



SENSATIONAL PUBLICNESS AND DIVERGENCE OF SOCIAL HIERARCHY: THE CASE OF BIRDMANSHIP IN ISTANBUL*

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

This paper is set out to examine the public spheres formed by birdmen in Istanbul. The aim of this research is to explore the diversity and questioning the validity of large volume of literature on public spheres. Three basic questions are the main concerns of the study: (a) How the sociability/the public spheres of the birdmen in İstanbul is different from that of public sphere images of J. Habermas? (b) How do senses play a role in the formation of public sphere and the constructed reality of birdmen? (c) How do conventional forms of public sphere in terms of class, status, perceptions of social position change within the public spheres formed by birdmen? The address to the questions mentioned will evaluate and validate a type of public sphere that is of different dynamics from the outer world and cannot be explained by rational actions of subjectivities. Hence, what is to be foregrounded in the paper is the study of public spheres created by birdmen, regardless of the kinds of birds they keep, and there is almost no classification of birdmen as such unless it serves for the aim of the study.

The research is of significance since there is no concept of sociability governed by senses but rather theoretical and case studies figuring out the function of rationally acting individuals or the convergence of rationality and senses governing the publicness concerned. This study is based upon the assumption that in contrast to what Habermas had argued, there is a possibility of a public sphere which is governed by the senses, where the status and classes of subjectivities are (firstly equalized as in the idealized form of public sphere) totally diverged.

The preliminary research method is ethnographies, in which “the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational data” (Creswell 2002, 13). The present research uses interpretative approach since its focus is on primacy of subject matter and the constructed reality of the birdmen (constructed sociability) within their own peculiar and some various public spheres. The study requires deductive method thus the researcher’s (with the acknowledgement of the premises of the literature and a possibility that there is a different kind of sociability

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governed by senses which is missed so far) starting point is the preliminary research in the field (participant observation), review of the literature, identification of what is lacking in the literature, main research in the field (questionnaires, participant observation and interviews). Techniques of data gathering were participant observation (direct observation), interviews, documentary evidences and questionnaires. The fieldwork duration lasted for almost eleven months.

This study challenges dynamics of the conventional forms, norms and perceptions of status, class, possession, the force of money and material gains in the action of man which is pictured as contributing to the formation of public sphere. The paper points out that public spheres of birdman are not typical Habermasian public sphere since the empirical data obtained through participant observations, interviews and documentary indicate that reason is replaced with the emotions. In other words, it figures out a public sphere that cannot be explained by rational actions of subjectivities and thoroughly governed by the constructed reality of the community. The constructed reality of birdmen is of a novel sociability and publicness in which the outer world social class, position and status of birdmen are not taken seriously within the community which is a type of idealized public sphere. Meanwhile the constructed reality works out, it creates a novel hierarchy within the community which can be summed up as the divergence of outer world social hierarchy.

The findings of this study might have implications for other sociologists or anthropologists who are seeking new/other public spheres that are not governed by the rationality or by the objects obtained through rationality. It may also invoke to search for other historical public spheres that have been successful in protecting its nature and existing in the post-modern times. There is abundant room for further anthropological investigation of birdmen and sociological study of the spheres created by birdmen in different countries.

A number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present study. Some of the interviewees did not want to reveal their full name since it is against the code of "natural heritage conservation" to catch birds in nature (Kahya, Sağsöz, Al 2014, 272). Interviews with the birdmen of İstanbul reveal many different stories however it is up to anthropologists make interpretative harmonistic anthropological future studies. This study is restricted in one city, İstanbul, it is left to other researchers to make further studies in the Southeastern Turkey where the birdmanship is of a long history, tradition and bird-auctions are held that can also be studied by the sociologists from culturalistic view. The most important limitation lies in the nature of birdman-coffeehouses, since they are male-dominant. However, the argument is not based upon a post-modern public sphere existing through the force of senses, rather a continuity of an historical tradition in the post-modern times. Thus, though it is a limitation according to the post-modern public sphere type, it is gives us all the aspects of an 18th century public sphere existing in the 21st century.

Key Words: birdman, public sphere, İstanbul, senses, rationality, social hierarchy, social class

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DUYGUSAL KAMUSALLIK VE SOSYAL HİYERARŞİNİN SAPMASI: İSTANBUL'DA KUŞÇULUK ÖRNEKLEMİ

ÖZET

Bu makale İstanbul'un Kuşçuları tarafından oluşturulan kamu alanlarını incelemek için kaleme alınmıştır. Farklılıkları keşfetmek ve kamusal alanla ilgili geniş bir literatürün geçerliliğini sorgulamaya çalışmak bu araştırmanın amacını oluşturmaktadır. Üç temel soru bu çalışmanın odak noktalarını göstermektedir: (a) İstanbul'un Kuşçuları tarafından oluşturulan sosyallik ve kamusal alanların Habermas'ın ortaya koyduğu kamusal alan prensiplerinden farkları nelerdir? (b) Söz konusu kamusal alanların ve kuşçuların kendileri tarafından inşa edilen gerçekliğin oluşumunda duyguların oynadığı rol nedir? (c) Geleneksel kamusal alan içerisinde bulunan sosyal sınıf, statü ve sosyal sınıf algıları, Kuşçuların oluşturduğu kamusal alanlarda nasıl değişmektedir? Bu üç temel soruya verilecek cevaplar, dış dünyadan (kuşçu mekanlarının dışında) farklı dinamikler içeren ve öznelere rasyonel hareketleri sonucunda oluşmayan bir kamusal alan tipi ortaya koyacaktır. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma boyunca öne çıkarılacak nokta kuşçuların besledikleri kuşlar veya türleri değil (amaca hizmet etmediği sürece), kuşçular tarafından oluşturulan kamu alanlarının incelenmesidir. Bu çalışmanın öneme haiz oluşu, duygusal kamusal olarak adlandırılmış olan duygular vasıtası ile oluşturulmuş bir kamu alanı incelemesinin yapılmamış olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Kamu alanları üzerine yapılan çalışmalar, genel olarak akılları ile hareket eden bireylerin ürünü olarak incelendiği ya da akıl ve duyguların bir arada olduğu örnekler ve ya teorik çerçeve içerisinde ele alınmıştır.

Bu çalışma Habermas'ın ortaya koyduğu çerçevenin dışında, bireylerin toplumsal statü ve sınıflarının saptığı ve genel olarak duyguları ile oluşturdukları kamusal alan ihtimali üzerine başlatılmıştır. Öncül araştırma tekniği araştırmacının "belirli ve uzun bir zaman periyodu içerisinde bozulmamış kültürel gruba ait gözlemsel bilgi toplama yöntemini kullandığı" halkbilimdir (Cresswell 2002,13). İncelenen konunun öncelliği ve bireylerin kendilerine ait özgün kamusal alanları içerisinde inşa ettiği gerçeklik gereğince, bu araştırma yorumlayıcı yaklaşımı kullanır. Tümünden gelim metoduna gereksinim duyan araştırmacının başlangıç noktası alanda öncül çalışma (katılımcı gözlem), literatür taraması, literatürdeki boşluğun tespiti, alanda temel çalışma, (anketler, katılımcı gözlem ve röportajlar), belgesel kanıtlardır. Alan çalışması yaklaşık olarak 11 ay sürmüştür.

Bu çalışma geleneksel statü, mülkiyet, finansal güç, maddi kazanımların düsturu, şekli, ve algılarını kamusal alana katkıları bakımından bireylerin hareketleri üzerindeki etkisini sınamaktadır. Ortaya konulan en önemli bulgulardan biri kuşçular tarafından oluşturulan kamu alanları, topoloji bakımından Habermas'ın kamusal alan tasvirinin dışında, aklın duygular ile ikame edildiği alanlardır. Başka bir deyişle, bu çalışma bireylerin inşa ettiği gerçeklik üzerinden kendini oluşturan ve bu bireylerin sadece rasyonel hareketleri sonucu açıklanamayacak olan bir kamusal alanı ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. Bu inşa edilmiş gerçeklik, bireylerin oluşturdukları topluluk içerisinde,

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söz konusu kamusal alanlar dışındaki sosyal statü, pozisyon ve ya sınıflarını dikkate almadıkları yeni bir sosyallik yapısı ve bir araya gelmeyi temsil eder. İnşa edilmiş gerçeklik kendini gerçekleştirdiği süreç içerisinde söz konusu topluluk içerisinde kendine mahsus yeni bir hiyerarşik yapı oluşturur.

Buradaki bulgular, öncülü rasyonel akıl olmayan kamusal alan çalışması yapmak isteyen antropolog ve ya sosyologlar için bu alana dahil olma yolları sunabilir. Ayrıca, günümüzde hali hazırda doğasını korumayı başarmış tarihi kamu alanlarını incelemek için fikir verebilir. Farklı ülkelerde ve ya şehirlerdeki kuşçular tarafından ortaya konulan hikayeler, antropologlar için önemli bir araştırma konusu olabilir.

Bu çalışmayla ilgili birkaç kısıtlayıcı nokta not düşülmelidir. Burada yer alan görüşmecilerden bazıları, ötücü doğa kuşlarının “doğal mirası koruma” kanununa göre yasak olduğundan dolayı isimlerini vermek istememişlerdir (Kahya, Sağsöz, Al. 2014, 272). İstanbul’un Kuşçuları ile yapılan görüşmeler farklı hikayeler ortaya koymakta, bu hikayelerin gelecekte incelenmesi antropologlara bırakılmıştır. Bu çalışma yalnızca bir şehirle sınırlıdır. Türkiye’nin diğer bölgelerinde, özellikle kuşçuluğun gelenek olarak devam ettiği ve korunduğu Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgesi, kültürel açıdan bakmak isteyen diğer araştırmacılar için büyük öneme haiz çalışma alanlarından biri olabilir. Kuşçuların oluşturdukları kamusal alan göz önüne alındığında, en önemli kısıtlama, kuşçu kahvelerinin erkek-egemen bir yapıya sahip olmasıdır. Fakat buradaki tartışma post-modern zaman ürünü olan bir kamusal alanın duygular ile yönetildiği üzerine değil, modern zamanlar öncesi oluşturulmuş tarihi bir kamusal alanın duygusal kamusalılık varlığını post-modern zamanlarda korumasının ortaya konulmasıdır. Bu post-modern kamusal alan algısına göre bir kısıtlama olarak görünse de, bu kamusal alanlar bize 18. yüzyıl kamusal alan özelliklerinin 21. yüzyılda temel prensipleri ile varlığını sürdürdüğünü göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kuşçu, kamusal alan, İstanbul, duygular, rasyonellik, sosyal hiyerarşi, toplumsal sınıf

Introduction

Birdmanship is a kind of social activity “based on the capture of singing birds (except for tumblers and canaries), fattening in the cages and meeting in the birdman-coffeehouses to make them sing reciprocally” (Somçağ 1997). It is a case study about special public spheres formed by birdmen such as bird bazaars, clubs and birdman-coffeehouses in different provinces of Istanbul. The objective of this research is to explore the diversity and seeks pluralism via challenging the conventional forms, norms and perceptions of status, class, possession, the force of money and material gains (obtained through rational action) in the action of man which is pictured as dynamics contributing to the formation of public sphere. In other words, the purpose is to evaluate and validate a public sphere that cannot be explained by rational actions of subjectivities. The fundamental questions addressed in this paper are: (a) How the sociability/the public spheres of the birdmen in İstanbul is different from that of public sphere images of Habermas? (b) How do senses play a role in the formation of public sphere and the constructed reality of birdmen? (c) How do conventional forms of public sphere in terms of class, status, perceptions of social position change within the public spheres formed by birdmen?

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Studies of birdmanship in İstanbul are restricted to the appreciation of birdmanship as a traditional culture dating back to Ottoman times. No research has been found that surveyed the public spheres formed by birdmen. The case under question is a of a pre-modern public sphere typology that is of “some aspects of Ottoman culture” characteristics securing its premises in the post-modern era (Yenişehirlioğlu, 2014, 1). There is also a gap in the literature about the question of how different forms of sociability are constructed in birdmanship/birdmen public spheres. If one delves into the realm of birdmanship, one can grasp that different kinds of birds require different kinds of actions for the birdmen. It is worth noting that this study includes five various public spheres, in which the birdmen are not distinguished according to the kinds of birds they breed and keep. Thus, what is to be foregrounded in the paper is the study of public spheres created by birdmen, regardless of the kinds of birds they keep, and there is almost no classification of birdmen as such unless it serves for the aim of the study.

1. Theoretical Framework

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the concept of public sphere. In order to appreciate the significance of this case study, one needs to have a theoretical framework through which what is missing and the goal of exploring the diversity can be appreciated. One major theoretical issue that has dominated the field for many years concerns what is called Habermasian public sphere. Public sphere is a democratic realm in which “access is guaranteed to all citizens” without any exception and “a portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (Habermas, Lennox, F. Lennox 1974, 49). Thus the prominent pre-requisite for public sphere to be called as such is “being open to any man who wanted to participate, regardless of social rank”(Cowan 2004,345). Social relation is a concept of conduction by “two cooperating individuals” who “evaluate each other positively and assume definite duties toward each other” (Znaniecki 1954, 299). Even before the positive interaction between the agents, “in sociability, talking is an end in itself” (Simmel 1971, 136). It is the “inter-subjective shared space reproduced through communicative rationality” that forms the essence of public sphere in which rationality is the key to communication between individuals (Habermas 1989, 144). In his impressive investigation into the concept of public sphere, Habermas (1989) maintains that “strategically acting subjects” in various kinds of communities “act in a purposive-rational manner” through which they contribute to the public sphere/sociability forms that is of “a process of reaching understanding” by nature (144-157). It is the “purposeful activity” that individuals constantly adopt and apply that lies behind the idea of public sphere and sociability (Habermas 1989, 144).The main purpose of existing/participating in the public sphere is “exercising their (individuals) reason” (Cowan 2004, 345). It is the rationale/reason providing the kind of continuity in such forms. “The rationality of an agent’s actions depend on the world relations that society imputes to him”, thus it is the public sphere/sociability one finds himself in, that evaluates and forces one to act in a rational way (Habermas 1989, 142). Public sphere is of a nature that is governed through reason/rationale or reason related means. Public is of an invisible hand imputing on the individual that “in bringing something of his subjectivity to appearance, he would like to be seen by his public in a particular way” (Habermas 1989, 146). Thus, according to Habermas (1989) public sphere forms its norms in continuity through unceasing dialogue and an individual is under constant interaction with the public through which “conception of complying with a norm” is at the center and incorporates “fulfilling a generalized expectation of behavior” (143). That kind of fulfillment cannot be thought separately from the rational since public sphere is a product of rationally acting individuals who constantly make cost-benefit calculations and involve in a “purposeful activity”(Habermas 1989, 144). Public sphere is of a constant debate characteristics which forces individuals to dispose of their “ego-centric calculation of success” and it is the “acts of reaching understanding” that

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“coordinates the participation” of the individuals into the public sphere (Habermas, Lennox, F. Lennox 1974). Debate is a concept which requires rationally acting/thinking individuals, and it is the rationally acting individuals who “constitute the public sphere wherever and whenever any matter of living together with difference is debated” (Dahlberg 2005, 112).

In their classical critique of Habermas’ conception (namely Marxist conception) of public sphere, difference democrats attack on the point that Habermas’ concept of public sphere “promotes a singular idealized form as normative acts to promote particular voices while marginalizing others”¹. It is the kind of “neutrality and rationality” adopted in Habermas’ arguments that “hides exclusion and domination”(Dahlberg 2005, 114). By exclusion, it is meant public spheres existing in the daily life but not fitting into the presumptions of Habermas as argued above. By inclusion, Habermasian public sphere is represented as the legitimate public sphere, whose characteristics acknowledge “something” as within or outside of the concept of public sphere. “Habermas’ conception of communicative rationality may act ideologically but obscuring the power relations it contains” according to Dahlberg (2005, 118). There is no discrepancy between one’s outer world power relations with others and within the public sphere, in other words, there is a precise continuity. Difference democrats’ criticism is of significance since the concept of public sphere governed mainly by the realm of rationality, and rationally acting subjectivities debating in order to improve rational means of living together is put under question in different aspects; feminist and postmodernist, the latter one focusing on the aesthetic –affective features of public sphere. Though there is a change of focus from the rationality attributed as the main aspect of public sphere by Habermas, to aesthetic-affective aspects, difference democrats argue that “aesthetic-affective as aspects of interaction actually contribute in various ways to democratic communication” (Dahlberg 2005, 115). They also focus on the democratic communication as a means to reflect the case that “each citizen has an equal chance to participate and have a say in the public sphere” (Dahlberg 2005, 115). It is due to affinity between passion and politics, as Walzer (2002) argues, “passion is not only inseparable from politics, but positively contributes to democratic communication”(618). Difference democrats focus on the function of emotions on the public sphere where access is provided to all participants and it is the “human emotions such as hate, love, and hopefulness contributing enormously to (individuals’) capacities to understand and be understood” (Hogget, Thompson 2002, 114). The means of democratic communication is the emotions through which the aim is to understand and be understood where the rational aspect of the public sphere and social relation between people is conceptualized within the habitus. It is, at the final stage, the habitus where social relations are realized through rational means, as the agents or subjects are expected to understand and be understood.

Both in Habermas’ typical public sphere and the difference democrats’ picture of public sphere do not assume (for the individuals within the public sphere) a change of social position, since both depict a public sphere where individuals protect their own position, which means their status, class, occupation and material possessions. As the most basic form of material possession, “money is conceptualized as the basis of social relations” and playing a crucial role in the formation of hierarchy of individuals in the public sphere as it symbolizes an item that can only be obtained through the exercise of reason (Ingham 1996, 507). It is also significant to take regard of the fact that social relation among individuals within the public sphere is formed at the expense of those who are in the inferior position in hierarchy relatively to the others. The kind of greeting one presents is addressed to the position of the individuals (protected in the public sphere) to which one

¹ See, for example: Jodi Dean, “Civil Society: Beyond the Public Sphere” in David Rasmussen, editor, *The Handbook of Critical Theory* (Oxford Blackwell,1996); Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, (London: Verso,2000); Iris M. Young, “Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy, *Justice and Identity:Antipodean Practices* (Wellington:Bridget William Books, 1995)

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is exposed to. Both Habermas and difference democrats do not mention about the possibility of a public sphere and sociability in which individuals have to leave their status, job, class, material possession and fame outside (outside of the public sphere or before the social relation in the public sphere starts). Young (2000) mentions that “greeting, or public acknowledgment involves gestures of respect and politeness that act to signify that parties will listen to one another and take each others’ positions seriously”, which makes the point clear that they are not referring to a public sphere in which positions of the individuals are not of significance, or completely disregarded (58,61). If it is the positions that define the form of social relations, one can argue that the right to have a say is proportional to the one’s position since there is continuity between one’s outer world status and the hierarchical social relations within the public sphere. The contingent feature of social inequalities manifests itself in the form of “inequalities in discourse”(Dahlberg 2005, 124). However, “the idealized public sphere” within which everyone has an equal say requires “discursive inclusion and the elimination of social inequalities”(Dahlberg 2005, 124). Inequalities represented as difference in social classes conduce inequalities in fashioning the discourse and presenting it, hence “the idealized public sphere of full discursive inclusion” necessitates that such inequalities are abolished (Dahlberg 2005, 124). The kind of public sphere figured out by Habermas and difference democrats cannot be envisaged to hold both the patron and the labor in the same arena having the same level of right to form a discourse. Though Dahlberg (2005) does not disregard “storytelling or narrative” as aesthetic-affective, they are depicted as the instances paving the way for “communicative rationality”(118).

“The coffeehouse being the main conceit of public sociability” is being questioned as to what extent it is compatible with Habermas’ or democratic theorists’ view (Cowan 2004 348). Significant to the study to be held, Kömeçoğlu (2005) “conceptualizes the public sphere as a realm of heterotopology, aesthetic, theatricality, playfulness and carnivalesque, as well as an arena of reason and rationality” providing in-depth analysis of sociability aspect of Ottoman coffeehouses (Kömeçoğlu 2005, 6). It is worth noting that coffeehouse as a public sphere may not only be addressing to the exercise of reason but also seeking the contentment of senses. However it is also important that Kömeçoğlu (2005) does not disregard the aspect of reason and rationality in the Ottoman coffeehouses since they are represented as the places where the political discussions and concurrent dialogue about state affairs are held. Sennett (2003) also does not disregard the aspect of public sphere as an address to the senses of “man” which is “the actor” and the public sphere is a kind of “*theatro mundi*”(384). Sennett (2003)“cuts free discussion of public life from questions of rationality” since ‘debate’ as a contingent factor in the public realm is of a rational aspect without which discussion does not seem possible since discussion includes thorough thinking, calculation, rhetoric, discourse and use of words evenly (384).

As in Ottoman Empire, the coffeehouses in Turkey are “exclusively restricted to male members of society” which is also the case for the sociability created by the birdmen, in birdman-coffeehouses, clubs and bazaars in İstanbul since they make allusion to coffeehouse culture in regard of the things consumed (different kinds of Turkish tea and coffee) (Kömeçoğlu 2005, 8). Coffeehouses are the places of sociability which are heterotopic since they can be mix of rational, belief-based (religious) and sensibility realms (Kömeçoğlu 2005). Coffeehouses as the places of playfulness and reason function as “the association among person of unequal social status”, however that association does not mean that positions of individuals are left outside of the coffeehouse, but rather just like in Habermas’ public sphere, social class, status and position implicitly form an inclined plane upon which the discussions among agents take place (Habermas 1989, 34). In other words, “the association among person of unequal social status” does not mean that coffeehouses provide a realm in which equal right to have a say prevails, since both the addresser and the addressee acknowledge each other’s social position and class and as such fashion

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their discourses in compatibility. Another aspect of playfulness in the coffeehouse is actually “a critical demand for equality” created especially by the ones relatively in inferior position in the hierarchy protected within the realm concerned (Tucker 1993, 206). The generalizability of the theories so far mentioned is under question throughout the study. Contribution of this study to the literature is the possibility of introduction of publicness in which senses function as a catalyst behind the actions of men; namely the actors. The expected contribution is to explore the diversity and open up a novel (in the sense that it has been disregarded or not studied as a case) sphere of sociability.

2. Method

The preliminary research method is ethnographies, in which “the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational data” (Creswell 2002, 13). The present research uses interpretative approach since its focus is on primacy of subject matter and the constructed reality of the birdmen (constructed sociability) within their own peculiar and some various public spheres. The study requires deductive method thus the researcher’s (with the acknowledgement of the premises of the literature and a possibility that there is a different kind of sociability governed by senses which is missed so far) starting point is the preliminary research in the field (participant observation), review of the literature, identification of what is lacking in the literature, main research in the field (questionnaires, participant observation and interviews). Techniques of data gathering were participant observation (direct observation), interviews, documentary evidences and questionnaires. The fieldwork duration lasted for almost eleven months.

3. Setting and Participants

Here, I would like to give a brief overview about the setting. Turkey is located as a bridge between Europe, Asia and Middle East. It is one of the ancient civilizations in Minor Asia dating back to the beginning of 1000’s. It is of an Ottoman heritage, and thanks to that heritage it is a multi-ethnic society. Majority of Turkish society is Muslims. The society living in the Anatolian territory has not undergone the processes of Renaissance, Reformation, geographical discoveries, industrialization, emergence of bourgeois and information era in parallel with the European counterparts. It is due to such a divergence that different kinds of sociability, social relations and public spheres have had the chance to get visibility in the social life. Istanbul, being the capital of Ottoman Empire for five hundred years, is of a pivotal aspect for the ones who want to make an anthropological/sociological study on the aspects of different kinds of social relations such as birdmanship. Birdmanship is of a historical aspect in Istanbul, since during Ottoman times, it was “mostly Armenians (and also Greeks) who formed the upper social class in Ottoman social structure” that were involved in the activities of birdmanship (Deniz 2014, 269).

The most significant point in picking up Istanbul as the concern and field of this case study stems from its geographical significance providing advantages for birdmen. In the documentary by Tez, Öztaylan, Aypar (2012) Assoc. Prof. Serhan Oksay maintains that “the old world has two migration points, these are Bosphorus (İstanbul) / Dardanelles (Turkish straits) and the other one is Gibraltar, which are used as the migration routes by millions of birds. Especially Bosphorus functions like narrow part of the funnel whose beginning can be extended from Atlantic to today’s Eastern Russia. This feature of the Bosphorus provides a route for various kinds of birds migrating at the same time”.

The key informants were birdmen interviewed in Topkapı Bird-Bazaar, birdman-coffeehouse very close to the Topkapı Byzantine walls, birdman-coffeehouse in Silivrikapı and Istanbul Canary-Lovers and Breeders Club in Eminönü.

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4. Source of Data

The community does not have a feature of exclusiveness, hence it was not difficult to get involved into the public spheres they formally and unofficially have, since the correspondent author is of a network to get familiarized with the studied community. Since variables are complex and difficult to measure, the researcher needs to use emic point of view which requires techniques of data gathering in the forms of interviews, participant observation and documentary evidences that will provide understanding the actor's perspectives. The raw data of interviews were collected from twenty key informants and also 155 questionnaires were conducted with birdmen in two different realms. Due to the nature of interpretative type, this study will reflect an interpretation of the sociability of birdmen in Istanbul as time and context dependent. Among over 20 interviews (and all the interviewees are male), birdmen's views on their constructed reality (sociability) are going to be reflected as evidence to the main argument to be made. Due to some repetitions made in the interviews, some of them will not be reflected in this study, it is also worth noting down that repetitions signify the validity and the communality of the constructed reality to be discussed.

5. Assumptions

The research is of significance since there is no concept of sociability governed by senses but rather theoretical and case studies figuring out the function of rationally acting individuals or the convergence of rationality and senses governing the publicness concerned. This study is based upon the assumption that in contrast to what Habermas had argued, there is a possibility of a public sphere which is governed by the senses, where the status and classes of subjectivities are (firstly equalized as in the idealized form of public sphere) totally diverged. What is fore-grounded is the use of empirical data in the interviews, documentaries and questionnaires to explore the pluralism existing out of Habermasian public sphere depicted as governed by rational actions of subjectivities.

6. Discussion

6.1. Birdman Public Spheres and Sociability: The Extent of Compatibility with Habermasian Public Sphere

As a part of the preliminary research, participant observation (direct observation) in four different public spheres of birdmen in İstanbul was conducted. Regarding the aspect of birdman-coffeehouses being male-dominated (just like any other coffeehouses in İstanbul), it is evident that public visibility of males and patriarchal nature of birdman-coffeehouses dating back to Ottoman social structure is manifested as male domination in the public spheres. It is also worth mentioning that the case study concerned here is not a public sphere that is of post-modern topology, but rather of a pre-modern public sphere endeavoring to sustain a unique topology.

The birdmen in İstanbul Canary-lovers and Breeders Club, Topkapı birdman-coffeehouse, Silivrikapı birdman-coffeehouse were asked to fill out the questionnaire about their occupations. This questionnaire has been conducted in order to illustrate to what extent the sociability created by the birdmen in different realms can be called a public sphere, since a public sphere should be "open to all individuals regardless of rank, social status and position"(Cowan 2004, 345). In this regard, the finding obtained through the questionnaire corroborates the idea of Habermasian public sphere. It is apparent from the table² that "access is guaranteed to all citizens", and it can be evaluated within the concept of public sphere (Habermas, Lennox, F. Lennox 1974). Very basic question to be addressed firstly is how the sociability/the public spheres of the birdmen in İstanbul are different from that of public sphere images of Habermas. Both the participant observations and the

² See the Appendix 1.

interviews with the birdmen depict that it is possible to meet every kind of person since birdman-coffeehouses bring many people of different occupations together which means different income groups and social positions. Turning now to the empirical data obtained through random interviews, most of the birdmen make use of the pronoun “we” when they refer to birdmen which points out the communal aspect that they possess: “We come here each Sunday, young-old, rich-poor, no matter who you are, all kinds of people come here” as in Nuri Yıldız’s³ (personal communication, October 12, 2014) words. It is not the purposeful action that imputes the birdmen to gather in the public spheres but rather the needs of singing birds. Tez (2012) reports the experiences during the preparation process of the documentary that “it is not only a tradition but a combination of time and space in which unique types of people were constructed. There is a kind of network between birdmen through which one can meet the others. Competition is another aspect of birdmanship. If you want to improve the singing/melodies/music of your bird, you need a community thus it is the bird itself that urges them to be a member of such a community”. There is a certain kind of respect between the members of the community and that respect is of a different aspect from outside social conventions. Birdman public spheres are of inclusive characteristics, addressing to all kinds of people regardless of their achieved social or economic position. Aziz Berber⁴(personal communication, 19 October, 2014) who is a hairdresser underlines the point that “each person can be a birdman, a hairdresser, a carpenter, dress-maker or an engineer. There is no limitation”. It is not a realm that addresses to a particular social class. Both the questionnaire and words of Korkmaz (personal communication, 26 October, 2014) figure out that “there are people of different social classes such as brain surgeons, lawyers, stevedores gathering for the sake of a common amusement”. There is also an unwritten law governing the public spheres of birdmen and Kaan Sangar⁵ (personal communication, 1 January, 2014) gives the hint that “the only condition that you would be expelled from the birdman-coffeehouse is when your bird has a disturbing singing or melodies”. Public spheres formed by birdmen do not represent the identical topology of Habermasian public sphere in the respect that it is not the people, their classes, their positions that shape community members’ actions or discourses, but a bird. The existence of an individual in the birdman public spheres depends on the bird and its ability to satisfy the unwritten laws of birdmen. There is a different kind of respect dynamics established within the public spheres of birdman. They refer to other birdmen as “good birdman” or “master” without any mentioning or implication of their occupation. Social position, social rank, status, being poor or wealthy is not something to be concerned when the birdmen establish their relations within the group. The assembly of individuals of different social classes makes the one think of the religious communities in the mosque where everyone is only expected to be God’s servant. Tez (2012) makes an identical allusion when he reports his experiences during the documentary shooting process: “It is like a religious community with special times to gather and content their feelings through special contests”. It is whether a birdman is a “good birdman” or “master” that matters within the community. It is easier to make the point clearer with Tuncay Ergür’s⁶(personal communication, 19 October, 2014) words; “even if a person is a garbage collector, we generally do not know it. Here we’re only the birdman. Nothing else.”. It is also of significance since within the walls of birdman-

³ Nuri Yıldız is a birdman (interviewed in Istanbul Canary Lovers and Breeders Club in Eminönü) attending yellow mosaic (canary) world competitions, he got the first degree in the World Contest in Italy in 2013.

⁴ Aziz Berber (a birdman feeding canaries for 30 years, some of the interviewees did not want to give their surname, just because they are known with their appellations thus Berber is not the surname but appellation coming from his occupation as a former hairdresser) interview with Alper Çakmak in Istanbul Canary Lovers and Breeders Club..

⁵ Kaan Sangar is a birdman (interview with the author in Topkapı bird bazaar) interested in canaries and greenfinches, through whom I had the network of birdmen located in different parts of Istanbul such as Silivrikapı Birdman Coffeehouse and Topkapı Birdman-Coffeehouse.

⁶ Tuncay Ergür is a birdman (a personal communication in Topkapı-Bird-Bazaar) feeding different kinds of singing birds for 50 years, he also appears on the document by Naki Tez, Birdmen of Istanbul.

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coffeehouses or clubs, participants would not “like to be seen in a particular way” or would have no tendency to perceive the other community members in regard of their social positions (Habermas 1989, 146).

6.2. Dynamics of the Public Spheres of Birdmen: Reason Replaced with Senses

Habermasian public sphere “comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (Habermas, Lennox, F. Lennox 1974). The predominant catalyst behind the public sphere is depicted as reason. Habermas’ conception of public sphere gives the image of a public sphere where “individuals exercise their reason” through constant dialogue and democratic communication (Cowan 2004, 345). It is the reason, in other words, “purposeful activity” that involves strategic calculation of costs and benefits and decision giving process that forms the fundamental aspect of public sphere (Habermas 1989, 144). There is a constant debate going on within the public sphere that signifies the use of reason as a means to reach understanding between interacting individuals. The interviews and the empirical data acquired through participant observation contribute to the aim of the study which is seeking pluralism and exploring the diversity. One of the main arguments of this study is to challenge the conventional forms, norms and perceptions of status, class, possession, the force of money and material gains (obtained through rational action) in the action of man which is assumed to be the main dynamic contributing to the formation of post-modern public sphere. During the participant observation process, many birdmen were in the birdman-coffeehouses on Sunday at 9 o’clock in the morning and many of them were there as if it was a duty to be fulfilled. The most important feeling that one encounters with is love since one can never make a reasonable explanation for assembling in a place where one can find only birds in pendent cages on the ceiling. The only day that birdmen gather is Sunday which is the only day off for many working people in İstanbul. It does not seem to be a reasonable action that can be explained as a result of the exercise of reason that imputes the birdmen to be there on Sunday at 9 o’clock in the morning. If the occupations shown in Table 1 are taken into consideration, it can be appreciated that these people are in constant exercise of reason in order to fulfill what is expected in the realm of business. Yıldız (personal communication, October 12, 2014) makes that point clear with the words: “There are such people that due to their status and class, if we did not have the bird as a common passion, they would not even look at my face if they saw me walking on the street”. Passion turns out to be the underlying force embodying the most prominent motivation to make people convene in a specific place while reason would not function in the same way. It is not the reason but passion functioning as a catalyst for bringing people of different status and classes that would have nothing to do with each other unless there is identification with bird and being a birdman, in other words, a common amusement to satisfy the feelings. The observations demonstrate that birdmen (or their birds since the term can be of use interchangeably) who have never been called “master” (“*hoca*”) by the others are envious of the birds that these “masters” keep and breed. Touching on this aspect, Yıldız utters the significance of emotions as the catalyst of their actions with the words that “it is the love and sometimes jealousy that makes us communicate with each other” and these words depict feelings as the focal point in the dynamic of communication. He also refers to a story that he has lived very recently underlining the dominant force of feelings in bringing different people together;

I had lumber herniated disc, and have had a surgical operation recently, the doctor that I met before the operation was also a birdman, feeding canaries, attending the auctions, festivals and competitions. Doctor owned a type of canary called gloster, but after some time, we came across several times in İstanbul Canary-Lovers and Breeders Fellowship and his love for yellow mosaic increased. I gave him a yellow mosaic as a gift, with the hatchling of the bird that I gave he got the third place in the last festival held in İstanbul. Attending many festivals and competitions for color or singing, he got degrees in these competitions.

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Doctor, as a man of science, exercising reason in order to fulfill the expectations of his occupation, whose status and position is acknowledged and being respected seeks another form of success through which the contentment of feelings is viable. Since it will be the focus of discussion in the next section, it is worth noting down briefly that doctor accepts to compete with other people whose social status or position is of higher or lower degree. There is also an implicit acknowledgement of the results in competitions that would mean a divergence of social hierarchy (only) in the public spheres concerned.

Most of the birdmen make use of the terms that have much to do with music such as tone, musical note, accent, melody, theme tune, beats and tunefulness in referral to how their birds sing. Some of them even view themselves as artists. Ergür (personal communication, 19 October, 2014) makes the statement that “you need to have a good ear (tamed ear) to be a birdman. We, birdmen, do respect each bird, but chase the one that satisfies our ears, it should give a gentle beating when it sings”. He makes use of the musical terms unconsciously in place while moving on. “Music is important. You feel proud to the extent that your bird sings as in musical notes: C D E F G A.”. He also complains that birdmanship has nothing to do with material gains and underlines the point that if someone gains money out of the birds, it has nothing to do with birdmanship since “one cannot gain money out of this. It is not a job. We’re not pet shop owners. It is the pet shop owners who gain money. People mix these two things up”. Musa Korkmaz⁷ (personal communication, 26 October, 2014) stresses that “birdmanship has nothing to do with gaining money but rather a loss of money” and reflects on the subject as “a way of getting rid of everyday life problems”. Via these words, they endeavor to put a clear distinction between involving in commercial activity and being a birdman. It can also be evaluated as a keen rejection of reason, material gains and money from the realm of birdmen. Trying to figure out that some behaviors of birdmen cannot be explained through sensible reasoning, Ergür maintains that “birdmanship is a reflection of love and passion. Why these people sitting over there are here? Who forced them? It is the force of love. It is a kind of illness, if you’re a birdman, no phone, no doorbell rings in your household. If they do, they will contaminate the tone of bird’s singing”. These words also decipher the extent to which birdmen shape their lives in accordance with bird’s needs. Rather than a simple relationship founded between the owner and a pet, birds are of the central point in the lives of birdman that may result in illogical actions. Aziz Berber (personal communication, 19 October, 2014) also points out the focal aspect of feelings governing the sociability constructed by birdmen with the words: “it is a thing that addresses to the feelings. It is a kind of devotion that moves us. It also prevents bad habits. It is a love, if you don’t love it, you cannot be a birdman. It is not something logical. If I listened to my mind this morning, I would not come here, (it was 9 am Sunday when the interview was conducted) it is like the devotion that you feel for your son or daughter”. These words point out that there is a certain clash between the realms of senses and reason that move the birdmen within and outside of birdman public spheres respectively. Aziz Berber implicitly claims that the people who are not into birdmanship are of difficulty in understanding some of their behaviors and refers to his friend “who is a shipmaster travelling around the world and carrying the bird with himself wherever he goes” and questioning “whether it is something logical or not?”. Engin Akyürek⁸ (personal communication, 10 December, 2014) makes a distinction between coffeehouses and birdman coffeehouses on the point that birdman coffeehouses or clubs are “places to appease their love for birds” whereas “coffeehouses are places to pass leisure time with the discussion of state affairs and current issues”. Passion, devotion, love and envy are the words that identify birdmen’s

⁷ Musa Korkmaz is a birdman (interview in Istanbul Canary Lovers and Breeders Club) who endeavors to increase the number of people who keeps canaries. He has been interested in canaries for more than 20 years.

⁸ Engin Akyürek is one of the new generation birdmen. During the interview in Silivrikapı Birdman Coffeehouse, he had a constant complaint about the loss of birdmanship in Istanbul as a cultural tradition that was of a great significance to be studied but out of the limits of this study.

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relation within the sociability existing within the public spheres that they form. It is the devotion that moves “a psychologist working in one of the public hospitals and making use of each chance to go and see his birds” as maintained by Cemal Kocaman⁹ (personal communication, 12 December, 2014). Şerifali Karagöz¹⁰ (personal communication, 12 December, 2014) who attended many public spheres formed by birdmen, makes emphasis on the point that “there are such kinds of wealthy people who are satisfied when they clean the cages”. Birdmanship imputes a constructed form of social behavior within which the birdmen adopt different kinds of behaviors that cannot be placed into the realm of rationality since such people would hire servants in their villas to clean their own houses. It can be called the constructed reality that governs their actions in the *theatro mundi*, namely the public spheres formed by birdmen. Avni Baba¹¹ (personal communication, 12 December, 2014) who abducted his future wife figures out another sample for the behaviors performed: “I passed the first night with my wife with two tumblers brought from Samsun (a city in Black Sea region of Turkey) in the same room”. It can be fair to argue that birdmanship is not governed via rational scrutiny since the interviewees are well aware that the stories have nothing to do with reason. The majority of respondents felt that there is no logical comprehensive explanation for many of their actions and almost all of them referring to a story want to make sure that the interviewer would not ask why. The last but not least story given by Yusuf Kocaman¹²(personal communication, 12 December, 2014) depicts another case that points out the sentimental focus adopted with the words: “one day I went out to capture chardonnoret, the season was winter and it was a very cold day, I realized that my hands were frozen when two birds were captured in the net and I realized it when I couldn’t pull the net to capture those birds”. One can argue that though birdmen criticize themselves since they involved in the illogical actions in the *theatro mundi* of birdmanship realm, the criticism which means use of reason is not viable before they are out of the *theatro mundi* in which they are the actors that construct the unwritten rules such as the force of senses as a catalyst to form their own public spheres and roles of conduction. Hence it could be proposed that emotions play such a prominent role in the actions of birdmen that it can be highlighted as the replacement of reason with emotions or senses.

6.3. A Novel Sociability: Divergence of the Outer World Social Hierarchies and Naturalizing the Divergent

The most important empirical data obtained through participant observation is that while within the birdman-coffeehouses or clubs, birdmen cut free from the expected power relations that a typical public sphere would consist of due to the participant’s relative social status, class or position. This study did not detect any evidence for outer world power relations within the public spheres of birdmen. Aziz Berber’s (personal communication, 19 October, 2014) words support the point made here when he claims that “we’re not who we’re there. I am not a hairdresser there anymore but a birdman”. Though he “*berber*” means hairdresser in Turkish, Aziz tries to make it clear that “the only person whose occupation is known is me. It has become my appellation since there are three birdmen called Aziz”. The only instant that a birdman is expelled from the public spheres that can be called exclusion in other words, is the case when the bird does not sing in accordance with the unwritten musical laws constructed by birdmen themselves. Before the

⁹ Cemal Kocaman works in one of the law offices in Mecidiyeköy/Istanbul and we had the chance to make an interview in his office and gave a lot of information about the people to be interviewed, on the dates when the auctions are held and people come together in the clubs.

¹⁰ Şerifali Karagöz (interview in Kağıthane) is one of the young generation birdmen who introduced me with the birdmen in Kağıthane that contributed to the observational study of the case.

¹¹ Avni Baba is a birdman (interviewed in Kağıthane) who breeds different kinds of special tumblers with whom I got connection through Cemal Kocaman. He is one of the first birdman who introduced special kinds of tumblers into Kağıthane.

¹² Yusuf Kocaman is a birdman living in Kağıthane (interviewed in Mecidiyeköy) and keeping greenfinches for 40 years.

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competitions, festivals or before the cages are hung on the ceiling in the birdman-coffeehouses, one can observe the “the idealized public sphere” in which each individual has an equal say since there is no social inequality and a full “discursive inclusion” since everyone is there just because of birdman identity (Dahlberg 2005, 124). Yıldız (personal communication, October 12, 2014) implicitly makes a referral to the elimination of social inequalities which is the contingent feature of any public sphere when he claims that “when we are here, we’re not engineers, not doctors, not technicians, but just a birdman”. Yıldız, in fact, refers to a public sphere in which positions of the individuals are not of significance, or completely disregarded in regard of the power relations. If it were the case that positions of individuals defined the hierarchy of discourse that the social relations involve, one could argue that there was a certain parallelism between birdmen’s outer world social status/class and the positions in the sociability constructed. Ergür (personal communication, 19 October, 2014) describes the equalization of individuals when he claims that “in the festivals, birdman-coffeehouses, competitions, your name, your possessions, your job...are all put into the dustbin since it is the bird that only matters”. One of the birdman interviewed in the documentary¹³, Birdman of Istanbul, reveals the admission process into the public spheres of birdman with the words:

Even if you’re a pasha, even if you are a billionaire or a colonel, if you’re a birdman, you’re a birdman. That’s all. If you take the cage and enter into the community, nothing else matters. Whatever it is, you leave your title outside of the community. If you do not hesitate to have your lunch with a garbage collector with honor, you can be a birdman (Tez, Öztaylan, Aypar 2012).

Though the first image is the elimination of social inequalities and birdmen founding sociability upon the same plane, as the process works out, birdmen’s constructed reality is realized. That constructed reality is dependent on the musical excellence of bird and the birdman’s excellence in selectivity on the aspect. Yıldız (personal communication, October 12, 2014) who attended many canary festivals and competitions regularly evidently stresses the elimination of class perception with the words: “in Italy, they know who I am, not because I am a successful businessman but thanks to the degree that I got in the last world competition”. Social class, position, social rank, status or class, whatever one calls it, is replaced with the hierarchy of birdmen constructed through festival, competitions or the bird hung on the ceiling that is a novel hierarchy based on the bird and birdman since “it is the bird itself that makes someone a master “*hoca*” or nothing. If you’re a master, it does not only mean that you can distinguish all the drums, melodies, and you have a good ear, but also you should know how to teach it to the apprentice” according to Hacı Doğan¹⁴(personal communication, 19 October, 2014). Another aspect of the novel hierarchy established through the singing of the birds (greenfinches) reciprocally pendent on the ceiling which is called “fighting” by the birdmen. In the documentary, Sarı Selim reports that “greenfinches fights via singing. When the bird sings, it is not only the bird itself, but also the owner that fights” (Tez 2012). Some of the birdmen even view the birdman-coffeehouse as an “arena” since it implies a novel realm of struggle, forum, even a ring before an audience. The (expected) relationship between the social position of an individual and birdman public sphere is utterly eliminated since “whoever you’re, whatever your name is, your bird can get the best grade, or be disqualified in the competitions or you may be expelled from the birdman-coffeehouse” as evidenced with Aziz Berber’s (personal communication, 19 October, 2014) words. If one takes

¹³ The documentary called *İstanbul’un Kuşcuları* (Birdmen of Istanbul) contributed in many aspects of story-telling, culturalistic view of birdmanship as a tradition, birdmen being interviewed reveal different stories that point out the ongoing network between birdmen.

¹⁴ Hacı Doğan is a birdman, keeping different kinds of singing birds and especially greenfinches for more than 50 years (the personal communication in Topkapı-Bird Bazaar).

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regard of the sociability created after the competition or after a bird sings in a way that fulfills the expectations in the unwritten laws of birdmen, the kind of greeting or commendation between birdmen points out that there is a certain acknowledgement of the novel positions that are taken seriously (Young 2000, 58). The ones whose birds fulfill what is expected (by the audience) are called master or “*hoca*” which is a signifier for the word teacher that means a novel authority or a person of respect. To put it simply, an unemployed person, or a garbage collector who is to form the inferior segments in the social class triangle can be the master of another birdman whose profession is of higher place in the triangle concerned, which means that birdman-public spheres open up another way to diverge the social hierarchies of the outer world and perform its existence through the novel sociability constructed. There is a certain respect by each individual for the constructed reality of birdmen almost without any exception. Kaan Sangar (personal communication, 1 January, 2014) who is of historical knowledge about the birdmanship in Istanbul refers to the case as a pre-modern type of community that endeavors to protect its premises. He emphasizes the “traditional aspect of birdmanship” and maintains that “mastership was a significant part of this tradition however I observe that this tradition is getting lost day by day... Not only the birdmen but also the birds were called master, which gave lesson to the young new born birds. It is the bird that makes a person master here. Not the money”. The right to have a say is also diverged in such a way that it turns out to be proportional to the one’s degree of mastership and acknowledgement by the other birdmen that he is a master birdman. The interview also illustrates the rejection of the concept of money as the force underlying the sociability and publicness being formed (Ingham 1996, 507). Another empirical data is the interview made with Selim Kavraz¹⁵ who is both a birdman and a pet shop owner, maintaining that “I am a pet shop owner not a birdman”, when we met in his pet-shop in Kağıthane, but he does not hesitate to add that “but I am a birdman when I get out this store, in auctions and festivals”. Kavraz makes a crystal clear distinction between being a pet shop owner and a birdman, but what is more significant is the rejection of money and birdmanship relation that contributes to the divergence of social hierarchy within the constructed reality of birdmen. Story-telling or narration is also of focal point within the sociability constructed by birdmen. One of them was Tolga Eronde’s¹⁶(personal communication, 12 November, 2013) story encountered during participant observation period; “my father was a retired colonel but also a birdman. He came across with one of his soldiers discharged very recently. Both the soldier and my father realized that they had their services in the same unit. Though they did not know each other there, they had many chances of interaction after they met (by chance) in the club and my father accepted the mastership of his soldier”. Eronde’s story is a typical sample for the diverged social hierarchy since it figures out a sociability that is of low probability outside and going one step further, acknowledgement by each participating individuals of the novel sociability that can be briefly put into words as “master-apprentice” relationship. The reciprocal acknowledgement within the public spheres reflects the participants’ propensity to naturalize the novel hierarchical form. Tez (2012) emphasizes the novel sociability with the words that “there is a relationship between master and apprentice through which there is a transfer of information about how to breed a better bird. There is a certain line of reciprocal and communal respect”. This respect also involves a kind of jealousy reflecting itself with the gossip and narration about other master birdmen or birds, in this aspect one can argue that there is also a certain kind of network re-established through and within the realm. The usual flow of information from the superior to the inferior one in the outer/routine world is diverged in such a way that the novel

¹⁵ Selim Kavraz (interviewed in Fatih) is both a birdman and a pet shop owner. This study required such an interviewee since it was also important to ask whether he distinguishes being a birdman and a pet shop owner; which will provide a parallelism with what the other birdmen claimed.

¹⁶ Tolga Eronde (interviewed in Beşiktaş) is one of the birdman who has an in-depth information about the public spheres of birdmen.

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sociability requires. Since the festivals, competitions or birdman coffeehouse meetings are held in different time periods continuously, the dynamics of novel social hierarchy is apt to alter since a birdman that got the first degree in one year may get disqualified two years later in another competition. Many references being made to unwritten laws of birdman public spheres, mastership functions as an institution that transfers the tradition.

7. Limitations

A number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present study. Some of the interviewees did not want to reveal their full name since it is against the code of “natural heritage conservation” to catch birds in nature (Kahya, Sağsöz, Al 2014, 272). Interviews with the birdmen of İstanbul reveal many different stories however it is up to anthropologists make interpretative harmonistic anthropological future studies. This study is restricted in one city, İstanbul, it is left to other researchers to make further studies in the Southeastern Turkey where the birdmanship is of a long history, tradition and bird-auctions are held that can also be studied by the sociologists from culturalistic view. The most important limitation lies in the nature of birdman-coffeehouses, since they are male-dominant. However, the argument is not based upon a post-modern public sphere existing through the force of senses, rather a continuity of an historical tradition in the post-modern times. Thus though it is a limitation according to the post-modern public sphere type, it gives us all the aspects of an 18th century public sphere existing in the 21st century.

Conclusion

This study challenges dynamics of the conventional forms, norms and perceptions of status, class, possession, the force of money and material gains in the action of man which is pictured as contributing to the formation of public sphere. The paper points out that public spheres of birdman are not typical Habermasian public sphere since the empirical data obtained through participant observations, interviews and documentary indicate that reason is replaced with the emotions. In other words, it figures out a public sphere that cannot be explained by rational actions of subjectivities and thoroughly governed by the constructed reality of the community. The constructed reality of birdmen is of a novel sociability and publicness in which the outer world social class, position and status of birdmen are not taken seriously within the community which is a type of idealized public sphere. Meanwhile the constructed reality works out, it creates a novel hierarchy within the community which can be summed up as the divergence of outer world social hierarchy.

The findings of this study might have implications for other sociologists or anthropologists who are seeking new/other public spheres that are not governed by the rationality or by the objects obtained through rationality. It may also invoke to search for other historical public spheres that have been successful in protecting its nature and existing in the post-modern times. There is abundant room for further anthropological investigation of birdmen and sociological study of the spheres created by birdmen in different countries.

The Appendices

Appendix 1: The Distribution in the Occupations of the Birdmen in Topkapı-Birdman Coffeehouse, İstanbul Canary Lovers and Breeders Club in Eminönü and Silivrikapı Birdman Coffeehouse.

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Unemployed	17	Colonel	1	Importer	3
Teacher	3	Librarian	1	Carpenter	6
Officer	10	Psychologist	1	Junk Collector	1
Labour	25	Biologist	1	Stevedore	1
Hairdresser	3	Lawyer	3	Coffeehouse Owner	1
Student	18	Accountant	6	Total:	155
Sales-Marketing	8	Pharmacist	2		
Business Owner	7	Guitarist	3		
Retired	20	Exchange Dealer	1		
Tradesman	6	Pitchman	7		

Note: 155 birdmen in the four different places mentioned above were only asked their occupations, so that one can get grasp of the publicness aspect in the places concerned.

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