal still remarks to some of these matters with “they were supposed to do it and did not, so we were directed to do it”.

In fact, as the interview was coming to an end, Kemal got a phone call from one of the 28 mayors in north Cyprus, since he answered the phone “What can I do for you, Mr. Mayor?” It seemed clear that the mayor was concerned about a storage facility in his municipal district. The water in this facility was not enough for 16 villages of the district. Kemal then confirmed that there are many projects being drafted at the moment for upgrading and placing additional pipes to a lot of the districts and that they cannot do anything until the projects are finalized. More interestingly, he told the mayor that the local State Hydraulics Authority never planned for any improvement, which is why DSI has been appointed to do it now. It seemed that the local office was to blame for a lot of the recurring malfunctions and lack of repair. Kemal, on the one hand, claims that DSI and the work that he and his colleagues are assigned to do is merely technical, concerning pipes, networks, and water pressure; and on the other hand, says a few times, in the most apolitical and neutral terms that DSI is only here because the work is needed. For him, technical work is decoupled from the socio-political effects of water

infrastructure. As such, he also positions his work as part of DSI to be technically and neutrally necessary, because “someone has to do it” as he remarked.

Carey and Pedersen (2017) highlight that “infrastructures... can be described as the ultimate ‘anti-politics machines’ (Ferguson 1994) for they not only have the capacity to hide asymmetrical social and political relations beneath a garb of ostensibly technical solutions, but they also define what can be seen and known, and what cannot” (22). In contrast to this, the case of Turkey-north Cyprus pipeline in relation to how Kemal as a Turkish engineer working for the project makes sense of hydraulic work, shows that these political processes of rumor, speculation, and diverging knowledges, rather than being concealed under the technical work, becomes most visible when handled technically. The techniques of management, allocating technical responsibilities to specific institutions, and the Turkish officers’ convictions regarding their Turkish Cypriot counterparts, who are supposedly to provide technical and local knowledge to them prove the opposite: that infrastructures can also be sites through which the political is most visible. The transferred water, the pipeline, and all the policy work around the upgrade bring to the fore, rather than hide, the asymmetry between two governing bodies from the beginning of the project.

When the privatization deal became headlines in the spring of 2016, many civil society organizations, trade unions, professional chambers, and political parties who opposed the Turkish imposed document came together and organized a few meetings. One of those meetings was organized by two oppositional parties—United Cyprus Party (BKP) and New Cyprus Party (YKP). Behcet was invited to provide expert knowledge as the then-head of the Union of the Chambers of Turkish Cypriot Engineers and Architects (KTMMOB) and a retired civil engineer. In his speech he summarized how KTMMOB attempted to intervene in the process prior to the signing of the privatization document.

A Minister a few years ago said that Turkish Cypriots neither have the capability nor the expert knowledge to govern this water. They do not have skills, he said. At that point, [KTMMOB] said ‘no, we, the Turkish Cypriots can govern it’. What is more important is that if that minister who sits in that office cannot come up with a solution, then he must immediately leave that office... KTMMOB and the government at the time, we started an action study, protocols were signed. We established a unit, a committee. We even prepared a bill to go through the parliament. That bill proposed an autonomous unit to govern the water, independent from the inspection of the political parties. The members of that unit would be appointed by and accountable to the people’s parliament. It would be called a water board. The bill never went to the parliament. There was a very long process between the Turkish diplomats and our officials. Then comes the privatization agreement.

Referring to the newspaper interview with the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources I mention in the beginning of this paper, Behcet not only questions the political system of TRNC



and its politicians' trust in their own institutions, but also claims that KTMMOB as a union of technical experts did all they could in order to have authority over the governance of the transferred water. Behcet's understanding of TRNC politics is repeated by many other interviewees in this paper, including Kemal. Kemal, the DSI engineer's remarks on Turkish Cypriot authorities and their lack of involvement or action regarding the transition period goes parallel with how Behcet perceives the ministerial authority and its lack of taking up responsibilities for advocating for the proposed water bill.

In a later interview, Behcet told a brief history of water resources in north Cyprus. Upon being asked whether KTMMOB holds any historical data, maps, or statistics from the pre-1974 period, Behcet blamed DSI: "We do not have such documents. There was a book that included extensive research from the British colonial period from 1959. It was taken from the Ministry of Energy library, it is lost. DSI took it when they opened their office. As you know, foreign powers, when they come, they take all the sources away. We looked for that book, it is gone." During both interviews, rather than talking about geological structures, hydrological processes like salinization, or other technical matters, Behcet wanted to talk about hegemony, civilization and colonization and more extensively, Turkish Cypriot identity and self-determination. As an expert and retired engineer, he avoided throughout our interview to 'technicalize' the matter at hand and insisted, though with utter despair, that water management and hydrology are matters of the state and politics. On the one hand, he noted that transferring water from one place to another is a sign of civilization and on the other, water could not be utilized to consolidate a state's hegemony. For him, the Turkish state's privatized and monopolized scheme of transferred water management was "worse than colonial rule or how once the Ottomans ruled its provinces". His call for political action never materialized and therefore remained without political force. Further, during both interviews he emphatically spoke to me in his capacity as a union organizer and representative and not as an engineer. With the leadership of Behcet, KTMMOB initiated a committee that would form a team of experts for the management of treatment and storage facilities and pumping station. Upon their training, the team of experts that comprised of environmental engineers, technicians, etc. were allocated to the facilities.

Ayfer is one of those environmental engineers that joined the team in 2015 and started working on a "service provision" contract at the Çamlıbel Water Treatment Facility. Since the beginning of the project, DSI had become the main office, which oversaw the facilities' construction and the administrative and managerial setup. It was also DSI's staff to provide expert knowledge to the local team at the facilities, but they also became the 'bosses' at the end of the day. Ayfer's biggest concern was that neither did she have a job description, nor her

contract affiliated her to any TRNC governing body like the Ministry of Natural Resources or State Hydraulics Authority of TRNC.

I was never part of the setting up of the treatment facility; we never really saw the equipment until the first day of our jobs. They took us a couple of times to the pumping station as the pipes were being fixed into place, just for us to see, but that was it.

Her implication was that her and the rest of the local team members felt out of place: “What if one day the DSI manager decided that he did not like my work and took my name out of the staff list, what would happen? I simply could not enter the facility—that is it. I have no affiliation to the Cypriot government.”

Ayfer’s lack of job description and security is symptomatic of how DSI and the Turkish state handled their questionable presence in north Cyprus. It is DSI who decides what and who goes in and out of the complex, which is in the middle of the Çamlıbel forest behind barbed wires and cement walls. Her job represented KTMMOB, a Turkish Cypriot union, yet no Cypriot office was responsible for her. She explained that it was as if DSI was making the KTMMOB a favor for letting the local team of experts in on the job. Her boss was DSI, an external State Hydraulics Authority that was only accountable to the Turkish state. Not only this, Ayfer also revealed that at the beginning of her job post, she realized the State Hydraulics Authority of TRNC (Su İşleri Dairesi - SID) had no clue about the technical work that was being conducted at the facility: “They simply looked at us and DSI from a distance, did not move their fingers. I swear, they did not have a single document in their hands, it was not of their interest.” Not only SID, but the Ministry of Natural Resources also did not attempt any input in the setting up of the facility. Ayfer claimed that they “simply allocated the funds and did not ask about what exactly our jobs entailed, what we did daily, or what they were responsible for. The coordination and management were in the sole hands of DSI, even though the bilateral agreement states DSI and SID to be equal partners/shareholders. With Ayfer’s comments along with the way Behçet expressing discontent regarding changes in the governance of hydraulics throughout the north, DSI, as a representative of the Turkish state renders itself a higher authority and is also perceived by officials as such. Behçet adds during the interview, “They said [in that document] that we can inspect on who manages the water. But in actuality, the case was that they were supposed to inspect on us.”

The officials at the State Hydraulics Authority of TRNC, at an impromptu meeting regarding the use of transferred water for irrigation, repeatedly described the task to be “a fool’s errand” (*abesle iştiğal*) and “mission impossible”. Just as Kemal informed that there are two potential projects being drafted for setting up a new irrigation system across the north, the

attendees of the meeting were also aware. However, their views and concerns did not point to which project was more feasible or not, as Kemal stressed. For Turgut, the deputy manager of SID at the time, the story was different. Along with Turgut, there was Mustafa, an official from the agriculture department, Murat, a hydrologist, and Selim, the geologist at the meeting, which in its entirety seemed rushed and uncalled-for. They were discussing the Master plan for Agriculture for the next few years; the Ministry of Agriculture was not satisfied with the statistics they were providing in the document. Referring to the statistics, data and expert knowledge that SID presumably included in the Master Plan, Turgut said, “A person who has no clue about what we [write], holds that minister seat!” With no objections to his statement from anyone in the room, Turgut complained about many other things during those three and a half hours of casual meeting. The feeling of ‘the world versus SID’ resonated in the room as they all expressed their agreement on these few things: the current management is failing, and SID does not have enough technical staff—something Ayfer was also referring to; water privatization agreement was the worst thing that has ever happened to TRNC; and numbers and technical knowledge on water consumption (irrigation and other) of north Cyprus is serious business and nobody consults them. They repeated many times that there needs to be a set political agenda for hydraulics and that it is the fault of the TRNC state, not theirs, that there has been no upgrade in neither the pipes, nor its management and governance.

The Master Plan for Agriculture had a deadline and the numbers were not adding up regarding how much water was needed for production in the two major agricultural regions of the north. Turgut jokingly said, “if we are doing the statistical calculations for this plan today, which is to be published tomorrow, poor us (*vay halimize*).” He, along with Mustafa both agreed that without determining how much people consumed for irrigation, they could not know what the water potential is for the north. After discussing the difficulty of obtaining the numbers for irrigation—since as they say, it all depends on the type of produce or plant, rainfall during different seasons—they decided to “get on with it”, as Selim said. Murat took out a piece of paper and started uttering numbers in meter cubes, ballparking how much each region uses, how much each crop needs annually and so on. Turgut in a joking manner said, “the irrigation water usage for TRNC annually is... 107 million m<sup>3</sup>. I said it, and so it is!” Speculative numbers and ballparked percentages were then neatly inserted in the Master Plan document. Murat, a hydrologist of more than thirty years was confident that his estimations were spot on. But the problem was not that they did not have exact statistics; it was that the TRNC as a whole system was broken. Turgut said to the whole room, “There needs to be a long-term government policy, a water legislation, but there isn’t. This needs to be scientifically handled, statistics need to be

collected”. The obvious irony here in what they were doing and simultaneously what he said did not seem to bother any of them. However, their complaints were not directed much at neither DSI nor the Turkish state. Especially Turgut repeated many times that it is the TRNC state’s responsibility to implement a long-term plan for water management, and yet what the government officials do is they “force us to lie to their faces for years”, referring to hydraulic governance in general. Turgut is perfectly aware that their tinkering with numbers to please TRNC officials and minister is outright lying. And it is also clear that SID has been getting by with such maneuvering and dodging of responsibility even before the coming of the transferred water. They reflect that their self-ascribed incapability and technical difficulties and lack of expertise does not stem from themselves, but from the nonchalance of TRNC officials in the ministries.

The meeting came to an end as they expressed their discontent with the clauses of the privatization, the price of the transferred and locally sourced water, the problem with loss-seepage rates, and so on. In drafting the Agriculture Master Plan document, as a series of policies and directives for the agriculture sector, based on these numbers and “statistical data”, was available to these actors for them to influence, only to a certain extent. Looking at the content of the draft plan, Turgut asked many times, “Why did they put the north Cyprus-Turkey water pipeline under the subheading of ‘bio-physical characteristics of TRNC’?” Turgut interprets this as a major mistake and yet he is also aware that the draft arrived at the Ministry of Agriculture of TRNC from their Turkish counterparts and their job was merely to fill in the blanks with accurate numbers.

### Conclusion

In this paper, I argue against the notion that development intervention—infrastructural and hydraulic in the case at hand—and the policy work that configure the practices and institutions for it, is not necessarily “an anti-politics machine” (Ferguson 1994). On the contrary, the Turkey-north Cyprus water supply project, as a developmental ‘gift’ from the Turkish state, have ended up becoming one of the most politicized infrastructure projects. On the one hand it deepens the political, economic, and infrastructural dependence of de-facto TRNC on its patron state, and on the other hand unearths the politicized nature of technical and policy work for the maintenance of such external patronage. In this paper, I first demonstrated the ways in which policy documents show that the political can easily be masked discursively through a neutral, ambiguous, at times open-ended, and at others normative language. Second, I showed how these documents, protocols, and agreements are interpreted by the techno-political actors within the Turkish Cypriot field of water governance. The efforts of depoliticizing and technicalizing by

the Turkish state authorities, through policy documents and directives, have resulted in the opposite effect when it hit the ground so to speak, within the institutional field of governance and expertise in north Cyprus.

Turkish Cypriot state actors and experts, as they interpret the components of a privatized system of hydraulic management, oftentimes resort to expressions of self-doubt and loss of trust towards the patron state. Their professional subjectivities are constituted through their ways of relating to their Turkish counterparts individually and institutionally and how these hierarchical bureaucratic relations reproduce an ethos of improvised public works, in which local state actors emphasize contradictory statements of being left out of hydraulic works and having no technical agency or capability to foresee the activities. The privatization deal attempts at “masking the impossibility of refusal” (Yeh 2013) by presenting the transferred water as a gift of motherland. Its policy components, clauses, and directives utilize a language of collaboration, efficiency, and sustainability through ambiguity, neutrality, and technicalization. This however, as it becomes clear to Turkish Cypriot experts, does not only pushes through market-led norms for the sole purpose of the Turkish hegemony’s neoliberal agenda, but also aligns such purpose to its political agenda of patronage and territorialization in north Cyprus.

Public works, as they get privatized, become more political and also their “publicness” is accentuated even further. The water infrastructure in north Cyprus, as it brought forward a number of neoliberal policy steps in hydraulic management, became a location where a specific public, that of technical experts and governance actors, was constituted. More importantly, I contend, it is a public that is imbued with constant maneuvering, contesting, and evading within a dominant system of patronage.

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