Moral Qualities of Space, Historical Consciousness and Symbolic Boundaries in the Beyoğlu District of Istanbul

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Map 1. Beyoğlu, the Historical Peninsula, the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn.

Map 2. İstiklal Street, Tarlabası and Tophane.
Introduction

Explosive Encounters

In just two years, the 23rd of January had acquired widespread signification as a day of political action. It marks the funeral of assassinated Hrant Dink, a prominent Turkish-Armenian journalist and intellectual, who was shot dead in front of the office of Agos, a newspaper that he had served as an editor-in-chief from its beginning in 1996. Now it was a grey Friday afternoon in 2009 and large crowds were moving towards the site of murder, mostly from the direction of Istanbul's iconic Taksim Square. The ambience consisted of nervous expectation of the turn of the events and a sense of fulfilling one's responsibility, of following the script that had already been laid out.

The demonstration brought together a diverse crowd: groups carrying flags and banderols of political parties were outnumbered by people who did not fit into the neat political divides; the scene resembled a typical congestion in Istiklal Street, the famous boulevard in the Beyoğlu district, attracting multitude of people as a place to enjoy its specifically urban atmosphere. Most of the participants were in their twenties and thirties but there were also families and older people, especially groups of old men dressed in suits. The occasion had also attracted business opportunities; in addition to food-carts selling simple dishes, the most popular article seemed to be a scarf with a checkered pattern, with diverse significations alternating between political protest and a fashion statement.

I met several friends in the crowd and was struck by their observations of details that could easily go unnoticed; the huge police presence was broken down into different factions, from the elite troops situated at the roofs of the surrounding buildings, ostensibly allowed to shoot without a warning, to the indiscernible snipers behind the windows and the officers of different ranks in the street with shields, helmets and batons. All the scarf-sellers were allegedly Kurds from the Mardin region in the Southeast and my friends identified several politicians, intellectuals and activists among participants. This was shared knowledge of Istanbul's urbanity; rumours, ideas and stories as ways to classify its complex character and reorganize it into comprehensible narratives.

I moved closer to the stage where the memorial speeches would be held and encountered another group of friends who will have the most crucial role in this study, Kurdish migrants living in the dilapidated inner-city neighbourhood of Tarlabası, just around the corner from Taksim Square.
The ongoing discussion dealt with our security: we were supposedly safe because there were so many people filming the event – an antidote for the excessive use of force by the police. On the downside, the state would allegedly film the participants and have their activities archived. Someone nearby said that demonstrations in Turkey are showcases of the state power, rituals repeated at different locations throughout the year.

The organizers announced a moment of silence but the chanting continued: “We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians!” (“Hepimiz Hrant’üz, hepimiz Ermeni’yiz!”). Many also raised their hands; proponents of Kurdish rights showing a victory sign and the leftist factions raising their left fist while the atmosphere began to turn agitated. A young man next to me started to cry, demanded silence for the memory of Dink and suddenly had a violent seizure and fell on the ground flat on his face. Someone said that he must have been Armenian to experience the occasion so intensely. At the same time, a group of leftist activists, all wearing similar colours, released several white doves into the air and were greeted with massive applause. It felt like everyone was drawing a deep breath before the hell broke loose. Most of the people knew of the plans to march to Taksim Square after the commemoration and that this had been prohibited. In what seemed like a rehearsed act, a large number of the participants dispersed from the scene and the remaining ones begun their march towards the square.

The chants got louder, the shopkeepers pulled their shutters down and the police began to pull on gas masks. The protesters began determined approach into the direction of Taksim and shots of teargas filled the air. The police formed a tight cordon across the street and managed to prevent anyone from crossing the line. There were just a few isolated attempts to break through and in a couple of minutes the incident was reminded only by the presence of the police and the smell of teargas lingering in the air. My friends were comparing the demonstration to the previous ones and agreed that it had not been as violent as they had expected.

This incident brings together the most central themes of my study. It illuminates the grand schemes of social and political organization intersecting with the realities of the everyday, the complex organization of historical consciousness with the spatial order of the city. On closer observation, many ambiguities are revealed: What brings a heterogeneous group of people, often antagonistic in other circumstances, together under a common cause, in this case memory of a Turkish-Armenian journalist many did not know about before his assassination? Why do they want to march to Taksim Square and why are they prevented from doing that? The circumstances escape the conventional classifications characteristic to modern Turkey; this was not an encounter between left-wing and right-wing politics, nor conflict between the elites and the masses, even less between
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This is an ethnographic study of urban life in Istanbul, an exploration of encounters between people from very different backgrounds; how they relate to the complex history of a rapidly transforming megacity and especially to the reproduction of its spaces and boundaries – how significant places in Istanbul carry different meanings for people, how certain elements, such as streets and bridges, have come to act as symbolic boundaries within the city and how the notions of public space and the spatial makeup of the city are rapidly changing, motivated by negotiations of appropriate values, appearances and practices. The specific focus is on the dynamics between the effective urban centre around Istiklal Street and the impoverished neighbourhoods of Tarlabası and Tophane in its close proximity.

These questions have a powerful moral dimension. In the context of a fragmented yet interdependent network of localities, I am interested in how everyday moral questions are intertwined with urban spaces and their shifting boundaries. How are moral rules or terms of sociocultural practices negotiated in the urban environment of Istanbul? What kind of moral environments do neighbourhoods and city centres constitute and how they are changing? I consider ethnographic study of urban experiences as a vehicle to understand the specific characteristics of transformation in the rapidly urbanizing world. My aim is to examine how these understandings of Istanbul’s cityscape reflect on quotidian practices that potentially result in concrete interventions. Methodologically, I focus on how moral qualities are attached to different spaces and how boundaries between them signify senses of belonging and exclusion.

I argue that morally appropriate behaviour in different spaces and contexts requires constant reflection with internalized, albeit often contradictory notions of the proper rules of conduct. My ethnographic data concentrates on how people reproduce their historical consciousness of significant spaces and boundaries, how moral frameworks operate contextually, and how changes in understandings of public space and neighbourhoods are related to complex, historically established notions of living moral lives. In Istanbul, there are countless struggles over locality, fractured along crosscutting lines of social difference: class, ethnicity, urbanity, gender and religion among others. These derive from urban encounters and assessment of moral conduct. Thus, the transformations within the city can be studied as both material and embodied, while acknowledging their historical specificities. In my research, I wish to build on these actions a culturally sensitive approach that connects the practices
with memory and place and examines the phenomena across different scales – from street corners to mass events and from the underemployed precariat to groups of professionals, treating the city as an everyday lived and living environment.

This is also a study of Turkish modernity that works toward rethinking the dynamic framed as an encounter between informal multiplicity of alternative modernities and an imposed, top-down modernity. The symbolic boundaries within Istanbul are constantly shifting with concrete processes of urban renewal, competing approaches to historical legitimization and mobility of people, goods and ideas, transnationally and translocally. They do not follow the teleological idea of universal modernization nor the determinist models of global geographical flows. Rather, I consider the city as shaped by socioculturally specific flows, complex patterns realized in encounters, that constantly reproduce moral frameworks, groups and their boundaries. They are often rather vaguely understood but nevertheless reproduced in different contexts, related to the official histories and, in turn, reshaping them. There are three central theoretical themes: spatiality and morality, formation of historical consciousness and dynamics of modernity – approaching the research questions from differently framed but interrelated perspectives – that run throughout the study.

**Spatial Divisions and Appropriate Moral Frameworks**

Istanbul’s quintessential centre of modernity, the district of Beyoğlu, has acted for centuries as a space of intricate boundaries. Home to the non-Muslim minorities of the Ottoman Empire and the celebrated pinnacle of urbanity during the formative decades of the Turkish Republic, it is nowadays a space where many of the fault lines of urbanity are realized and negotiated. Characterized by abundance of boundaries and internal divisions, from skyrocketing rent values in İstiklal Street to impoverished but rapidly gentrifying inner-city quarters just a few minutes walk away, the area portrays historically developed spatial arrangements in myriad ways. The questions of its history are also conceptualized at different spatial scales, from “global hierarchy of value,” a system of worldwide evaluation extending over boundaries of the nation-state (Herzfeld 2007:316) to the cultural intimacy of a neighbourhood (*mahalle*),1 a differently ordered space with distinct moral qualities. Furthermore, the boundary dynamics of Beyoğlu are experienced very differently by its inhabitants, a fact that quickly became clear when observing the constant navigation across sociospatial boundaries.

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1 I use the Turkish word "*mahalle*" for "neighbourhood" throughout the study to evoke its diverse connotations, from an administrative unit to qualities of social relations and distinct mentality that it captures better than the English term.
by my informants living in the poverty-stricken *mahalles*, in comparison to those, who restricted their life-worlds into a remarkably few spaces.

The overriding guiding principle of my work is to understand how people struggle to live in accordance with moral standards (cf. Duneier 1999:341) and accomplish a positive sense of belonging in an environment that demands constant adjustment of behaviour and awareness of diverse and frequently conflicting sociocultural norms. This does not, however, imply outlining the rules of the proper conduct but detailed study of differently ordered spaces and contexts, some tied to deeply held culturally intimate relationships, others defined by exclusion or even danger. This brings embodied knowledge together with detailed reflection of the moral environment; not so much about what its norms are, but whether they can be violated only so often or if some norms are more violable than others (Faubion 1993:xiii). I do not approach the moral appropriateness as sets of rules but as context-dependent moral frameworks of everyday life.

By moral frameworks, I refer to sense of respect and obligations to others, questions of what makes life worth living and notions concerned with dignity (Taylor 1989:15), standards not “wired in” or totally imposed by society, but the implicit notions that are brought to fore when challenged (Taylor 1995:168, 1989:9). However, I wish to stress the spatial aspect of moral frameworks and consider them as coexisting in space, organizing social communication and influencing how people act in particular situations of everyday life (Dahlgren 2010:267, 313). They are not common frameworks shared by everyone but embrace several, mutually contesting ideas the agents need to recognize and adjust their practices accordingly, to enact successfully within the social dynamics (Dahlgren 2008:65). Following Susanne Dahlgren’s work on coexisting moral frameworks in Aden, I focus on “how social processes that manifest a diversity of social norms are constituted in the dialectical relationship between structures and agency” (2010:7). In many cases, this involves conscious effort to locate the sources of power and to find cracks in the system, to search for transformative potential while remaining comprehensible to others. I argue that these issues are intimately related to the most crucial categories of identification, the often overlapping notions of kinship, nation, religion and person. In the dense urbanity of Istanbul, the outcomes of these processes are often experimental and surprising: in an inner-city *mahalle* Islamic faith becomes an integral component of modernity and the act of strolling back and forth Istiklal Street a powerful expression of freedom and independence.

Moreover, I consider moral frameworks as a basis for belonging, whether in the most deeply held senses or in the ephemeral encounters characteristic to urban life. They also act as guides for physical environment, practical ability unfolding in exercise, consisting of ways to treat different
people and situations in appropriate ways, rather than a maps inside our
heads that simultaneously relate all points to one another without
discrimination (Taylor 1995:176, 1992:217). I see within them the power to
create social relations between individuals and groups, to organize potential
encounters between people, largely reliant on moral qualities of spaces and
their variable boundaries. Not restricted to linear separation of spaces from
one another, I employ the concept of boundary in a variety of fields, marking
movement and creating motivation for what lies beyond them, enabling the
creation of contrasts and expressions (Bashkow 2004:444, 451). Yet, I also
consider boundaries as concrete elements that alter the course of daily life in
significant ways: some separate the egalitarian urbanity from mahalles,
others designate the public space of the squares and the boulevards, some are
enforced by encounters with the authorities, still others convey a sense of
danger and are rarely crossed by large segments of the population.

In the first two chapters, I focus on social hierarchies and their
relationship to spatial orders of the mahalle and the urban sphere, with an
emphasis on their reorganization under present-day conditions. I argue,
influenced by theories of Timothy Mitchell (1988, 2002), that the modern
arrangement of space is largely a question of the world divided in two, into
an abstract structure and a material realm – institutional architecture apart
from life itself and the occurrence and reoccurrence of practices (1988:14,
59). In a similar vein, Charles Taylor acknowledges the division between a
frozen representation and an embodied experience and suggests an
analytical shift into “a spatially ordered idea of sociality, consisting of the
embodied knowledge to treat different people in different contexts in
appropriate ways” (1992:217–218). My approach towards the spatial orders
of Istanbul is based on this tension, of relating the embodied practices of
self-making into reflections of the multiplicity of divergent pasts and
differently bounded spaces.

Historical Consciousness – Between the Grand Narratives and
Cultural Intimacy

In my study, history is realized in movement within the city, mostly
concentrated on just a few quarters in Beyoğlu, but stretching in imagination
to distant periods and spaces immensely larger than the experienced
physical environment. Beyoğlu’s spatial arrangement also encapsulates many
crucial twists and turns of the modern history of Istanbul; from the gradual
repositioning of the central institutions of education and business – even the
sultanic palaces – to its confines during the late Ottoman era, all the way to
the Gezi Park protests in 2013. I approach the relationship to changes as a
development of historical consciousness that cannot be formalized perfectly;
rather than following a set of rules, it must be embodied (Faubion 1994:62). It is not based on careful and balanced considerations of the historical trajectories but reifies epochs with rich sociocultural variety and radical transformations into static wholes and makes use of anecdotes, stereotypes and clichés that cut across the urban mosaic and make its complexity easier to absorb. It rests on the ambivalence between the official and culturally intimate narratives, social perfection and imperfection, and reflects on the power relations within society (Herzfeld 1987, 1997, 2005; Stokes 2010). Michael Herzfeld describes this dynamic in a following way:

Social perfection, then, is not absolute but relative; the rhetoric of absolute perfection is a ploy for power. This is the rhetoric of definition, grammar, precision, legal control, formal clothing, sexual chastity. And conversely, in the logic of disemia [cultural intimacy], imperfection is the mark of a shared sociability: tacit understanding, good fellowship, daring exploits, casual wear and behaviour, procreation. (Herzfeld 1987:182–183)

In practice, the categories become blurred and consist of sophisticated strategies combined with the vernacular tactics of the everyday, the order imposed by dominant actors slipping into cluttered improvisations, space as practiced place (de Certeau 1988:91–93, 117). Furthermore, the encounters between people in Beyoğlu are characterized by historically founded expectations. The degree of involvement in the unpredictable urban bustle, the knowledge of the codes of appropriate behaviour in particular spaces, the experience of crossing geographic and symbolic boundaries and the skill to both follow and challenge the expectations, define the reproduction of historical consciousness.

In Turkey, the everyday understandings of history deviate considerably from the official propositions. For instance, the grand historical narratives of the authentic origins of the Turks and the long-standing opposition between the essentialized Republican and Ottoman currents – tied to spaces, solidarities and senses of morality – contain different punctuations that become entangled, often deliberately, when related to current conditions. The ubiquity of historical layers in the urban environment demands a constant stance-taking towards ideologically laden trajectories that, nevertheless, requires human intervention to transform sociocultural realities. These historical references are not construed around a coherent

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2 In his later works, Herzfeld uses the concept of cultural intimacy instead of the neologism disemia. He justifies the choice in the following way: “It expresses in more directly political terms the dynamic that I had earlier sought to clarify through the more formalistic notion of disemia, the formal or coded tension between official self-presentation and what goes on in the privacy of collective introspection. While the official aspect is a legitimate (and indeed necessary) object of ethnomorphic analysis, the intimacy it masks is the subject of a deep sense of cultural and political vulnerability” (1997:14, italics in the original).
point of view; instead, they depend on divergent positions and modalities, ranging from quotidian evaluations of appearance and behaviour into deeply held conceptions of personhood and morality, realized through the potentially explosive dynamics of the urban sphere, distinctive in its capacity to encompass a varied constellation of disparate positions.

Consequently, anthropological approaches to history are closely linked to the question of the constructed nature of social realities. I consider this an integral aspect of historical consciousness, consisting of “various modalities of historically grounded ethical and moral and intellectual practice” (Faubion 1993:13), a dimension of personhood that shapes the encounters and sociocultural realities. I follow Bruce Kapferer’s proposition that the acknowledgement of the fact that human realities are constructed, does not deny the reality of their construction but rather that the goal of anthropology should be to penetrate into the heart of the constructional processes (in Smedal and Kapferer 2001–2002). This study aims at a nuanced description of historical consciousness in present-day Istanbul that rests on “the embeddedness of specific cultural orientations in the development and historical production of practices” (Kapferer 2002:5), observed ethnographically in reflections and narratives connecting the different streams of history to lived realities. While most of the daily encounters rest on enforcing and normalizing the historically dominant conceptualizations, they are always subject to alterations and shifts in the point of view. I consider the very act of reflecting upon the constructedness of historical consciousness as an essential activity to ensure a sense of coherence in everyday life.

My ethnographic material illustrates the ways to encounter the historical trajectories of the city and its inhabitants through various registers; the powerful sensations of becoming an Istanbulite, of learning to enjoy the fast-paced life of the metropolitan multitude, of finding geographic and linguistic kinship from previously unknown essences, of reconfiguring one’s relationship to tradition and religion; or, on a more negative note, of facing excluding practices on the basis of one’s origins, of the necessity to find new routes to avoid the ID checks by the police, and, of becoming disappointed in politicians throughout the political spectrum are some of the themes I discuss in detail to illuminate these complex relationships.

**Dynamics of Modernity and Urban Transformation**

The topic of modernity is strongly present throughout the study and ties together several approaches to spatial and historical classifications. In Turkey, modern is one of the most powerful classificatory categories that integrates the specifically Turkish experience into issues with global reach, from the concrete transformation of a country, remaining unequally divided
according to the classic indicators of modernization, to the condition of modernity, a new sense of awareness, and a qualitatively different approach to life. I address the Turkish encounter with modernity from two interrelated perspectives; firstly, as a distinctive way to organize history and conceptualize selfhood and, secondly, as a widely shared periodization in the Turkish context; from its emergence in the late Ottoman era, to the rupture of the Republican revolution in 1923, further, to the shift to an increasingly liberal country with a multiparty system after 1950, and, finally to a period after the 1980 military coup, characterized by neoliberal politics and post-Kemalist ideologies. In the course of my fieldwork, I noticed almost obsessive attentiveness to modernity, especially among my friends living in impoverished mahalles. It became particularly apparent in the movement between different spaces; the world of the mahalle, organized along a complex sets of loyalties, was distinguished from the space of freedom in the area surrounding Istiklal Street, just around the corner. The idea of a modern self, capable of sophisticated reflection and appropriate behaviour in different contexts, was at the heart of the matter.

By modern self I do not mean a neutral configuration of a punctual object but rather something that exists “in a certain space of questions, through certain constitutive concerns” (Taylor 1989:50). Its connection to modernity represents a novel manner of relating to the world:

A new, unprecedentedly radical form of self-objectification. The disengagement both from the activities of thought and from our unreflecting desires and tastes allows us to see ourselves as objects of far-reaching reformation. Rational control can extend to the re-creation of our habits, and hence of ourselves. (Taylor 1989:171)

Yet this self-reflection is not solely based on abstract principles but closely related to the historical consciousness of modernity in its different, often contradictory forms. Nor is it restricted to individual action but takes place “in the nexus of reflective self-making, collective identities, and political economies” (Dahlgren and Schielke 2013:11). This sense of the modern self also reflects a specific orientation to history and spatiality: it disciplines thought towards disengagement from embodied agency and social embedding (Taylor 1995:169).

In my discussion of modernity characteristic to different periods, I bring individual understandings together with collective ones by analyzing metaleptic acts that express divergent orientations towards history (Faubion 1993). These consist of the evaluation of different periods, incorporation of breaks and continuities, establishment of new beginnings and discarded pasts, as well as selective appropriation of principles and materials, in relation to desired modernity. I argue that many of the dynamics originating from the past are still very much alive in the everyday practices and moral
evaluations of today. Analytically, I distinguish between introjective metalepsis, the trope of the cultural classicists referring to the past as an exemplary standard, and projective metalepsis, a basis for historical constructivism and creative utilization of the concreta of the past (Faubion 1993:xxi–xxiii). I challenge the uniform notions of the past and offer historical and ethnographic illustrations of how attributes of modernity from different eras have created powerful senses of belonging and morality in the present. Furthermore, I propose that the maintenance of traditions, retrieval of the old and establishment of the new do not constitute playful arrangements of identity politics but have become vital issues with far-reaching consequences concerning selfhood and dignity.

In addition to reorganization of historical trajectories, the contested modernity of contemporary Turkey is powerfully related to novel arrangements of its urban spaces, especially through questions of public space and urban transformation as the most pressing and divisive issues in present-day Istanbul. I approach the notion of public space in a manner similar to modernity: rather than taking an influential model, such as Jürgen Habermas’ notion of public sphere (1989), as a starting point, I wish to focus on how different aspects of publicness become central in the urban sphere (see Low 2000, Navaro-Yashin 2002a), how they are connected to the spatial makeup of the city and how they can be challenged by different means. My focus on the qualities of space aims to locate “positive opportunities for group life” (Stokes 2010:5 fn.9), new solidarities and processes to appropriate urban space. These issues are interrelated with the rapid urban transformation of Beyoğlu that is radically redrawing the boundaries between its mahalles and urban sphere and transforming the moral qualities of space into new configurations that have been challenged on several grounds.

The Structure of the Thesis

My exploration of everyday life brings together the spatial orders and contested historical trajectories of Istanbul to illustrate its specific condition of modernity in the present day. Methodologically, the study is divided into two parts. Its first half focuses on the central questions thematically: Chapters 1 and 2 examine qualities of different spaces and boundaries, Chapter 3 shifts attention to the operations of the historical consciousness and Chapter 4 concentrates on the questions of modernity. The second half of the study integrates these themes to different periods of Turkish history; from the emergence of Turkish modernity in the late Ottoman period to the most recent developments in the twenty-first century. However, the aim is not to study history as linear progression but to locate significant events and developments and analyze how they are related to different spaces and moral
concerns of today. In order to study the moral ambiguities of Istanbul's inhabitants, I show how even the most distant epochs are effortlessly brought into the present and influence life in the city. Throughout the study, the emphasis is on the quest for dignified life in an urban environment characterized by contextual moral frameworks and shifting solidarities.

I begin my analysis with an ethnographic account of how different spaces in the city are experienced, balancing between the grand narratives and culturally intimate significations. In Chapter 1, I highlight the perceptual and sociocultural characteristics of neighbourhoods, the impoverished mahalles in Beyoğlu, in contrast to the urban sphere of Istanbul around Istiklal Street, the famous pedestrianized boulevard of the area, that has been central to debates of Istanbul's urbanity for centuries. I connect the qualities of these spaces with their historical development and questions of morality, especially dealing with the notions of community, freedom and tolerance.

Chapter 2 examines spatial orientation in the form of concrete and symbolic boundaries crisscrossing the city. I start with an analysis of their historical formation and show ethnographically how their current understandings are often confused but reveal interesting constitutive principles of movement across both concrete and symbolic boundaries. I move on to analyze how boundaries are connected to moral frameworks guiding the senses of appropriate behaviour in different spaces and how they define access and safe passage in the lived realities of the inhabitants.

After establishing this framework of spatially ordered idea of sociality, a city consisting of differently bounded spaces with distinct senses of individuality, community and morality, I move on to analyze the shared historical understandings and the culturally intimate individual experiences that shape the awareness of qualities of urban spaces. While the first two chapters focused on the most significant juxtapositions between different districts and neighbourhoods and the reproduction of their boundaries, I continue with a discussion of how historical narratives transform the fragmented city into a coherent whole, shape the mental maps of its inhabitants and establish a sense of belonging into its urbanity.

Chapter 3 investigates the formation of historical consciousness of different spaces and their moral qualities. I begin with accounts of urbanity and experiences of becoming an Istanbulite among my informants, signifying a shift to a new environment with radically different norms and possibilities, and explore how historical dynamics shaping the urbanity of Istanbul are brought into the present with metaleptic operations reorganizing different historical currents. Towards the end of the chapter, I discuss the cultivation of a modern self, a reflective orientation defining a
sense of desired modernity that had become central to the lives of my informants.

The first three chapters identify several characteristics of the “modern” as a qualitatively different spatial arrangement, mentality and sense of selfhood that shapes the life-worlds of Istanbul’s inhabitants fundamentally. Moving up in scale, I first examine them on the level of the neighbourhood, proceed to how they are understood as historically distinct trajectories influencing the Historical Peninsula and the district of Beyoğlu and how they relate to the whole city and contain potentially explosive powers in its extremely contested sites such as Taksim Square. In Chapter 4, I shift my focus to an even larger scale, to diverse conceptualizations of modernity in Turkey, in relation to its emergence and development globally. I examine concrete changes in the living conditions together with the abstract principles associated with the “modern” and outline how the dynamics of modernity, its spread and reach, as well as its hierarchies of value, have been applied with regard to Turkey. Put together, the first four chapters address the different dimensions of contextual moral frameworks in Istanbul: how spatial orders, historical consciousness and modernity are intertwined in the pursuit of feeling at home in the urban environment, crossing boundaries designating different standards of morality and acting appropriately in different situations.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 take the themes discussed in the earlier chapters into a historically periodized framework. My aim is to relate the formal and informal understandings of Turkey’s modern history to the realities of the present day and to study how classifications and narratives integral to them have influenced the questions of belonging and moral life in contemporary Istanbul. In Chapter 5, I start with a brief sketch of the threshold of modernity in the late Ottoman era, a period often covered in haze and subject to reifications and confused interpretations outside the expert circles. After that, I move on to the radical modernity of early Republican Turkey with an emphasis on the reorganization of history and categories of belonging. I look especially into how the changing notions of nation, ethnicity, secularism, religion and civilization have shaped the understanding of modernity with far-reaching consequences.

In Chapter 6, I explore the era between the years 1950 and 1980, labelled as “populist modernity,” characterized by large-scale migration from the countryside to the cities and hybrid cultural formations, exemplified by the emergence of arabesk urbanity that has reshuffled the categories of imposed top-down modernity with vernacular and culturally intimate understandings. I show how many of these debates are far from being forgotten and how they still influence encounters between people from different backgrounds.
Chapter 7 deals with the modernity of the most recent times, from the liberal opening of the country after the 1980 military coup. I begin with a discussion on how the new political climate of the country has created polarizations influenced by the earlier divides between the masses and the elites, arabesk and high culture, rural migrants and urbanites and how my informants experienced discrimination and exclusion in this new social order that rests on another reconfiguration of history and modernity. In addition to the neoliberal reforms and populist politics of the new political elites, I study how the parallel and often complementary ideas of Islamic values and neo-Ottomanism are related to the political and sociocultural climate of today. These three chapters represent the diverse currents of Turkish modernity and move between the grand historical narratives and their tactical utilization in everyday life. My ethnographic analysis covers a wide spectrum of situations that reveal how the disputed notions of the past eras are revitalized and reinterpreted, often with surprising consequences.

The last chapter of the study takes the contradictory modernity of present-day Turkey to illustrate the current spatial rearrangements in Beyoğlu. While the first chapter provided an introduction to the spatial orders in Beyoğlu, the last one returns to their present-day realities with a focus on how the mahalle and the urban sphere are changing in unpredictable ways. I explore the transformation of public space through case studies of police interventions, the commodification of spaces in Beyoğlu and, especially, how town squares have become central arenas for political expression, designating claims for access, rights, control and ownership of public space. I conclude with speculation about the future of rapidly gentrifying city, where the coexistence of different moral frameworks has become increasingly volatile and the boundaries between the mahalles and the urban sphere subject to radical alterations at different scales.

Fieldwork and Methodology

I collected most of the ethnographic data during my ten-month fieldwork in Istanbul in 2008–2009. However, many of the findings are supported by my earlier and subsequent visits to Turkey: from travelling around the country extensively from the year 2002 on, conducting three months of fieldwork for my Master's thesis in 2005, and returning to Turkey several times for conferences, summer schools and to work as a visiting scholar. I have also been paying close attention to developments in Istanbul and the whole country throughout the period: first, mostly following mass media, but increasingly by means of different social media platforms. I have kept in touch with most of my informants after my fieldwork and had a possibility to
discuss the almost final version of the work with them when working at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul for the first three months of 2015.

My analysis is grounded in participant observation throughout the doctoral fieldwork, systematic collection of impressions, characterizations and memories of spaces and traces of history, especially in the Beyoğlu district. After the initial period of engaging with my informants, my data collection consisted of series of semi-structured interviews, dealing with spatial characteristics and historical understandings of particular events or locations, sometimes recorded over a few quick glasses of tea, at others extending into hours of informal discussion covering a wide range of topics. Whenever possible, I would write down my notes immediately and extend and comment on them preferably on the same day. The number of short audio recordings exceeded one hundred; some proved to be very useful and found their place in the final text; many others remained at the background, designating the range of interpretative possibilities.

Gradually my attention turned increasingly towards an interrelated set of issues, constantly present in the lives of my informants. The emphasis on detailed historical consciousness and especially on the contextual moral frameworks of differently bounded spaces began to attract even more of my interest. I developed a method I called “virtual walks” and began to exercise it with my key informants. We would sit down over tea and talk our way through the city: beginning at one site, I would inquire into the characteristics of spaces and places in Beyoğlu, moving across the streets and squares, recording narratives of significant sites, encounters and boundaries. This method\(^3\) proved to be very successful (and hugely popular); there was a clear sense of enjoyment for all of us in describing the cityscape, correcting supposed misunderstandings and debating the developments and transformations. I used this methodology with eight of my central informants,\(^4\) three of them depending on low-income jobs and living in Tarlabası, and five representing other segments of Turkish society, either living in Beyoğlu or frequenting the area regularly. I repeated many of these sessions, especially the ones conducted with those living in Tarlabası, and added new details on an informal basis. I transcribed all of my recordings and compared commentaries on the most significant spaces and themes to identify shared patterns of thought. Towards the end of my fieldwork I scrutinized the central themes further in semi-structured interviews,

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\(^3\) After my fieldwork, I came across Kevin Lynch’s study *The image of the City* (1960) that utilizes research method of abstract mapping similar to mine. However, Lynch follows a much more structured set of questions, concentrating on forms rather than social meanings of spatial attributes (46) and his study does not involve long-term participant observation.

\(^4\) Şıvan, Ridvan, Ahmet, Veli, Osman, Volkan, Didem and Nazlı.
focussing on issues such as social inequality and the imagined future of Beyoğlu.

My anthropological approach could be summarized as “comparative study of common sense, both in its cultural forms and its social effects” (Herzfeld 2001:x), that is based on both practices of everyday life and their detailed reflections. For an ethnographic study, my aim, following David Graeber, is to tease out “the hidden symbolic, moral, or pragmatic logics that underlie certain types of social action; how people's habits and actions make sense in ways that they are not themselves completely aware of” (2007:305). Often the most interesting features became apparent when the practices were challenged on different grounds or turned ambiguous and contested. Many of the accounts of my informants combined stereotypical characterizations, recited almost by rote, with distinctive personal stories of meaningful experiences. The local culture of verbal expression had an interesting role in this dynamic, especially in the beginning of my fieldwork: if there was even a hint of a formality in the interview setting, the replies extended easily to solemn and ceremonial recitations of one's deepest feelings. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish the ritual expressions from the immediate concerns; at the same time, I have always been attracted to the ease many Turks have when talking about their innermost feelings only after a short period of acquaintance.

I discuss examples from literature, films, magazines and newspapers to illustrate wider linkages to my arguments and I have been fortunate to take part in countless discussions of everything between heaven and earth during my time in Turkey. This familiarity with the contextual life-worlds of people has helped me to identify modalities of different practices and to trace out their implications and uses (Henkel 2007:64, Houston 2013:334). However, I have chosen to refer to media discussions sparingly and use them mostly to complement my ethnographic examples. In order to make discussions in the media more accessible, I mostly refer to English-language sources for the news that has captured wider attention and use Turkish sources for the local news.

INFORMANTS

A substantial part of the study consists of the depiction of the lives of underemployed men, between 25 and 30 years of age, working in the area around İstiklal Street and living in Tarlabası. Especially two of them, Şivan and Ridvan,5 have very central role and their experiences are referred to throughout the text. Of the many others involved, some might appear in the

5 All the names have been changed to protect the privacy of my informants. I have also altered some other sensitive details of locations and situations on the same grounds.
text only shortly, in the form of a particularly telling anecdote, while others occupy more central positions, demonstrating the range and potential of the social imagination. They also serve as a background against which the references to other ways to experience Istanbul become more comprehensible. There are five people, three living in Tarlabası and two representing other societal positions, whose stories and experiences I use recurrently to illustrate my argument.

At the time of my fieldwork, Şivan was a 29-year old Kurd who had moved to Istanbul ten years ago from a now abandoned village near Mardin in the Southeast of Turkey. I first met him through a friend who had a real estate agency in Tarlabası. Running errands for the office, he possessed an incredible skill to find whatever materials or help needed in just a few minutes, often based on his extensive networks in the neighbourhood. Despite his lack of formal education, he possessed intricate knowledge of the area and was very interested in its history. Contemplative and slightly reserved, he nevertheless had an appearance of a streetwise urbanite, balancing his life between the mahalle in Tarlabası and the urbanity of the İstiklal area. He had his mother and seven brothers living together in Tarlabası, with the brothers frequently moving around the country in their search for employment. He had very pragmatic relationship towards being a Kurd and a Sunni Muslim but liked to deliberate over matters concerning religion and politics. At the time of my fieldwork, Şivan was also very determined in advancing his career and later managed to enrol in private business school for an evening course. He met his future wife Birgül during the time of my fieldwork and they live nowadays in a rented flat in Tarlabası.

Ridvan knew Şivan by name but they moved in different groups of friends and would not keep in touch. He was 30 years old and had had a very troubled past. His home village, also near Mardin, had been bulldozed during the civil war in the 1990s, both of his parents were dead and he had moved to Istanbul, after living in Mardin and Diyarbakır for few years, in 2000. He shared a small room in Tarlabası with his older brother who alternated between different jobs. Unlike Şivan’s very close ties with his relatives, he mostly spent his free time with a circle of friends of approximately the same age, usually around Taksim Square. Against all the odds, Ridvan had been successful in his undertakings. He operated a small grocery store (bakkal) together with a friend, ordering nuts and dried fruit from Eastern Turkey and keeping a wide variety of other products available. In addition to these chores, he worked as a waiter in a teahouse nearby and

6 All of my central informants were, at least nominally, Sunni Muslims of Hanafi school of jurisprudence.
Ahmet often emphasized that he was a newcomer to Istanbul and had not really become familiar with the city in his first two years. His family was originally from Diyarbakır, also in the Southeast, but had moved together to Istanbul and settled in Tarlabâş in the search for better life. He was 25 years old, slightly younger than Şivan and Ridvan, very pious and would have wanted to carry on with Islamic education. His family lived in a tiny flat in a run-down building with lots of relatives coming and going. He was working in a modest family-run teahouse neighbouring his home and spent most of his time in the vicinity. Ahmet often stressed the significance of being Kurdish and Muslim; he felt isolated from Turkish society and often depicted his life as a constant struggle in a hostile environment. Despite the anxiety and confusion, he had no plans to return into quieter life in a more religiously oriented neighbourhood and would come up very quickly with ingenious solutions to issues disturbing him.

Veli, 30, was living in the neighbourhood of Tophane, down the hill towards the Bosporus from Istiklal Street, and worked as an artist and art instructor. He was originally from a small town close to the Syrian border and had background in Islamic medrese education, in addition to the state-run primary school. From very early on, he had wanted to move to Istanbul and, despite the opposition from his family, had enrolled into an art school and later continued his studies in the university. We became friends and later flatmates after a random encounter in one of the teahouses of Beyoğlu. Veli was a self-confessed urbanite and cosmopolite with a wide circle of friends but would often relate his current situation with his roots at the periphery of the country. He also proved to be incomparable help to me in explaining the complex dynamics of Turkish society and Istanbul's urban transformation.

Didem, 27, had been living half of her life in an upper-middle-class neighbourhood of Ataköy, some 15 kilometres from Beyoğlu, near the Atatürk airport. She was working in a production company and rapidly moving towards international career path, already spending a fair amount of her time in Germany and England. At the same time, she was proud to be Turkish and Istanbulite and often saw her work as a way to promote the country and correct misconceptions associated with it. Knowledgeable about history of Turkey and closely following the political developments, she would be very eager to engage in lengthy discussions of the future course of
the country. Didem also participated actively in feminist politics and would often emphasize issues facing Turkey from this perspective, often based on her own experiences.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While supported by extended observations of Turkish society and social engagement with wide variety of actors, this study revolves around the lives of a relatively few people. It is also centred on the urban sphere in Beyoğlu; I discuss how the dynamics I study are perceived differently in other spatial contexts but I have not conducted long-term fieldwork in other locations. Naturally, the group of people I focus on is not representative of whole city, nor the spaces where my research has been situated. The advantage of concentrating on the life-worlds of a fairly few individuals lies in the possibility to tie complex phenomena of seemingly different orders together in a detailed way that acknowledges the role of individual histories. My aim has been to include a variety of voices to give insight into my argument while focussing mostly on the thoughts and practices of men in their twenties and thirties. I have been discussing the themes of my study extensively with their families, relatives, friends and partners, whose thoughts play a considerable role in the background. The gender dynamics have also had an effect on the study; as a male researcher I faced no problems in communicating with the women in the mahalles of Tarlabası and Tophane, usually girlfriends or wives of people that I knew, but lengthy interviews, sometimes consisting of several sessions, did not seem an appropriate way to conduct research. I organized interviews with couples and had possibility to reflect on my findings on the light of experiences of women from other parts of Istanbul in extensive interviews. While there is a relatively good grasp on the most pronounced themes such as publicness and security, the extended narratives of individual histories of females living in these mahalles are outside the scope of this study.
NOTE ON THE USE OF LANGUAGE

My aim has been to make the text as readable as possible for people with no knowledge of the Turkish language. I have used the English transliteration when it has become established (İstanbul instead of İstanbul and İstiklal instead of İstiklal or İstiklâl) but used the Turkish spelling in other cases (Tarlabaşı, Şişli). I have also translated names of the well-known locations into English (İstiklal Caddesi – İstiklal Street, Taksim Meydanı – Taksim Square, Tarlabası Bulvarı – Tarlabası Boulevard). When mentioned for the first time, I have designated the Turkish name for places where the connection between English and Turkish name is not obvious (the Golden Horn – Haliç, the Bosporus – Boğaz) but not when it corresponds closely to the English name (Bilgi University – Bilgi Üniversitesi).

Turkish words that cannot be captured fully in English translation are written in italics (e.g. mahalle, gecekondu), also when the Turkish word is similar to English but with different connotations (modern – modern). The Turkish terms are defined in the glossary at the end of the book (p.218). For these words, I have not rendered the plurals according to the Turkish system of pluralization (mahalle – mahalleler, çapulcu – çapulcular), but given them in English (mahalles, çapulcus).

Turkish alphabet has seven letters, modified from the Latin alphabet, but not found in the modern English alphabet (in addition to three vowels that sometimes appear with circumflex: â, î and ü). The orthography is highly regular.

Ç  – as ch in chain
Ğ  – “the soft g” lengthens the vowel before it
I  – as -er in letter or speaker
İ  – as ee in keep
Ö  – as vowel in bird or her but shorter
Ş  – as sh in show
Ü  – as e in new
Chapter 1:  
The Mahalle and the Urban Sphere

Istanbul is a country, not a city.  
— Istanbul Mayor Kadir Topbaş

I had just moved into my first address in Tarlabası and waited for Şivan to show me around. I had been wandering aimlessly in the area on my previous visits to Istanbul but now it felt different because I had a specific aim: to learn to understand the spatial divisions of the city. From my window, I could see Tarlabası Boulevard (Tarlabaşı Bulvarı), a six-lane thoroughfare, built in 1986–1988 after the demolition of over three hundred buildings, which has arguably become the most significant boundary constructed in twentieth-century Istanbul. On its other side rose the thick stone walls of the British Consulate General and it was almost possible to see all the way to Galatasaray Square, marking the approximate halfway point of Istiklal Street. On my side there were no visible landmarks; the maze of winding streets and alleys, lined mostly by dilapidated Levantine townhouses with four or five floors, began at my front door and I had yet to learn how to navigate around the labyrinth. On a closer look, the facades had interesting details reminding of the Greek and Armenian residential history, but most of the them were covered in black soot and some of the buildings had deteriorated into empty shells waiting to collapse in the yearly floods or snowstorms. Şivan had told me earlier that in case I was about to receive visitors, I should tell them that I live just around the corner from the pro-Kurdish BDP party headquarters: nobody will know the names of the streets in the mahalle but they can always ask around for the office. For foreigners coming to visit me late in the evening, he suggested that I escort them from Galatasaray Square.

In first couple of days I had already become familiar face in the few establishments near my home. In addition to some carpentry and metal workshops, a real estate agent and numerous car-repair stores lining Tarlabası Boulevard, there was Mardin Çay Evi, run by Ahmet’s family, a simple snack bar serving mostly tea and sandwiches; Ibrahim Market, a busy grocery store that had the best selection in the area, frequented by large

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families who came shopping together and bought the essential household
goods in large quantities; Star Tekel Bayii, a corner shop that did most of its
business selling beer and cigarettes and attracted a group of men to chat over
a drink by the benches in its front, and Özdemir Kiraathanesi, a nondescript
but very popular teahouse for reading newspapers and playing board games,
with sturdy tables covered with dark green tablecloths. These also represent
the most typical businesses in an impoverished mahalle in Istanbul. It was as
if variety of corner shops (bakkal) and teahouses (çay evi), stood for the
public life of the place: some operated mainly as greengrocers or displayed a
selection of nuts and dried fruit, others sold alcohol; some doubled as
teahouses and prepared simple meals, others specialized as bakeries or
confectionaries, either with one or two tables inside or just simple benches in
the front. The shopkeepers might expand their selection if they came across
a new business idea or happened to find a cheap bargain. Serkan, the burly
owner of Star Tekel Bayii, had somehow acquired dozens of pairs of women’s
shoes – all of them identical and decorated all over with gold paint – and
decided to prepare a display next to the store window. The shoes were sold in
a less than a week and he reminded me several times of his good business
instincts. Another innovation of his was to sell shots of vodka, whisky and
gin from plastic cups together with sausage sandwiches as a good package
deal. This kind of informality and sense of close-knit community marked its
difference from the district across the boundary – typified by public space,
presence of the state control and large profits to be made.

On a street level view, the picture was of a quintessential Istanbul
mahalle. There was laundry hanging across the narrow streets, packs of
children roaming around, and the streets were punctuated by corner stores
and teahouses, or small workspaces either manufacturing or repairing goods.
Tarlabaşı was, however, different from Istanbul’s stereotypical clusters of
neighbourhoods in several ways. Unlike the recently built areas, its
cosmopolitan past was brought to life in surprising ways: sometimes a
peculiar architectural element captured one’s attention on walls covered with
graffiti, at others the change of atmosphere was truly astonishing. There were
several churches of different orders; Greek Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox,
even an impressive German Protestant church with a tiny congregation just
around the corner from where I had moved in. The non-Muslim minorities
of the Ottoman Empire are nowadays mostly gone but their presence came
to light at unexpected moments; my first landlady was an old Greek woman
who owned the whole building but preferred to live in an area that she
described more modern, namely the upper-class district of Nişantaşı a few
kilometres up north. A more famous character was “Istanbul’s last pork
butcher,” a Greek man whose store in Dolapdere, a short walk from my
home, had attracted even international attention. These were, however, somewhat mysterious, even ghost-like encounters: the landlady would visit the building very rarely, have someone to drive her to the front door and leave straight after her business; the butcher, very welcoming to his customers, would not have a sign outside his shop because selling pork in Istanbul could be perceived as a provocation among some elements of the society. It sometimes felt that it was possible to encounter the multicultural past in an uncomplicated manner only in Asır Meyhanesi, one of the last Greek-owned traditional taverns in Istanbul, at the time the only respectable restaurant serving starters, mains and rakı in Tarlabası.

The contradictory qualities of the area are sketched best by walking around its streets. I was fortunate to have Şivan to show me around, a task that he clearly enjoyed and that we would repeat numerous times during my fieldwork. He knew that I would have only a couple of weeks to stay in this address before the principal tenant would return and we had decided to combine my introductory tour to Tarlabası with visits to its real estate agents. When he arrived, he had thought carefully which streets would be suitable for me to live and was intrigued by my expectations. He recognized the notorious reputation of Tarlabası and reflected on that, especially now when he needed to accommodate a foreigner (yabancı) into its social mosaic.

He had already decided that the area where I was currently staying, referred to as Aynalı Çeşme in vernacular, would be best choice for me because it was mostly Kurdish territory and not as rough as the areas towards Taksim Square. In Tarlabası, the earlier multiculturalism of Greeks, Armenians and Assyrians had been replaced with another order of Roma, Kurds and increasing numbers of African immigrants, most of them on their way to Western Europe. “For a foreigner,” Şivan stated, “it is crucial to find the best possible surroundings – you should look for a place where you have friendly neighbours, in the street that is not involved in prostitution or drug trade. I have a lot of relatives living in Aynalı Çeşme and they know how to take care of the mahalle. In fact, I would rather live on this side of Tarlabası but the apartments are too expensive for the whole family.”

It felt that Şivan was already living here. He seemed to know everyone and we would stop to exchange the latest gossip every few minutes on a way to a real estate agent that he considered trustworthy. At last we entered the office and came across Reşit, an elderly man with a long grey beard and light-blue Islamic attire: loose shirt, baggy şalvar trousers and a skullcap. He had already talked with Şivan and said that he had found a perfect place for


9 Popular aniseed-flavoured alcoholic drink.
me. To my surprise, we went into the courtyard of a modest neighbourhood mosque (*mahalle camii*) nearby and Reşit opened a door in a building next to the minaret. “This is a perfect place for you to stay, there are just good Muslims coming here, people will make sure there are no thieves or other problems. There is also my brother living in the house next to yours, he will help you to get settled.” Şivan interrupted the introduction in a polite but slightly nervous way and told Reşit that we have another appointment but will think about this possibility. When we left he burst out laughing. “Reşit had really planned to make you part of the community,” he whispered, interrupted by gushes of laughter, “he wants to make you a pious Muslim as well, not that there is anything wrong with that, but he has no idea what the foreigners here are up to. Let’s go to another place to see what they have in mind.”

His next manoeuvre was to show me how to get completely lost in the winding streets with several cul-de-sacs. In Tarlabası, the main thoroughfares are easy to distinguish from the backstreets for they represent the public life of the *mahalle*, the world of corner shops and mostly all-male teahouses. The backstreets reveal its space of intimacy; women in floral scarves gossiping on the stairs, children playing football, interrupted by itinerant vendors selling cleaning equipment or foodstuffs. It took me a long time to learn to relax with the feeling of the watchful eyes and I could sense how Şivan also lowered his voice slightly when we turned to this semi-private sphere. He wanted to share with me his streetwise attitude towards orientation in the city: “You will have no use for a map in this city, except to understand its sheer size. For places like Tarlabası they do not even bother to draw all the streets.” I understood that he was referring to the tourist maps that had been placed near the most famous sights and designated merely the historical monuments, public transport connections and the biggest streets. “If you rely on a map you will just end up walking Istiklal Street from one end to another, perhaps having a sneak peek of its side-streets and end up in the tourist area across the Galata Bridge. We are not on the map here and we do not need to be.”

His pride over the informality of the *mahalle* led conveniently to what Tarlabası signifies to most of the Istanbulites. The area is associated with squalor and danger, a district dangerously close to the entertainment centre around Istiklal Street. It is equated with crime and political unrest, a space infested with drugs, prostitution and seedy nightclubs, many of them visible from the other side of Tarlabası Boulevard. Şivan had stressed to me repeatedly that I will have to know what is happening in different streets and that for me it would be crazy to live close to where the criminal activities are located. He stopped and pointed at me a bar with its shutters down. There had been a nightclub (*gece kültübü*), he said, the only one of its kind in the area, that would resemble the music clubs around Istiklal, not making its
money out of prostitution or give an impression of a simple drinking-den for the old mustached men. He had been working there briefly but the owner had had to close the place down. Firstly, there were complaints from the residents, who did not want another bar selling alcohol in the neighbourhood and who, in this case, could do something to prevent it, because the place was not run by the mafia that everyone was afraid of. Secondly, there had been groups of ultra-nationalist youth who came to look for fights in the Kurdish-run place and, thirdly, the police did not want to have anything to do with the situation. I later asked about the place from a shopkeeper nearby who just said calmly that those kinds of establishments belong to the other side of Tarlabaşı Boulevard and that the idea was doomed from the start.

Our detour ended close where we had begun, at another real estate agency that had recently opened a new office in Tarlabaşı. Its owner, Murat, corresponded more closely to the agents I had met earlier and had prepared a thorough presentation of his vision for Tarlabaşı. Dressed in a very smart suit and welcoming me in English, he ordered us tea and baklava10 from the nearby confectionary and started with a story of the new branch. Like Şivan, he was a Kurd from the Mardin region but had lived in the city centre and had a business degree. He had great plans for what he described as urban renewal (kentsel dönüşüm), a concept that I would hear numerous times in the future, more often with negative undertones. For him, Tarlabaşı signified waste of potential and would soon come to resemble the area on the other side of the road. Principally, his business consisted of renovating flats in run-down buildings and putting them up to let or selling them for a hefty profit. He emphasized that he had experience of working with foreigners and knew what their expectations were. He proceeded to show me pictures of his most recent acquisitions, mostly two-bedroom apartments that were way over my budget. Şivan told him that I was a student looking for something more modest and Murat looked surprised, also slightly disappointed. He decided that we should rather walk to see another option.

“There is one place nearby,” he hesitated slightly, “but it is in one of the backstreets (arka sokak), would that be OK?” Again, he looked at Şivan first, received a shrug and we strolled along. The shift to a more private world of the mahalle was again very sudden as we turned to a very narrow alley with the sun almost blocked by the hanging laundry. Şivan read my thoughts and joked: “This is as much of a mahalle as you can expect.” My presence intrigued the children on the corner who followed us up the stairs. These were clearly homes for large families: the doors were open, perhaps out of practicality of people coming and going constantly and dozens of pairs of shoes and slippers in front of them, and we could see a family having a meal

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10 Filo-based pastry sweetened and held together with syrup or honey.
sitting on the floor, with bowls of dishes spread on a white tablecloth. The apartment, especially with no furniture, looked ridiculously big for someone who would move in with just a few bags – Murat understood the absurdity of the situation and said that he will keep me updated.

The sun was already setting and I asked Şivan to share dinner with me. I also needed to buy a new charger for my laptop so I suggested that we cross Tarlabası Boulevard go somewhere close to Istiklal Street. He hesitated and muttered that he is not dressed properly and that we could just buy wraps (*dürüüm*) from somewhere nearby. This served to me as an introduction to one of the dynamics between the areas: how the informality of the inner-city *mahalle* is contrasted to the expectations of appearance across the boundary. The iPhone promotion T-shirt, simple cardigan and slightly worn-out jeans were not good enough for Şivan to dine, however casually, in the urban centre. We settled on a compromise, to buy the charger first, avoid the trendy quarters and have a no-frills dinner on our way back.

We crossed Tarlabası Boulevard through an underpass and could immediately perceive the change in the atmosphere. The streets were teeming with people from different nationalities and social classes and their chatter filled the air. I could sense Şivan’s pace quickening and the his eye-contact to the passers-by becoming cursory as we blended into the urban anonymity. In an interesting way, Georg Simmel’s classic idea of metropolitan blasé and indifference coupled with extremely detailed knowledge of differences (1976 [1903]) corresponds closely to conditions in contemporary Istanbul. The seemingly detached movement in the midst of the multitude involves careful reading of its signs, many of them decipherable only to those accustomed to the city. Many of the signs referred to the unique history of the area. It can be traced back to the essentialized compartmentalization of the city: the historical Ottoman centre and the areas north of the Golden Horn, previously occupied mostly by the non-Muslim minorities – Greeks, Armenians, Jews and Levantines – who have left their mark in the surroundings. However, Istiklal Street and its side-streets portray a vivid mix of representations associated with different eras. In rudimentary terms, discussed in detail in the following chapters, the Ottoman past of the old embassy buildings and churches lining the streets represents one historical layer, distinct from the classic urbanity of the early twentieth century – scenes of gentlemen dressed in suits and ladies in elegant

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11 The hillside of Galata, now officially called Karaköy, was primarily inhabited by the Genoese already present in Byzantine times. The area of Istiklal Street was mostly covered by vineyards, before the construction of the embassies, beginning in the eighteenth century (Sumner-Boyd & Freely 2000:427–428).

12 I use Levantine as an all-around term for the Euro-Mediterranean minorities of the Ottoman Empire.
costumes promenading the streets or sitting in its Parisian-style cafes – a period now visible only in books, postcards and posters sold in souvenir stalls. The palimpsest is complemented with contemporary designs of the twenty-first century, depicting a hip party capital competing with Berlin, London and New York. The Islamic Ottoman imagery around Istiklal Street is mostly limited to posters, books and music associated with Mevlevi dervishes, especially in the souvenir shops near the Galata Mevlevi Lodge (Galata Mevlevihanesi), converted into a museum with regular performances of sema, the ritual better known as “whirling ceremony.” The immediate perception of the historical layers is so vivid and striking that it is difficult to comprehend that there was no clear boundary separating the Istiklal area from Tarlabası before the construction of Tarlabası Boulevard in the late 1980s. Nowadays, they seem like separate worlds, demanding different appearances, senses of sociality and standards of appropriate behaviour.

Defining Urban Spaces

Istanbul consists of diverse neighbourhoods; some extend over vast areas in a porous fashion and merge with others seamlessly, while others are sharply delineated with unmistakable geographic and/or symbolic boundaries. I argue that rather than geographic locations, the classification of the spatial orders of the mahalle and the urban sphere, with their corresponding moral frameworks, is crucial in understanding the societal dynamics of Istanbul. By spatial order I refer to historically grounded spatial arrangement, ordering of social relations and a sense of moral appropriateness that is both abstract and embodied and can be applied to very different environments. Often some characteristics of the mahalle and the urban sphere coexist in the same space, often contradicted with other features and connected to the historical master narratives of modernity and tradition, individual and community, authenticity and cultural corruption. Spatial orders can also be employed as pure abstractions. Çağlar Keyder argues that there is a genre in Turkish literature and cinema that maps the neighbourhoods onto attitudes and emotional charges of separation organized along lines of Westernizers and defenders of cultural authenticity (2008:507). I argue that these categories are still available but the divisions have transformed considerably – they have become more complex and incorporated novel configurations of modernity, authenticity and selfhood, sometimes bearing only slight resemblance to their earlier forms.

In Istanbul, the qualities of space are routinely evaluated with emphasis on their aesthetic features, residential patterns and appropriate practices linked to moral principles. The term mahalle, an Arabic loanword denoting
the smallest administrative unit in the city, extends its meaning to institutions within a neighbourhood. “Neighbourhood mosque” (mahalle camii) and “neighbourhood school” (mahalle mektebi) are common examples but the term can also be used with connotations to “neighbourhood mentality” (mahalle baskısı), morality and atmosphere. In these cases, the term mahalle is used as an adjective, widely recognized but also ambiguous with regard to its positive and negative qualities.

The concrete living conditions in the mahalle reflect the turbulent relations of the past, present and future. Atatürk’s Republican reforms employed the dichotomy between the city and village as the quintessential dynamic of the civilizational dialogue but they also targeted mahalles as obstacles to development. While the reformers favoured the syncretic Alevi traditions of Anatolian villages, discussed in Chapter 5, as traces of the authentic Turkish essence, the religiously conservative dimension of the urban mahalle was seen as a hindrance. Şerif Mardin describes how the reformers were on a quest “to establish a ‘new collective identity’ where religion was no longer of any determining power, and were intended to liberate the individual from the ‘idiocy of traditional, community-oriented life.’ The secularisation of daily social life and the independence of the individuals could only be realised by breaking the traditional social relationships and destroying the power of the imam at the local level of the mahalle” (in Gül 2006:79). Here, the mahalle represents an enclosed world, an entity binding the lives of the inhabitants together with specific spaces. Murat Gül highlights its importance to the life of an average inhabitant who would “undertake his primary education, obtain his professional or occupational skills, arrange his marriage, celebrate the birth of his children and receive a funeral ceremony on his death” (2006:79) within the confines of the same mahalle. The modernist ideas of urbanity challenged this way of life forcefully: they emphasized cities organized rationally as egalitarian spaces for citizens who were expected to abandon voluntarily their earlier senses of community.

According to this view, the life-world situated in a bounded space of a mahalle is related to distinct kind of sociality, expressed in networks that cannot realize their full potential because of their traditional and hierarchical character. It is opposed to the independence of individuals, citizens of the emerging Republic, who would gradually escape the

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13 This, of course, means that the whole city can be divided into mahalles, also its urban sphere. For example, Asmalı Mescit Mahallesi in Beyoğlu has Istiklal Street as its boundary all the way from Tünel Square to Galatasaray Square. My use of the term acknowledges the administrative functions – mahalle as a unit governed by an elected muhtar – but emphasizes its sociocultural definition.

14 Alevism is a heterodox branch of Islam, with elements from Twelver Shia Islam and Bektashi order. There are approximately 10 million Alevi in Turkey.
domination associated with the stagnant past. Nowadays, I argue, the focus on the debates has shifted from the ideal of producing citizens loyal to the Republican ethos to the questions of liberal mindset and democracy, defined in opposition to corruption and majoritarian rule. The earlier ethos of social engineering to improve national well-being has transformed into a more abstract conception, associated with the capability of independent thought. Elizabeth Özdalga, a Swedish sociologist who has been living in Turkey since the middle of the 1970s, gives an excellent definition of *mahalle* mentality in opposition to liberal modernity:

“Mahalle baskısı,” or small-town (or neighborhood) mentality, is the kind of pressure any dominating majority population may exert on individuals who want to take their destiny into their own hands, i.e., who object to following in the tracks of mainstream society. The social setting for such pressure is usually a closed, communitarian community where personal control may be highly affected. It goes without saying that this kind of pressure belongs to milieus where a liberal and democratic spirit is weak or lacking.

Yet, people like Şivan felt that they had a more democratic and just community within the boundaries of their *mahalle*. He took pride of mastering both of the environments but did not see the promise of freedom around Istiklal Street as unproblematic. For him, the question did not resonate only with the earlier dichotomy between Islam and secularism but the sum total of being from the countryside, Kurdish, poor and religious in an environment where these distinctions were noted and had far-reaching consequences. The stares, rude behaviour and police harassment in the supposedly equal and anonymous urbanity created tensions that were linked to historically developed standards of the secular urban sphere (see also Houston 2013:345). The attacks towards women who chose not take their veils off in the early Republican years (see Özyürek 2007a:4) were still alive in the stories of today and captured the much greater malaise of a divided and unequal society. “On a good day,” Şivan told me, “I can balance the two lives that I have, to feel at home in Tarlabası and go to Istiklal to enjoy the freedom (*özgürlük*). On a bad day, I feel that I am not welcome here and that I have nowhere else to go – I cannot stand the hopelessness of the buildings of Tarlabası slowly crumbling down and the neighbours following my every step, but even less the people who look down on me and make clear that I should be somewhere else.” Especially for those lacking the right credentials, balancing between the two spatial orders is serious work, constant

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15 Criticisms of majoritarian conception of democracy were widespread already during my fieldwork. It has been interesting to notice how the significance of these issues has escalated in the Gezi Park protests and played a remarkable role in the ideology of the resistance.

deliberation of spatial attributes and moral qualities that can have profound consequences for their lives.

ORIENTATION AND TERRITORIALITY IN THE DISTRICTS OF ISTANBUL

A quick look on what different areas look like on a map, despite Şivan’s criticism of its usefulness, gives an idea of Istanbul’s spatial arrangements. The following examples are based on recurring typifications of urban space; stories of the inaccessible labyrinth of Tarlabası, the co-existence of the mahalle-like and modernist principles in the proximity of Istiklal Street and the recently established pattern of gigantic construction projects at the outskirts of the city, in this example Kayaşehir, where many inner-city dwellers who cannot afford the rising rents have been relocated. I talked about the differences with three of my key informants living in Tarlabası – Şivan, Ridvan and Ahmet – and found out they shared very similar views. Their comments employed descriptions bordering stereotypes but nevertheless illustrated significant organizational principles that help to understand the composition of the city.

\[\text{In Tarlabası you have to know your way. There are some places that should be avoided, especially after dark. Nobody knows the names of the streets, we use names of teahouses, shops and mosques everybody knows. (Ridvan)}\]

Map 3. The labyrinthine structure of Tarlabası.

17 LSE Cities publication Istanbul: City of Intersections (Burdett 2009) also features an analysis of the typological variation within the city. Interestingly, it identifies a grid pattern in Pangaltı, formerly a mixed neighbourhood of Muslims and non-Muslims, that still has a pervasive sense of mahalle with the current residents (34–35).
Most of the people who visit Beyoğlu only know Tünel Square, İstiklal Street and Taksim Square. They are afraid to go into the side-streets and have not learned the shortcuts. (Şivan)

Map 4. İstiklal Street and its subsidiary streets where cars are allowed.

Of course, there are recently built areas for tens of thousands of people, far away from the centre. I don't know what is happening there – often the poor people are forced to move in there when the rents become too high near the centre. (Ahmet)

Map 5. Models of urban planning in Kayaşehir.
The map does not capture the embodied experience of walking in the city but provides a selective abstraction of the foregrounded elements. The tourist map Şivan referred to earlier concentrated on significant sights but had nothing to tell about their relationships. In the following two sections, I will discuss how the relational and context-dependent dynamics of Istanbul's mahalles are different from the spatial order of the urban sphere.

Social Organization and Spatial Order of the Mahalle

Timothy Mitchell (1988), following Roberto Berardi, demonstrates the dynamic between the mahalle and the urban sphere brilliantly in his analysis of Cairo's encounter with modernity. I consider many of the same issues integral to Istanbul's spatial orders. He raises accessibility as an essential quality of urbanity and approaches the city as “a network made up of enclosures, of prohibitions and accorded rights’ (1988:55). In this view, the emphasis is on the context; everyday life consists of the sliding between these principles, degrees of accessibility and exclusion determined by the persons involved, temporal attributes as well as other circumstances (56). Often the informality of the mahalles means the lack of regulation and control by the state. My walk with Şivan around Tarlabası illustrated several of these features: many of the buildings would be considered unfit for living in other districts but in Tarlabası they are accommodated on an informal basis, the shops can extend to the sidewalks and double as bars without permits, the drug trade is relatively open on some of the backstreets and the watchful eyes of the neighbours observe the space around the clock. While Istiklal Street has a very visible police presence, accompanied by a large number of undercover security officials, in the mahalles the police are rarely to be seen – some spots in Tarlabası, visible from certain points at Istiklal Street, have questionable reputation as areas that the police enter only in large groups. However, their boundary zones are heavily policed. This signifies the antagonistic relationship between the state and the community, but also neglect: disputes within the boundaries of the mahalle are private matters, better left to be dealt with by the community.

This does not necessarily mean that the state is absent in all impoverished mahalles. The famous Roma neighbourhood of Sulukule, situated by the Theodosian Walls up the Golden Horn, a popular destination for tourists seeking for an authentic encounter with the cultural performances of the residents, had a notable police presence with patrols and checkpoints clustering the landscape. This was, however, to ensure the safety
of the outsiders rather than the inhabitants and should be seen as increasing the sense of separation rather than reducing it. Now Sulukule has largely been bulldozed to the ground, to make way for middle-class housing, and similar security concerns were at the heart the urban renewal of Tarlabası. Moreover, the deliberation concerning degrees of access and exclusion is linked into a long historical continuum. It played a significant role already in the legal deliberation over public and private spheres in the Ottoman times (Murfhey 1990), was at the heart of the concerns of the Gezi Park protests and is a constant source for discussion wherever Istanbulites meet. I will discuss the changing notions of public space and urban transformation in the last chapter of the study and concentrate here on the contrasts between the spatial orders.

DEGREES OF ACCESS WITHIN A MAHALLE

The relationship between the individual and the community plays a significant role in defining the limits of access. In the semi-private space of the mahalle the life of the residents extends from their homes into the streets and individual buildings – even whole streets – are often inhabited by people who originate from the same region in Turkey; itinerant vendors and handymen provide their services within specific areas and inhabitants are protecting their boundaries. In contrast, İstiklal Street is an embodiment of the modernist urban sphere; a linear arrangement cutting across districts that provides a supposedly egalitarian space for citizens to promenade at all times of the day. The accessibility of mahalles is also tied to temporality and requires intimate knowledge of their rhythms: they can welcome visitors during street markets, often assigned to specific weekdays, or organize cultural events that temporarily allow unrestricted access. Following a shorter cycle, their boundaries are unguarded to a degree in the daytime but visitors are not expected in their vicinity after the dark. It is important to note that many of the spaces in the city exhibit combination of mahalle-like and modernist urbanity, not as exhaustively defined qualities but something that arises through negotiation and dialogue.

On moral grounds, mahalles are strongly associated with questions of honour,\textsuperscript{18} linked with a self-governed system of communitarian control.

\textsuperscript{18} There are several conceptualizations of honour with different Turkish terms. Jenny White interprets their complexities and different usages with the following example of a message by the military in the Southeast: “soldiers had used stones to outline a message on the ground: Hudut namustur, “The frontier/boundary is honor.” The term namus is also used to refer to women’s sexual honor and chastity. – Attacks against ırz [chastity, purity, honor], namus [good name, honor], iflet [chastity, innocence], haysiyet [personal dignity, honor], and şeref [honor, distinction] […] We have a debt of loyalty and honor [namus] to those who put this motherland [vatan] under our protection [emanet, in our care]” (White 2009:14).
assuring the observation of Islamic norms and protection of women and family life within their boundaries (e.g. Gül 2006; Kandiyoti 2002:121–125; Özyürek 2006:76), a strong ambience of observing eyes surveying the space together with anticipation of bodies that can be quickly mobilized to action when needed. These actions can manifest in several ways, mostly quotidian and unremarkable, but essential in guaranteeing the steady flow of everyday life. When Şivan referred to neighbours following his every step, he meant that the sense of control was not limited to the outsiders but an all-encompassing fact of life that he occasionally needed to escape to the freedom of Istiklal Street. Furthermore, some aspects of his life were compartmentalized according to these spaces and their morally appropriate practices. The neighbourhood mosque we visited with the real estate agent was one of the significant spaces. There was another mosque closer to his home but he preferred this one, mainly for its community of Kurds from his home region. He was not very observant but did his best to attend the Friday prayers and had periods when he prayed more regularly. At other times he felt seduced by the other side of the boundary and its bars. He also jeered at the people of his age drinking beer in Tarlabası and questioned the point of that. The delights of Istiklal’s urbanity awaited just across the street but some limited themselves to the familiar circles where nothing new ever happened.

THE MORALLY AMBIGUOUS SPACE OF TOPHANE

In the following discussion, I explore the range morally appropriate practices of an ambiguous space, just a few blocks away from Istiklal Street but situated between the environments of the mahalle and the urban sphere. Unlike Tarlabası, separated from the apex of Istiklal’s urbanity by a wide and busy road, the boundary on the other side was of a porous kind. The ambience in Tophane, consisting of several neighbourhoods between Istiklal Street and the shore of the Bosporus, changed gradually when rolling down the hill towards the sea. Veli, an artist and art teacher who later became my flatmate, lived in the area and expressed his views of its qualities frequently, often using examples of the everyday practices in the street outside his window. Originally from a small town in the Southeast, he had pursued a career as an artist against all the odds. His father had died when he was very young and as the oldest of the children he had adopted the position as the head of the family. “It might be difficult for you to understand,” he began the story that he had told to many others, “but this country follows still the old traditions, what you see in Istiklal Street is just a surface. For many, the biggest fear is to become sahipsiz (without a guardian or protector), an independent individual. I struggle against all kinds of currents in my artistic work and question the traditions, but at the same time I am part of them.” He continued with a concrete example: “There is a reason why Turks always
ask “nerelisiniz?” (“where are you from?”) when they meet a new person. The jobs go to people from the same region and many people want to live surrounded by their kin, or at least people from the same region. I can tell you where people running businesses in this street are from; the corner shop (bakkal) is operated by a Laz family and the religious guy in the store up the road is from Kayseri. In the Nike store up the road it might be different but here these things really matter. We are close to İstiklal Street but things already work differently here.”

To illustrate the sense of self-sufficient community, he pointed at a feature I had not paid much attention to, but noticed later also in many other locations. The people working at the bakkal had taken responsibility to direct traffic when the street was jammed. They would indicate to cars when it was their time to turn, who can stop where and directed cars as close to the curb as possible for others to overtake. For Veli, this was the positive side of self-governance, without which the traffic chaos would have become unbearable. Unlike police, with legal credentials to command traffic, these men had taken the task themselves – there was a clear sense that the drivers had to obey the signs for they were in space operated according to these regulations. I later asked about this from the shopkeepers who did not seem to grasp the question but just told me that this is the only way to make traffic work at this trouble spot.

On a more negative note, Veli complained of the neighbourhood pressure in a way that demonstrated sensitivity to the contextual norms. He told me first that the pressure in this place was nothing compared to conservativeness of the Fatih district in the Historical Peninsula where he could not imagine himself living in. In Tophane, the vigilance of the neighbourhood caused annoyance and frustration rather than concrete interference or danger that he associated with the extremely conservative mahalles. At the same time, as he pointed out, not all mahalles share the same rules nor they enforce them in uniform ways. For example, unlike conservative Sunni Muslim neighbourhoods, Alevi or Roma neighbourhoods have no problem with the sale of alcohol but can have a very tight sense of community and social control; in some mahalles the shared regional origin (hemşehri) of the families can be the uniting factor, while in others the emphasis on religious observance unites them. Veli felt that his daily conduct

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19 Laz are a minority group native to northeastern Black Sea coast with their own language (Lazca).

20 Several terms with different connotations are used to refer to different areas in Istanbul. The peninsula can also be referred to as the “old city” or the “historical centre.” I have decided to use mostly the term “Historical Peninsula” as a neutral descriptive term for the area within the Theodosian Walls. However, wider connotations cannot be completely avoided; Michael Herzfeld comments on the term “Historic Peninsula” as evoking the Italian term centro storico or historic center, but with a “geographical twist that also emphasizes what makes Istanbul different” (2010:318).
challenged some of the norms of this particular mahalle. The most pressing issue had to do with people visiting his home.

Veli had a very wide circle of friends, Turks and foreigners, many of whom paid regular visits to this conveniently located apartment. This had made the mahalle suspicious. There were several students, male and female, some of them only teenagers, who came to his apartment for lessons in painting. Sometimes he organized informal gatherings, lectures dealing with art or social issues, discussions over dinner and small parties. He said that the shopkeepers were staring at him in condemning way if he walked down the street accompanied by different women and that the people around had already invented nicknames to some of his frequent visitors. There had been no threats but he could sense the pressure. When I later moved in to share the apartment with him, my initial interpretation of the attention was curiosity; many were just eager to know of the different ways of life, some suspicious of foreigners’ weird manners, a handful afraid that these people would invade the mahalle by buying their rental flats. I quickly developed an easy-going relationship with the people around me, very similar to the area I lived in Tarlabası for the first months of my fieldwork. However, the negotiation does not always follow these subtle approaches and the self-governance occasionally shows its menacing side with serious consequences. People can be driven out from their homes on the basis of the honour of the mahalle. I will next discuss an occasion that shows the potential of mahalle to mobilize on shared notions of morality.

**EVICTED BY THE MAHALLE**

The chain of events unfolded when I was conducting fieldwork for my Master’s thesis in 2005. A Turkish artist, whom I had met only very briefly, had sublet his apartment, incidentally also situated in Tophane, to foreign visitors for a couple of months. The tenants were very pleased with the magnificent view of the Bosporus and spent a lot of time at the roof terrace. The problems begun when they started sunbathing. Some of the buildings next to this one were taller and it was possible see to the roof terrace from their windows. One day a relaxed afternoon in the sun was interrupted by a woman, dressed in black full-body veil (çarşaf), who told the new tenants angrily something that they, not speaking Turkish, did not understand. Next day, there was a man at their door, who told them politely in English that sunbathing on roof was not appropriate in this neighbourhood and that they had to do it in some other place. I visited them a few days later, not knowing about the episode. They had not taken the warning seriously and the woman appeared again, furious with both the beer bottles on the table and the skimpy clothing the foreign tenants wore. She told them to go away very angrily and used the word kâfir (infidel), a very strong and rarely used
pejorative term in Turkey. I, encountering the situation for the first time, felt that this was something very different from the routine quarrels between neighbours.

The news arrived the next day. The people of the mahalle had contacted the owner of the apartment and told him that the new tenants, as well as the one who had sublet the apartment, had to go immediately. They also presented a stern warning that if they did not obey, their safety cannot be guaranteed. Their Turkish friends told the guests to take the issue seriously, pack their backs on the same day and stay the next night at the hotel for there was no solution after this line had been crossed. The former tenant also had to move away as soon as he returned to Turkey.

These stories illustrate a strong tendency to link the mahalle environment with static notions of tradition, where “communality is limited to the immediate neighbourhood, communitarian organisations based on primordial and religious identities (such as associations based on place of origin) shape everyday life, and relations with the political authorities are largely mediated through patron-client ties” (Ayata 2002:25). From a common derogatory and patronizing view, the uniformity equates with the communitarian ethos, a lack of both self-autonomy and rational critical thinking, accompanied by a lack of self-restraint and a judgement of people being guided by instincts and emotions (38). They indicate a primitive mindset, inability to escape the tradition and to reflect upon the world critically. While mostly analyzing the importance of deeply held relationships and moral dilemmas in Turkish society in a calm and balanced manner, Veli would sometimes become agitated: “I just can’t stand the way the shopkeeper positions his chair outside the shop and keeps staring at my room! If I look back from the window he will not even blink. I do not want to keep the curtains closed all the time like people do in mahalles, I need sunlight when I am painting. It is impossible to explain these things to them – they think I am running a brothel here and there is nothing I can do!” Şivan reflected on the same issue as an object of discrimination: “I have gotten so tired of people genuinely thinking that daily life in Tarlabası consists of honour killings and blood feuds – it is as if we are sheep herded into one place and expected to kill ourselves one by one.” These criticisms were real, both in the everyday discussions and in the sensationalist media accounts. Again, on a closer examination, the critics would acknowledge the diversity of values held by Kurdish people but would regularly resort to the widely spread stereotype of uncivilized villagers as “unwitting automata, guided by structures that we share with them but that we are, through our conscious wit, to transcend” (cf. Herzfeld 1987:60).

Şivan and his friends would see the desirable environment of the mahalle as emphasizing communal ties, Islamic values and self-governance.
They contrasted this with the soulless existence of urbanites, often characterized as sahipsiz and terbiyesiz (unmannerly, badly brought up), unable to act according to community norms, not showing proper respect and being outside the networks of solidarity and obligations (see Mango 2004:126). They were not characteristics of individual freedom but rather equated with exclusion and isolation. In order to understand this dynamic, it is essential to examine how the spatial arrangement of the urban sphere relates to the mahalles.

The Boulevard and Egalitarian Urbanity

In Beyoğlu, the dichotomy between mahalle and a distinctively urban environment was exaggerated in the course of everyday life. Throughout my fieldwork, I casually asked my informants to describe their movement in the city, comment on different spaces and apply different classificatory principles for their spatial qualities. I would often accompany them on their daily errands and we would elaborate on the topics over a glass of tea. As I noted above, there was a general consensus of the most typical features of the mahalle and the urban sphere but no single exemplary model that would epitomize all of their characteristics. Both the age-old neighbourhoods in the Historical Peninsula and the more recent squatter settlements (gecekondu)21 at the fringes of the city would fit into the framework of archetypal mahalles and, on the other hand, the long-rooted cosmopolitanism of Beyoğlu and the skyscrapers of the financial district in Maslak would symbolize the urban sphere despite their huge differences with one another. I want to ask here, what is at the heart of the classification that makes the difference worthy of attention and why has this distinction become so significant. I have already discussed the intimate contextual solidarities and their spatial attributes in the context of the mahalle. Now I wish to turn my attention to the urban sphere, characterized by egalitarian space. I will argue that this opposition is not unique to Istanbul but revolves around the encounter with modernity: its leading principles have been realized in contexts as geographically distinct as nineteenth-century St. Petersburg and Paris (Berman 1982) as well as colonial Egypt around the same time (Mitchell 1988, 2002) but it has produced historically unique outcomes in Beyoğlu.

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21 Gecekondu refers to informal housing built by the migrants without official permissions. The term could be translated as “built overnight” to indicate their rapid construction.
It can be a striking experience to leave the labyrinthine alleys of Tarlabası or Tophane and enter into a wide and straight boulevard. There is more air and light and it is possible to see further than the next corner with no need to carefully survey the loose cobblestones. The mass of people brings with it a promise of surprise, the possibility to see something new and attractive on every visit, contrary to mahalles, where novelty is the exception from the routines of the everyday. Yet, the properties of urban space are not restricted to sensory stimuli but are constantly related to historical formations and senses of sociality. Istiklal Street is based on the model of a wide Parisian boulevard rather than the spatial arrangements associated with the pre-modern Ottoman times. In the most general terms, the historical dynamic lies in the difference between individual and community: Istiklal Street has a historical foundation as an egalitarian urban space, a site of self-expression, self-realization and tolerance in contrast to the surrounding neighbourhoods where people have been defined by their similarity and uniform ways of life as a part of community (Özyürek 2006:76; Robins and Aksoy 1995:229).

Moreover, in Turkey there is a significant difference that sets Istiklal Street out on the basis of its uniqueness:

Neither a street, nor a neighbourhood [...] For at least two centuries it has been the most significant space where Turks who want to make an individual cultural preferences have expressed their choice. (Özgüven 2008:156)

In concrete terms, Istiklal Street (İstiklâl Caddesi), formerly called Grande Rue de Péra by the Europeans or Cadde-i Kebir (Grand Street) by the Ottoman Turks, is a boulevard of 1.4 kilometres, pedestrianized in 1988, that connects Tünel Square, on the top of the hill rising from the Galata Bridge, with Taksim Square. Extremely crowded almost around the clock, it brings together people from different backgrounds more than any other place in Istanbul. It is also a place that most of the Turkish tourists add to their itineraries when visiting Istanbul.

It is a platitude to say that Istiklal Street represents the culmination of Turkish modernity. Even so, an ethnographic project that takes seriously the everyday interaction cannot ignore the fatigued metaphors: one's relationship with modernity, its reach, range or misappropriation is explored relentlessly by people who essentialize its meaning and stretch the boundaries of the concept, sometimes with specific aims in their mind. The centrality of the street is expressed in sociospatial terms, relating it to other spaces, and as a historical construction, reflecting on the abundance of its historical sediments and layers. Commentaries on Istiklal's modernity consist of rearrangements of the palimpsest, shifts in the frame of reference and reflection on its different
attributes. They emphasize the internalized experience and embodied knowledge of the city, recognize the generalizations and stereotypes and often focus on the informal characteristics and unexpected transformations in the lived environment rather than the uniform trajectory of developmentalist modernity.

The immediate perception of İstiklal Street is relatively ordered and uniform. Along its course, the ground floor establishments consist predominantly of large international chain-stores such as Nike or Levi's, alongside coffee houses and restaurants of both multinational and Turkish varieties. This is İstiklal Street in its quintessential form, attracting all kinds of people to spend money or just to stroll around, back and forth, along the street. The extreme crowdedness is one of its principal features; the stock photographs of the street come across as either depicting this multitude or its absence: the deserted street during a snow storm or heavy rain. For Turks not familiar with Istanbul, the word Beyoğlu has connotations only with İstiklal Street, Taksim Square, and perhaps the nostalgic representations of the early Republican past. The organization of its more detailed contours gets easily lost amidst the dominant currents.

On closer look, the urban space of Beyoğlu does not fit neatly into a framework of equal units of measurable space. The area consists of intersecting and differently valued domains; divided into individual streets, bounded neighbourhoods or larger wholes with their different characteristics. The ways people classify and evaluate different spaces at variable scales and embody their differences in their daily practices is directly connected to the formation of groups and solidarities in Beyoğlu. In the work of defining spatial orders, the abstract notions operate together with the lived realities. Some of the frameworks resemble the established distinctions between the widely shared fault lines, others are significant for smaller segments of the population and many of the most crucial ones are based on the individual experiences of the city.

**SPACES OF FREEDOM AND LIMITS OF TOLERANCE**

Şivan often mentioned that he was addicted to the urbanity of İstiklal Street, but this had not always been the case. At first, after moving to Istanbul ten years ago, he had been afraid of the masses of people and did not know how to behave. He had spoken only elementary Turkish and was nervous of people approaching him: “I could not relax when I had all these weird people around me. I just did not know how to relate to them and was scared that something bad would happen,” he said and pointed at one of the familiar characters, a small man with watery eyes, who wandered around the area everyday with a scale to weigh people for small change, a common substitute for begging in Istanbul. “It is not that someone like him would look scary but
everything here felt unpredictable. Now I have learned to enjoy the surprises and feel myself at home. It is rather the normal-looking people who think that I should not be here that bother me.” This sense of freedom pointed to the area as an experimental site, a kind of laboratory for prototyping representations, expressions and solidarities.

Alternatively, the two years Ahmet had lived in Istanbul had nurtured his expectation of urbanity and freedom but he still found it difficult to go to Istiklal Street, especially alone or in the evenings. For most of the days, he was preoccupied with running the family teahouse in Tarlabaşı but was very curious of what happened across the boundary. For him, generally, the biggest problem was to consolidate his pious Muslim identity with the urbanity of Istanbul and he was suspicious of the secular Turks with whom he felt he had very little in common. However, the distinction was not unambiguous and Istiklal Street also represented a tolerant space for him:

> It is a different thing for a woman to be veiled in Istiklal Street and in some of the conservative mahalles. I don't like the pressure there is in some places [to veil] and how the rules are enforced by intimidation. In Istiklal it is a matter of choice, people respect each other and take responsibility of their actions. I would not like Turks to wear burqa22 but I do not get disturbed by seeing Arab tourists wearing them in Istiklal Street. In some other place it could lead into a conflict and have some people to pressure the women to take them off.

This was not the only time that the pervasive presence of veiled Arab women was brought up. In addition to the self-confessed urbanites that Istiklal Street was famous for, it received its fair share of tourists, casual visitors and people working in the area, not always out of their own preference. The recurring joke that Istiklal Street had the highest ratio of full-body veils in Istanbul was widely shared and referred to the numerous veiled Arab tourists promenading the street. Especially during the national holidays, there was also a steady stream of Turkish tourists who take a walk from Tünel Square to Taksim along Istiklal Street as part of their sight-seeing itinerary. Out of this mix it was nevertheless easy to single out a shared sense of reality that was more than the sum of its parts. The elements that contradicted the liberal atmosphere of urban Istanbul only seemed to enforce the specific moral framework of tolerance.

The tolerance associated with the urban sphere united appearances and moral principles into a distinct mode of being, vastly different from the mahalles. It was not wholly specific to Istanbul but relied on the possibilities of social control and the expectations of the nature of the encounters, at the heart of what boulevards have signified historically (Berman 1982; Mitchell 1988, 2002; Scott 1998). I discussed above how Şivan felt at times welcome

22 Referring to both niqab and burqa, both leaving very little of the face visible.
and at others an unwanted visitor in the area, on the edge of inclusive urbanity and powerful practices of exclusion – he felt that those who defined the limits of tolerance and could resort to tactics of intimidation to degrade others who deviated from their norms of its urbanity. Ahmet had adopted the idea of boulevard as a tolerant melting pot, but Aygül, Ridvan’s wife who had moved to Istanbul just a year ago, was very outspoken in her criticism of the shallow morals of urban Istanbul.

We were waiting for Ridvan to return from his errands and decided to have a quick glass of tea near Galatasaray Square. Aygül decided that we go to one of local hamburger joints because she did not like the atmosphere of the more upmarket establishments. She wanted to explain the complexities she encountered when visiting the area: “To a certain extent it is true that Istiklal represents freedom (özgürlük) and attracts all kinds of people. However, not everyone is happy here, especially the women who choose to veil. Nobody is going to tear a veil off a woman but there are particular kinds of stares towards people who dress piously. It is not visible to you but many of my friends never feel completely at ease.” She stopped for a moment and chose her words very carefully: “I do not veil myself – partly because of this – but for those who choose to veil it is something that they think about all the time. They do not want to restrict their movement but they do not feel welcome. It is not always that the observant Muslims are the intolerant ones.” For her, the moral ambiguity was not just divided into the different moral frameworks in Tarlabası and the Istiklal area but extended to constant adjustment to different spaces. “I do not want to go to the fancier cafes here because I feel out of place. It often happens that the waiters are also living in the poor areas but the management tells them to treat their kind badly. Maybe some of them do it to hide where they themselves come from.”

THE BOULEVARD AND THE HIGHWAY

Boulevards have long historical roots of bringing potentially explosive elements together. Marshall Berman argues that pacifying the masses by employing them in large numbers for the construction and creating long and broad corridors for the troops and artillery to move against the popular insurrections, were the factors that introduced boulevards in nineteenth-century France (1982:150; also Scott 1998:61). Their societal impact was, however, much more far-reaching. Tearing down the medieval slums enabled the urban poor to walk out of their neighbourhoods to explore the life in other districts (Berman 1982:153). On the other hand, the public space of the boulevard, connecting urban areas, also helped the wealthier segments of society to see the very different social realities of the poor, otherwise not accessible to them. Berman notes the inherent paradox within modern boulevards as a perfect symbol of capitalism’s inner contradictions:
“rationality in each individual capitalist unit, leading to anarchic irrationality in the social system that brings all these units together” (159).

Berman continues with an argument of how roads with different characteristics can have remarkable social effects. Interestingly, his analysis mirrors the development at my primary field site, albeit in a different timescale than proposed here:

The distinctive sign of nineteenth-century urbanism was the boulevard, a medium of bringing explosive material and human forces together; the hallmark of twentieth-century urbanism has been the highway, a means for putting them asunder. (1982:165)

What Berman defines as the attributes of the highway, are in Istanbul located just around the corner from Istiklal Street. Busy Tarlabası Boulevard, the boundary that most of my informants living in Tarlabası crossed several times a day, possessed the characteristics of the classic boulevard only in its name. With only a few traffic lights and underpasses, it sliced between the impoverished inner-city neighbourhood and the world-famous urban centre. Thus, both varieties of prototypically modern roads, connecting and separating districts, were running parallel with just a few blocks distance, with wide-ranging consequences to the sociospatial makeup of the city.

It is telling of the spatial orders of the mahalle and the urban sphere how, in the case of Tarlabası, the demolition of the turn-of-century Levantine houses to make way for the wide road was justified as a moral project. In the 1980s, the demolition officer Fevzi Aydin claimed: “We want to clean up Beyoğlu. We are going to clean out the vermin from their nests.” These same tones were echoed approximately twenty years later with regard to the huge urban renewal project of Tarlabası, discussed in detail in the last chapter of the study. A police officer commented the situation to the press: “After years of swatting at mosquitoes, the swamp will now be drained.” The battles over moral appropriateness, entangled with the spatial orders, have been fought in these locations with different labels over centuries and they still spark fresh confrontations over desired forms of urban life.

The streets, roads and pathways are never just enablers of transport but lend themselves to culturally intimate categories. As a spatial arrangement, Istiklal Street forms a relatively straight line of roughly equal width, that,

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23 In contemporary usage, the term boulevard often refers to wide thoroughfares with busy traffic. I follow Berman’s (1982, 2006) use of the term as a site of gathering and social interaction.


according to the modernist logic of egalitarian urbanity, should connect individuals as equal units sharing the space. However, it would be insufficient to think about this space as solely revealing “in material form the determining presence of a non-material plan or meaning” (Mitchell 1988:54–55). More than a spatial arrangement, İstiklal Street is filled with intersecting and contradictory representations and narratives, subject to reinterpretations, and occupies a unique position as a space to make a statement on what Turkish modernity and urbanity mean. What for people like Şivan, Ahmet and Aygül was an ambivalent and precarious space, seductive in its unrealized promises, was the most secure space for Volkan, a professional photographer who considered it as the only space in Istanbul, or in Turkey for that matter, where he could be among his own kind, the liberal (liberal) and urban (şehirli) Turks. Furthermore, he considered his presence in the area as a way of maintaining relationships, close to a political statement: “We have to retain İstiklal Street and especially its backstreets as spaces where the subcultures (altkültür) thrive. Otherwise Istanbul will be lost. It is crucial to just have these people around you – otherwise you would feel miserable in this city.”

In the egalitarian urban sphere, the sense of equality does not mean sameness, but rather a promise of freedom, very different to other spaces of the city. The dichotomy between the mahalle and the urban sphere often parallels the reified historical patterns of the Ottoman city and its Republican modernist counterpart. However, their qualities do not conform to a specific historical period but to an entanglement of different principles of ordering space and history. Often essentialized and simplified to the extreme, they become embodied moral frameworks as well as abstract principles guiding orientation, movement, sense of belonging and solidarity. Their moral frameworks can be related to communities providing mutual assistance and security over their areas, or, by crossing the boundary, to the sense of escaping the suffocating atmosphere of watchful eyes of the mahalle into the space of freedom, realized and experienced even in the act of walking the boulevard from one end to another. The contemporary spatial orders are formed in integrating the cosmopolitan city of the Ottoman times into the Republican modernity of the Turkish nation, and further, into the neoliberal realities of the present day. These connections are rarely effortless or uniformly understood but play a major role in the hard work of everyday life, consisting of movement and adjustment between different spaces. On the analytical level, the challenge, to simplify a bit, is to connect the modernist logic of the abstract space with lived reality of maintaining the “proper relationship between directions, forces and movements” (Mitchell 1988:54).
Despite their frequent polarization in the course of daily life, the question is not about wholly belonging into one spatial order but of successfully uniting them. Their distinctive existence provides ways for integrating different life-worlds into the capricious flow of life. Berman uses Nevisky Prospekt, another boulevard associated with the promise of freedom in the Russian nineteenth-century modernity as an example of the forces that simultaneously tear apart and unite social life in myriad ways:

The Nevsky can enrich Peterburgers’ lives spectacularly, so long as they know how to take the trips it offers and then come back, to step back and forth between their own century and the next. But those who cannot integrate the city’s two worlds are likely to lose their hold on both, and hence on life itself. (1982:203)

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After a quick dinner with Şivan, we returned to Tarlabası, crossing the boundary between two worlds and received very pleasant news. The director of the real estate company where Şivan worked had left me a note: they had acquired a property just around the corner and I could move in whenever I wanted to. It was Kadir Gecesi (Night of Power), the holiest night of Ramadan (Ramazan) month, when the first verses of the Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammad. It was dark in Tarlabası and just a few people around but the loudspeakers of the neighbourhood mosques were blaring out sermons. Şivan looked at me and explained: “The celebration will go on the whole night. In Istanbul it is forbidden to use the mosque loudspeakers outside set times but here we crank them up to the maximum volume. We are Muslims and these things are important to us. No one can stop us.” There was a certain sense of pride over the control of the area, the possibility to extend it over the soundscapes. In the next chapter, I will concentrate on this contextual nature of boundaries and moral frameworks to show how crisscrossing spatial divisions produce a shared sense of reality.
At a quick glance, Istanbul's geography gives an impression corresponding closely to the archetypal divisions of the cityscape. The sea acts as a natural boundary; the Bosporus Strait separates Europe from Asia and the Golden Horn forms another boundary between the Historical Peninsula, with its rich Byzantine and Ottoman history, and the district of Beyoğlu, on the north of the Golden Horn, famous for its cosmopolitan past and currently representing the apex of urban modernity of Turkey. The topography of several hills and waterways makes it possible to discern these principal features from different locations and to build up detailed orientation for the classifications. Istanbul stretches constantly, expanding to both east and west, but its expansion is hindered by the Black Sea in the north and the Sea of Marmara in the south. As in many other big cities, even the most recent newcomers know the names of the central areas, but further from the centre, the names of the districts are familiar mostly from the signs of end stations of busses and dolmuş. On the shores of the Bosporus, districts and villages have familiar names associated with their long histories, more memorable than recently built areas that lack historical content. Istanbul is also famous as a city of bridges; often evoked as bridge between the East and the West, a metaphor that for many has become a wearisome cliché, it is nevertheless revived frequently when commenting the great geographic divisions in symbolic terms (see Mandel 2008:1–2, Navaro-Yashin 2002a).

Again, while the principles of the divisions and boundaries are generally agreed upon as historically based idealizations, their uniformity and accuracy is compromised in the actual movement within the city. Their significance is context-dependent and stretches to very different usages associated with a variety of moral undercurrents. Many of the age-old juxtapositions are relentlessly criticized and even ridiculed but resurface from time to time in discussions to bring order to seemingly chaotic urbanity. A brief look at how the imperial centre of the Ottomans differs from another centre across the bridge in Beyoğlu provides an introduction
to how intersecting histories connect and contrast elements from different eras in the course of everyday life. In this chapter, I will discuss how history is perceived in the cityscape and how the most significant boundaries within Istanbul are related to historical developments, how boundary-crossing influences the orientation to moral frameworks and how everyday movement is compromised with regard to access and safety. In my ethnographic examples, I will discuss experiences of people from different backgrounds to show how their understandings often become confused but, nevertheless, rest on the sense of shared moral topography.

Ambiguous Historical Divides – The Historical Peninsula and Beyoğlu

Even before the Ottoman conquest, the Golden Horn has acted as a boundary between the Byzantine seat of power and the Genoese and Venetian trading colonies on the northern side of the water. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans settled into the Byzantine centre, converted Hagia Sophia church (Aya Sofia) into an imperial mosque and constructed Topkapı Palace as their seat of power.27 Many of the Byzantine structures still exist and create a rich mosaic of historical layers of the bygone civilizations with the more recent constructions often replicating the Ottoman and Byzantine styles more or less successfully.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the city was divided between Muslims predominating the Historical Peninsula and foreigners and the newly wealthy Christians who had moved to the northern side of the Golden Horn (Keyder 2008:506). While the old city remained the centre of the imperial power, there occurred a gradual shift that could be perceived in various spheres of life. Between 1839 and 1847, the period associated with the Tanzimat reforms, the land values in Beyoğlu saw an increase of about 75 percent whereas rents in the Grand Bazaar of the old city fell by about 90 percent and fewer and fewer of the merchants and bankers located their businesses within the old city (Gül 2006:36). The future seemed to be in the side of Beyoğlu – the existing polarization acquired new dimension when the Ottoman elites began to establish their offices and acquire education in the area (Findley 2008; Tokatli and Boyaci 1999). The tendency of the Ottoman nobles to spend more of their time in the villas and palaces along the Bosporus culminated in the assignment of Dolmabahçe Palace, downhill

27 There is, of course, an abundance of detailed studies of the Ottoman History, covered here very briefly. For readable introductions, I recommend Findley (2005), Goodwin (1998) and Finkel (2005); for a concise history of the monuments, the classic study by Sumner-Boyd and Freely (2000).
towards the Bosporus from Taksim Square, as an Ottoman administrative centre and home of the sultan Abdülmecit I in 1856.

The division is also apparent in the aesthetic qualities: while the silhouettes of the monumental sultanic mosques dominate the skyline of the Historical Peninsula, palaces and residences along the Bosporus were designed by European or Christian Ottoman architects who began to monopolize the profession (Gül 2006:35). Up to this day, people moving to Istanbul develop quickly an acute sense of the visual signs referring to distinct epochs with different connotations. However, these are never purely aesthetic observations; Byzantine, Ottoman and Republican architectures also refer to particular groups and reflect their social orders. They also reveal a hierarchical dimension; new Ottoman Palaces were designed by the minority subjects of the Empire, often its noteworthy and respected members, whose distinct styles had become desirable for the Ottoman nobility. Their architectural mixture of Turkish and European features has been labelled as the European style, perhaps to separate it from indisputably Ottoman-style buildings. Of course, the criteria for comparison is tied to its historical context and many of the present-day classifications would not have been relevant, or even made sense, in the Ottoman times. Similarly, some of the most crucial distinctions of the Ottoman society would nowadays be difficult to comprehend, often downright impossible to apply to the life today. In everyday life, they have also become essentialized: the regime and empire spanning many centuries with several complex transformations of aesthetic sensibilities and sociocultural orders has been reduced to a label that can be applied to wide range of phenomena at different scales.

In addition to the classic divisions that have crystallized in the minds of the inhabitants, there are more or less ambiguous boundaries, not necessarily based on visible geographic markers. During my time in Istanbul, I have met a very few people who know the proper administrative boundaries between districts and municipalities (ilçe / belediye), neighbourhoods and quarters (mahalle / semt), or have even heard the official names of many of the neighbourhoods in their district. Nevertheless, many other kinds of divisions are deeply internalized and significant when navigating the city. I emphasize the classification of neighbourhoods and districts in relation to social standing throughout the study. In comparison to the global trends of urban composition, Istanbul corresponds neither exclusively to what Mike Davis defines as the model of “donut”-shaped American city, with the urban poor in derelict cores and inner suburbs, nor to “saucer”-shaped European urban model, with immigrants and unemployed in the high-rise housing on the urban outskirts (2006:31): both models are found in the structure of the city and one can add to the mix the ever-expanding squatter settlements that still grow into its furthermore
peripheries. Another feature typical to Istanbul is its compartmentalized geography: the vast majority of Istanbulites never make the crossing between the continents but 10 percent make it every day, amounting to clearly over one million people (Sudjic 2009:4).

THE HISTORICAL PENINSULA – THE OTTOMAN CENTRE OF ISTANBUL

Istanbul has several different centres, distinguished by their historically developed qualities and functions. If the Sultanahmet district in the Historical Peninsula is the archetypal Ottoman centre with its world-famous monuments and bazaars, it is also home to a massive tourist industry that utilizes the Ottoman aesthetics by turning them into commodities for the short-term visitors. For someone not familiar with the area, the initial impression is of hotels and restaurants coming from a same mold – the heterogeneity becomes visible only at a closer investigation. Some streets are dominated by modest hostels catering for the backpacker market, others form pockets offering luxurious Ottoman-style accommodation for another kind of clientele. Just around the corner from hotel-cluttered streets are the run-down quarters of Ahırkapı and Cankurtaran, inhabited largely by Roma, but rapidly transforming for the needs of tourism. Towards the west from the most-visited historical sights, the atmosphere can change within almost every block; straight after the Grand Bazaar (Kapalı Çarşı) the massive buildings of Istanbul University fill the space; in the narrow side-streets of the area one can feel the alternation between conservative mahalles, grand historical monuments and pockets of the tourism industry; further to the west comes a discernible change in the character of tourism – there, most of the hotels cater for tourists and traders from Eastern Europe and the Central Asian states. A bit further, but barely a twenty-minute walk from Hagia Sofia museum is Aksaray, the great transport hub of the area with a sinister reputation for prostitution and trafficking.

Officially, all these spaces belong to the Fatih District (Fatih İlçesi), consisting of 57 different neighbourhoods (mahalle) such as Sultanahmet, Cankurtaran and Aksaray mentioned above. However, only a few of the other names have acquired widespread significance, even fewer are used as adjectives with intricate connotations to be contrasted with one another. In its everyday usage, the word “Fatih” refers to the general mindset and atmosphere associated with the area, not to the more inclusive picture that acknowledges the different shades and stark boundaries. The power of these stereotypical expressions became obvious in an informal chat that I had in a barbershop in Beyoğlu:

Mehmet: You would probably not believe that I am from Fatih; born in Fatih and still living there with my family...
Mehmet's customer: He does not even have a long beard and a Koran in his hand [laughs].

Me: Well, Fatih is quite large area. You have everything from the nightclubs of Aksaray to the Four Seasons Hotel in Sultanahmet...

Mehmet: No, no. I am talking of the real Fatih. Not the tourist areas. On those there is nothing to me anymore.

Mehmet could anticipate that I was surprised of him living in Fatih. He told me laughing that it is not always good to mention the fact to people frequenting the barbershop because they want to come to a cool (cool) place for a haircut, not to a barber living in Fatih. Interestingly, he credited living in Fatih for what he had become: “Me and my friends would hang out in the tourist areas of Sultanahmet when we were young. Later, we would go to work in its restaurants and hotels and also travel to Marmaris and Fethiye to work during the high season. When I was younger, Beyoğlu was a scary place for all of us. Of course, the area has changed but I have changed as well. I would have been frightened by Beyoğlu of today had I only spent my time in Fatih.” After hearing his story, I noticed that I also saw at him in a different way. I had studied people working in the tourist trade in my Master's thesis (Tuominen 2006) and noticed many of the same elements in his appearance. Lacoste shirt, jeans with gradient colouring and shiny details, as well as spiky hair with a generous amount of styling products were all outward signs of the style I encountered back then, but I had not paid attention to them in the barber shop across the boundary. Mehmet had learned to be at home in Beyoğlu and could conceal his origins in Fatih if he wanted to. However, this was rarely the case. The stereotypical definitions of spaces and their inhabitants had not lost their power and only a few managed to challenge them and balance between the expectations successfully; even the most recent migrants to Istanbul were acutely aware of them – despite the fact that many had never visited the areas they claimed to understand in a detailed way. In these cases, the historical palimpsest could became misinterpreted in interesting ways.

EMBRACING THE HISTORY – OTTOMAN MINORITIES OF THE PRESENT DAY

Ahmet had never visited the Historical Peninsula, except for a yearly Ramadan market located at the Hippodrome, a big attraction with countless food carts and portable teahouses serving people after the sunset. I often ate breakfast at his family’s teahouse and we would discuss the news and gossip of Tarlabası. Lately, he had become interested in the history of Istanbul and wanted to share his thoughts of how the city had changed to him. He had watched a TV documentary of Ottoman Istanbul and had become fascinated
with the social mosaic of the times, especially the people living in the old quarters across the Golden Horn. We discussed these issues further and I realized that many things he had seen in the program, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the old churches and synagogues in the neighbourhoods of Fener and Balat, famous for their Greek and Jewish communities dating to early Ottoman times, were still very much alive to him. Seen from the Beyoğlu side of the Golden Horn, the silhouette is dominated by the Ottoman mosques but between them is tucked, for example, the massive Phanar Greek Orthodox College, a late nineteenth-century building with its distinctive redbrick construction, architecturally very different from the surrounding ones. On this basis, he thought, quite consistently with the abundance of representations of the minorities of Ottoman Istanbul, that the Jewish and Greek communities, of which only tiny fragments remain, would still inhabit those quarters. The iconic landmarks remind of their historical existence, also supported by a profusion of books and documentaries of the cosmopolitan history of Istanbul. Fener and Balat are situated across Atatürk Bridge, just a half an hour's walk from his home, but signified a completely alien world, occupied by the timeless communities of the Empire in his understanding of the historically established boundaries.

The powerful notion of the boundary between the city centres did not have impact on just newcomers who had not yet visited the areas in person. The impossibility to stay informed of all the changes in a rapidly transforming city could also lead to frustration and enforce different stereotypes. Didem, who had just found a new job in a production company specializing in branding urban events, said that she would be interested in documenting the conservation of the old neighbourhoods, especially the aforementioned Fener and Balat, and considered them as an integral part of the city, something to be proud of. However, she had visited them only once or twice. She had moved to Istanbul with her family in her early teens and said that she did not frequent other areas than Beyoğlu – the window to global modernity – and Ataköy, an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, where she had lived all her time in Istanbul with her family. She told me that she was enjoying the best that Istanbul could offer her, that she knew perfectly well the topography of Istanbul but wanted to limit her everyday life to spaces where she felt safe and at home. She would like to connect to the Ottoman past of the city and establish links to its cosmopolitan character, but thought that the historical Jewish and Greek quarters were ruined by of the influx of Anatolian migrants. She declared that she does not need to confirm their contemporary realities herself: their connection to the

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28 It is obviously problematic to assign strict labels to heterogeneous areas. This designation is based on characterizations of the area in my ethnographic data.
past had been severed by the new demographic and could not be reestablished. What was left were the stories of the old buildings, valuable as such but resembling empty shells without the social fabric of the past.

This familiar manner to classify Istanbul's topography was also present in the narrative of Volkan, a professional photographer who spent most of his time in the subcultural bustle of Beyoğlu and cherished its liberal atmosphere, but had developed a new relationship to the rest of the city quite recently. Earlier, he had visited the Byzantine and Ottoman monuments on a school trip but had felt no reason to go to see them alone or with friends. He knew the history of the great mosques, churches and synagogues as examples of the peaceful coexistence of the Ottoman order and had enjoyed visiting the sacred site of Eyüp, with masses of religious pilgrims and a beautiful cemetery on a hillside. He was also familiar with the areas north from Taksim Square; the wealthy quarter of Nişantaşı, its streets lined with French-style cafes and the financial centres dotted with skyscrapers even further up north. According to him, all of those had been superficial encounters that corresponded only to widely shared ideas and the most typical representations. Only after he had started to photograph them, he had found out how inaccurate his impressions had been. The conventional image of the city had started to crack, its boundaries were redrawn in myriad ways and contrasting features of different spaces had started to abound. Nothing looked the same in Istanbul anymore; for him, this total transformation was simultaneously fascinating but also frustrating and tiresome. The lived spaces had become fragmented and new surprises followed after each trip. He also found it difficult to communicate his thoughts on the aspects that did not fit neatly into the deeply internalized qualities associated with particular locations. Even the familiar places in Beyoğlu revealed new sides after each subsequent trip.

BEYOĞLU – THE NEW CENTRE

Not restricted to the urban bustle of İstiklal Street, the whole district of Beyoğlu29 is connected with Turkey's encounter with modernity more than any other space in Istanbul (e.g. Navaro-Yashin 2002a; Özyürek 2006; Sumner-Boyd & Freely 2000:427–447). Its grand themes, as well as ephemeral peculiarities, are aesthetically present in the environment and subject to endless debates and reinterpretations, often contrasted with the Historical Peninsula. They are reflected in contemporary Turkish literature,

29 Beyoğlu municipality covers Tophane and Tarlabasi and stretches into a very wide area. However, the word Beyoğlu is also used to refer to the urban core around İstiklal Street. Sometimes Taksim (referring to either the square at the end of İstiklal Street or a slightly larger area), İstiklal (referring also to its side-streets) or even the old Greek name Pera (when referring to the nostalgic character of the area) are used.
cinema and fine arts, and find more quotidian expressions in the homes, street corners and at the tables of the tea and coffee houses. Yet, they refer simultaneously to political ideologies, individual desires and senses of communal affiliations with very differently grounded connotations. In Beyoğlu's lived environment, nostalgia for the cosmopolitan past or for the early Republican modernity coexists with traits from different eras; early Republican taverns (meyhane) serving fish with raki, Türkü Evi clubs showcasing Turkish folk music often accompanied by synthesizers, and the hypermodern cinema multiplexes that have sprung to the area. Perhaps the past of Beyoğlu is uncomplicated only in the souvenir stalls, representing reflective nostalgia that thrives in longing itself, without any serious attempt to restore the past conditions (Boym 2001:xviii, see also Navaro-Yashin 2009).

The pre-Ottoman history of Beyoğlu is scattered around the area as ruins of the old city walls and a few buildings, most notably the Galata Tower (Galata Kulesi), built by the Genoese colony of the area in 1348, and still the most famous landmark in the area (Sumner-Boyd and Freely 2000:438–440). Throughout the Ottoman times, the area was mostly called Pera30 and home to the Empire's non-Muslim minorities; nowadays only fragments of the populations remain but their historical presence is evoked by the numerous churches of different denominations and the historical embassies of various European nations, now reduced to consulates, as the embassy status is transferred to offices in Ankara. The distinctiveness of the area, rooted in the presence of its minority populations in both the Ottoman and the Byzantine periods, has evolved throughout history with a help of various contrasts between spaces. Edmondo de Amicis, who wrote a famous memoir Constantinople of his visit to the city in 1874, describes vividly the vastly different character of the area. He notes that in Pera:

The Europeans talk and laugh more loudly here than elsewhere, cracking jokes in the middle of the street, while the Turks, feeling themselves, as it were, foreigners, carry their heads less high than in the streets of Istanbul. (in Freely and Freely 2006:16)

For the whole of its history, Beyoğlu has been a space of experimentation with alien elements. There are stories of Sultans visiting its taverns in a disguise (Boyar and Fleet 2010:40), Atatürk and the other Republican revolutionaries immersing themselves to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of its establishments (Mango 2002:52–53) – even nowadays, it would be difficult to imagine the Gezi Park protests, uniting people from very different backgrounds, occurring in any other part of the city. Having said that, the

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30 While the origin of the name Galata is not clear, Pera, interestingly for a study focussing on space and boundaries, means “beyond,” “on the other side” in Greek (Sumner-Boyd and Freely 2000:427).
extreme density of urban modernity of Beyoğlu is contrasted with its strict boundaries and accounts of inaccessibility and danger within its confines. There are several widely shared dividing lines, some corresponding to the officially marked boundaries and others to vernacular terms. Out of its 45 neighbourhoods, the names of only a few are instantly recognizable; those that are, derive from the names of renowned streets or buildings within neighbourhood.\footnote{e.g. Asmalı Mescit Mahallesi is used as a general name for the quarter famous for its bars and meyhanes and Arap Camii Mahallesi (Neighbourhood of the Arab Mosque) is named after a renowned mosque, probably given to the Arab refugees who settled into the area after escaping the Spanish Inquisition (Sumner-Boyd and Freely 2000:441)} Further along the shores of the Golden Horn, the neighbourhoods become less familiar and rarely frequented by the general populace.

Nowadays, Beyoğlu, especially Istiklal Street with its side-streets, represents “Cool Istanbul.” The phrase was largely coined by a Newsweek cover story in 2005 that celebrated the cultural life of Istanbul at the time. Its first paragraph is worth quoting in its entirety to give an example of the popular ideas of cosmopolitanism in contemporary Istanbul:

Spend a summer night strolling down Istanbul’s Istiklal Caddesi [Istiklal Street], the pedestrian thoroughfare in the city’s old Christian [sic] quarter of Beyoglu, and you’ll hear something surprising. Amid the crowds of nocturnal revelers, a young Uzbek-looking girl plays haunting songs from Central Asia on an ancient Turkic flute [sic] called a saz.\footnote{Saz is a long-necked lute, best-known for its central role in Anatolian folk music.} Nearby, bluesy Greek rembetiko blares from a CD store. Downhill toward the slums of Tarlabasi you hear the wild Balkan rhythms of a Gypsy wedding, while at 360, an ultratrendy rooftop restaurant, the sound is Sufi electronica – cutting-edge beats laced with dervish ritual. And then there are the clubs – Mojo, say, or Babylon – where the young and beautiful rise spontaneously from their tables to link arms and perform a complicated Black Sea line dance, the horon. The wonder is that each and every one of these styles is absolutely native to the city, which for much of its history was the capital of half the known world.\footnote{Foroohar, Rana. Newsweek 29.8.2005. http://www.newsweek.com/turkish-delight-117821} Again, for many of the subcultural aficionados frequenting the area, this would be a superficial account of the worn-out cliches of the district. Just as the Historical Peninsula was conceptualized above in very different ways by Mehmet, Ahmet, Didem and Volkan, Beyoğlu lends itself to a variety of interpretations. Everyday life in Istanbul, even when restricted to a small area, consists of movement across differently defined spaces: the complex polarities, some dating from ancient times and others referring to recent cultural cleavages, have to be encountered on a regular basis. However, the shared sense of reality or the cultural map of the city among inhabitants has not disappeared (see Öncü 2002:187). The ways to relate into rapidly changing...
phenomena are not aleatory but founded on historical developments that correspond to communicated realities, shared in encounters. In practice, the firsthand impression of shared realities appears as the “quotidian mental work of ordinary people,” dealing with the plurality of possible worlds (Appadurai 1996:5), as well as the contradictory modernity that alternates between the joyous abundance of possibilities and a “multitude of fragments, speaking incommensurable private languages” (Berman 1992:17, 22). Volkan concluded his account of the image of the city with detailed contemplation: for him, satisfactory life in Istanbul consisted of the ability to act fluently with very different people and in very different situations, but also, to understand the dynamics that drive the city forward and to explore their seemingly random constellations. He was determined to study them carefully and reveal them through his work.

Boundaries and Lived Realities

The mental map of the city is subject to radical transformations when its hollow spots are filled with new information, either via direct experience or mediated knowledge. In the examples above, Mehmet and Volkan had prioritized the accumulation of first-hand experiences and their careful reflection, and, on the other hand, Ahmet and Didem had developed far-reaching conclusions on the basis of historical representations brought into the present. By crossing the boundaries people encounter the city from different angles and are often forced to readjust their views of its other spaces. It is this coexistence of detailed reflection and embodied knowledge that captures my attention here. I will concentrate on boundaries as lived realities, fashioning everyday practices into observable patterns; how their qualities are communicated and how they are linked to moral concerns. I argue that the most crucial boundaries are connected to moral ambiguities, hard to define in exact terms, but arising as matters of concern in particular contexts. They have evolved into powerful social constructions, where the spatial terms refer to qualitative, rather than quantitative and measurable spaces.

FLEXIBLE BOUNDARIES AND IMAGEABLE CITY – SHIFTING EMPHASES OF THE EVERYDAY

During my fieldwork I observed how bounded spaces were connected historically with their former inhabitants – especially if traces of their past

34 By mental map I refer to the everyday orientation to the city, a perception that “is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all” (Lynch 1960:2).
remained; they were representing the specific norms of appropriate behaviour that had a significant impact on contemporary understandings. Sometimes, spaces could be associated with possibilities – even abstract ideas like success could be characteristic of a specific space, such as Istanbul's streets lined with gold, a conventional image of the nearly limitless possibilities offered by the city. While recognizing the nuanced distinctions was hard work and their constellations subject to sudden changes, their identification was simultaneously a source of pride, for both newcomers and born Istanbulites. Nonetheless, the endless list of facts about spaces in Istanbul did not arouse interest in itself, except in the monomaniacal tendencies of some of the inhabitants (see p.78–79), but they had to be connected into more encompassing moral frameworks. In these processes, the facts became entangled with cultural intimacy, the informal and in many cases exclusive knowledge that could create solidarities, often celebrating the deficiencies of life. Through repeated encounters, various commentaries enhanced the mutuality of everyday relationships and carved out inclusive spaces for people to meet and interact. Especially for newcomers, the city became more familiar when there were certain recurring ways of referring to its composition. Some spaces were tightly and uniformly bounded, others more fluid and flexible. In the reproduction of these formations, mental mapping, spatial awareness, historical consciousness, and embodied moral frameworks came together while moving in the city.

While İstiklal Street was regularly considered as a space for sociocultural experimentation and the pride of living in Tarlabaşı was expressed as participation in the communal self-governance, these principles were not taken-for-granted but had to be upheld and reproduced in encounters and interaction. A city built upon layers of ruins, some discovered after being long forgotten and others widely shared in the collective memory, offered distinct modes of understanding and expressing its spatial makeup. Kevin Lynch, in his influential work The Image of the City (1960), introduces the concept of imageability to the study of spatial attributes. According to him, an imageable city is “well formed, distinct, remarkable; it would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation. The sensuous grasp upon such surroundings would not merely be simplified, but also extended and deepened” (10). At the same time, imageability does not necessarily mean preciseness or regular order which can easily become obvious and boring (10). Lynch acknowledges the influence of “the social meaning of an area, its function, its history, or even its name” (46) but takes as his objective to study the form and uncover its role in the urban environment. He identifies five types of elements, namely paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks as a foundation for his analysis (46–48). My approach, inspired by his comparative take on American cities,
stresses the imageability but emphasizes what he has decided to leave out; social relations, moral codes, functions of use and formations of historical consciousness. In conceptual terms, my analysis concentrates on boundaries, not as limited to separating spaces but as flexible constructs reorganizing space in multiple ways.

I argue that rather than a complex set of forms, the concept of boundary has proven to be a useful analytical tool to work with. In the previous chapter, my walk with Şivan centred around the act of comparison between the different moral universes set apart by the powerful boundary of Tarlabası Boulevard, and everyday life of Veli was influenced by ambiguous boundary dynamics delineating the moral appropriateness in Tophane. One of the advantages of the concept is its variability; not limited to a simple geographic notion, understood in a linear fashion, boundaries can operate according to very different principles, bringing together abstract qualities of spaces with social practices and arrangements. Furthermore, bounded spaces can be contrasted on the basis of their constitutive elements: Lynch’s use of the concept of imageability, the sensuous grasp of the surroundings that calls for extending and deepening their interpretative possibilities, attention and participation (1960:10), balances between semantic structure and lived reality, in a manner that Roland Barthes summarizes excellently:

He [Lynch] has a sense of discrete units: he has attempted to identify in urban space the discontinuous units which, mutatis mutandis, would bear some resemblance to phonemes and semantemes. These units he calls paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks. These are categories of units that would easily become semantic categories. But on the other hand, in spite of this vocabulary, Lynch has a conception of the city that remains more Gestalt than structural. (Barthes 1997:160, italics in the original)

I wish to move away from an analysis based on an idea of a map as a frozen representation, into a spatially ordered idea of sociality, consisting of the embodied knowledge to treat different people in different contexts in appropriate ways (Taylor 1992:217–218). My focus on contextual moral frameworks recognizes the city as more than the sum of its parts and joins the immediate spatial awareness with the reflection of its historical narratives and abstract qualities. Yet, history is also flexible and allows creative uses: different questions can become more pronounced at particular moments and even rise to the most central image of the whole city at a point in time, like the Gezi Park protests have recently proved. Nonetheless, the less pronounced collisions of spatial orders, reorganizations of boundaries and reactions to their novel outcomes, formed a significant part of the daily lives of the inhabitants.
During my fieldwork, I spent most of my time in a relatively small area of just a couple of square kilometres. This rarely led to boredom; I would seldom prearrange meetings but would just go to places where I would expect to meet particular people, move in Beyoğlu with them and sometimes, albeit rarely, do excursions to other areas. In my experience, this kind loyalty to space is characteristic of many urban areas – not just in Turkey – coupled with reluctance to leave the familiar surroundings, even pride in not frequenting the other quarters. Nevertheless, the other spaces of Istanbul were constantly present as they were referred, contrasted and juxtaposed to the specific urbanity of Beyoğlu. Even if the discussions were not referring to boundaries per se, their contrastive functions were exercised in detailed ways, acknowledging the movement across them and indicating their relationship to history. It is important to note that, particularly among people with very little formal education, the history of Istanbul did not form a clear continuum but often included partially understood features; abundant Ottoman-era tombs with writing in indecipherable Arabic script, traces of radically diminished Armenian, Jewish and Greek communities in Beyoğlu, foreign-sounding names like Casa Garibaldi, Neve Shalom or Surp Yerrortutyun.35

What interested me the most, was how dignified life was achieved in these conditions, especially among people who were struggling for their livelihoods. Differently bounded spaces, related to contrastive moral frameworks, had a substantial effect in the practices of navigating within the city and making it feel more like home. The following account illustrates the role of boundaries in the lives of two Istanbulites who experienced them in very different ways: in their everyday lives Ridvan and Nazlı contrasted Beyoğlu constantly to other spaces in Istanbul and contemplated on the nature of boundaries and different moral landscapes located around them.

RİDVAN – EXCLUSION AND MORAL WORTH

Compared to Şivan's mastery of navigating between different spaces, Ridvan always seemed to attract trouble. He was perhaps even more knowledgeable about internal divisions in Istanbul but wanted to challenge the conventions and see how far he can bend the rules. His friends would alternate between admiring his courage and condemning him as crazy (manyak); I noticed that I was always slightly on guard when spending time with him. He acknowledged this quality in him and offered a pragmatic explanation: “I

35 A fraternal association by Italian workers, dating to 1863, a Sephardic synagogue from the late 1930s, and an Armenian sixteenth-century church, all situated close to Istiklal Street.
have learned everything in my life by doing, always struggling against people who are more powerful than me. When I was just sixteen and living in Diyarbakır, I was arrested for taking part in a demonstration – we were just hanging out at the square, killing time and the police approached us. My friends managed to slip away but I was stupid to stay and was taken for questioning. I was in jail for several weeks for nothing. After that I understood that I will have to learn their rules if I want to stay alive. You get nothing in this world for free.” From Ridvan’s account, I understood the principles that were driving him. There was the unrelenting quest for justice by someone who always felt that he needs to do more than others to prove his worth, coupled with the tactical mastery of the street-wise urbanite who would test his limits to learn new ways to succeed. There were, however, boundaries that he did not feel comfortable crossing, not thought as total prohibitions but reflecting degrees of access with very different criteria.

Ridvan and his friends visited the skyscraper-surrounded shopping malls of Levent or the upmarket quarters of Maçka and Nişantaşı just north of Beyoğlu very rarely; they were imageable only in the simplest terms, housing the rich of Istanbul but not arousing curiosity. There were also more pragmatic reasons. Once we walked up Cumhuriyet Street from Taksim Square up north and Ridvan told me bluntly that he does not feel comfortable in this area, that we can continue if I really want to, but he would rather not, simply because it is not for him. This was at the early stages of my fieldwork and I thought that the problem was the street, a rather uninviting thoroughfare without a curve or bend, with extremely noisy high-speed traffic. The real reason became obvious, not from Ridvan himself, but from a friend of his, Ali, some time later. For some reason, I had not thought of the security controls further up the street. On one otherwise unmemorable evening, we were discussing everyday matters when Ali stated boldly: “I know that they do not want me to enter Nişantaşı and wish to intimidate me with ID checks – I could not care less, there is nothing for me anyway. Just as long as those jerks stay out of Tarlabası, I think we are even.” In my company, Ridvan’s encounter with the security would have been even more embarrassing, for the attention of the police would be most definitely directed at him. As a foreigner, it is very rare to be stopped at the checkpoints – the few instances when this has happened to me have seemed to reflect the boredom of the officers, willing to check if the foreigner speaks any Turkish or a prospect to try some English phrases with him. I later asked Ridvan about this and his justice-seeking side surfaced – he was ready to go to try his luck immediately at the checkpoint as a Turkish citizen who just wants to have a walk in the city. He told me later that he had visited Nişantaşı

36 Diyarbakır, *Amed* in Kurdish, has almost one million inhabitants and is the capital of the Diyarbakır province in the Southeast of Turkey. It is often dubbed as the Kurdish capital of Turkey.
with a friend but could not find any reason to go back there. It sounded that the purpose of the visit had been to cross the boundary established by the police rather than actual interest in the area. In a similar way, Ali’s criticism showed another moral property of the boundary: despite the problems in impoverished Tarlabası, he cherished the pride over spatially bounded community. Here, the contextual boundary arose as a result of agitation; the usual tone of all the visitors being welcome to visit Tarlabası transformed into claim of access and right over a particular space.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I became more and more intrigued to visit other districts with Ridvan. He would often suggest that we go for a Bosporus cruise or even to the Black Sea coast when he has time but always cancelled at the last minute. His immediate circle of friends rarely set foot outside Beyoğlu; some would leave occasionally for construction work or even travel to other parts of Turkey for work or to meet relatives but otherwise their lives were bound to a few squares, street corners and teahouses. Even the work trips were mostly arranged with a company van picking them up and driving them back to Tarlabası at the end of the shift. Yet, Ridvan was very curious of what was happening in different parts of Istanbul and followed the news actively.

I lowered the stakes slightly and suggested that we visit the famous sights of the Historical Peninsula, just a thirty-minute walk from İstiklal Street, but, however, rarely visited by most of the Istanbulites. Ridvan was not an exception. He claimed that he had been there already several times and seen all the sights. What was the point of going again? A couple of days later, he agreed and we set off. We crossed the Galata Bridge and he told me how the fish restaurants, teahouses and pubs at its lower level often serve as the first, very badly paid workplaces for people moving to Istanbul from the Southeast. This lead him to elaborate the significance of the boundary on the basis of tourism: “The bridge and the markets down the hill on the other side are fine. After that the tourist area begins. Sultanahmet is full of young country folk who follow their friends from the same village to make a quick buck in the tourism industry. I might be from a village near Mardin myself, but I can see their country manners from miles away. They also recognize me as an outsider and see me as a threat. When I am with you they think that I am taking advantage of a stupid tourist – when I am alone they think that I am going to steal something. Their eyes are everywhere and sometimes they start to follow people they consider outsiders in groups to force them out.” I could feel his uneasiness of the of rigid practices of social control waiting in the Sultanahmet area, this time not in the form of police patrols checking the ID cards, but of the informal variety of neighbourhood policing. At the same time, he looked down on the people he saw as villagers who did not know how to behave in the big city. We decided to sit down for
a glass of tea after crossing the bridge and not to venture further to the tourist areas. Even there, Ridvan was slightly nervous and observed the passers-by very closely.

He separated himself as an urbanite from people working in Sultanahmet, but also detested what for many would be the definitive forms of urbanity. These included the images of aristocratic modernity of the early Republic, associated with the wealthy quarters north from Taksim, as well as the contemporary cosmopolitanism of Beyoğlu’s self-confessed urbanites. For him, the movement between Tarlabası and the İstiklal area, between the marginalized inner-city quarter with a strong sense of community and the space of freedom to escape its constricting norms, had begun to represent a space that enabled highly valued urbanity but did not compromise senses of authenticity or modernity. Ridvan’s reflections stressed the qualitative difference between spaces with different moral frameworks and practical realities. He had cultivated his skill to distinguish the manners of the others and to analyze the situations in nuanced manner. After separating himself from those working in tourism, he specifically criticized Sultanahmet’s consumerism as representing all the bad sides of contemporary Turkey. The resulting mapping portrays an uneven picture of the cityscape in Istanbul’s central areas – pockets of communities distinguished by moral frameworks defining standards of appropriate behaviour. This, however, applies mostly to the central districts that are, in the terms of Lynch, highly imageable; their boundaries do not correspond to the clear-cut definitions of modern-traditional dichotomy but consist of unlikely combinations that enforce the uniqueness of a particular space: for instance, the picture of Anatolian hustlers amidst the buzz of the tourism industry has a recognizable ring to anyone living in Istanbul for some time. The definitions cut across the division between the mahalle and the urban sphere and portray features – for Ridvan corruptions – of both. However, boundaries do not always concern districts situated close to one another but could extend over long stretches of space.

NAZLI – BOUNDARY AS A LONG BRIDGE

Beyoğlu attracts not only people who live in its vicinity but has many frequent visitors who hold it dear to their life in the city. I first met Nazlı, an English teacher originally from the Anatolian city of Kayseri, while she was studying at Erzurum University where I stopped on my first trip to Turkey in 2002. We kept in touch irregularly but tried to meet every time we were in the same city. In 2008, we had not seen each other for years and I was curious of how her life in Istanbul had begun. She had sent me photos of her at Taksim Square with captions celebrating her new life. When we met, she told me that she did not feel comfortable in Istanbul. She had loved visiting
the city as a tourist but now she had difficulties of orientation. She had found her new home in Küçükçekmece, a rapidly expanding area close to the Atatürk airport with a long history, the older landmarks now mostly lost amidst the newly built housing, but with a very different feel to more middle and upper-class Bakırköy and Ataköy in the south. For Nazlı, the choice was expressed as a strong sense of belonging:

*I love Beyoğlu and want to visit here often but I like to live with other Anatolian people in Küçükçekmece. What really bugs me is that traveling between home and Taksim takes so long time – soon I will buy a car so I can do the trip without anyone disturbing. Now I feel I am moving on one long bridge, changing from one bus to another in the middle, before I reach Taksim or home.*

At that point, I had mostly heard references to Anatolians from people who did not wish to identify with the group, using the label to signify the country folk lost in a big city, with positive qualities of the region reserved for traditional food and music from the Turkish heartlands, made safe as consumer items. For Nazlı, the issue was dead-serious. It also revealed a side of her that I had not encountered before. In our meetings before, she had referred to herself as a “child of Atatürk,” (“Atatürk’ün çocuğu”) but only in Istanbul had she started to pay more attention to the dangers Turkey was facing. What followed, to my surprise, was a combination of prominent conspiracy theories. She saw the problems of the country as the fault of Turkey’s inside enemies; Kurds, Jews and Islamists. Turkey was also attacked by its outside enemies, ruining the country’s economy and plotting against the military. Nevertheless, what I found extremely interesting, was her solution to limit her life into the spaces she preferred.

In her everyday life, she had developed her own rhythm of carving the city into distinct spheres. Beyoğlu was a good place to visit, to enjoy its cosmopolitan atmosphere, do some shopping and stop for a meal, but to settle in she would prefer different environment, in her case, constructed around the notion of being Anatolian. For her, Beyoğlu was limited to Istiklal Street; she did not stray into its side-streets and had never set foot in Tophane or Tarlabas mh; the former name she recognized only vaguely and the

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37 We had our discussions mostly in English.

38 This does not mean that these references to Anatolia do not have political dimension. Martin Stokes explores Anatolian identity through the music of Sezen Aksu, especially the album *İşık Doğudan Yükserlir* (Ex oriente lux), which includes references to the Anatolian mosaic, “Turks and Kurds, Byzantines and Ionians, Armenians and Hittites, northern Mesopotamians and Romans, Sunnis and Shiites, Laz and Zeybeks, Whirling dervishes and Bektaşis, dancers and court musicians” (2010 131–132). This idea of differently bounded Anatolia had raised furore among certain nationalist politicians and still divides the views. See also Iğsiz (2007) for discussion how the notion of Anatolia, with its different languages and religions retranslates individual Anatolians into geographic kin. To confuse matters of identification even further, the word Anatolia (*Anatolía*) derives from Greek ἀνατολή (*anatole*), referring to “East” (Papadakis 2005:29).
latter had connotations with just crime and social problems. The familiarity of home, associated with Anatolian morals and a tight sense of community, in contrast to the decadence and untrustworthiness of the urban centre, could be connected through shopping arrays and a cup of coffee, preferably by car as a means to connect these two spheres. She was crossing from what she considered an Anatolian town to İstiklal Street – to an atmosphere she once described as being abroad – on a regular basis and was struggling with the situation. Here, the symbolic boundary was not tied into a linear construct but consisted of twenty kilometres of journey by public transport, a space Nazlı did not want to relate to and avoided by concentrating on social media and text messages. In addition to Küçükçekmece and Beyoğlu, she told me, Istanbul had one more location that she would regularly go to – the bus terminal that would enable her to travel home to Kayseri in Central Anatolia.

These cases show two very different ways to move in the city and occupy its spaces. The areas Ridvan and Nazlı frequented overlapped very rarely – they might bump into each other in the rush of İstiklal Street or wait for their friends at Taksim Square but they conceptualized and experienced the urban boundaries in very different ways. For Ridvan, the desired life consisted of moving between Tarlabaşı and the İstiklal area; the boundary north from Taksim Square symbolized unattainable wealth and inauthenticity while crossing the bridge to the Historical Peninsula and Sultanahmet meant entry to another community where he could not feel at home. In the case of Nazlı, life in Istanbul was also limited to two very different spaces, geographically far from one another with a sense of boundary separating them. The boundaries marked the different moral frameworks and standards of appropriate behaviour and appearance that needed to be integrated in the course of everyday life. A closer look into how boundaries and morality can be grasped theoretically helps to understand what are the stakes in carving one's lived space in an urban environment.

**Anthropology of Boundaries and Moral Frameworks**

In my study, I use the concept of boundary in two distinct but interrelated ways: as a principle of representation and as an emerging sense of signification in an embodied practice. Boundaries can be seen in a totalizing perspective, as a transparent and readable formations of what Michel de Certeau calls “all-seeing-power,” in his example the view of Manhattan from the top of the World Trade Center. This is a mode of perception that derives its power, most of all, from being detached from the messy lives of the city’s inhabitants.
In contrast to this, Barthes provides an illustration of contextual boundaries in practice and emphasizes the distinction between objective data and signification. According to him, a map that has two neighbourhoods adjoining, can be in a complete opposition to their signification of radical separation in the image of the city and modern cartography “can be considered as a kind of obliteration, of censorship that objectivity has imposed on signification” (1997:159–160). Drawing of boundaries is also profoundly connected to issues of power: David Harvey argues that in modern societies “the power in the realms of representation may end up being as important as power over the materiality of spatial organization itself” (1990:233). The influential consequences of the binary order of modernity, the tension between the structure and the practice, in establishing and controlling logics of representations (Mitchell 1988, 2002), has been studied in the previous chapter in relation to spatial orders of the mahalle and the urban sphere. Here, I wish to connect these questions theoretically into contextual dynamics of boundaries and moral frameworks.

CREATIVE BOUNDARIES – MOTIVATION FOR RELATIONSHIPS

In the social sciences, the study of boundaries has expanded to numerous fields, sometimes sharing no common ground. It has been associated with research on “cognition, social and collective identity, commensuration, census categories, cultural capital, cultural membership, racial and ethnic group positioning, hegemonic masculinity, professional jurisdictions, scientific controversies, group rights, immigration, and contentious politics, to mention only some of the most visible examples” (Lamont and Molnár 2002:167). At the most general level, the distinction can be made between symbolic boundaries; conceptual distinctions to categorize objects, people, practices, time and space; and, social boundaries; concentrating on objectified forms of social differences, dealing with unequal access and distribution of resources and social opportunities, usually in articulation with one another (168). These categories also reflect, respectively, a dialogue between the intersubjective level and the already formed groupings of the individuals (169). In my ethnographic examples, consisting largely of accounts of movement in the city, the reflections alternate between these

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39 Interestingly, Barthes stresses the “modern” dimension of maps as objective geography in opposition to their predecessors. He argues that in the world of Herodotus maps were “constructed like a language, like a phrase, like a poem, on oppositions: hot lands and cold lands, known and unknown lands; then on the opposition between men on the one hand and monsters and chimaeras on the other etc.” (1997:159). Similar kinds of ideas of mapping in the seventeenth-century Ottoman times have been presented in Robert Dankoff’s study of Evliya Çelebi (2006), who, arguably entered into the cartographic world of symbolic oppositions, especially at the outer reaches of the empire (2006:62–65).
two categories and the analytical distinction between practice and structure is realized in the spatial realm, influenced by Ira Bashkow’s definition of boundaries as “expressive, contrastive, constructive functions of culture” (2004:444). In the same vein, I consider the lines drawn onto maps as not so much blocking the things passing across them but, rather, marking the movement across them and creating motivation for relationships with what lies beyond (451). The question is more about how different moral significations are attached to boundaries and how crossings relate to experiential realities.

However, in the practical examples throughout the study, the dominant properties of boundaries (sınır, hudut) signify separation and exclusion. Crossing of boundaries requires adjustment of behaviour and many of them are characterized by degrees of prohibition, either in concrete form such as police presence or in an ambiguous but deeply felt form like neighbourhood pressure. They reflect the practices of keeping the unwanted populations in their allocated areas and result in backlashes of the mahalles guarding their boundaries. On a larger scale, the concept refers to the national boundaries that are restricting the movement of people who lack the right connections and/or credentials to experience the world without boundaries. On the scale of supranational bodies such as the EU, the benefits of their protective reach are extended only to those who, by the virtue of their national citizenship in their place of residence, already enjoy their freedoms and rights while the non-citizen residents are forced into second-class legal status (Mandel 2008:16, 230) In sum, the recognition of boundaries at different levels reflects a global hierarchy of value that reproduces classification of individuals and groups. Geraldine Pratt states correctly that both the denial of the reality of boundaries and their romanticization are luxuries experienced only by those who are not trapped by them (1998:27).

Furthermore, boundaries have a temporal dimension and constitute a basis for a diverse kinds of connections, exchanges and transactions that simultaneously recognize and negate the distinctions through their relationship with history (Green 2010:272). They are not realized only in the present but contain the previous ways of how they have been thought and performed, thus generating novel kinds of connections and disconnections (272). Some of these histories can be clear-cut and relatively uniform, while others are precarious and subject to constant renegotiations. The understandings and performances of boundaries vary but reveal shared

40 Both of these terms have a rich variety of other semantic uses, often referring to limits and the lack of them. Breakfasts often include unlimited tea (sınırsız çay), and telephone operators advertise unlimited internet use (sınırsız internet). In fact, my informants only rarely referred to boundaries as such but talked about crossing or passing (geçmek, geçirmek) or described something as opposite or on the other side (karşı, taraf).
patterns – the quintessential boundary between the *mahalle* and the urban sphere provides an example of how historical properties of space contain traces from the past that create and reproduce moral landscapes. The individual relationship to spaces and boundaries evolves historically in everyday movement and participation, in gradually growing understanding of the cityscape and the embodiment of the appropriate practices in particular spaces. De Certeau likens the movement of the actors to writings and describes their practices of mental mapping, as a situated practice, in poetic terms: “the networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other” (1988:93).

**MORAL FRAMEWORKS AND EVERYDAY PRACTICES**

Strong contrasts like the one between Tarlabası and the Istiklal area are first revealed in the form of a physical boundary, the wide and busy road slicing the previously unified area in half. The realization of the different moral frameworks, defining the standards of public and private, individual and community, moral and immoral, requires intimate knowledge and experience of the area. Boundary-crossing becomes an act of relating moral characteristics of spaces to one another – in the course of daily movement, the environment is perceived, reflected upon and reacted to in ways that combine individualized understandings – the awareness and knowledge of particular spaces – with familiar notions of the city, shared to a degree by different actors. Together these elements make up social morphology, “the structure of a town made up of interconnected or interdependent parts joined together in an urban community” (Dahlgren 2010:32).

I wish to stress the flexibility and adaptability of the moral frameworks within Istanbul. They are defined by their situatedness, the interplay between space and context – not “wired in” or totally imposed by society. Rather, they consist on a quite unarticulated sense of things, that, however, allows us to formulate reasons and explanations when challenged (Taylor 1995:168). The embodied agency, largely unformulated understanding of the self and the world, is coupled with disengaged thought, the framed representations of the nature of the world, our aims and social dynamics (169–170). Several of my ethnographic examples stress this dimension: the steady and embodied flow of everyday life is interrupted at moments of reflection – sudden thoughts that one is out of place, cannot behave in a proper manner or read the signs of the city. Often the very act of becoming aware of something changes the way we feel about the environment we are in (Taylor 1985:261). Methodologically, I consider individual practices as situated within analytically distinguishable moral frameworks, emerging through practical
action in different contexts and open to transformation. However, instead of focusing on moral frameworks as tied to persons, I wish to emphasize their spatial qualities, and, following Dahlgren, consider their coexistence as a crucial feature in organizing social communication (2010:267). The coexistence of contesting ideologies is manifested in the everyday practices of social space, divided into fields controlled by sets of rules, designating the appropriate behaviour (Dahlgren 2007, 2010).

The coexistence of spatially distinct moral frameworks is not realized just in the actual boundary-crossing but in the encounters and social interaction throughout the movement. An evenly distributed grid with equal spatial units does not explain the vivid experience of boundaries – they are not solely tied to geography as linear constructs separating measurable spaces from one another, but extend to sociocultural characteristics of the spatial orders and layers of historical consciousness. The geographically marked boundaries like Tarlabaşı Boulevard and the Galata Bridge correspond to the shared moral geographies of the city but to recognize the porous boundary marking the distinct moral frameworks in Tophane and the Istiklal area requires intimate knowledge of Istanbul, both as an abstraction and a lived environment.

**SPATIALITY AND HABITATION**

Before showing in more detail how boundaries and contextual moral frameworks crisscross the lived space in Beyoğlu, I wish to discuss briefly theories that consider their relationship to habitation, especially on how crossings are related to movement as a whole. The representational modernist geography, based on mapping, reflects a distinct classification of secular rationality and has dominated approaches to the urban space of modernity (Mitchell 1988, 2002). To approach this notion critically, Tim Ingold (2009) has argued provocatively against the preoccupation of space as simple locations and point-to-point connections of places. He would rather concentrate on the lineal character of habitation, as opposed to areal occupation (34) and calls for conceptualization of spaces as topics, joined in stories of journeys. Thus, occurrence is prioritized to existence. Walking is filled with surprises, unique encounters and possibilities of interaction with the environment. In this scheme, things are situated at the confluence of actions and responses – memories they call up are more important than their intrinsic attributes (41). In addition, the distinction between occupation and habitation is related to de Certeau’s analysis of strategies and tactics, employed throughout this study to relate dominant power structures into informal and culturally intimate activities of the inhabitants. For de Certeau, stories “traverse and organize places, they select and link them together: they make sentences and itineraries out of them” (1988:115). A city
of stories and memories is also a city of intensities; Ingold is right to claim that “every place, as a gathering of things is a knot of stories” (2009:41) This, in turn, is reflected on the different types of operations: strategies produce, tabulate and impose spaces, whereas tactics are restricted to using, manipulating and diverting them (30). In analytical terms, it is possible to distinguish between the practices of the urban sphere that follow widely shared criteria and ones that single out a particular formation and question its validity. While the former; typical greetings, gestures and figures of speech are learned quickly, often unconsciously, by just being exposed to the city; the latter are meaningful to smaller, often contextually defined groups and require tactical knowledge of the situation at hand.

Ingold criticizes the “strategists’ architectonic world,” built to be occupied, and presents an alternative: “as inhabitant tacticians continue to thread their ways through the cracks and crevices of the built environment, they both contribute to its erosion and reincorporate its crumbling fragments into their own ways of life (2007:200). I understand the cracks as providing possibilities for largely unformulated practices, shaping and stretching the parameters of the modernist space. I argue that they contain potential for slight adjustments as well as revolutionary action, for rapidly escalating processes in the heterogeneous urban space, often resulting from the clash of spatial orders and moral frameworks. Ingold’s argument, while acting as an important reminder to avoid simplistic generalizations of space in the purely modernist or representational sense, pays less attention to numerous situations where people consciously refer to abstract features of spaces. Even mundane acts in the urban environment require abstract reflection: supporting the feeling of being at home by choosing different routes, avoiding some spaces, or, challenging the expected norms by entering to a space where access might compromised or problematic, are examples of the tactical operations that shape the city in informal terms. Daily life consists of combining both orientations to one’s environment; the spatial abstraction interacts with embodied knowledge.

Access and Safe Passage

During my fieldwork, I learned quickly how notions of access and safety were integral to the lives of my informants. I have discussed the qualities of different boundaries in the earlier sections and will conclude this chapter with an analysis of their dynamics on a very small and quotidian scale, focussing on practices that manipulate spaces and challenge their restrictions. I will analyze the sense of belonging and possibility of feeling at home in a particular space, often with boundaries that crisscross the
environment in very subtle ways – widespread understandings of spatiality merging with personal experiences and memories. In addition, I will show how boundaries are sensitive to time, with profound changes to how the crossings and spaces are experienced. Here, I will illustrate the contextual nature of boundaries through three examples: the daily practices of Ridvan in his constant negotiation of accessible routes, a case study of a crossing that threatens the safety of the inhabitants and a description of a weekly market that refashions a significant boundary on a regular basis.

CONVENIENT ROUTES TO AND FROM TARLABAŞI

Ridvan crossed Tarlabası Boulevard at least twice every day; on his way to work in the teahouse or his corner shop (bakkal) and, in the late evening, on his way back. In his case, life with a strong sense of community and religious participation in Tarlabası and a distinctively strong sense of freedom and urbanity on the other side of Tarlabası Boulevard were combined in the course of movement; part-time job as a waiter and irregular working hours at the bakkal often involved several daily crossings and adaption to very different environments. The geographic scope of his daily life was just a few streets but had a very rich social content. Friends would come and go, there would always be something happening in the surroundings to be worked out into stories, ranging from neighbourhood gossip into discussions of globally significant events. More than often, this involved reflection on the qualities of the boundary.

Map 6. Crossings of Tarlabası Boulevard.
For Ridvan, the safe passage in Istanbul was defined as the absence rather than the presence of the state security apparatus. This was not limited to the boundary controls on the way to Nişantaşı, discussed earlier in this chapter. Rather, on his daily route between home and work, he was frequently reminded of his status as someone unwanted; of the few crossings of Tarlabası Boulevard (Map 6) the most convenient for him was at Kalyoncu Kulluğu Street, the third possible crossing, when coming from Tünel Square (left on the map). On the Tarlabası side, especially in the evenings, the street had a sinister reputation for it hosted a number of transsexual prostitutes and very forbidding nightclubs and pubs. At the same time, it provided a convenient way to the enter one section of the labyrinthine maze of the neighbourhood. The sense of boundary was, at the time, further enforced by the police station on the corner, with armed policemen – eager to check ID cards from the people crossing – and a permanently parked TOMA intervention vehicle. In both geographical and symbolic terms, the crossing marked a rupture, enforced with the arbitrary identity checks. Ridvan was extremely vocal about this, did not want to use the crossing and said that he felt intimidated when asked to prove his identity.

Once we stood on the other side of the street and looked at the entry point. Two policemen were standing next to one another holding guns. They would point at people in a seemingly random fashion, sometimes waving their hands and at others by waving their guns, not specifically aiming at anyone but still conveying a powerful signal to stop. Some of the passers-by were questioned and demanded to show their ID cards. Ridvan reflected on the scene: “The policemen recognize me and know me but still want to check my ID,” he began, “it can happen when I go to work in the morning. It feels even worse when, after a long day at work, I have to show them my ID to go home. They are not protecting my neighbourhood – we, sure as hell, do not want them to – they are just trying to make us stay in Tarlabası.” He would occasionally see someone familiar and follow the person with his eyes, speculating whether they would be let through without an intervention. He continued on the absurdity of the situation. “Nobody really minds me when I am working as a waiter by Istiklal Street – the city would stop if tea would stop to flow – but except inside the teahouse or my home I am never in a right place. In the morning I go to serve people who otherwise intimidate me and I am supposedly doing something wrong even when I am going home the quickest way.” The controls did not make sense in practical terms either. The rush by the crossing is at most of the times immense, the area is

41 The police station building was later demolished and, according to my information, a new one will be built in its place.

42 TOMA is abbreviation of Toplumsal Olaylara Müdahale Araci (Intervention Vehicle to Social Events), a ubiquitous sight at demonstrations.
not illuminated too well after the dark and, most importantly, it is always easy to avoid the controls by a slight detour.

**ALTERNATIVE CROSSING TO TARLABAŞI**

Ridvan, just like Şivan in the previous chapter, felt like a sheep that is being herded in Beyoğlu. He lived closer to the Kalyoncu Kulluğu crossing but would rather cross Tarlabası Boulevard at a different place to avoid the intimidation by the police and navigate his way home in the backstreets. The crossing at Sakız Ağacı Street, the next one towards Taksim Square, was just a short walk away. This, in turn, had affected the boundary dynamics in the immediate vicinity. On the Istiklal side, Sakız Ağacı Street continues as Atıf Yılmaz Street that had developed a reputation as a gateway to Tarlabası – some of the cheapest eateries in Beyoğlu, with a steady stream of customers sharing tables and quickly eating platefuls of simple Turkish dishes, dominate the street with more upmarket restaurants and nightclubs closer to Istiklal Street. Its difference to the surrounding streets became clear, to a surprising degree, in the “virtual walk” interviews (see p.14) I conducted during my fieldwork. Here, the presence and movement of particular kinds of people altered the space that would architecturally be indistinguishable from the streets next to it.

What for Ridvan was a direct route to the mahalle, was for many others, especially those who had never entered Tarlabası, an uninviting and vaguely dangerous border zone. Geographically, Atif Yılmaz Street crosses Istiklal Street at a very busy spot but Istiklal’s ambience does not extend over it. The constant movement, the presence of traders selling cheap China-produced clothing and toys and a large number of people standing on the street corners – instead of sitting in the cafes like in most of the other streets – made it different. On the corner of Istiklal Street is a mosque, the only one adjacent to Istiklal Street. On Fridays and religious holidays all the people did not fit in but some had to pray in the street. The mosque served as a significant landmark, symbolically connected to the ambivalence of the space, a corridor providing access to the neighbourhood and punctuating the space with a different quality. It did not separate two spaces like Tarlabası Boulevard but presented a gradual passage to a different spatial order before reaching the crossing to Tarlabası – at the same time, it did not mark the separation between two areas but acted as a separate zone, covering just one street but very different from its surroundings.

Ridvan acknowledged the difference and liked to joke about it: “This is a street where I feel safe. I know that there are many people who would like to drive all of us away from it but I feel that we also need a place to hang out. In fact, I prefer to see my friends at Taksim Square but it makes me feel good that there are cheap places to eat or just street corners where I feel welcome
on this side of the city. One of the big differences is that there are almost no women, except for the ones going to Tarlabası. I think they are afraid of the poor Kurds.” He expressed this in the tone that addressed the social distinctions of class and gender in the area, considered them as important issues but laid them out with a dose of cynical humour. The street itself was not much to praise but it could be used to reflect upon the boundary dynamics of the area.

The women that I talked to generally avoided the street, not as a definite no-go area but a slightly uncomfortable zone that can be easily avoided. Didem extended her idea of rural newcomers, expressed earlier in this chapter in relation to repopulation of the old Greek and Jewish neighbourhoods, to this space: “I just do not feel at home when I walk that street. First, there is the mosque at the corner. I can see the scorn in the eyes of the men at the yard, as if they would want to keep the area to themselves. There are also more and more of them. Before they would fit inside but now they are on small prayer mats all over the place.” She sighed, and proceeded to explain: “This does not mean that I am hostile to religion or the Anatolians and Kurds coming to Istanbul. I just feel they are not doing it in the right way. After you pass the mosque there are these gangs of youth who stare at you, call at you in rude ways and laugh afterwards. So much of Istanbul is already like that, you just do not feel comfortable as woman walking around there. We have to struggle to keep this area like it has been.”

This account, repeated with slight changes in detail by many others, concentrated on the same themes as Ridvan’s – the quest to make the city safer and more accessible, in a word livable. However, Ridvan and Didem articulated the issue in an antagonistic manner.

In the cases above, the boundary dynamics entered into a complex set of relations with the intimacy of home, its extension to the world of modernity, and the presence of the state safeguarding its values through policing particular spaces from intrusions. The daily rhythm of crossing Tarlabası Boulevard, possible identity checks and a resulting sense of exclusion, reproduced the divide between spaces, giving it a mundane signification that could be extended to other practices and employed as a model for other spatial relations. The dangers of Tarlabası were thus constantly reminded both to its residents and to the people who only saw the permanent police presence, with no apparent reason, as enforcing the sense of a dangerous world set apart. On the other hand, Atıf Yılmaz Street provided a safe gateway to Tarlabası for its residents but extended its mahalle-like features into the İstiklal area. It expressed and contrasted the difference between the two spaces in a gradual way and marked the norms associated with social class, gender and religion as a knot that had to be negotiated, often unsuccessfully and deepening the existing conflict.
Along these lines, Joel Migdal considers social boundaries as virtual checkpoints, where the markers between the identifiable features of familiar and strange are separated and the sense of security established (2006:10). The markers include daily practices, not limited to dress and language, but extending to other domains that have evolved into signifiers marking who is included in a group and who is not (6). Virtual checkpoints are also integral in establishing the shared sense of space, embodied knowledge of what to expect from the others. Migdal states that the need for checkpoints and markers lies in the recognition of the unfamiliarity with how things are done and how strangers behave, which, ultimately, leads to particular neighbourhoods developing reputation as dangerous (10). In my case, the familiarity and strangeness were directly connected to questions of access and safety. However, the relationship between inhabitants' knowledge of boundaries and moral frameworks was asymmetrical. By the necessity of survival, a Kurdish migrant living in an impoverished neighbourhood had to think about contextual boundaries and moral frameworks, to cross between ambiguous spaces and adapt to their expected behaviour on a constant basis – more fortunate ones had much more freedom of choice. Didem (or Nazlı) had never set foot in Tarlabas: in fact, she had once planned to do a school project that that would have involved interviewing residents of Tarlabas but her parents had prohibited her from doing it. Even so, it is rare that the boundaries within a city deny access completely. Their contextual character is closely related to cycles of time.

RHYTHMS OF THE SAFE PASSAGE – UNDERPASS

The definition of the safe environment reflects a range of issues, from the feeling of comfortable surroundings to the absence of a physical threat. The standards of security, such as the density of streetlights in one particular street, the presence of other passers-by, the small police booths set at strategically important locations and the very different opening hours of shops, stalls and restaurants in different areas are all related to the embodied experience. A difference of just one hour can turn lively bazaars into ghost towns or bring previously deserted streets into life after bars and nightclubs start to attract clients. Thus, the uniform grid of the city transforms into diverse spatial relations that reflect appropriate practices at different rhythms. In a sense, the informal passage of social time is contrasted to the monumental time of the state, the latter being slower and more readily appropriated by the state machinery (Herzfeld in Byrne 2011:150). The recognition of how social time relates to the contextual boundaries is at the heart of being Istanbulite and knowledgeable of urban realities that cannot be formalized perfectly.
The spatial dynamics of safety are perhaps easiest to observe in daily cycles; which streets one should not cross after a certain hour and which districts change in character after the sunset. In my field data, the properties of social time rested on finely tuned reflections as a precondition for safe movement. As I mentioned above, Tarlabası Boulevard could be crossed by pedestrians only from a small number of points (map 6). Coming from the direction of Tünel Square, the first crossing is on the side of the adjoining quarter of Kasımpaşa, above Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Stadium. The next one further up had developed into a significant feature of the cityscape for people with intimate knowledge of the area. Leading to Tarlabası directly from Galatasaray Square, along the towering walls of the British Consulate-General, is an underpass that had become notorious, also among people who did not use it, and acquired a reputation as a location where one would risk almost certain robbery in the nighttime. My second home in Tarlabası was just a couple of steps from the underpass: immediately after moving in, my friend Osman told me to avoid the underpass, supported by the Serkan, the owner of the Star Tekel corner shop, who joined into our conversation. This was the first but definitely not the last time I was reminded of the danger. Osman, a financial analyst who took pride of living in Tarlabası before it had become increasingly popular among university students, middle-classes and foreigners, gave me clear instructions with a sense of pride over his knowledge of the area.

He also had experience of doing documentary photography in reputedly dangerous neighbourhoods and emphasized the importance of knowing one’s surroundings to find an escape route if necessary: “Especially as a foreigner you have to be more alert than others because you will be an easy target. It is also important for you to learn to know people in the neighbourhood that no one thinks that you are lost here.” Serkan joined in and told me that I was lucky to have his shop nearby: there would be more people around and he would keep it open until late in the night. They talked about how in some other quarters nearby one would enter into pitch-dark alleys straight from the Tarlabası Boulevard and how it would be impossible to guarantee my safety living there. Osman presented a detailed description

43 With the influx of wealthier people into the area its social dynamic had started to change. During my latest visit to Istanbul in January–April 2015 I inquired briefly about the situation concerning the underpass. The comments could be summarized as Tarlabası, especially the Aynalı Çeşme area bordering Kasımpaşa, becoming less dangerous.

44 My impression, based on discussions over the years, is that Tarlabası began to increase its popularity as a centrally located and cheap location to live among people from wealthier backgrounds around the time of my fieldwork 2008–2009. On this issue, I have not found reliable data, and doubt it could be collected. Many of the newcomers I know have rented their apartments without proper contracts and sublet rooms informally. Tarlabası’s gentrification will be discussed in detail in the last chapter of the study.
of my future route home late in the night: “It is much better that you cross Tarlabası Boulevard by the stadium, there are traffic lights next to the other side of the Consulate. That is good because there is a bus stop and taxis around all the time. Next, you follow the road by the car-repair shops that are also open until late and have very bright lights to the road. Then you are almost at home; there are luckily some shops, like this one, that are open. That is definitely your safest bet.” He carried on and contemplated the more abstract qualities of the boundary. “The underpass is a definite trap. When you enter, the muggers come from both directions and you cannot escape. When you come from the Kasımpaşa side you can always run if somebody starts harassing you. The underpass is completely lawless – also those who have lived in the area for a long time won’t be using it in the nighttime. In the daytime there are enough people around so you just need to be careful.”

It was slowly getting dark and we all looked at the direction of the underpass: Cesur, a teenager whom everyone in the mahalle knew, was sitting at the stairs next to it. He was one of glue-sniffers in the neighbourhood, begging money around the underpass for most of the days, someone who would not cause trouble despite his unappealing appearance and occasionally erratic behaviour. Serkan pointed to another difference that would help me to deal with dangers: “Cesur is ballycı, sniffing glue, and completely harmless. He is not one of the muggers but will ask for money from you. There is another variety that you have to watch out. We call them tinerci (thinner-sniffers) and they are much more violent and unpredictable bunch. We have both here in Tarlabası but with Cesur you are all right.” He laughed with Osman that soon I would be an expert on the various people in the Tarlabası side. I took this as a part of Istanbul’s urban grammar, a negotiation of the qualities of different areas, referring to standards of safety on both sides of the boundary.

What was interesting in this case, the actual area constituting the boundary was perceived as more dangerous than its different sides. Being cornered in a narrow tunnel out of sight of the others, especially as a victim of professional criminals, demonstrated an intensification of the spatial characteristics of this location. Even being part of the community, prided as the inclusive sense of the mahalle, would not help here. Osman said that he would avoid the underpass late in the night and Serkan added that he does not have to think about the issue because he has nothing to do on the İstiklal side late in the night. When I discussed the underpass with Şivan and Ridvan, their view was that it was best to be avoided if it was late and,

45 The term consists of the brand Bally, a popular contact adhesive in the country, with the suffix -ci, used to denote persons who are professionally or habitually concerned with an object or quality denoted by the basic word.
practically, it was such a short detour to cross the boundary from the other
direction that it was not worth taking the risk.

**RHYTHMS OF THE SAFE PASSAGE – WEEKLY MARKET**

The rhythms of social time were ticking in different tempos. The sense of
security fluctuating between the day and night was combined with a longer,
weekly rhythm, associated with the market spreading into the streets of
Tarlabaşı every Sunday. Weekly markets are an institution in almost every
district of the Istanbul and the one in Tarlabaşı was famous for its rock-
bottom prices. Every Sunday one could distinguish constant flow of people
on the way to Tarlabaşı from early morning on. The first market stalls selling
vegetables, fruit, toys, and snacks were located immediately after the crossing
and the market extended into the streets of the neighbourhood and made it
accessible for outsiders. Its busiest part was located further up north but
small stalls were set up all around.

In this case, the boundary between the areas became less marked
because the context enabled free access into the space, normally defined by
intimate sets of loyalties and perceived as unwelcoming to strangers, either
as a semiprivate space of *mahalle*, or the corrupted space of modernity,
defined by drugs, crime and prostitution. During the market, the
transformation was not complete; many of the visitors were slightly nervous,
very few strayed into the streets that were not already crowded and it was
easy to tell the difference between those who were occasional visitors looking
for cheap bargains and the ones who would be around every Sunday, know
many of the traders and stop to greet and exchange news with their
neighbours.

On one bright April morning I joined Ridvan for a stroll around the
market. Based on the discussions we had had on the accessibility of different
spaces, he wanted to tell what the market meant to him. “This is a very difficult
topic and I do not know what to think about it. Of course, as I have told you
many times, it is good that people come to Tarlabası and see that we are just
like people elsewhere in Istanbul, not thieves and fanatics that they think we
are.” He paused for a while and lit up a cigarette: “The foreigners and rich
Istanbulites also bring money into the *mahalle* but I feel that they have
something else in the mind. You live in a renovated house and pay much
more than I could afford, I have friends who work in the construction and
who are renovating luxurious apartments for people moving in here. Maybe
the police and private security will come next and we will be chased out. We
are not allowed these days to wander around the city without stress.
Especially foreigners come here to take photos of living sheep sold at the
market and the buildings that have almost collapsed. In a way, you are doing
the same thing: you are asking me constantly how life is so different across
Tarlabaşı Boulevard and I have began to think about it more and more.” From Ridvan’s account, I gathered a real worry about the future developments. The opening of the mahalle signified potential transformation that had already begun and was accelerating. At the same time, he had developed a way of living that depended on movement across the boundary.

For him, the question was not so much of manipulating situations and stakes within them, but consisted of the skill of managing in diverse situations (Dahlgren 2010:4). Most of the time he felt powerless. What bothered him the most, was how to live a good life in conditions where the moral norms, senses of community and the rights of the individual were constantly shifting. When I refer to managing in different spaces and contexts, I do not simply mean etiquette that people will learn to follow in specific situations, but an embodied way of negotiating one’s relationship within differently bounded contexts and groups, corresponding to various criteria and values. To live a satisfactory life in the city does not consist of uniform behaviour in recurring situations but of skillful adjustments of one’s everyday practices. In the next chapter, I will focus on how it is possible to bring together shifts between contextual moral frameworks and classifications they employ. I argue that this involves developing a specific sense of selfhood, capable of detailed reflection towards different strands of history, modernity and urbanity and masterly implementation of particular practices in different contexts. I will begin with accounts of how to establish a sense of belonging into the city.
Chapter 3: Becoming an Istanbulite in a Fragmented City: Cultivation of the Modern Self

Istanbul is a unique city with an unmatched historical background and natural beauty, bringing distinct civilizations together and connecting the two continents. Yet, we have wasted this city; played with its identity. We have been pursuing a big battle in this city, a big fight. It is a battle for bringing this city back to its state of glory.

— Prime Minister Erdoğan, 2007 (in Aktar 2009:48)

The quote from Erdoğan's speech uses several classifications and narratives of different courses of Istanbul's development in clever ways. The first two juxtapositions play with references to human agency and natural conditions: the city's uniqueness is a sum of “historical background” against a backdrop of “natural beauty” – this, in turn, is elaborated in cultural terms by connecting “distinct civilizations” (Christian and Islamic) with geographic divisions (continents of Europe and Asia). The unique location and history direct attention to human responsibility; according to this view, life in Istanbul has evolved in a dialogue with features of place and memory, not the model of tabula rasa, associated with modernist urban design that sacrifices existing substance in its quest making way for the new (Hebbert 2005:591). The quote also emphasizes that the weight of historical layers cannot be ignored in the future development of the city.

Erdogan's reference to “wasting this city” and a battle for bringing it “back to its state of glory” is also a narrative that reflects back to the achievements of the past as exemplary models for the future, a familiar tendency throughout the history among people with grandiose plans. What makes this rhetoric so intriguing in Istanbul is the variety of exemplary pasts to refer to, and their different senses of sociality and belonging. I argue that these are located at the intersections of reflective self-making and established group solidarities, often connecting seemingly unrelated epochs and events that nevertheless provide coherent continuums emerging at various points of history.

In this chapter, I will focus on historical consciousness as the hierarchical organization of the formal and informal attributes of the city
and its history, shaping the sense of belonging as an ongoing process. I suggest that belonging to the city is founded on the strategical and tactical uses of powerful narratives that reorganize history, find solutions to moral dilemmas and create new senses of agency. However, establishing a simple distinction between strategies and tactics is not enough. Instead, I wish to focus on chains of actions that form morally evaluated narratives. Single actions can be isolated and judged separately but life is not a sum of those actions, it is not based on avoiding negative consequences (see Dahlgren 2010:10). Different actions might be considered appropriate or inappropriate quite uniformly but are very rarely considered individually. Rather, they relate to historical narratives and principles of classification that act as foundation for more complicated senses of belonging, consisting of quotidian practices, but not reducible to them. In order to study how one's relationship to the urban environment develops, I will begin with a brief glimpse of how Istanbul has acquired different, often morally defined characteristics, and relate them to my informants’ experiences of becoming urbanites and Istanbulites. Next, I will move on to discuss how histories of particular spaces become reorganized and look in detail at Taksim Square as a space where contested historical narratives clash in complex ways. After that, I will return to the level of the individual experience and establish a framework, based in theories of James Faubion (1993), for an approach I will use in the following chapters to study the historical consciousness of modernity. To conclude, I will argue that reflection on different types of agency and cultivation of the modern self has become an essential quality that acts as a precondition for participation in Istanbul's urbanity.

Expertise of the City

It often feels that Istanbulites are obsessed about their city and can discuss its peculiarities endlessly. While conducting my fieldwork, this quality proved to be a useful icebreaker when looking for new connections and helped me to gather the informal anecdotes presented throughout the study. Participating in these exchanges also deepened my sense of belonging in the city and made me crave for more. There is a long history of expertise of the city; a seventeenth-century Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi begins his massive ten-volume opus Book of Travels (Seyâhatnâmesi) with an exhaustive description of Istanbul that fills up the whole first volume (Dankoff 2006). Orhan Pamuk devotes several pages of Istanbul: Memories and the City, his autobiography and a memoir of the city, to Reşad Ekrem Koçu (1905–1975), an obsessed author of Istanbul Encyclopaedia (İstanbul Ansiklopedisi), whose unfinished project’s span of 11 volumes and 7076 pages had gotten him
alphabetically into a letter “g” before his death (Pamuk 2006b:191–199). In the twenty-first century, the most famous successor in this tradition is Pamuk himself: he has taken pride in his passion for Istanbul and assembled many famous anecdotes of the city in creative ways into the maze-like construction of *Black Book* (*Kara Kitap*) (2006a), a postmodern mystery tale mixing the formal and informal, digging through the layers of Istanbul’s seemingly insignificant and quotidian features. The novel is a showcase of Pamuk’s mastery of different facets of Istanbul's history, often compared to James Joyce’s extremely detailed portraits of Dublin.

There is a very enthusiastic but tiny minority with a comprehensive understanding of the history of Beyoğlu – for most of the others, the area is shrouded in the multiple layers of an ambiguous past, constantly employed in discussions but impossible to order in a stable way. Orhan Pamuk’s insistence: “Istanbul is a place where, for the past 150 years, no one has been able to feel completely at home” (2006b:115), captures both the sense of anxiety, the haunting of the layers of history, and a celebratory tone of urbanity; to be not at home also hints at the chances of creating new connections and senses of belonging. Furthermore, in these narratives the city is not merely a collection of facts to be accumulated infinitely but, rather, consists of selective appropriation and exploration of its possibilities. This task is combined and complemented with the actual movement in the city, participation in the rhythm of various routinized episodes, connected to sociality as well as solitude (cf. Duneier 1992:34). It is also a question of the formal and the informal, abstraction and practice. In the parlance of De Certeau, one is constantly balancing between the totalizing perspectives that transform city into a transparent and readable text, and the power it derives from the very messiness of the operations and practices of its inhabitants (1988:91–93). Following this analytical current, I wish to examine ethnographically in which situations ideal structures and actual events are organized hierarchically (Herzfeld 1987:32) and how these hierarchies can be turned around or rejected altogether. In many of the narratives, the messy and informal features are seen to possess a life of their own that can lead even the most well-planned projects go astray. From time to time, my friends explicitly referred to the specific unexplainable atmosphere of Beyoğlu that allows different forms of sociality to arise. This idea of urbanity can be traced all the way back Simmel who divides the discourse of the city into two dimensions: its material fabric of buildings and institutions and the “crystallized spirit” that these spaces and structures seem to embody (in Mitchell 2002:97).

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Şivan was not familiar with the learned historical accounts of Istanbul but the details of his surroundings fascinated him and he had developed an elaborate reading of the city that often resembled the classifications and narratives of the famous authors. He expressed a qualitative difference between being a villager (köylü) and an Istanbulite (İstanbullu) – he was proud of his humble origins but told me in clear terms that there would be no going back to the rural life. The ten years he had lived in Istanbul had changed him as a person and he felt, despite the discrimination he encountered on a daily basis, that he was on the right track. He would often refer to the change on a slightly cynical manner: “In this country it is clear that I will never become a Turk – the whole system would need to change for that to happen. However, I can be an Istanbulite just like anyone who lives in the city.” The prioritization of the urban identity over the national one is a tactical choice, found also in other countries, and has long historical roots in Turkey. Used as an adjective, Istanbul manners, Istanbul accent, Istanbul fashions, among others, denote excellence, especially when compared with the rest of the country (Mango 2003:198). Becoming an Istanbulite was also something Şivan had dreamed about earlier in his life.

On an exceptionally warm day in February we had been drinking tea all around Beyoğlu and he suggested that we buy a couple of beers from the bakkal nearby and go to Tepebaşı to drink them. We managed to find a place to sit down a little bit out of sight, at the edge of the car park, and looked at the sun beginning its descent. Şivan began to contemplate his first days in Istanbul as combination of bewilderment and accomplishment. We had discussed his introduction to Istanbul several times before but these had been short exchanges dealing with his surprise of the big city. “I had just finished my military service and knew that I had to move on,” he began, in a slightly shy manner, “my home village was uninhabited, there was no work in Mardin, Diyarbakır or the other cities nearby, some of my older brothers had already moved to Istanbul. I felt that I had to follow them – if I would not do it now it would never happen.” He took a sip of his beer and looked at the city extending over the horizon on both sides of the Golden Horn.

47 See Mandel (2008) on how many Turks in Berlin have prioritized their identity as Berliners instead of Germans (73–77, 105–106, 182) and how some have even extended the identification to a smaller unit and claim to be Kreuzbergers (157).

48 Mandel (2008) notes that among immigrants from Turkey in Germany “the rural-urban divide commands such symbolic capital that those hailing form Anatolian villages often claim to be from Istanbul or Ankara. Children are instructed to declare they are from Istanbul, but when pressed, display complete unfamiliarity with the city” (92).

49 Tepebaşı is a quarter (şemt), situated in Beyoğlu, very close to İstiklal Street. In everyday usage the name indicates the top of the hill with magnificent view over the Golden Horn.
“Istanbul was like in the pictures that I had seen; masses of people and cars everywhere. I knew in an instant that now I was one of them. I came here, to this exact location, and looked at the view to the Golden Horn and further. Here I was; I had not visited any of the places I saw, and had seen just pictures and some film clips of Istanbul. At the same time, I knew that this was my city just as much as anyone’s.”

On another occasion, he explained how even the most basic practical realities of life in the city had been shocking. I first thought Şivan was speaking metaphorically when he told me that he did not know what bread was in Turkish when he had left his home village as a teenager. He had first gone only to Kurdish-run stores and asked for nân instead of ekmek, bread in Turkish. He said solemnly that learning a completely new language was the next revelation to him after the electric light he had first seen in Mardin after his home-village was deserted during the conflict in the 1990s. From this account I understood both the radical transformation and new beginning that the city signified to him.

For some, his celebratory tone might epitomize resurrection of the outdated descriptions and romantic metaphors – cliches circulated within and across different urban environments. Yet, they also expressed a sense of urbanity and modernity in the vein of Berman, of actively yearning for changes, positively demanding them, seeking them out and carrying them through (1982:95–96). My discussions with people who had moved to Istanbul revealed several coexisting motivations; the narrative of Istanbul with its streets paved with gold – a rational economic drive arguably diminished at the dawn of the global capitalist expansion of in the 1980s (Keyder 2008:514); the individual decision to migrate and take part in the global civilization as an equal participant; and aspiration for self-development. These distinctions and divisions were also related to movement between different scales: from the village to the city, further across the national boundaries and ultimately in the global perspective. I will discuss these in detail in chapters 5–7 and link them to historically shifting emphases of Turkish modernity.

Another recurrent theme was unpredictability. Life in Istanbul represented possibilities, rarely realized but nevertheless thrilling unlike in other places. Simultaneously, life in the city was rife with risks. After his initial encounter with the city, Şivan had begun to approach the city and the village through comparison and told me about the intensity of urban life: “If a building collapses in my home village near Mardin the whole place will talk about it for years. In Istanbul, I might wake up one day and see that the whole block next to me has disappeared overnight. Such is Istanbul [Böyle İstanbul].” He said this with a particular pride in his voice, singling out this

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50 Kurmanji Kurdish for bread.
characteristic as something that separates his city from other cities, highlighting the ability to tolerate and even enjoy sudden transformations as a mark of a true urbanite. “At the same time,” he continued, “an argument between two people can lead to a deadly riot.” Here, it is important to point out the ambivalence and tension between two different notions of agency. A superficial reading of Şivan’s remarks could point to passivity over changing conditions, an Orientalist fantasy of the Eastern mentality illustrated perfectly in young Le Corbusier’s description of a fire in Istanbul.

It [the fire] seems like an intermission at a theater where a great, extraordinary spectacle is performed, but whose audience is blasé because they know it all and nothing more can interest them. For Stamboul has been burning like this for centuries. (1987:156)

This stereotype – misguided and ridiculed but nevertheless used regularly – works together with its opposite, the promise of increased agency and a wider range of possibilities over future. For people like Şivan and Ridvan, Istanbul was filled with potential, both in the entrepreneurial sense as well as a way to become an urbanite. They had both moved to Istanbul with very low education and elementary knowledge of Turkish but had secured jobs that provided for their livelihoods: Şivan’s position as an office attendant was relatively low-paid but still much better than working in the construction industries or as a waiter. Ridvan had managed to start a bakkal with a friend on one of the side-streets of İstiklal Street and ran the orders for nuts and dried fruit. Both of them stressed their positions as self-made men, ready to rise higher in the social hierarchy. This was coupled with a powerful sense of belonging, urbanity as something to be cherished, even addicting. Once, Ridvan summed up beautifully what he meant by this new sense of urban selfhood:

Now, when I am married, I would like to move to Bahçelievler [a lower middle-class suburb on the old side of the city] but I feel that I need to keep my other foot in Beyoğlu to see what is happening in the world.51

What really struck me in these descriptions was the paradoxical sense of certainty, even a peculiar sense of harmony, that could be obtained from the unpredictability of the urban surroundings. On a closer look, many of the responses were influenced on persistent classifications and narratives established in the past.

THE LIMITS OF AGENCY – ISTANBUL AS AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC BEING

The agency of the city itself has long historical roots in stories. Time and again, Istanbul acquires an anthropomorphic character, often of an ageing

51 Discussed at length in Tuominen (2013:43–45).
woman – very beautiful yet promiscuous (Suner 2010:151), with its own will and erratic behaviour that can shake the established order vigorously. This unpredictability, however, contains a promise of cracks in the system and possibility to successfully alter the mercurial urban conditions. The accounts of its agency are unconsciously and consciously elaborated, debated and negotiated, and supported by intricate understandings of its urban dynamics. Moreover, they contain, reproduce and perhaps even enforce distinct ways to organize the city and its social orders. A quintessential illustration of this tendency is presented in the 2005 film Istanbul Tales (Anlat İstanbul), written by Ümit Ünal and consisting of five interweaving vignettes, each directed by a different person. The stories portray lives of Istanbul’s marginalized and downtrodden; petty gangsters, transsexuals, Kurdish migrants and alcoholics – all of them integral part of its informal urbanity. One by one they come across surprising circumstances and fail in love, or, in other aspects of their lives. In the final scene, they are all together walking on the now defunct Old Galata Bridge (Eski Galata Köprüsü) (Figure 1) towards the sea and cursing Istanbul for causing their demise. The antiquated narrative has not lost its ability to invoke powerful responses.

![Figure 1. The characters of Istanbul Tales marching towards the sea cursing Istanbul. (screenshot)](image)

It often felt that the assignment of agency to the city was a shortcut, a way to avoid complex analysis of its social dynamics. Even so, it also signified a new way of life, different from the predictability of the rural areas. While Şivan referred to sudden changes in the physical environment in his depiction of the disappearance of a whole block of flats in one night, the agency of the
city also extended to fantastical heights. For Ridvan, Istanbul was still very much a city with its streets paved with gold and he liked to illustrate this with dramatic examples: “There are many people who have become rich overnight, some by inventing something special, others by gambling or robbing. One day they wake up and Istanbul has taken everything away from them.” I found expressions of this orientation also from people with extensive knowledge of Istanbul’s history. When I started to prepare a map that would illustrate the most convenient walking routes and locations with contested histories in Beyoğlu, Veli pointed at the construction project just outside of his window in Tophane and told me that my attempt would be futile, even potentially dangerous: “You know, this city is changing much faster than you can track it down. If you start drawing maps or filling them up with additional information, you will have no time for anything else. I have met several people who have lost everything when coming too close to the city and it has made them insane.”

CONQUERING ISTANBUL

Istanbul Tales is, however, just one version in the long series of cultural products dealing with the same theme: the surge of anxieties arising from modernity and urban life by projecting them into a feminized image of the city. In cinematic history, the city mostly represents a “whore,” or, inversely the prostitute can act as a metaphor for the city52 (Dönmez-Colin 2014:294). According to Suner, promiscuity is related to the city’s long history and cosmopolitan culture and its deceitful nature with the presence of modern and independent women on its streets (2010:151). In Istanbul Tales, a film dealing with the most pressing issues of the twenty-first-century urbanity, the city seduces and destroys individuals from a wide spectrum of social underclass, from sexual to ethnic minorities. Another perspective, emphasizing the capability to transform, even conquer the city, is present in the earlier representations. In Birds of Exile (Gurbet Kuşları) (1964), the central theme is migration from the rural areas, and the film begins with a family of migrants crossing to the city from the Asian side amidst shouts “Whore Istanbul! I am coming to conquer you!” and “I will be your king!” (Figure 2) (Dönmez-Colin 2014:325). In this case, the family and its traditional values disintegrate in the urban environment despite their attempts to combine the best of rural and urban lives. Together with my

52 If Istanbul acquires its anthropomorphic character as a devious woman, alternating between a mother and a whore, there is another powerful trope of likening the Turkish Republic to a young woman, girl or virgin (kız) (Özyürek 2006:145). Thus, if the point of reference shifts from the city into the Republic, the moral problematic is seen in a very different light. In this case, the intimate sense of belonging is directed at protecting the anthropomorphic figure of the nation from an outside threat rather being seduced and destroyed by it.
ethnographic examples the films point at the limits of agency, of how the relationship towards the city has been expressed and experienced. They serve as illustrations of what specifically urban life in Istanbul consists of and how it fluctuates between the extremes of all-powerful city as an actor and the possibilities of radical reorganization of its cityscape by its inhabitants. Next, I wish to connect these abstract qualities to the actual spaces of the city, move deeper into the historical foundations of their organization and ask what happens when its history is contested on different grounds.

**Figure 2. The classic scene of the family crossing the Bosphorus in Birds of Exile. (screenshot)**

**Taksim Square – Unifying Stories and Dividing Classifications**

There are specific spaces in Istanbul where history becomes a site of an intense struggle. Their boundaries reorganize the mental maps of the inhabitants and help them to situate each other into the mix of rapidly changing groups and collectivities. Here, my aim is to explore how different senses of belonging develop in the course of everyday life, how groups with distinct solidarities are established, allow comparison to one another, react to contradictory situations and, especially, how they are built on the top of old
formations and related in moral terms to the past, present and future. I will
discuss Taksim Square as a site of clashing histories, identifications and
legitimizations, a space that encapsulates the twists and turns of the stormy
history and remains extremely contested.

I argue that historical classifications employ a wide set of categories;
ranging from fundamental notions of belonging associated with religion,
ethnicity and class to stylistic details and fleeting fashions, they create
powerful shared understandings, producing dichotomies and essentialisms
of the city. This line of reasoning highlights the pervasive presence of
essentialism in everyday life, as a way to make sense of the urban chaos of
different spaces. Of course, the ubiquity of essentialism in social life is very
different from distrust of it in social theory (Herzfeld 1997:26, Mandel
2008:84–85). In anecdotes, stories and figures of speech that portray
classificatory patterns in systematic ways, essentialist categories routinely
situate complex phenomena into clear frameworks, and produce common
ground for debates.

The classificatory geography of the city based on simple dichotomies is,
however, insufficient for understanding the dynamics of belonging. I will
explore here how attributes of spaces relate to historical understandings and
produce senses of belonging and solidarity. Following Nancy Munn, I
maintain that “the presence of the past is not grounded in either the subject
or the place per se, but in the subject as always oriented, located, moving
through or in ‘some place’ and equally, in the place as a concrete location and
center orienting and surrounding the subject. The importance of places to
memory is founded in this nexus of relations” (2004:13). I argue that
establishing and severing these place-bound histories is an integral part of
urbanity, of immersing oneself into the stories of the city and acquiring
knowledge of its intricate classifications. While the previous chapter focussed
on movement and boundary-crossing, here the centre of attention is the
history of particular locations.

Tim Ingold notes that “stories always, and inevitably, relate what
classifications divide” (2007:205). I will apply this principle to broader
construction of history as “the construction of a meaningful universe of events
and narratives for an individual or collectively defined subject” (Friedman
1994:118). In order to study the ordering and expression of historical
consciousness within a specific cultural context (Faubion 1993), while
acknowledging the connections established in different spaces, I will
demonstrate here how different historical epochs are brought together and
contrasted with one another, paying specific attention to the dichotomy
between Republican and Ottoman histories, not solely as essentialized grand
narratives, but related to culturally intimate senses of belonging, often
ambiguous and half-formed associations of convoluted histories.
TAKSIM SQUARE AND GEZİ PARK: REPUBLICAN AND OTTOMAN HISTORIES COLLIDE

Istanbul’s Republican space *par excellence*, Taksim Square (*Taksim Meydanı*), has a history of violent clashes of qualities with Republican and Ottoman connotations. Originally named after the reservoir for the water-distribution (*taksim*), built in 1732, its most important symbol nowadays is the Republic Monument, sculpted in 1928 by the Italian sculptor Canonica (Sumner-Boyd and Freely 2000:429). It has been the site of the Ottoman countercoup of 1909 (*31 Mart Vakası*), Taksim Square Massacre in 1977 (*Kanlı Bir Mayıs*), the Gezi Park protests in 2013 and several other political events, often culminating in violence. Its surroundings have seen Ottoman military barracks, Turkey’s first football stadium and a public park that became the centre of the Gezi protest movement. It also hosts Atatürk Cultural Center (*Atatürk Kültür Merkezi*), most famous as an opera house and a concert hall, but also a powerful symbol of the Republican Turkey. On the other hand, there have been frequent calls to build a mosque of a grand scale to the location, mostly as an initiative of the Islamic parties.

In 1997, journalist Mehmet Akif Beki from *Turkish Daily News* (nowadays *Hürriyet Daily News*) summarized the rhetoric of the Welfare Party in favour of the mosque, as an interesting combination of arguments, alternating between representational power and rational analysis of the needs of Istanbulites. According to the newspaper article, the proponents of the mosque justified its existence on the basis of a former structure, a mosque as part of the Ottoman-era military barracks, torn down and substituted by Gezi Park, which was in 1997 a relatively insignificant space in the imaginations of the people.

Beki questions whether the project is a response to the prayer needs of the area’s Muslim population or an attempt to symbolically reconquer the square, Istanbul and the whole nation. Catering for the needs of the people would fit into the rationalist framework of the secular state but with it arises

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53 Atatürk Cultural Center was closed for renovation in 2008 and its future destiny remains uncertain.

54 The Islamist Welfare Party can arguably be seen as a predecessor of the Justice and Development party (*Adelet ve Kalkınma Partisi*/AKP). The current president Erdoğan was a former party member and the ex-president Gül its deputy leader until its dissolution.

55 I will generally refer to the biggest parties in present-day Turkey with their Turkish abbreviations (AKP, CHP), for those are the terms used most commonly also in English-language discussions. For the lesser-known parties, I will use their full English names. I will also refer to politicians with titles of the period I discuss. Find a summary of political parties in glossary (p. 218).

the danger of shaking the delicate balance of Istanbul's moral geography. In
the other half of the article, Zeki Ayik cites Yıldız Uysal, the general secretary
of the Istanbul Chamber of Architects, who opposes the mosque on symbolic
grounds: "The symbol of secularism and democracy, Taksim Park, should be
rearranged in accordance with its image." In another argument featured in
the article, the former mayor of Beyoğlu, Huseyin Arslan, blames the Welfare
Party for combining religion with the politics:

They only try to use religion for political goals [...] the area across from
Taksim Park where they plan to build the mosque is the tourists' favorite
place. Building a mosque there will also affect the hotels around. In addition,
they will kill off one of the few green areas in Beyoğlu by building it.

It is possible to capture many foundational debates of the nature of the
Republic, religion and secularism in one relatively short newspaper article. It
illustrates how the tendencies underlying contemporary issues are anchored
into the essentialized Republican values. In the quote above, the symbol of
secularism and democracy, is argued to be “rearranged in accordance with
its image,” a vague but comprehensible statement for opposing the mosque
on the grounds that it would disturb the spatial arrangement. Interestingly,
the story also contains a reference to hierarchical organization of the spaces.
Arslan suggests a compromise that, to my knowledge, has not resonated too
well with the Islam-leaning parties: "But if they have to build a mosque, they
can do it after demolishing a few of the old buildings in Tarlabaşı.” There is a
huge difference in occupying one of the most significant spaces of the
country in comparison to acquiring space from a residential area nearby.

Moreover, the symbolic properties of the square are in stark contrast
with everyday realities. Taksim Square is not the most comfortable place to
spend time. There are no places to sit down, the traffic and especially the
busy terminal57 for local busses makes the area noisy and restless. Of my
friends, Ridvan preferred the square as a place for congregation but most of
the others came there only for metro and bus connections or to meet
someone at a convenient spot. Its symbolic significance was another matter.
On one occasion, I met Veli at the Bambi Cafe, an Istanbul institution for fast
food by the square and we begun to discuss the significance of the area. Veli
was following the urban transformation of Istanbul very carefully, liked to
question the changes in his artistic work and was active in the social
movements, later one of the small group of people who initiated the Gezi Park
protests. The Taksim mosque had been on the news again and he began to
contemplate the issue: “The mosque is a definite provocation (provokasyon). I

57 By the time of writing, the busses have been moved to the terminal underground and the square
is nowadays a vast expanse that is very busy at its edges where all the establishments are, but
mostly deserted in the middle.
know that it has been justified as answering the needs of the population; the small mosque by Istiklal Street is often full and people have to pray outdoors, and the neighbourhood mosques in Tarlabası, Tophane and Cihangir are mostly for people living in the areas. I understand this argument. However, there is more to the question.” He stopped for a long while and struggled to express himself in a balanced way.

He pointed at the mix of people at the cafe: youth who spoke Turkish with a thick Southeast accent; a pious family of four consisting of young boy in a Galatasaray football shirt, father going through the prayer beads, mother and a teenage daughter covered in simple headscarfs; a businessman in ill-fitting suit shouting to his phone about something wrong with the schedules, another group of youth in a hip-hop gear and many others. “In this city everyone is afraid of one another, not as separate people you meet when walking down the street, but as people who can do and have done terrible things together. Another terrible thing is that I hate the military but I know that without their existence this country would fall apart with different groups attacking each other. Building a big mosque on Taksim Square or even reconverting Hagia Sophia to a mosque would be too much. That would lead into a total war. The most scary thing is that in the chaotic conditions the liberal (liberal) people would be the first ones killed.” The transformation of Taksim Square would alter the image of the whole city and country. In Veli’s view, it was the army, an institution that he despised and wanted not to be involved with, that he saw as the protector of the peace. This reflected a more general pattern: the army has intervened in the politics several times contrary to democratic principles but maintained its status as the most trustworthy institution in the country (Mango 2004:54), although this is less obvious in the light of the most recent changes, especially the lengthy Ergenekon trials and unsuccessful interventions to influence political sphere, discussed in Chapter 7 (Aydınlı 2011, White 2012:77–79). However, there have been times when the tensions have peaked and the history of the square has been reconsidered.

GEZİ PARK, ÇAPULCUS AND TACTICAL READINGS OF HISTORY

In Turkish politics, complex references to history are abundant but their significance is easily lost in international media presentations. A very recent case illuminates how the vast historical continuities are entangled dialectically in what first seems like simple opposition. The powerful ideological representations can be anchored to different historical epochs, often to singular events, and revitalized to new political significance in contemporary conditions. Often the rhetoric has a spatial dimension and the narratives travel through symbolically significant places like Taksim Square, known for its multi-layered and contested history, with great potential to
become an arena for new struggles. The Gezi Park protests, initially on environmental grounds against the urban development plans that would transform the area into a shopping mall and luxury flats, resonated with wider concerns over public space, personal and collective freedoms and the corruption of the political system, and brought together the vast historical potential of the place.

Complex histories can be captured in single words. When the protests at Gezi Park escalated towards the end of May 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan began to use an obscure term, çapulcu, to describe the protesters. Its dictionary definition is “looter” or “marauder” but the term was rarely used and unknown to me before the events. However, the choice was not arbitrary but connected the unrest strategically to an unfolding chain of historical oppositions, linked to the spatial politics of Taksim Square. The name given to mostly secular protesters dates to the history of the Ottoman-era military barracks that were demolished in 1940 to establish Gezi Park next to the square. In 1909, the barracks were the site of mutiny by the pro-Islamic coalition against the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti), the ideological predecessors of the nationalists who founded the Republic of Turkey. The people marching to support CUP were accompanied by Bulgarian irregulars, who were called çapulcus in the descriptions of the events.58 Connecting the same term to the heterogeneous group of protesters in 2013 is an example of the continuous work of relating historical occurrences into the past, present and future, as well as of creating new solidarities and loyalties that can be traced and evaluated in relation to their historical precedents. These narratives can be organized according to repetitions, ruptures or other temporal metaphors. The obscure reference to Bulgarian irregulars more than hundred years ago can burst into a new life in present-day Istanbul and acquire new meanings, reorganizing the historical palimpsest.

In this case, Erdoğan’s reference to protesters as çapulcus did not remain an isolated incident of categorizing diverse group of people but developed into a new category of belonging. Very soon, protesters started to refer to themselves as çapulcus; the positive association with newly formed, though largely undefined, group spread through the social media and news channels. Political activists representing different historical eras were claimed to be çapulcus and renowned contemporary activists such as Noam Chomsky and Patti Smith sent their greetings to protesters saying that they were also çapulcus. The dictionary definition of a “looter” gave way to the more positive “rebel” with connotations to global social movements such as Occupy and its offshoots (Singer 2013). One could find people around the

world expressing their sympathy under slogans “every day I am chapulling” and “everywhere is Taksim, everywhere is resistance.” The events were no longer tied to a particular location: this became apparent in a fitting way when, just as writing these lines, I was distracted by a news report of a woman chanting the latter slogan while being forcefully removed from a meeting during Erdoğan’s visit to Finland. While the struggle for urban space in Gezi Park resonated with larger global concerns, the historical reference to the Ottoman defeat over hundred years ago was registered in spatially bounded, local and particular historical consciousness.

**PALIMPSEST OF THE PAST**

As illustrated by the Gezi Park protests, different layers of the past were available to be appropriated selectively in the course of social interaction. However, they were not just materials for conscious strategic elaboration but arose at unexpected moments, often associated with a sense of amazement or unease. The often simplified and essentialized images of the Ottoman city, Republican city and global metropolis were just some of the recognizable patterns to organize the historical consciousness of different spaces. Taksim Square was simultaneously a site of Sultan’s military barracks waiting to be reconquered and completed with the construction of a grand mosque; the Republican heart of the city built around the Republic Monument with depictions of Atatürk and his aides, and, in the everyday rhythms of the inhabitants, a place to arrange meetings and catch busses and metro from the adjacent terminals. The expected course of history had been altered so regularly that acknowledgement of its various trajectories had become a quotidian work of observing and ordering the city. It was also subject to strong emotional turmoil; the old meanings could shift with new information and transform the encountered reality. In the previous chapter I discussed how Volkan had learned to appreciate the historical complexity of the old quarters of Istanbul by photographing and studying them. The same was true of his relationship with Taksim Square.

We had arranged to meet at the Republic Monument and discussed the site while leaning uncomfortably on the thin fences surrounding the statue. I asked casually what he thinks of Taksim Square, waiting to hear his view of

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59 A google search of the slogans, with slightly different spellings, gives a good idea of their global reach. 

60 YLE 6.1.2013 http://yle.fi/uutiset/valikohtaus_keskeytti_turkin_puuministerin_puheen_finlandia-talolla/6920499

61 The construction of the neo-Ottoman style shopping center next to the proposed mosque had even created a joke of a new attempt to build a contemporary mosque-market nexus, a disneyfied version of the earlier arrangement.
its transformation in the future, but he chose to deliberate on its changing meaning for him: “A couple of years ago I thought that I knew Beyoğlu very well but I have begun to question many things recently. It was quite shocking that I really learned about Taksim from the perspective of the foreigners. The Turks know their history only from school and cannot see the bigger picture. I did not know that there had been a mosque and imperial barracks by the Square [we had this discussion four years before the Gezi protests], I did not know that the Atatürk Cultural Center looks to foreigners like fascist architecture and the Republic Monument looks comical to them. Some might say these are small things but to me they have really changed the way I see the city.” However, the initial shock had increased his confidence in the possibility of positive change.

He told me explicitly that one must be constantly alert where the conscious and unconscious observations point at, how references to different times and events are related to spaces within the city and how seemingly contradictory interpretations of historical developments can lead to very different understandings and possibilities for action. This manner of reasoning resembles Marshall Sahlins’ classic idea of the variation and reproduction of societies by submitting cultural categories to empirical risks (1985:ix). Reflecting on the rigid narratives of the dominant histories against their contradictions in the course of daily life means studying the dynamic between “the cultural order as constituted in the society and as lived by the people: structure in convention and in action, as virtual and as actual” (ix) and learning to make use of their inconsistencies. According to this view of historical change, all creative action has a potential to change the larger structure into which it is embedded, and even possibility to turn out to be revolutionary (Graeber 2001:249). In sum, everyday practices include testing and stretching the limits of the cultural order, reflection on its virtual and actual dimensions and exploration of its potential for change. Thus, the classification of the attributes of the city comes together with the personal histories of its inhabitants. In order to understand these processes better, I will next explore the different temporalities that define narratives of belonging, move into how individual and collective memory are related in meaningful ways and argue that among my informants there has emerged a powerful notion of a modern self, characterized by both its authenticity and ability to act appropriately in multiple contexts, organized according to spatially bounded moral frameworks.
The Variety of Exemplary Pasts and Modern Selfhood

In the case of Taksim Square, the historical consciousness of the place is fashioned in the contrast between the Republican and Ottoman streams of history. However, this did not mean necessarily restricting one's view to the one or the other but concentrated on their ongoing dialogue. Furthermore, for my informants the streams were not clearly defined nor did they correspond to contemporary realities: the mythical grand narrative of Republican history extended to the ancient origins of Turks in Central Asia and fluctuated ambiguously between different strands of secularism and laicism. Outside the small group of experts, the understanding of Ottoman history consisted mostly of anecdotes and legends, scattered pieces of information that could be combined into stories in the most imaginative ways.

The question is also about formality and informality. It is possible to make analytical distinction between the national memory, in Turkey the extremely powerful Republican narrative of the schoolbooks and official histories, as a single plot of national identity, contrasted to the social memory, not so rigidly bound but, rather, consisting of collective frameworks that mark and influence but do not define individual memories (Boym 2001:xxviii). In Istanbul, historical narratives coexist alongside each other: their current positions do not fit neatly into the Republican/Ottoman divide but these labels have not disappeared nor lost their strength: especially in the case of the historically most distant examples, building a consistent narrative that would stretch all the way to the present day is serious work, full of crossroads and diversions that can compromise its authenticity.

I have found Faubion's (1993) theoretical approach, defining the sense of modernity in Athens, also productive in the study of Istanbul. Life in Istanbul shares the similar normativity of the metaleptic task; the need to come to terms with the multiplicity of pasts and the operation of bringing them into some informative rapport with the present and with the future (93). This is how the frozen representations of the past are brought to life through different rearrangements. Faubion contrasts cultural classicists, with their view of historical decline from the exemplary past, to historical constructivists, who reincorporate the elements of the past to the present and redetermine them in the light of the present (xxii). I argue that in Istanbul the multiplicity is ordered according to several exemplary pasts. In Turkey, even the classicists do not agree on what era to prioritize.
METALEPTIC ACTS – OPERATIONS OF CULTURAL CLASSICISTS AND HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIVISTS

A familiar story, spread across the population, illustrates the complexity of referring to authentic origins aptly. In it, two men meet in a bus, begin to talk about the most recent gossip of Istanbul and end up challenging each other on the grounds of their knowledge of the city. This leads to a contest on how many generations their families have lived in Istanbul. Both men start in unison to condemn the most recent arrivals to city as country bumpkins with no understanding of Istanbul’s history or urban life. They talk about the glorious days of Beyoğlu and how their families took part in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the early twentieth century. Both make the strategic move and jump into their family histories in the Ottoman times. They boast that their families had long histories with the Sultan’s court but later associated with the nationalists and severed their ties with the Ottoman past. Their contest is not solved yet and both think what to say next; finally the other one begins: “Before that…” The other one interrupts him and says loudly: “I knew it all along that I am talking with a Greek (Rum)!”

To have the longest possible roots in Istanbul is to be a descendant of a Byzantine Greek or one of the Empire’s minorities but not a Turk. Until the nineteenth-century reforms in the Ottoman Empire, Muslim Turks did not inhabit the Pera (Beyoğlu) and Galata (Karaköy) districts and rarely visited them. The difficulty of constructing coherent narrative of the past can be illustrated through the act of metalepsis, a trope that “takes up the past, or an aspect of the past, or rather the enduring presence of something past, and makes it function within a different narratological milieu” (Rabinow 2014:221), or, more figuratively, according to Harold Bloom “a return of the dead, but very much in the poet’s own dress, his own colours” (in Rabinow 2014:222).

Faubion distinguishes between two central metaleptic acts. Introjective metalepsis is a reversal of the prioritization of the future, or present, over the past. It also reverses the figuration of either the future or the present as the telos, the ultimate aim, of the past (1993:xxii). The longing for the glorious past is central to establishing these links. In contrast to this, projective metalepsis opposes any figuration of the past as the exclusive standard of the present or the future but organizes the concreta of the past into novel

62 Nowadays the word Rum refers to Greeks who hold Turkish citizenship, to differentiate them from Yunanlı, Greek nationals. However, there is a further historical complication with the term that Yiannis Papadakis illustrates: “In Turkish I was Kıbrıslı Rum. Kıbrıslı meant Cypriot, no problem, but Rum? Where did that come from? I knew that during the Ottoman Empire, the Greeks called themselves Romii, meaning Romans, the people of the Eastern Roman Empire, as the Byzantine Empire was also known. The Ottomans called them Rum. The Greeks still living in Turkey were called Rum by Turks, while those in Greece were Yunanlı. I did not like the implication of this, that we living in Cyprus were regarded as ex-Ottoman subjects” (2005:22).
formations (xxii). As a favourite trope of historical constructivists, it allows the convergence of histories. With these metaleptic acts, sometimes coexisting in a single narrative, it is possible to reorganize history and trace down its most significant turning points. As analytical devices, they also enable detailed scrutiny of the strategies and tactics at play in the course of daily life.

In the following chapters, I will argue that in the historical consciousness of Turkish modernity, the mythical nomadic origins, the Ottoman conquest, the birth of the Kemalist Republic and the entry of Turkey into neoliberal globalization in the late 1980s, mark the greatest transformations. In the canonized histories, yet, surprisingly often also in the everyday discussions, different epochs are considered as leading to sociocultural dead-ends that are almost completely demolished by the new formations; Islam uniting the pagan tribes, the Republican values overriding the stagnant Empire, and, at the most recent stage, the rigid Kemalism being transformed into neoliberal Turkish nation where the Islamic principles coexist with the global competition over influence and economic gains. I will argue that the new beginnings and repetitions of the old are connected to principles of rebirth and regeneration, especially when brought in relation with contemporary moral dilemmas.

Furthermore, Istanbulites share ideological narratives that connect the elements ordering history to particular events. In her analysis, Esra Özyürek (2006) emphasizes the “nostalgia for the modern” as the primary principle for the elderly Republicans, who have their historical consciousness centred around the formative years of the Republic. For them, this period acts as an exemplary model of the past that has deteriorated into decadent and corrupt globalization, ever further from the promises of their childhood. From another perspective, the Republican past can be considered as a facade, with another, largely neglected historical stream operating in the background. Popular Islamic intellectuals such as Mustafa Akyol have pointed out in sophisticated analyses (e.g. 2011) that Islamic movements and their guiding principles were preserved and cultivated also when they were suppressed by the state and left out of the official history. According to these views, many of the social and scientific innovations can be traced back to the Ottoman glories of the Islamic civilization and their dialectic relation to Republican modernity should be reconsidered.63 The abundance of historical materials is made to serve very different morally legitimized outcomes and futures.

63 Of course, there are also elaborate academic studies that demonstrate the continuities between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic (e.g. Meeker 2002, Silverstein 2011). I will return to them in my periodization of Turkish modernity (Chapters 5–7). My aim here is to show how historical dynamics can be reorganized in numerous contradicting ways.
In the contemporary context, establishing a coherent historical consciousness is (and is seen as) hard and serious work. On the one hand, one wrong strategic move, as in the discussion between two men in a bus, could rule out one's Turkishness. On the other hand, the rigid categories of belonging, defined exclusively on ethnonationalistic terms (Turk, Kurd), or, on the basis of religion (Muslim, atheist), produce a narrow sense of selfhood, not sufficient for present-day conditions. Moreover, the practice of self-making from historical materials does not resemble playful postmodernism mixing superficial influences through consumption practices (although this can be part of it) but a responsible course of dignified life that would cultivate the valued characteristics and essences in appropriate ways. Among my informants, this capacity for heightened self-reflection was intimately connected with modern selfhood.

CULTIVATION OF THE MODERN SELF

In the course of my fieldwork, the complexities of entangled streams of history often left me wondering, what the most important principles of self-making in an urban environment were. Why was it that so many of my informants claimed life was so fundamentally different in the city? A recurring theme here was that Istanbul had also changed and its earlier social fabric had transformed considerably. At a first glance, the most dramatic change sprung from the introduction of laissez-faire capitalism, the rise of a new urban class with its carefully cultivated distinctions, based on consumption patterns, in opposition to the idealized picture of Istanbul’s urban sphere with clearly demarcated boundaries and senses of belonging, based on ethnicity and religious affiliation (Navaro-Yashin 2002b, Öncü 2002). For people like Şivan and Ridvan, this transformation signified an entry to modernity, expansion of possibilities and a radically different idea of selfhood.

However, the introduction of consumption-based identity politics had not led to disappearance of earlier loyalties and categories of belonging but enabled their elaboration in new ways. I have argued that qualities of different spaces and their corresponding moral frameworks foreground different senses of individuality and community, moral virtues and appropriate behaviour. Here, I will concentrate on the notion of the modern self, qualitatively distinguished from other configurations of personhood. Above all, it is a sense of self that demands tactical improvisation as its foundation and has been cultivated to respond to the shifts of moral frameworks in the midst of urban complexity. The emphasis is on adaptation to different situations rather than unbound individualism. Among my informants, both the ones living in impoverished areas and in wealthier districts, these distinctions were largely framed on the basis of their rigidity;
ranging from steadfast categories of ethnic and religious affiliations to slightly more adjustable senses of class, and further to ephemeral communities of taste that allow manipulation of markers of identification according to the occasion.

I have discussed above how historically grounded distinctions are categorized and combined as narratives; here, the focus is on the very acknowledgement of these categories and their limits. Cultivating modern self emphasizes the skill of identifying (and identifying with) particular groups or collectivities, understanding the limits of belonging into different groups, bringing together often seemingly incompatible classifications and narratives. According to this orientation, much of the lure of the city springs from the wide variety of senses of belonging, the possibility to change one's association just by entering into a different space and interacting with different people. This involves sophisticated interplay between the widely shared markers of identity and more complex practices of signification that are not shared and understood by the whole population.

SELF-REFLECTION AS A FOUNDATION OF URBANITY

Ridvan was a master in analyzing the passers-by, telling where they come from and whether they are new to Istanbul. He often told me that this quality was a key to his survival in Istanbul and that it was something he had worked for. We were once drinking tea in one of Istiklal's side-streets and he began to elaborate the development of this skill and how it had changed him. “When I moved to Istanbul,” he begun, “I was completely lost and very nervous all the time and did not know what to do. First, I was imitating my brother and asked him about everything, even the most stupid things, what to wear, where to drink tea, how to order it and how to look at people. I thought that I had learned this very well but now I can spot so many people in the crowd who are exactly like I was. They walk in Istiklal Street like kings and queens but forget to close their mouths and look like idiots.” He did a very good impression of exaggerated self-confidence that looked like an odd combination of aggression and nervous amazement. “In fact, the point is not to try to look like someone else but to be comfortable and relaxed.” He then moved on to say that the city had made him a different person, more open to the world and more tolerant. He referred to his relationship to Islam to illustrate the change he had experienced: “After living in Istanbul I know about these things. I know that Islam is the true religion but I have to have respect for the other religions. My parents would call all non-Muslims infidels (kâfir) and say they are like animals but that was because they did not know about the world outside their village. If they would have lived in Istanbul, they would have been different.” He paused to contemplate his
words for a while and finished by saying that he does not know if he would
think the same had he not moved to Istanbul.

Yet, cultivation of a modern self did not mean substituting former
identifications with new ones but rested on balanced self-reflection. Ridvan
was adamant that he had not compromised his authenticity as a pious Kurd
after moving to Istanbul but had rather expanded his horizons and could
now see the world in a more comprehensive manner. Finding the balance
between coexisting moral frameworks of the mahalle and the urban sphere
would enable effortless shifts between the locations, here thought as both
physical positions and as a sense of variable spatial relations with other
places (Munn 2013:141). In contrast to mastering the widest possible palette
of religious and traditional practices, or signifiers associated with specific
lifestyles, the sophisticated skill of assessing the different options was the
critical solution to differentiate the modern self from the unreflective
existence of the “others.” The centrality of the modern self was also reflected
in the debates of the wider society: in contemporary Turkey, the failure to
modernize is no longer seen as deriving from the “absence of mechanisms of
incorporation, but of an inability to relinquish ‘traditional’ attitudes” (Keyder
2005:133). Urban encounters expressed this variety: people could be
categorized as products of specific cultural formations rather than of the
culture at large and very different configurations of personhood were seen
cohabit the same cultural and historical space (cf. Mahmood 2005:120).
Consequently, there was no single exemplary model of modernity to follow
but varying contexts and situations that demanded different kinds of
practices and behaviour to reach the level of wholesome participation in life
with all of its contradictions. Here, the wider society was not seen simply as a
civilizing influence but as a vehicle to express one's own civility (cf. Duneier
1992:159).

COMMUNICATION AS AN EXTENSION OF THE MODERN SELF

Cultivation of a modern self was not just something that was happening
inside one's head but needed to be communicated with the wider world. I
conducted my fieldwork at the time when smartphones and social media
applications like Facebook were spreading rapidly among wider segments of
the society and had become a topic of daily conversations also among my
friends living in Tarlabası and Tophane. Expensive mobile phones had been
essential as symbols of modernity before but now the new channels of
sociality and self-representation had become an integral part of everyday life.
They stood for participation in globalized modernity and levelled the
hierarchies associated with the earlier, costly and more challenging forms of
participation, available only for small segments of the population. Most of
my friends had at least distant family members living abroad, most
commonly in Germany or in the Netherlands. With the introduction of free or low-cost SMS-services, photo-sharing applications and Facebook status updates, my informants finally got a chance to extend their virtual selves to locations that had been out of their reach altogether, or too expensive to connect to. Possessing very little formal education, many did not master Turkish perfectly but this did not stop them using tools for sharing and commenting on various phenomena. I felt that some used chat-applications constantly, that there rarely was a break in the steady stream of greetings, names of localities and emoticons of ever-changing variations. Just like Turkish immigrants studied by Ruth Mandel, they accessed, and were of, “the global and local simultaneously and synergetically via a whole host of resources” (2008:84).

When I asked Şivan about the importance of these new forms of communication, his initial thoughts echoed the general pattern with vague references to meeting the demands of modern life, upholding loyalties to family and friends, or simply, just staying in touch with people. He returned to the topic a couple of days later, and we drifted into a long discussion of how satisfactory life in a city with limited resources could be attained and how virtual and face-to-face communication contributed to this. Among the poor, he said, life consists of continuous struggle to uphold support networks, something that the rich do not have to think about, because they are not dependent on others and can just move elsewhere or live off their savings if they lose a job. He emphasized how the well-being of his mother and his seven brothers was always a priority. All were doing informal, often short-term jobs in construction or renovation industries and as waiters or kitchen staff, or, if lucky like Şivan, sometimes found longer periods of employment at a specific place. In addition to the intrinsic value of a tightly knit community, it was extremely important to be in touch with what was happening in the neighbourhood, for this could result in job opportunities for the other members of the family. Irritating and uncertain underemployment was combined with pride related to upholding these solidarities. According to Şivan, the strength of his community in Tarlabası lay in its self-sufficiency and mutual help. The organization of people across families (aile), clans (aşiret) and places of origin (memleket) created a safety net that made life possible in difficult conditions. To be sure, this was more of a general organizing principle, for loyalties could shift quickly and tensions between fractions sometimes erupted in quarrels and fights. He differentiated these foundational solidarities from voluntary friendships and stressed that the former are established at birth and associated with the most intimate connections with home and family. Nonetheless, they could be extended into valuable assets in contemporary conditions and coexist with other solidarities, expressing the fluidity of the modern self.
In practice, cyberspace had not replaced the face-to-face encounters but had increased the possibilities to participate in global modernity. The underemployed young men in impoverished areas placed a strong emphasis on the personalized trust. Şivan referred to his earlier precarious job situation as constant balancing between upholding his dignity and securing his livelihood: “I am now very lucky; I am treated well at the office and I make enough money to take care of myself – there is even a little bit left for the family. It was not always like this and almost everyone in Tarlabası is in a very difficult situation.” He pointed at the street corner frequented by glue-sniffing teenagers: “I understand perfectly why so many get involved in crime and drugs. It has been dozens of times in my earlier jobs that my bosses have told me to get lost if there is no need for me on a particular day. There are always others to do the work – you can employ the Uzbeks and the Turkmen for next to nothing and the paperless Africans for even less. If you protest against something the bosses will just tell you to leave.” Şivan waved his hands and shrugged: “In a way, it is all slightly criminal anyway: nobody pays their taxes and the shops buy stolen or faulty goods. You have to be really careful when choosing a job because you might end up being cheated and lose everything that you have. We tell the younger ones not to do dodgy deals but they do not believe us – for many, there just isn’t a choice and the system goes on and on.”

With an unreliable labour market and informal contracts that could be annulled at any moment, the safety net was extremely important, and, as Şivan pointed out to me, best realized in close personal encounters, for then one would at least be able to ask around about what to expect – the virtual networks helped in spreading information but could not substitute the face-to-face agreements. There were countless stories of dishonest deals and fraudulent companies taking advantage of unskilled and unorganized labour. Upholding dignity needed to be compromised with the practical realities and the standards of good life adjusted accordingly. The cultivation of the modern self meant learning to navigate between different realms of communication and to read the interactions in a sophisticated manner.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND THE MODERN SELF

The tactical improvisation at the core of the modern self could also be applied to moral dilemmas concerning religion. The two following anecdotes illustrate how, alongside ethnicity and kinship, a sense of being a good Muslim brought up contradictions to be solved. Şivan told me once that praying regularly, preferably five times a day, would be desirable, that he had lots of respect for people who did so, but that it would impossible for him to combine regular prayers with work. He added that he did not want to cause any trouble and would rather adapt to the ways of the secular Turks and
foreigners that he worked with. When I asked, rather naively, would he pray during workday if given a chance, he said that he had not thought about it – he would definitely not insist on the right and did not want to stand out from the crowd. A couple of days later, he told me that they had laughed about the matter with his friends: “What would it look like if people in a modern office building would start praying in a middle of a meeting with foreign investors? They would think that we are in Saudi Arabia.” He did not see the situation as compromising his deeply held beliefs – we had intricate discussions of the compatibility of Islamic principles and practices with contemporary conditions – but as a reflection of the daily realities with an acute sense of comedy. The situation was just one of the practicalities to be dealt with. The sense of Islamic belonging was in this context not an obstacle and could be brushed aside: this type of office was not a place for religious expression and the ideological complexities could be expressed through humour.

However, it was also possible that Islamic values became foregrounded in conflict situations. Ridvan called me one afternoon very disturbed and wanted to see me immediately. He insisted that we meet in bar Sultan, a cheap and somewhat nondescript establishment which primary attracted clientele with its happy hour beer promotions. I was surprised of his choice of place because it was early and did not remember him ever drinking beer in the afternoons. He wanted to buy me a pint and told me that he had lost his job as a waiter in the teahouse around the corner because he insisted on having his shifts organized according to the prayer times. This happened only a short time after I had discussed these issues with Şivan but there was no connection between the cases.

I was surprised of what had happened; Ridvan had told me several times that he is a devout Muslim but that Islam is something that is in his heart, not a matter of strict rules and regulations, unlike the Islam of the conservative Anatolian folk who would not change anything in their lives when moving to Istanbul. I asked him if he had prayed during workdays before and added that I remember him telling me that he prays irregularly, whenever he feels like it. He admitted that his praying had been irregular and never an issue at work, but added that the owner of the place had said something insulting about him being a Kurd from the countryside, so he had decided to confront him and had referred to his human rights (insan hakları). In other words, he had countered the insult of being primitive with a demand for the human right to practice his religion, reversing the hierarchy of value with his claim for justice in the global framework. The owner had told him not to come back and Ridvan said that he wanted to celebrate his “victory” over a beer. At the same moment we heard the call for prayer from the only mosque lining Istiklal Street, almost drowned to other sounds of the city, and could not do anything else than laugh together.
These brief examples provide an introduction to how the modern self does not operate without constraints but rather adapts to situations with available means to uphold its authenticity and dignity. Nor does it mean that the desired subjectivity has “transcended culture” and embraced rationalistic secularism (Herzfeld 1987, 1997; Houston 2002:429; Navaro-Yashin 2002a:23–24). Turkish history offers numerous examples of how “universal” identity has been connected to secular Turks and “cultural” to Islamists and Kurds (Navaro-Yashin 2002a:53). In Şivan’s and Ridvan’s experiences there is an evident refusal to play the game of modernity according to rules set by the former secular elites but, instead, an attempt to carve their own space into it. Even if the seemingly mundane act of drinking beer in the daytime, visible to the public passing by the bar, conveys intricate meanings of partaking in the global secular civilization, Ridvan did not want to claim that he is one of the secular Turks. Rather, he wanted to show that in his everyday life authentic cultural expression can consist of acting appropriately in different contextual moral frameworks, related to the spaces of the city. Next, I wish to extend these concerns and discuss what balancing between the universal and local conceptualizations of modernity involves and how it has developed in Turkey.
Chapter 4: Turkish Modernity

One could half-jokingly claim that if there is one distinctive feature of Turkish modernity, it is the fixation Turks have with their uniqueness vis-à-vis global developments. The familiar patterns of universal modernization – technological advancement and bureaucratization of daily lives – commonly contradict, but also occasionally complement the exclusive qualities of Turkishness. Moreover, tensions arise when homogenizing inclinations on the global scale are contrasted with the preeminent events of Turkish history. These seemingly opposed tendencies towards universalism and particularism can, however, coexist in different spaces; I argue that the modern condition of contemporary Istanbul should be defined as an entanglement of local, spatially situated modalities, that need to be brought together with the global models, both as concrete developments and as abstract principles. This involves a complex orientation towards history; its narratives become conglomerations of ends and beginnings, blind alleys of thought and revitalized sets of values, organized in practice through metaleptic operations, reflecting different hierarchies of value.

In the previous chapters, I have mostly focussed on societal dynamics within Turkey. Here, I wish to extend my analysis to dynamics alternating between the local and the global and concentrate on the relationships between varieties of the modern, analytically divided into modernization, modernity and modernism, their definitions, uses and connotations. My focus is on how modernity is embraced as a distinct form of consciousness with possibilities and limitations. I will argue that the different senses of modern in Turkey are intimately associated with the notions of urbanity and civilization, conceptualized as ruptures and continuities in time and space. Modernization, modernity and modernism have emerged as different configurations at separate historical periods, often pointing at conflicts over different forms of sociality. These often refer to particular spaces, not defined as fixed places but as relative locations that bring together the specific relationships to the modern; encounters between the Ottoman and the Republican, the cosmopolite and the nationalist, the rural and the urban. They can consist of islands of cultural distinctiveness like the unique modernity of Istiklal Street or be defined as transnational or translocal cultural flows, interaction and interrelation of social units across real and
imagined boundaries, “agents, institutions, organizations, but also values, texts and concepts” (Reetz 2010:295–296).

This relatively short chapter consists of a theoretical discussion on modernity and provides an introduction for the next part of the study, which examines the history of Turkish modernity in the light of ethnographic examples. Based on periodization into four eras, I will integrate the largely informal trajectories of my informants with the observations of researchers studying Turkish modernity. I will begin with a brief look of the social forces at play in the late Ottoman Empire, move on to how the modern was defined in the early Republican era, how the multiparty system introduced in 1950 changed the ideals of the modern – especially how Istanbul's urbanity has been transformed as a result of a great demographic shifts in the second half of the twentieth century, and conclude with an analysis of neoliberal modernity, a set of tendencies introduced already in the 1980s and strengthened in the following decades. This periodization, shared by my informants, should be seen as an established classification that nevertheless becomes questioned and even rejected in narratives connecting the eras and their guiding principles. The periods are related to specific themes and qualities: İlhan Tekeli approaches Turkish modernity as movement from the idea of “shy modernity” from the second half of the nineteenth century until the proclamation of the Republic, towards “radical modernity” in 1923–1950, “populist modernity” in 1950–1980 and “erosion of modernity” since the 1980s (2009:16). In the field of art and architecture, Sibel Bozdoğan associates the first period, starting in the 1910s, with the creation of modern artistic and architectural culture, the second period, after the 1930s as their subordination to the project of nation building and state ideology, third, from the 1950s on, as the more liberal, international and pluralist scene, and finally, after 1980, as “post-modern” or even “post-Kemalist” Turkey, “in which the forces of globalisation and political Islam continue to challenge the founding ideas of Republican modernity” (2008:420).64

Modernity, Modernism, Modernization

While modernity can be problematic as a category of empirical analysis, it has become a ubiquitous social fact. As an idea, it has a pervasive and powerful role in the popular imagination across the ethnographic spectrum (Keane 2007:48) and extends even to the most quotidian practices. Defining what it means to be modern has also been part of lives of those who

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see themselves as moderns (Silverstein 2011:4). Following Daniel Miller, rather than defining a particular version of modernity and testing it out against the ethnography, I will concentrate on “which aspects of the modern condition may indeed be illuminated by this particular ethnographic inquiry” (1994:12). There is also confusion with terminology. According to Susan Stanford Friedman, perhaps the most applicable way to approach the triumvirate of modernity, modernism and modernization is to focus on their “different grammatical functions that carry semantic weight” (2001:498):

The -ity of modernity limits the word modern to a noun – a status as a thing or condition that is distinguishable from other things or conditions. The -ism of modernism turns the noun modern into an advocacy, a promotion, a movement presumably centred around a systematic philosophy, politics, ideology, or aesthetics. The -ization of modernization signifies a process, an evolution or revolution from one condition to another, with modernity as the condition achieved by modernization. (Friedman 2001:498)

These descriptive boundaries suggest the designation of the varieties of modern into different societal spheres and the possibility to analyze them using different methods. However, instead of being restricted to steadfast categories, they resonate with particular fields of life and have connotations with specific modalities and attitudes. While modernization is closely connected with economics and politics, modernism is associated with art, culture and sensibility (Berman 1982:88); modernism exhibits the air of certitude and arrogance, while modernity focuses on questioning and reflection (Lefebvre 1996:45), modernization is the supposed triumph of humankind over nature, while modernity is “the triumph of humankind over itself, or at least over oppressive forms of human privilege and authority, through successful resistance to political tyranny, clerical bigotry, and economic servitude” (Wallerstein in Woodside 2006:18). For the purposes of this study, I consider the common denominator of modern as combination of two separate tendencies; a sense of a break with the past, a subjective experience of becoming part of a new age and a new way of life, together, sometimes in a tense relationship, with the objective changes generally associated with modernity (Brenner 1998:10; Habermas 1987:5–7; Silverstein 2011:4). More than the other dimensions of the modern, this is a study of modernity; I will approach modernity as consciousness, significantly different from the other ways of experiencing the world, a qualitatively different outlook to life which can take a rich variety of forms but encompasses features and patterns that warrant the usage of the term. It is the modernity of self-reflection and questioning as an integral quality of urban life.

Yet, the deepest senses of experiencing modernity can be at odds with modernism and/or modernization. For Marshall Berman (1982, 2006), the
celebrated contradictions of urbanism and modernity, from Parisian arcades of Baudelaire and Benjamin, to Dostoevsky's St.Petersburg, and, further, to Jane Jacobs' and Robert Moses' New York, complicate the teleological trajectory of technological advancement of modernization. As another example, he points at Chernyshevsky's claim that the integrality of urban and modern can be compromised. The cities with long histories are not contrasted just with the primitive countryside but also with the "highly developed, super-technological, self-contained exurban world, comprehensibly planned and organized – because created ex nihilo on virgin soil – more thoroughly controlled and administered, and hence 'more pleasant and advantageous,' than any modern metropolis could be" (1982:244). All the adjectives (including “modern” at the end of the quote) point at different frames of reference towards modernity, modernism and modernization. In the Turkish context, a similar point can be made about the juxtaposition between Istanbul and Ankara, the incomprehensible social mosaic bastardized throughout history and the clean slate wherein to install the core values of the modern Republic (Keyder 2008:509–510, Papadakis 2005:26), seen even as the conquest of the Ottomans by the Republican Turks (Lewis 1968:10), realized in the German architectural and technological expertise (Kezer 2010:41, Duben 2011). However, the top-down modernist projects are never complete and the sanitized monumental architecture of Ankara has not succeed in protecting it from disruptions arising from everyday practices (Nalbantoğlu 1997:199).

The relationship of modern to spatial and temporal frames is at the heart of my study. If the evolutionary teleology and inevitable geographical spread characterize the ethos of modernization, modernism treats time and space in a more complex way. It combines effortlessly ancient roots with present-day realities and experiments with histories of particular spaces. The thoughts of Le Corbusier provide an illuminating example of the tensions between modernism and modernization: in 1933, he approached Atatürk to design Istanbul's reconstruction for free and provided a plan that would leave the Historical Peninsula untouched and situate new structures outside the Theodosian walls. One could argue that this was done in a true modernist spirit, juxtaposing the ancient with the contemporary according to a distinct spatial organization – the problem was that it did not express the hierarchy of spaces that would run smoothly with the historical consciousness of modernity in the new Republic. Later, in 1948, Le Corbusier described his plan as the “most strategic mistake of my life… I foolishly suggested to the greatest revolutionary hero of the new nation to leave Istanbul as it was, in the dirt and dust of the centuries” (in Gül 2006:95). The winning proposal by Henri Prost was based much more in modernization and efficiency than the aesthetic sensibilities of modernism.
THEORIES AND FACTS OF MODERNITY

If the concept of modernization establishes a strong connection with technological advancement and modernism with aesthetic sensibilities, my definition of modernity brings together two domains: the phenomenological dimensions of the everyday experience and the abstract organizational categories of the sociocultural sphere. I follow Charles Taylor’s (1995) definition of the culture of modernity, with a strong emphasis on the last sentence, focussing on the imagination of society:

The intuition behind this is that modern society is different from those of preceding ages not just in the novel institutions and practices of representative democracy, the market economy, institutionalized scientific discovery, and steady technological advance; it is different not just in moral and political principles, in authenticity, rights, democratic legitimacy, equality, non-discrimination. The notion is that alongside these changes, connected with them and in a relationship of mutual support, is a set of changes in the way we have come to imagine society. (Taylor 1995:x)

The definition and conceptualization of modernity is itself a social and cultural phenomenon, one aspect of it as an ongoing process (Faubion 1993:114). The reflective work of defining modernity in conjunction with performing its contradictions is an integral feature of the modern self. In the previous chapter, I argued for the centrality of the normative endeavour that compels one to reflect on the surroundings by relating them to history. Often this very reflection reduces complex social practices into a binary order of modernity, defined by Timothy Mitchell as the coexistence of individuals and their embodied activities together with reflection on “an inert structure that somehow stands apart from individuals, pre-exists them, and contains and gives framework to their lives” (1988:xii). I consider the imaginative framework of modernity in Maussian terms, as new groups and institutions built on the top of the old (in Hart, Laville, and Cattani 2010:14), a balancing act between vernacular globalization and concession to large-scale national and international policies (Appadurai 1996:10), accompanied by a powerful spatial dimension – modernity as influences spreading across spaces, islands and pockets of modernity, and boundaries it cannot cross.

In addition, the ethical dimension of modernity, as a desire for full, authentic and meaningful life, is extremely significant in the urban context. In Istanbul, the world that is not modern is not situated just far back in history but coeval with ongoing life across urban boundaries. The coexistence of different senses of personhood inhabiting the urban sphere allows for a range of selves, not restricted to the archetypal division between traditional and modern, to exist. According to Faubion, the paradigmatically “primitive” and “traditional” can be opposed to paradigmatically “modern”
but the traditional can also be classical, medieval and “countermodern” while the “modern” includes possibilities for “countermythological,” “counterclassical,” or, as a degree of development, for inchoately modern or “protomodern” (1993:160). In Istanbul, all these varieties occupy spaces within the city, some tucked into the mystery of its mahalles, others found in the constant face-to-face encounters in modernist boulevards like Istiklal Street, shifting constantly between moral frameworks while moving in the city. Together they demonstrate a culturally sensitive understanding of modernity, alternating between spectacular triumphs of a developing world culture and the fragmentation and incapacity of giving meaning (Berman 1982:17).

The understanding of modernity is subject to historical changes. The radical modernity of the late Ottoman and early Republican times was acutely different from the neoliberal principles of the present times. For example, Atatürk’s model of a progressive nation was based on universal values of civilization, a shared model with different nationally appropriate manifestations:

The Turks are the friends of all civilized nations. Countries vary, but civilization is one, and for a nation to progress it must take part in this single civilization. (Atatürk’s speech in 1924, in Lewis 1968:292)

In Turkey, variations of modernity are also expressed in terminology. The introduction of progressive modernity termed çağdaş (of age, contemporary) with strong connections to Kemalism and civilizational difference, is different from the more fluid, and globally associated term modern (White 2013:48). The terminology of civilization is even more ambiguous; civilization (medeniyet) can be posited against çağdaş and associated with Muslim values of covering and cleanliness (Navaro-Yashin 2002:92) or be used as a referring to both Islamic civilization and modern Western civilization (White 2013:48). White cites two studies by Hakan Yılmaz that show how only 9% of Muslims in contemporary Turkey associate with the laic connotations of çağdaş but 63% would choose identity of “modern Muslim,” designated with the term modern, over “traditional Muslim” (2013:21).

As I will argue below, the modern rationality associated with the birth of the Republic is still powerful idea, especially among the staunch defenders of Kemalism. According to this widely spread vision, “everything could be understood as the development of this universal principle of reason, or reaction against it, or its failure, delay, or absence” (Mitchell 2002:1) and it endorsed belief in “continuous process of accumulation of self, in the form of wealth, knowledge, experience” (Friedman 1994:91). The sense of the modern self I encountered among my informants, based on sensitivity to the context and successful balancing between differently ordered spaces, rejected
this unilinear view. For them, it represented fantasies, not appropriate for the contemporary conditions. This did not mean that categories such as rationality or progress would have lost their significance, rather that the affirmative modernity of the early twentieth century had become questioned on many fronts, often based on quotidian experiences. This questioning of modernity’s master narratives does not, however, necessarily lead to meaninglessness and fragmentation. The fragility of self-creation, defined by Daniel Miller as increased consciousness of the principles and criteria by which life is judged (1994:293), was closer to my experience. It is also closely related to Habermas’ definition of modernity no longer being able to borrow the criteria from other epochs, but having to “create its normativity out of itself” (1987:7, italics in the original). The fragility of self-creation also means growing consciousness of the possibilities of modernity and its alternative trajectories in different contexts. Consequently, the principles of progress and shared civilization as quintessential components of the Kemalist modernity need to be evaluated as normative questions, in ways that help to situate the Turkish experience into the global one.

The Spread of Modernity

After we acknowledge the multiple forms of modernity and concentrate on people’s engagement with them in their daily lives, an interest in their boundaries and amalgamations arises. If the Republican history of Turkish modernity is based on the opposition between essentialized Republican and Ottoman epochs, Turkey’s relationship to the world-historical trajectory of modernity is also patterned in distinctive ways. In addition to the temporal dimension, there are specific spatial patterns intrinsic to the concept. Globalization, together with the spatial understandings of the West and the former dominions of the Ottoman Empire, has produced new ways to approach modernity. In Turkey, discussions of globalization are loaded with questions of authenticity and hierarchy of value in the global scale; often alternating between routinely repeated clichés enforcing the stereotypes of Turkey’s global positioning, deliberate stretching of sociocultural boundaries and critical examination of the contemporary situation, not just as a frozen point in time but filled with expectations. The common theme, examined obsessively in Turkish literature, from Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s slowly modernizing Turkey of the early twentieth century to Orhan Pamuk’s description of incomplete or delayed attempts to modernize, points at the continuous urge to apply different criteria to measure modernity – as a relative quality within the global scale.
In the dominant Republican historical narratives, the advancement of Turkey is hindered by real enemies, both outside and inside the country (Altunay 2004, White 2013) but there is also a sense of ambiguity and confusion that cannot be expressed in such a straightforward manner. A specific kind of backwardness and helplessness has evolved into a banality, but also influenced truly modernist masterpieces like the works of the authors mentioned above. It postulates Turkey's relationship with the outside world as fragile and somehow out of sync; a bit like the case of Tanpinar's novel *The Time Regulation Institute* (2013 [1962]) that describes the Republican reforms using a metaphor of synchronization, not just of clocks but of mentalities and languages. Moreover, it provides a classic example of globalization suggesting simultaneous homogenization and diversification of lives – and the West as an exemplary model as well as “a mass of soulless, decadent, money-grubbing, rootless, faithless, unfeeling parasites” (Buruma and Margalit 2004:10).

**GLOBALIZATION, THE WEST AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

For the study of globalization I follow John and Jean Comaroff and consider “the local” and “the global” not as received empirical realities, but rather as “analytic constructs whose heuristic utility depends entirely on the way in which they are deployed to illuminate historically specific phenomena” (1999:294). There are, however, some general principles that need to be taken to account for a comparative perspective. At the most general level, Roland Robertson has defined globalization as referring “both to the compression of the world and to the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole” (1992:7) and Anthony Giddens as “intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (1990:64). What remains interesting in these familiar definitions is the emphasis on the processual character of globalization; the intensification presumes the prior existence of “worldwide social relations,” an existing condition of globality (Nederveen Pieterse 1997:48). The processual nature of globalization is closely related to the various boundaries shaped by globally imagined forces; the invention of localities that globalization supposedly links into different configurations is a quintessentially modern idea of imagining the world consisting of these units (Robertson 1997:35). For the purposes of this study, I will consider the vernacular uses and meanings my informants have given to the dynamics of globalization more important than evaluation of the massive literature on the topic.

Many of the themes related to Turkey’s relationship with the West also seem to consist of endless debates locked into predictable lines, repeated over and over in various contexts. Having said that, the West is also a very flexible concept that brings together categories integral to the experience of
modernity. Traces of the West can be found everywhere; generalized from geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category, it can be recognized in structures and in minds (Nandy 1983:xi). Laden with tendencies bordering on blind imitation of Western societies and challenging them in various ways, Turkey is definitely not done with its relationship with the amorphous West. Alastair Bonnett points out wittily, that the contradictory things said about the West do not imply the redundancy of the concept but, rather, point at its extraordinary intellectual and political utility (2004:6). In the following periodization, I will discuss globalization as formation of differently structured networks, intersecting the local and the global, that point at Turkey’s changing relative location within the global hierarchy of value. In this context, globalization as a process is intimately tied with the category of the West: as an agent of change and a physical or psychological influence; something that can be imitated, borrowed, adopted or rejected; something that is unevenly spread at different intensities over Turkey, or, an outdated and faulty category that should have become redundant long time ago.

Another more recent current in Turkish spatial politics, discussed at length in Chapter 7, rests on the prioritization of the Ottoman Empire as the frame of reference, labelled under the umbrella term neo-Ottomanism. Here, the imperial past is not framed only as an epoch with a different social order but something that extends spatially to reorganization of Turkey’s relative location and alliances in contemporary modernity. This does not mean abandoning the West but emphasizes greater political engagement with the regions formerly belonging to the Empire. According to the neo-Ottoman position favoured by the AKP, the largest party in Turkey since 2002, Turkey’s alliance with the Middle East has been rediscovered in terms of politics and trade and situated within the framework of former Ottoman dominions rather than ummāh (ümmet), the global community of believers (White 2013:10). Burak Bekdil, a popular columnist for Hürriyet Daily News, demonstrates the shift of geographic focus by quoting AKP’s Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2009 and Prime Minister since August 2014.

In a speech in Sarajevo in October 2009 Davutoğlu explained:

> As in the 16th Century, when the Ottoman Balkans were rising, we will once again make the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East, together with Turkey, the centre of world politics in the future. That is the goal of Turkish foreign policy and we will achieve it.

65 Of course, the most recent developments, especially in Iraq and Syria, could not be anticipated when writing this section. The text reflects the earlier situation when the view of the party emphasized closer integration of the region, with Turkey in the leading position.
In April 2012 there was a clearer rhetoric of loss of the parts of the Empire and reference to predestination:

On the historic march of our holy nation, the AK Party signals the birth of a global power and the mission for a new world order. This is the centenary of our exit from the Middle East [...] whatever we lost between 1911 and 1923, whatever lands we withdrew from, from 2011 to 2023 we shall once again meet our brothers in those lands. This is a bounden historic mission.66

RUPTURES AND GRADUAL PROCESSES – THE DYNAMICS OF MODERNITY

Modernity encompasses effortlessly wide stretches of time, from ancient origins into barely imaginable futures, it can accommodate radical shifts in perspective and form unlikely combinations of cultural elements in the quest for desirable modern selfhood. Nonetheless, its patterns are not arbitrary but based on layers of historical consciousness. The everyday realities of my informants that I have discussed in the previous chapters point at their far-reaching influence; Şivan pondering over what to wear in Istiklal Street, Veli expressing his irritation over the appropriate standards of behaviour in the mahalle, Nazlı and Didem restricting their lives to spheres of desired modernity and Ridvan worrying about the transformation of his surroundings, all show that modernity was far from a taken-for-granted concept in Istanbul but, instead, its defining features were heatedly debated.

In Turkey, the extremely powerful official reading of history, accompanied by the efficient state machinery that has used its power time and again to suppress deviant elements, has kept the definitions of modernity and Turkey's relative location central questions for its inhabitants. The coexistence of different attitudes towards modernity also shapes the encounters between Istanbulites. In the following attempt to cover the stormy period from the late days of the Ottoman Empire into the present day, I have had my field data to guide the selection of the relevant themes, to provide a glimpse into how people living in Beyoğlu reflected on Turkish modernity in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The stress is on the hierarchical relationship between the formal and informal building blocks of historical consciousness. I follow Michael Herzfeld in his critique of Benedict Anderson's (2006) and Ernst Gellner's (1997) views of modern nation as invented from above (1997), as well as Eric Hobsbawm's and Terence Ranger's (2012) theories of invention of tradition for “failing to recognize the role of the ordinary person in taking the grand images

presented by the leadership and recasting them in the more familiar terms of local experience, and influencing their public evolution in turn” (1993:49).

I maintain that the dynamics of modernity are understood either as sudden ruptures, shaking the foundations of life in irreparable ways, or, as gradual developments that can grow in scale, multiply, be sidetracked or retreat under changing conditions. The emergence of modernity has been problematized in social sciences; Arjun Appadurai notes that the sense of a “modern moment” that would create a dramatic and unprecedented break within society has been steadily reinforced in conceptualizations of history (1996:3). However, the very idea of rupture can be problematized as an implication of the present global hierarchy of value, instead of the “scaled-up negotiation of the tension between shared rules and strategic practices” (Herzfeld 2007:320–321). As I will argue in the following chapters, the logic of the “clean slate” and an absolute break with the past have been powerful ways to transform systems of representation, categories of belonging and spatial arrangements. Despite the central role of ruptures of twentieth-century Turkish history as “points of no return,” or “thresholds of new eras” (Kasaba 2008:1), there are other dynamics at play.

Sudden ruptures can be contrasted with a gradual spread of modernization and civilization but they also come together in complementary ways; for instance, what started with the initial push exemplified by the personality of Atatürk, continued as slower processes radiating from the centres to peripheries; from metropolitan centres of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir to their gecekondu settlements and adjacent villages; from the provincial towns into their own peripheries (Keyder 2005, 2010; Mardin 1973). Modernity can be seen as bursting into life too rapidly and forcefully, delayed and degenerated, fake and inauthentic; in Turkey often connected to the patronizing narrative, according to which the masses are too innocent to look after their interests, and thus need guidance in the attainment of the collective goal (Mardin 1997, Özyürek 2006:48).

In practice, these historical narratives are related to specific contexts and their logical inconsistencies go easily unnoticed if not specifically questioned. This resembles closely Berman’s (1982) idea of modernity as a condition, capable of taking countless forms and hiding its internal dynamics – pulling itself to several directions at once, in opposition to modernization as an orderly series of developments that can be assessed and distinguished easily. Thus, the principles of rupture and gradual spread can coexist effortlessly in varieties of the modern. In order to study these dynamics in detail, I wish to combine concrete historical transformations with contemporary understandings, wishes and disappointments. In the following chapters, I will question the spread of modernity as a straightforward development gradually encompassing Turkey and concentrate on its deviant
characteristics, battles over origins and influences, and the relationship of various competing centres over peripheral spaces near and far.
Chapter 5:
Late Ottoman Empire and the Republican Revolution

The late stages of the Ottoman Empire are still capable of arousing heated debates among both historians and general population. In addition to attempts by various historians (e.g. Findley 2008; Kasaba 1988; Tokatli and Boyaci 1999) to assess critically the complex reasons and events that lead into the disintegration of the Empire, the explanations I regularly encountered, whether from the educated urbanites or the impoverished people living in Tarlabası and Tophane, shared a commonality; they referred to the inevitability of the events as a race where the winner was already known. In the dominant narrative, Ottoman policies responded to emerging global modernity in both its Janus-like faces: “the threatening aspect (separatist nationalism in the Balkans, imperialism in Asia and Africa) and the attractive aspect (the hope of overcoming Ottoman backwardness by emulating European progress)” (Findley 2008:14). In this chapter, I will argue that many of the powerful narratives and classificatory principles of today have their origins in the crucial debates of the late Ottoman Empire and the Republican revolution, brought to the present with the aid of different metaleptic operations. I will discuss here the themes that arose most frequently in my fieldwork and relate the quotidian reflections into the established historical narratives.

However impartial and half-understood, the distant events carry remarkable weight in moral terms and form trajectories of modernity that have potential to challenge the dominant understandings. In my field data, the questions of ethnicity and national belonging were the most central themes of the Ottoman past in the light of today. Şivan, like several of my other informants, liked to study history from popular history books, many of which concentrated on complex conspiracies related to the traumatic events

67 A thorough historical analysis of these dynamics is outside the scope of this study. A concise summary of the most usual explanations is provided by Charles Issawi as: “the increasing cost of armaments and war; population changes; the great inflation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the continuing rise in prices in the eighteenth; technological stagnation in agriculture, transport, and the handicrafts; […] an unfavorable balance of trade with, and outflow of bullion to, Iran and India; and the effects on the Ottoman economy and society of increasing contacts with Europe” (in Tokatli and Boyaci 1999:184).
concerning Armenians Kurds, Jews and Greeks. His alternative view of history emphasized the inclusion of the minorities and reversal of the dominant hierarchy of value, an issue that become clear when I asked him casually how Turkish modernity had become sidetracked:

The history taught at schools is not real but nationalist fabrication. It is written by the people who think that everything in the West is great and who want to blame everyone who thinks the other way. There have been many Kurds in high positions during the struggles but they were deceived and written out of history. Many of the people who did this were fascists and did whatever they could to stay in power. Throughout the modern history, only Atatürk had a real vision of the future but that also became corrupted.

According to him, in the Ottoman past there had been no need for recognition of people as Kurds for they had been a self-governing group with their linguistic and cultural rights. He pointed out that the past in the Southeast had been oppressive in many ways with the clans, loyalties and hierarchies but the Republican era had been even worse. In his view, there was no going back to the Ottoman times but he felt betrayed by the selective emphases of the following periods. He referred to the same themes and categories present in the dominant histories but evaluated them differently. Şivan saw the Republican modernity as an exclusive that left him out, no matter how hard he would try. For him, the globally defined modern was more inclusive and inviting.

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68 İhsan Dağı summarizes the historical development of prominent conspiracy theories in Tukey perfectly in his column for Today’s Zaman: “Previously conspiracy theories were used mainly by Kemalist-nationalists to explain whatever happened in Turkey. For them, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) was brought to power by the US to carry out its “Greater Middle East Project”; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül were in fact Jews hiding their true identities; the AKP stands for the American-Kurdish-Party designed to create a Kurdish state with the help of the US; EU membership aims to finish off the independence of the Turkish Republic and its secular regime; the ruling AK Party is just a lackey of the US and the EU, etc. Nowadays, we do not hear such “theories” any more. Instead there are those circulated by “the other side,” the government and its supporters. Those who used to be portrayed as traitors in earlier conspiracy theories by Kemalists-nationalists have now resorted to using conspiracy theories. In their “theories” too are lots of references to foreign plots, outside forces and their domestic partners, the Jews and the Israelis, Turkey’s independence, the West and its inherent anti-Turkey nature. From the “interest rate lobby” to killing the prime minister by “telekinesis,” conspiracies are everywhere and their target is obvious…” http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/ihsan-dagi/why-turkey-needs-conspiracy-theories_329931.html

69 I have chosen to point out when my informants used the Turkish terms modern and çağdaş, because of their different connotations.
Late Ottoman Empire – Inevitable Disintegration and the Threshold of Modernity

The beginning of modern Ottoman history is commonly traced to the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774, a major defeat of the Empire to Russia that pushed the sultans toward reforms (Davison 1990:xii). There are several other dates, military treaties, parliamentary reforms and constitutions that mark the advancement of the late Ottoman era. The textbook histories identify the edict of Gülhane (Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerifi) in 1839 that guaranteed the equality before the law for all the subjects of the Empire, regardless of their ethnicity and religion, as the first push towards genuinely modern institutions.70 According to the developmentalist view of history, this was the beginning of Ottoman modernization, periodized as the era of Tanzimât (literally “reforms”) in 1839–1876 (Findley 2008). On a closer look, the era was characterized by fluctuation of reforms, not always associated with the West: the institutional changes were passed down gradually but, for example, Sultan Abdülhamid’s rule (1876–1909) was markedly less enthusiastic about the West (Kasaba 2008:4). Interestingly, his stance was increasingly opposed by the Islamic scholarly establishment (Silverstein 2011:49). Brian Silverstein suggests that the Ottoman Islamists of the era were aware of and explicitly grappling with the “issues of the commensurability of (‘modern’ and ‘Muslim’) life-worlds while at the same time having to deal with extremely urgent, pressing concerns regarding the form that their state and institutions should take, the kinds of knowledge that would allow them to survive in the world around them, and the nature of just and ‘good’ governance” (2011:8). Especially in its vernacular form, the essentialized dichotomy between the “Ottoman” and the “modern” has been subject to complex debates taking different shapes in the course of history.

Another widespread periodization, taught in detail as part of the general education, concentrates on the critical years between 1908 and 1923: “Ikinci Meşrutiyet” (Second Constitutional Period) (1908–1918), “Milli Mücadele” (National Struggle) (1919–1923) and “Cumhuriyet” (Republic) (after 1923) (Zürcher 1992:239). In contrast to this, Erik J. Zürcher (2004) has influentially suggested that the whole period between 1908 and 1950 should be labelled as the Young Turk Era and several other researchers stress the continuities across the major periods (Kasaba 2008; Mardin 2002; Silverstein 2011) In fact, Silverstein considers the history of the late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey today “as an extended and ongoing experiment in the chain of events entailed by the engagement of a sovereign Muslim polity located on the near margin of the heartland of industrial

70 See Silverstein (2011) for a more detailed history of the reforms and their foundations.
capitalism with specifically modern forms of power and their attendant modes of subjection” (2011:47). However, rather than the correct periodization, my focus is on how references to complex histories resurface in the present-day conditions. For example, the historical emergence of the terms above also resonates strongly with the lived environment of today; while there is Gülhane Park and Tanzimat Museum by Topkapı Palace in the Historical Peninsula, the modernity of the Republican çağdaş is alive in the names of the streets in Beyoğlu: one finds İstiklal (independence), Meşrutiyet (constitution) and Cumhuriyet (Republic) streets, telling about the Kemalist influence over the area (Kezer 2009:518). These three are probably also the best known streets in Beyoğlu, in addition to Atatürk Boulevard (although this continues officially as Tarlabası Boulevard in Beyoğlu) and İnönü Street, reminding of the revered founders of the Republic. Representing not just series of abstract principles or historical facts, the political dynamics of the era are intimately linked into the experience of walking the streets in twenty-first-century Istanbul.

THE YOUNG TURKS AND NEW CATEGORIES OF BELONGING

It is important to stress that the intellectual foundations and networks of the Young Turk leaders, responsible for many of the developments leading to the Republic, had shaped their outlook on modernity in significant ways. They were almost exclusively military officials, politicians and intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire who grouped together with the goal of saving it (Kasaba 2008:3). They were urbanites and their cosmopolitan connections played a significant role; many of the leaders were exiled in Paris, used French as a medium of intellectual communication and were affected by the French nationalism rising around them (Hanioğlu 2006:10). Furthermore, the very name Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was adopted by the Young Turks after the Turkish movement merged with the Paris-based one in 1907 (Zürcher 1992:248). In addition to their urbanity and cosmopolitanism, the worldview of the leaders was based on their education, namely the Western-type schools, established in the nineteenth century for the training of the bureaucracy and the military (242). They were products of “government through the rationalization of administration and normalization of the objects of governance […] [that] was well elaborated in the empire long before there was any talk of a republic” (Silverstein 2011:18). In sum, the Unionist and Kemalist movements were the work of some two hundred men who were in close interaction with one another and who had served together in the almost continuous wars of 1912–1922 (Zürcher 1992:243). Their aim was to strengthen the Muslim polity rather than to “Westernize” the Empire or replace Islamic norms with the non-Muslim ones (Silverstein 2011:32).
In the current times, the nationalist narrative of the Young Turk revolutionaries was taught at schools but the people from the peripheries of Turkey felt completely left out of this strain of modernity and found it difficult to reconcile with their everyday realities. According to the dominant ethos, the Republican modernity emanating from the global centres like Paris via Istanbul would reach their home-villages in the Southeast last and would be doubly distanced from them by two foreign languages, French and Turkish. Much of the resentment had to do with their modern categories of national belonging. The category of Republican citizenship was very different from the assumed solidarities of the Ottoman past.

For the Young Turks, Türklük (Turkishness) referred to Muslim Turkish identity, for Kemalists, after the birth of the Republic, it was directly connected with the ethnoracial identity (Kieser 2006:x). What Şivan saw above as a radical shift from self-governing Kurdish communities, only nominally ruled by the Sultan, to the arbitrary and unequal citizenship of the Republic, concealed many historical debates of belonging. Before the Republican revolution, the tensions were already rife between the Young Turk/CUP-controlled centre and the various ethnoreligious groups of the empire (Hanioğlu 2006:18) and the conflicts between the centralized administration and groups defined in ethnic and/or religious terms have re-emerged in Turkey until today. There have also been interesting explorations that reveal the distinctively modern possibilities of both welcoming the universal standards and redrawing the national boundaries. From the time of the Young Turk leaders, there has been a significant movement calling for “Panturkism,” the unification of all Turkic peoples in Central Asia under leadership of Turkey which, during the Republican era, has declined into an extremist fringe position (Zürcher 1992:45). Another, differently bounded notion of belonging is formed around the category of Pan-Turanism which “seeks the unification of the “Turanian race” which includes the Magyars and the Finns as well as the Turks” (Çağlar 1990:81). Nowadays, the debated term is Türkiyelilik (being from Turkey) that would not limit the national belonging into the religious or ethnoracial terms (Kieser 2006:x). These principles, subject to metaleptic operations reorganizing history in wide-ranging ways, are still highly influential but have taken very different forms to those in the past.

Despite its association with disadvantages, the ambivalent rupture marking the beginning of the Republican era signified to Şivan crossing of the threshold of modernity that would alter fundamentally the senses of sociocultural belonging (see Faubion 1993:7). For him, it designated the emergence of a modern self and potential to imagine society in a new way, as individuals who would be simultaneously equal citizens of Turkey and representatives of their ethnic and religious groups. This, in fact, this was the
opposite of the goal of the reformers, strongly influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, whose project in social engineering, a secular *homo Ottomanicus*, “designed to weaken clerical communitarianism and enhance equality between communities ended up cementing a bond between ethnicity and religion, thereby reinforcing the very centrifugal ethnonationalist forces it was meant to suppress” (Hanioğlu 2006:5). Şivan held his identity as a Kurd and Sunni Muslim as something vital to counter the discriminatory practices of the Kemalist nation-state. He felt that for him it would be impossible to survive in Istanbul without the support of the *mahalle* and the deeply held relationships with his kin. This was yet another reference to the more authentic solidarities of the Ottoman times (and beyond). He did not want to return to the past but to appropriate its materials selectively.

These categories of belonging were at the heart of the urbanity of the late Ottoman era. According to the reformers, the Ottoman social order – unlike the Republican notion of citizenship – had its basis in the spatial distribution of communities into a complex mosaic of context-dependent rights and loyalties, with different principles of government. In this powerfully reified view, the *millet*71 (confessional community) system of the Empire allowed extensive self-governance in particular areas and separate legal courts for the religious minority groups. The order was based on the authority of their religious leaders responsible for the community affairs under the rule of the Sultan, who, in practice, rarely interfered in their business. Until the *Tanzimât* era, the people of different millets could also be distinguished by their prescribed clothing.72

However, the widely spread understanding of residential exclusivity by community in the late Ottoman Empire has also been questioned: Donald Quataert claims that the families chose their home according to a multiple criteria – often economic status – not simply religion (2005:180–181). The distinctions were finely tuned and the communities would not be isolated from one another; the diverse borrowings in the Ottoman language demonstrate considerable overlap and the principle of the separate legal

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71 The meaning of the *millet* has changed considerably throughout the Ottoman centuries. Before the reign of Mahmut II, in the early nineteenth century, it simply referred to Muslims in the Empire and Christians outside its boundaries (Quataert 2005:176). See Göçek (2006) for a concise history of the changing position of the minorities in the Empire. In addition, Findley (2008) argues in a detailed way, how the Ottoman rulers made far-reaching changes into the *millet* system to achieve particular political aims.

72 Goodwin sums up the dress codes in his not strictly academic history of the Ottoman Empire adeptly: “Greeks wore black trousers and slippers; the Armenians violet slippers and purple trousers; the Jews sky-blue trousers and slippers, and certain very privileged non-believers were allowed to wear yellow slippers and red trousers, like a Turk” (1998:96). For a comprehensive academic perspective, see Faroqhi & Neumann (2004).
courts was not absolute (Quataert 2005:174–186, Riedler 2009). In fact, the reforms in the sphere of economic activity had the most far-reaching impact for the social relations: the social mosaic of the Empire was radically altered with the introduction of uniform rules for different communities who ended up establishing free markets together and, as a result, produced new kinds economic and social inequalities and political demands (Keyder 2008:505). Şivan was clearly influenced by these historical principles but brought them into the present day mixed with ethnic categories of Republican Turkey. He would sometimes refer to Kurds as a millet, simultaneously a group willing to establish a nation-state and a category of belonging in Istanbul. The fact that in the late Ottoman times Kurds would be designated under the more inclusive category of Muslims, not a separate millet, did not stop him from using the concept.73

SURPRISING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN AMORPHOUS CATEGORIES

The Republican rupture produced ambiguous categories of belonging that could be contradictory but nevertheless deeply felt. In Reşat Kasaba’s illustrative study of the epic poems and vernacular stories of peasants in the early twentieth century, the heroes, when pressurized, “end up declaring their loyalty to an entity that had no fixed temporal point of reference whatsoever. In their speech, the Sultan-Caliph, Young Turk leaders, Mustafa Kemal, the Prophet Muhammed, and his nephew Ali often melt into one amorphous being who claims their allegiance” (1997:30). In the political climate of today, some of the categories remain but they are organized in a very different manner.

After Ridvan had lost his job at the teahouse, on a basis of what he saw as unfair treatment of Kurdish people in Istanbul, we discussed the issue on almost daily basis. In his initial outburst he had claimed that the owner hates all the Kurds and everyone with a rural background but he had begun to analyze the situation later with detailed historical references to ethnicity, language and religion. One evening we had gathered to Taksim Square with Ridvan and his friends and he wanted to raise the issue to all of us. I was already used to his style of presenting his political views in the form of lengthy monologues, during which he did not like to be interrupted:

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73 Nowadays, the word “millet” is used colloquially to refer all kinds of groups of people, e.g. kadın milleti = womankind. However, Şivan liked to elaborate the differences between citizenship (vatandaşlık) and other categories of belonging – the term millet provided a possibility to play with its connotations in relation to the nation-state, an ethnic category in Turkey and the historical Ottoman solidarities.
I have read about the Ottoman History and how the times before The War of Independence were full of plotting between different factions. Where do the Kurds belong in all this? We have been ruling much of this country and building Istanbul for centuries. The school system feeds us these lies and they are repeated everywhere – I still see angry faces when I speak Kurdish in the street. That is why I keep doing that. I want to establish my presence here because this is my city just as much as theirs. We have been pulled into the sidelines but we will find our place; I have been thinking of this one thing: I have read that Kurmanji Kurdish is related to English and French: it is actually us who are much closer to the West in this sense. If we would get proper education we would learn the languages so much better than the Turks. We are the Europeans here! [laughter all around]

On another occasion, just a few days later, he told me that he had thought the issue further and finally understood what the source of the problem was. It was all about Islam. According to him, the Kurds had been following the true Islam in the late Ottoman era when so many others, including the Sultan, had begun to compromise its central tenets. The Young Turks with their ideas of making Turkey like France had been afraid of this and had concluded that the oppression of the true Muslims was the only way to secure Republican rule. This was how we had gotten to the contemporary situation – by restricting the agency of the population that was erased from the history, truly Islamic and at the same time closer to the West because of their linguistic kinship. According to Ridvan, if the obstacles would be removed, all the Kurds would cross the threshold of modernity as authentic modern subjects.

In this case, his understanding of the past was shrouded in mystery but what I found extremely interesting was the fluidity of categories and the apparent ease of making connections between them. In Ridvan's speech, the metaleptic acts conceptualized the features of the Ottoman era as both exemplary origins and as building blocks for the future to be approved or rejected. In addition, they offered a very wide scope of imagination for the possible senses of selfhood, fascinating in its experimental character. The elements for the formation of historical consciousness included multiethnic and multidenominational communities, senses of linguistic variety extending across unexpected boundaries and an ambiguous feeling of religious authenticity that had supposedly been corrupted by the modernist stream of Republican history.

Within the context of Turkey's official history, the threshold of modernity is positioned at the birth of the Republic but this does not mean that everyone has crossed it, nor does it imply that the crossing has been complete. Faubion, following Weber, defines the threshold not as a “Great

74 There are several Kurdish languages and dialects. Kurmanji is the most spoken of them in Turkey and an Indo-European language.
Divide” but argues for a great difference “between those doubts, those problems, and those problematics that coherent cosmogonies and cosmologies can go some way toward assuaging and those doubts, those problems, and those problematics that arise only once the cosmos has been declared ethnically and morally neutral, God declared dead, and men and women declared […] to have nothing from which to proceed but their own devices (1993:6). The great difference is rather in the “vague and extended juncture at which values began to lose their self-evident facticity and world views devolve into ‘ideological perspectives’” (7). Moreover, in Rıdvan’s and Şivan’s interpretations, the entry into modernity that would acknowledge them as equal citizens of the nation had been compromised by the Republican revolution – turning its most integral aspect of equality into discrimination of those who do not qualify as Turks.

Republican Revolution – Radical Encounter with Modernity

It was not a surprise for me that someone else had already done a Google search for “How many statues of Atatürk in Turkey?” for the country is overwhelmed with reminders of the revolutionary hero. In an interview,75 Aylin Tekiner, an artist who has written a book on the statues, connects the almost one thousand monuments, in addition to innumerable more modest representations, with the emergence of the modern state. She notes that the Ottomans did not install monuments of people in public spaces but the emergent state took this as a new tool to expand its presence. The monuments gradually covered the whole country and their construction has sped up considerably after the 1980 military coup, entering into a realm of mass-production and resulting some truly bizarre incidents. In the interview, Tekiner points out an anthropologically interesting case:

In an incident in 2001, an Atatürk monument in Mersin, Turkey’s south, was caught in a flood and drifted out to sea. A few days later, the same monument was found in neighboring Antalya – but had lost its feet. Since it is against the law to destroy an Atatürk monument, the officials did not know what to do with it so they decided to place it in a village school, mounting it at its ankles. And thus a village school without a library or even a computer has an Atatürk monument.

I consider the statue of Atatürk as a perfect emblem of the tendencies of the Republic; simultaneously a radical rupture in qualitative sense and a

gradual expansion in the quantitative, an artistic representation in modernist terms and an object available through mass-production – father and an ambiguous being that is always more than the sum of its parts. In this section, I will focus on Kemalism's relationship with modernity, especially during the period from the birth of the Republic in 1923 to the victory of the Democrat Party in the second multiparty elections in 1950. I argue that the period signals substantive changes to the foundational categories of belonging, extending to diverse realms of ethnicity, religion and gender while relating to intertwined standards of secularism, cosmopolitanism and civilization. Just like the representations of Atatürk, ranging from monumental scale to tiny lapel pins, discernible only to those who can read their significance, the values of the early Republic reappear in unanticipated ways and their particular take on modernity remains crucial feature of everyday life.

TURKISH ESSENCE AND REBIRTH OF THE NATION

The birth of the Turkish Republic in 1923 is commonly presented as a point of an epoch-making rupture, signifying a break between two distinct civilizations, a quintessential beginning of the progressive future, a genuine cultural rebirth that would alter the course of history in decisive ways (Altınay 2004; Mardin 2002; Meeker 2002). According to the Republican understanding, there was a distinct “Turkish essence” that had been realized in various forms throughout the history. It had been crystallized in the authentic origins of the Central Asian Turks and was recovered in the foundation of the Republic (Mardin 2002). In this view, the Ottoman Empire, lumped together as a whole despite its variety, was a cultural corruption rather than a glorious chapter in the history of the Turks (e.g. Kandiyoti 2002:10, Özyürek 2006). In the global hierarchy of value, the Republic transformed the Turks from a people in a need of civilization to the bringers of the civilization to the others (Bozarslan 2006:33), but an important, perhaps even constitutive principle in their civilization, has been the element of threat, both from the inside and outside enemies (Altınay 2004; White 2013). That is why the elements in opposition to the authentic essence needed to be neutralized. This is in stark contrast to the Ridvan’s and Şivan’s view of the Ottoman Empire as an inclusive and just society that allowed Islam and Kurdishness to flourish.

Republican modernizers emphasized the rationality of their choices, in contrast to the whimsies of the society consisting of several semi-independent communities under the rule of the Sultan-Caliph. Even in the context of Atatürk’s autocratic rule, the emphasis was on the difference between sultanate supposedly ruled by force and Atatürk’s rule as a natural representation of the whole nation (Özyürek 2006:50). Timothy Mitchell
summarizes this dynamic of modernity in Egypt in a way that fits perfectly into the Turkish context (of course, with the replacement of non-European by Ottoman and European by Republican):

In non-European [Ottoman] government the exceptional was the rule; power gained its strength from its arbitrariness. Modern government, like modern science, the European [Republican] believed, was based upon principles true in every country. Its strength lay in its universalism. (Mitchell 2002:54)

The rupture also marked a new relationship to Islam. The abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 transformed Istanbul’s position vis-à-vis Muslim world radically; it ceased to hold any particular interest among Muslims and was no longer the site of cultural and political pilgrimage among Islamic intellectuals (Keyder 2008:508). In the reformist rhetoric, belonging to ummah (ümmet), gave way to collective love towards the ruler by the national subjects.

Throughout the world, modern nationalism on the rise at the time found the ancient origins and traditions as important building blocks (Özkırımlı 2010: chapters 3, 4 for an overview). The ancient past of the Turks is traced to the nomadic Turkic tribes in the Central Asian steppes, with the first mention of Tujue (T’u-chüe) in the Chinese literary sources in 600 C.E. (Findley 2005:21), and the beginning of the history of Turkey to the Seljuk ruler Alp Aslan’s (Alparslan) defeat of the Byzantine emperor Romanos IV Diogenes at Manzikert (Malazgirt), north of Lake Van in 1071 (Mango 2004:16). Even though these might at first seem obscure references to the distant past, the narratives are transferred into the contemporary times and carry with them ideas of social organization and moral qualities, also adopted by people who are not historians.

The ancient past extends effortlessly into the realm of the everyday representations. In the popular image below (Figure 3), the continuum stretches from the Turkic forefathers, Oğuz Khan and Dede Korkut, directly into Atatürk, leaving centuries of Ottoman rule out. Furthermore, the representation is not limited to the national heroes: at the lower half of the picture the Central Asian nomads gathered outside their yurts are connected in time to the rich musical tradition of the Turks and to their Republican military glories.
Culturally, the nationalistic history has been selective in its appropriation of elements. The Republican ideology came to see Alevis, a heterodox religious group forming a significant minority in the country, as representative of the original Turkish nation settled within its borders, before it had been spoiled by the Ottomans. Alevis were suitable for the strategic aims of the reformers especially well because they had retained beliefs and practices of the Central Asian origin and as “remote forest or mountain peoples relatively untouched by imperial institutions […] free of the stigma of the Empire, and also of the stigma of Sunni Islam” (Meeker 2002:xiv). The egalitarian and democratic ethos associated with the nomadic populations (Arat 1997:99, Papadakis 2005:29) fit well with the idea of newly recovered and intrinsically modern Turkish essence – in contrast to practices of gender segregation associated with the Ottomans and Islam. In the case of Alevis, these were exemplified in the participation women in the cem religious ceremony that features music,

76 http://dedemkorkut.tr.gg/Galeri/pic-1000002.htm

77 In the countrywide censuses conducted every ten years, information on religious affiliation is not requested (except for Muslim, Christian or atheist (dinsiz)). David Shankland, in his extensive study of Alevism, estimates their number to be 15 percent of the population, around 10 million (2003:20–21). See Mandel for an excellent summary of principles and history of Alevism (2008:251–255).
singing and dancing as well as in their voluntary use of headscarf – feature that distinguishes them from Sunnis until this day (see Mandel 2008 and Shankland 2003 for an in-depth discussion of these aspects in both rural and urban communities). The principle was also incorporated into legal matters: the extension of suffrage to women in 1934 was defended with appeals to the egalitarian origins of the Central Asian Turks that provided an occasion to reinforce the nationalist myth (Aram 1997:99). In addition to establishing continuum across temporal distance, the logic of the rupture separated the nomadic and the Ottoman epochs: Murat I (1362–89), the first Ottoman ruler to take royal title (hünkarı), was seen as replacing the relatively egalitarian administration with accountability and revenue management (Findley 2005:111). While not always historically accurate, these parallels and juxtapositions are extremely seductive and often fit surprisingly well into the contemporary conditions.

In defining the course of historical currents, laden with evaluations situated at different junctures, the modernist logic considers myths as products of invention; history awaiting its discovery (Herzfeld 1985:181). Republican nationalism has been able to employ the apparent paradox of the mythical Turkish origins in an interesting way. The view is based on what Ayşegül Altunay, following Etienne Copeaux, defines as “dual geographic framework” whereby “Central Asia is the ‘main’ homeland, while simultaneously the current location of Turkey (Anatolia) is claimed to have Turkish origins long before the Ottoman Empire” (Altunay 2004:22). The logical contradiction of the two homelands has developed mythical qualities (cf. Levi-Strauss 1986:216); the unresolvable conflict of autochthonous origins and descent from migrants conquering the land operates as a master narrative, combining the authentic origins in both Anatolia and Central Asia. The strength of the myth derives from the parading of these internal contradictions, serving the ideology of a specifically Turkish variant of nationalism (cf. Herzfeld 1985:198–199).

NOVEL SYSTEMS OF REPRESENTATION

The new Republic expressed its abstract values and strategies of representation through significant changes to the daily routines. Again, the superficial characteristics associated with modernization feature strongly in the policies of many of the late Ottoman, Young Turk and Kemalist leaders; regulation of the outward appearances, standards of cleanliness and nature of institutions consumed an inordinate amount of their time and energy (Kasaba: 1997:24). Especially the perceptual environment, representations associated with the Empire and the role of its significant buildings were subject to radical transformations. Murat Gül summarizes some of these changes in the following way:
Removal of all Ottoman coat-of-arms and insignia from official and public buildings; the sale of Ottoman archival documents to Bulgaria as recycled paper; the proposal of Sultanahmet Mosque as an art gallery for young artists of the Republic [...] the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a museum; the removal of classical Turkish music from primary and secondary school curricula; the closure of the Turkish section of the Istanbul Conservatorium; and the temporary banning of Turkish music on radio in the 1930s. (Gül 2006:75)

The best known changes in the formative years of the Republic have been those in direct opposition to the Ottoman times and Islamic practices. The abolition of the Sultanate and Caliphate as well as the Sufi orders, the reform of the alphabet from the Arabic into Latin and the substitution of the Islamic calendar with the Gregorian are characteristic examples of the rupture-like qualities of the new nation (e.g. Mango 2002; Silverstein 2011; Zürcher 2004).

The reforms altered the urban mosaic of Istanbul and resulted in far-reaching consequences for social relations. The Republican dress regulations – the prohibition of the fez headgear and preference for a black suit – were not just attempts to imitate appearances associated with the Western modernity but put an end to a public sphere where a person’s ethnicity, religion and sometimes position in social hierarchy could be distinguished immediately from clothing they were prescribed to wear. Reorganization extended even to soundscapes – implementation of Turkish language for the call for prayer (ezan) for 18 years (1932–1950) at the height of nationalist fervour presents a good example of a change that for some can be a trivial matter and for others a grave affair.

In the present day, the organizational principles of the Republican revolution often come to light unexpectedly in ways that make good stories. The abstract principles of nationalism and modernism transform into culturally intimate narratives of everyday practices and, in some cases, help to identify with the past and to feel the confusion of people going through the changes of organizing time, modes of representation as well as relating to one another. The introduction of surnames is a fitting example where ideas and practices of governance with the specific aims of standardization and legibility (Scott 1998:64–71) are embedded in the sense of self and one’s relationships. In the Ottoman times, Jews and Christians had surnames but Muslims did not. On June 21, 1934, a law was passed compelling all citizens to adopt one (Mango 2002:498–499), sometimes with consequences that provide material for memorable anecdotes.

A friend of mine had a distinctive but not very uncommon surname Dilsiz (deaf – literally “without tongue”) and a great story of how his family had been designated it. He told me that the surname originated in a meeting
his great-grandfather had had with the officials. He belonged into the military corps and had thought that in his case a fitting surname would have been the number of his regiment, 59 (ellidokuz). The beginning of the story already sets the stage ready for a radical transformation, the introduction to a world where people would not choose a number for their surname. He went to suggest this to the officials who then informed him that the name was not appropriate, could not be chosen and asked him for another name. He could not come up with a new idea, and just stood still for a long time. The officials waited patiently for a while and decided to give the silent man a name Dilsiz. The name stuck and made a good story because it comments on the rigidity of the official rhetoric of modernization as a leap to the new era, as well as the cultural intimacy of actual people going through actual changes. It also provides material for further reflection: my friend said that it would have been interesting, perhaps even beneficial, to have unusual names like ellidokuz to mark oneself out in contemporary society. In fact, there are several people whose relatives have received approval for their regiment numbers as surnames and who still use these names, perhaps also spreading captivating stories of their grandparents’ adaptation to this specific form of modernity. Yiannis Papadakis provides another example of how the rigid system of classification of the citizens could be used in creative and culturally intimate way: “My friends gave me an easy book of stories by a contemporary Turkish writer they liked. His surname was Nesin, meaning ‘What are you?’ He had chosen this surname in order to have this philosophical question posed each time he was addressed” (2005:21).

FANTASTIC CHARACTER OF THE REFORMS

In the 1920s, the war-torn nation was energized with the new spirit of reformation and the resulting modernism produced a fantastic combination of ancient origins and modern urban atmosphere. In his study of multifaceted modernity, Berman suggests a relationship between modernization and modernism as a dynamic that seems to be borrowed directly from the Turkish experience:

In relatively backward countries, where the process of modernization has not yet come into its own, modernism, where it develops, takes on a fantastic character, because it is forced to nourish itself not on social reality but on fantasies, mirages, dreams. (Berman 1982:235)

In the early Republic, the decline of the Empire and definition of Turkey as the “sick man of the Europe” in the global hierarchy of value resulted a powerful backlash that attacked the assumed inferiority of the Turks in extreme ways. The Republican understanding of history has been selectively appropriated through intense – sometimes obsessive – gathering of folklore
and anthropomorphic data (Özyürek 2006:112) to legitimate the existence of a Turkish nation as a novel category of belonging.

The ethnoracial component developed alongside other reforms and culminated in the Turkish History Thesis and its linguistic counterpart, the Sun-Language Thesis, that have formed the basis for the school textbooks and population policies from the 1930s onward (Altınay 2004:22–23). According to Altınay, their content can be summarized in following propositions:

Neolithic civilization was first created in Central Asia by the Turks.

Due to climactic changes (mainly drought) Turks of Central Asia migrated to different parts of the world and introduced Neolithic civilization to Asia, Europe, and America.

The Turks developed the early civilization in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Early civilizations in Anatolia (Asia Minor) such as those of the Hittites were also of Turkish origin.

Turkish language is the oldest language of high culture and is the origin of Sumerian and Hittite languages.

The Turks have formed many states in history.

(Altınay 2004: 22–23, see also Papadakis 2005:28)

Nowadays, reactions to these fantastic assertions are filled with wonder about their extravagance but occasionally turn awkward. The sense of desired modernity requires not just thorough reflection of the self but also of shared history. During my time in Turkey, I have occasionally met individuals who have been promoting, or at least subscribing to these views, usually with undertones of global conspiracies. Others take more pragmatic view of the period.

The range of these interpretations became clear to me when visiting Veli after we had barely gotten to know each other. His meticulously organized bookshelf had one whole section of books dealing with Turkish mythology; between numerous academic volumes there were wildly fantastic books on the past glories of the Turks. When I asked what he thought about them, he endorsed a thoughtful reading of this very complex phase in history. According to him, the times were stormy, there were many ideas floating around and the reformers made understandable mistakes when surrounded with diverse materials. Rather than taking the theories at the face value, he suggested focussing on the whole picture to understand the position of Turkey in those times. Veli also reasoned that Atatürk did not believe in the legends but had thought that they were good for raising the
morale of the nation during the turbulent period. He had a clear goal of establishing a clearly bounded national unity out of the complex solidarities of the Empire – *millets*, Sufi orders and hereditary systems – and needed to exaggerate or invent some features to join the dots. Veli finished in a light-hearted manner by saying that most of the Turks like books only for decorative purposes and will present their interpretations without reading the texts – he joked that he had all the books just to make an impression on women.

From his reflections, I gathered a stimulating constellation of dominant narratives and cultural intimacy. The self-deprecating jibes acted together with a very careful analysis of the historical developments. They also allowed him to laugh at the absurdities that stretch deep into history – to express his sense of modern selfhood that can distance itself from the past that is accentuated in different ways. This was different from someone who would convolute the genres and be offended by questioning and experimentation with history. He was different from the die-hard Kemalists who would consider criticism of Turkishness or Atatürk, even in the tongue-in-cheek manner, a treason, or the pre-modern masses who would lack the critical faculty altogether. This was just another occasion of the multifaceted modernity presenting a challenge to metaleptic operations: how to look back at the ancient glories and bring them into the present day.

Restructuring the Principles of Belonging in the Early Republican Era

At the birth of the Republic, the reformist views had wide-ranging consequences for the organization of solidarities. Initially, the categories of identification and loyalty were in flux and consisted of “multi-ethnic Ottoman patriotism, Islamic solidarism or Turkish nationalism” (Zürcher 1992:244). The aim of the Republican reformers was a thorough reorganization of the old matrix of power, largely based on context-dependent solidarities where the power would reside largely in the hands of imams, Sufi sheiks, clan leaders, or, in the case of minorities, their religious leaders. According to their view of egalitarian and uniform modern citizenship, individuals belonging into several hierarchically ordered groupings would hinder modernization and concentrate power in the hands of the reactionary segments (Gül 2006:79–80). On the other hand, the uniform sets of rules would increase the risk of social polarization among different ethnic groups and could eventually give way to independence movements, a situation familiar from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire (Keyder 2008:505). To break the earlier religious hierarchies, the
abolition of the Caliphate was followed with the establishment of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), a public institution located within the state organization that took control of the issues concerning Islam; the Sufi orders were outlawed and many of their leaders executed in the initial years of the Republic and the religious leaders of the minority communities were stripped of their judiciary powers. The legal status and position of religion within the society was altered in fundamental ways, with new categories of belonging replacing the earlier ones. Through radical transformation, often accompanied by the threat of force, there arose a need for new ideologically established solidarities.

In addition, the classificatory basis for ethnicity was fundamentally restructured. As stated in the previous section, the Republican narrative of origins was based on the logic of a myth but could also be used strategically to advance political aims. Here, the origins in Central Asia marginalized the Ottoman and Islamic influences and the claims of an Anatolian past served to counter Armenian and Greek land claims over Turkey (Copeaux in Altınay 2004:22). The reformers also stressed the unity of the Turkish essence with clear boundaries and disregarded other senses of belonging. Muslim minorities of Turkey, particularly the Kurds, Laz and Circassians could not be easily accommodated into the new framework the nation-state. The shift was very rapid. In the Erzurum congress of the Republican revolutionaries in 1919, Atatürk addressed the other Muslim elements of the nation as “sibling” (“kardeş”) nations that have unified their goals in preserving and defending their nation (Altınay 2004:18). This sense of common Muslim identity, consisting of mixed influences and separate groups was, however, soon to be abandoned. Just ten years later, the War of Independence had been re-conceived with addition of the term “Turkish” in the front and the existence of Muslim elements as distinct ethnic groups was denied – they were now seen as “Turks who had ‘forgotten’ their Turkishness or were in ‘denial of their Turkish origins’” (22–23). The split tendency of nationalist history to narrate nation as both eternal and novel subject still dominates the Turkish understandings of the modern nation.

RURAL AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTS – TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

In 1923, despite its continuities with the Empire, Istanbul was a very different city. Its population had risen above the one million mark during the war but had shrunk to 500,000 in 1924 and was still below 700,000 in 1927. All the foreigners and almost half of the Christians had moved away and two-thirds of the population consisted of Muslims (Keyder 2008:506). In the Ottoman era, the classic minorities of the Empire; Greeks, Armenians and Jews had outnumbered the Muslims in Istanbul and had mostly been its merchants, bankers and industrialists. Without them the state had to create a new
bourgeoisie through its nationalist modernization policies (Keyder 1997:39). The changes were supported by the military and bureaucratic elites who had to force their policies on “an economically largely pre-capitalist and culturally conservative and religious society of peasants and craftsmen” (Zürcher 1992:251). Zürcher estimates that the creation of an indigenous Turkish bourgeoisie took a generation (251).

In this new demographic environment, the task of constructing an idealized form of Turkishness depended on the meticulous reorganization of rural and urban components. Turkish language, associated with the peasant or folkic background of the Ottoman society, in opposition to the Ottoman Turkish of the court, riddled with Arabic and Persian influences, provided an integral building block for a new identity (Mardin 2002:119–121, Papadakis 2005:27). This also gave rise to a conception of the peasantry as a source of the authentic Turkish essence. Şerif Mardin summarizes the development in 1920s and 1930s aptly: “The image of a Turk as the country bumpkin was transformed into that of the bronze-bodied, strong, serene and silent farmer carrying his load of grapes door-to-door in the stifling heat of the summer (2002:122).”

For the modernizers, the boundary between the rural and the urban was not just a matter of simple geography, between the town and the countryside, but extended into a variety of contexts and became intertwined with ambiguous spaces, sometimes forming new kinds of boundaries. The desirable characteristics of the peasant background were to be assimilated into urban environments and urban models into the rural settings, to find a centre, a nationalist core. This symbolized a moment of transcendence when “the nostalgia for lost origins and the demand to civilize reveal themselves as two sides of the same coin” (Nalbantoğlu 1997:200). This idealistic understanding of the young Republic has been reshaped considerably throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries but the paradox at its core is still evident.

These principles of belonging are still heatedly debated: even a cursory look at newspaper columns or a visit to a teahouse renowned for political debates will prove that emphasis on authentic Turkishness is exercised to categorize people in very detailed ways. During my fieldwork, it just seemed that, compared to the categories of the early Republican modernity, new significant dimensions had been introduced to the debates. As my discussion above with Veli showed, the fantastic legends of the Turkishness could be approached with a sense of humour – the categories that were involved in the immediate experiences of the everyday were much more serious business.

The incorporation of the rural and urban communities had not been successful. Despite her suspicion towards the Anatolian migrants taking over
Istanbul, Didem was a committed supporter for the Kurdish cause and the stories of “mountain Turks” or “Turks who have forgotten their Turkishness” filled her with scorn and shame. We were once on our way to meet friends and overheard a couple speaking Kurdish. We could not understand what they were saying but I could identify the language as Kurmanji based on the words that I had learned. Didem commented on the language question in an angry way but nevertheless acknowledged the confusion in the past, in a manner similar to Veli: “It really is amazing that there still are people who honestly believe that the Kurdish language does not exist. I can imagine that in the Ottoman times when Istanbul was full of people speaking weird-sounding languages, some people might become confused. Even in Atatürk’s times it would be possible; so many things had changed so quickly that people could be manipulated easily to believe that the enemies of Turkey are turning people against each other.” She stopped to wonder for a moment and looked at me in a very serious way: “But nowadays there are TV channels, in Turkey and abroad, broadcasting in Kurdish language, songs in Kurdish and in Istanbul you hear Kurdish, you hear these distinct sounds [imitates the guttural sounds], in the street. You really need to be brainwashed [uses the English word] to believe that the language does not exist.” In other words, she was saying that early modernity was introduced to people with limited capabilities and a different kind of self-reflection would be required in contemporary Turkey. From her global viewpoint, many of the Turks were still backward in their understanding what of is happening in their country and stuck with the ethos of the past.

The complicated issues related to minorities and Turkey’s relative location had created new relationships towards the desired historical consciousness of modernity. It is perplexing how the Republican notion of Turkishness can be contextually very flexible and result extravagant fantasies but also create rigid boundaries to delineate inclusions and exclusions. They are influenced by the widespread theories of the modern nation-state but complement them with specifically Turkish realities. For example, Kurd is potentially a nationalistic category, but it is also situated in the experienced reality as self-reflexive understanding of ethnicity, culture and language. According to my informants, being able to understand wider historical dynamics was related to crossing the threshold of modernity as an abstract principle but also deeply situated in daily life, where encounters with others were constantly evaluated with regard to degrees and accentuations of the modern sense of self. This can lead to a celebrated sense of diversity, ability to take part in multifaceted modernity, or, in the words of Herzfeld, produce histories that “do not serve the national entity, but, on the contrary, treacherously reveal its internal fragmentation” (1987:43). If ethnicity and religion are the cornerstones of the Republican definitions of Turkishness,
the ideas of secularism, cosmopolitanism and civilization connect the formative years of the nation even more tightly to global reach of modernity.

SECULARISM AND EXCLUSION

The historical roots of Turkish secularism are heterogeneous; in Turkish, secularism is referred to as *laiklik* that suggests a connection with laicism, strongly influenced by a specifically French Jacobin tradition (see Bowen 2007). I have chosen to adopt the term secularism, in its broad definition, “referring to the doctrine that morality, national education, and the state itself should not be based on religious principles, a doctrine which can gain specific meanings in different political and historical contexts” (Azak 2010:8) and will focus on its uses rather than its complex history (see Altunay 2004; Azak 2010).

In everyday life, secularism is not so much tied to abstract principles but acts as a social dividing line. This was at the heart of Ahmet’s anxiety for going to Istiklal Street, for him the centre of secularist Turkey. I saw him at the family teahouse, next to where I lived, almost every day and would often stop by for a glass of tea. At first, he mostly joked about being new to Istanbul, how, after two years, he was still a religious young man from the other side of the country. When we got to know each other better, I began to realize that the geographic boundary separating Tarlabası from the Istiklal area corresponded closely to the boundary that excluded him from secular Turkey. Once, he let his feelings to burst out in a confrontational manner:

> What irritates me most in this city is that you are never good enough. I do not want to pass as one of these Beyoğlu idiots, I am proud of what I am, but I clearly sense that I am not welcome to many of the places around Istiklal Street. Perhaps it is this pullover, it is not Levi’s or Diesel brand. Even that does not matter; they see me as a religious idiot and themselves as secular people, Western and full of contempt to anyone who is different from them. They are not followers of Atatürk, they would not do anything for this country, they do not even go to do military service but pay money to avoid it.

For Ahmet, secularism signified a lifestyle of privilege; even military service, an institution that he otherwise recalled with horror, became positively evaluated. The moral framework of the *mahalle* reflected the hierarchy between the elites and the masses, equating secularism with modernity (*çağdaş*) and its values radiating from the centres to the peripheries. Ahmet’s dignity consisted of balancing between his valued authenticity as a devout Kurd from the Southeast, a citizen of the Republic who has fulfilled his military duties, and an individual advocating a more just social order. From the opposite perspective, he was a country bumpkin controlled by religious impulses, cannon fodder to be expended in war and someone with no real knowledge of the workings of the society. Furthermore, Ahmet’s account
referred to global hierarchy of value: how people he despised claimed to take part in the purportedly superior cosmopolitan civilization associated with the West. It mirrored the troubled relationship that the Republic has had with global modernity.

COSMOPOLITANISM AND CIVILIZATION

In Republican modernity, the idea of cosmopolitanism has had a very ambivalent character. On the one hand, it has connotations with the valued diversity of the Western metropolises: on the other hand, it signifies the supposed decadence of the Ottoman era and compromises Turkey’s ethnonational character. In Istanbul, cosmopolitanism has been historically bounded to certain spaces and its relationship to the district of Beyoğlu has been paradoxically both celebrated and traumatized. Rıfat Bali presents an example that connects cosmopolitanism with urbanity, minority status and the global hierarchy of value. According to him, the Turkish elites “remembered how the minorities cheered the Allied forces when they occupied Istanbul and the Greek army when it occupied Izmir. They could not forget the famous Grande rue de Péra [Istiklal Street] in Istanbul, where one could hear Ladino, Greek, Armenian and French, but practically not one word of Turkish” (2006:49).

These debates have not been limited to the formative years of the Republic. The characteristically Turkish inferiority complex is ridiculed and considered outmoded but is regularly brought up with real concerns. What I find most intriguing in the following quote is the very serious approach popular newspaper columnist and writer Mustafa Akyol takes to tackle the issue:

What all this means is that if we Turks don’t want to remain as European wannabes that people joke about, we have to get rid of this 80-year inferiority complex. There are many things in the West to admire, to be sure, but adopting them should not mean denying ourselves. There is nothing admirable about that.78

The discussion of adopting cosmopolitan influences without compromising cultural authenticity reaches to numerous fields of life. Thomas Turino defines modernist reformism as careful balancing between the “threats inherent in both localism and cosmopolitanism” (1996:16). He argues that “the reformism typically objectifies, recontextualizes, and alters indigenous forms for emblematic purposes in light of cosmopolitan dispositions and social contexts and programs” (16). In Turkey, the highly selective

appropriation of historical representations, discussed in the previous section, has resulted in a precarious balance between local and cosmopolitan influences. The problems arise when participation in cosmopolitan modernity becomes imitation, inferior to the example it is based on. Ahmet saw the Turks wearing Western clothing brands as inauthentic caricatures embodying the worst elements of the contemporary cosmopolitanism, but hastened to add that for him they would be suitable. Likewise, the early Republic influenced by the West tried to find a balance in its cultural appropriation; the unsuccessful introduction of contemporary music and benches into the mosques to follow the “civilized” Western practice of churches (Azak 2010:53) is a fitting example of the incommensurability of the local and the global hierarchies of value. These entanglements have often been intensified depending on the historically prominent global discourses of civilization and modernity.

From Mustafa Reşid Paşa, the primary architect of the Tanzimat reforms indicating Turkey’s introduction to the modern era, to Atatürk and further, Turkish reforms have followed closely the twists and turns of the Western European history. Şerif Mardin summarizes their broad tendencies as intellectual shifts, first from Comte's positivism, to the late nineteenth-century disillusionment with parliamentary government, and, further, to Durkheim's solidarism (1997:68). The last phase has been extremely significant in crafting the modern notion of Turkish civilization. Most of my informants had never heard the name Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), referred to as the leading ideologue of Turkish nationalism (Bozdoğan 2008:422), or, recalled him distantly as someone mentioned during their school years. Nevertheless, many of his ideas about culture and civilization radiate still strongly, despite the nearly hundred years of distance.

In Turkey, the tension between local and cosmopolitan influences is reminiscent of the division between the Enlightenment idea of the universalistic and unilinear civilizational progress and the Herderian assertion of a “rich variety of cultures whose contrasted interplay makes up the history of mankind” (Dumont 1994:9; also Kadioğlu 1996; Taylor 1992:210–215). Gökalp’s nationalism is a unique mix of both. He established a division between international civilization (medeniyet) and national culture (hars) that could be reconciled in an appropriate manner (Bozdoğan 2008:422). The model of civilization was seen as freely floating, consisted of theology, philosophy, science and technology and could be encompassed by

79 These reforms were not backed by Atatürk but have remained in circulation as powerful anecdotes of the times. See Bein (2011:127–128) on how the leaked report of propositions had a significant global impact.

80 As discussed above, (p.108) medeniyet can be used in a variety of ways and is used by the Islamic actors with an emphasis on purity and modesty.
different cultures. In contrast, national culture, the authentic but variable spirit, included everyday language, customs and creative arts. Gökalp's intellectual project consisted of entering the Western civilization but not importing Western culture (Bonnett 2004:73; Stokes 1992:26). The caution against imitating the West and losing one's authentic Turkishness is expressed in very similar terms by both Ahmet and Mustafa Akyol above.

In some domains, the categories are organized in relatively simple and straightforward ways. The adamant secularism of the early Republic relied on the strict rules of appearances and specific forms of cultural expression; it associated Turkey firmly with the Western civilization and its regulated cosmopolitanism selected the superficial features of cultural expression to be appropriated into “high culture.” The boundaries become much fuzzier when one takes more complex issues, such as dynamics of gender, and examines them according to the Republican understanding.

AMBIVALENT DYNAMICS OF GENDER

One of the most complex balancing acts of the Republican reformers was the reorganization of the gender relations into the rubric of desired modernity. In the sociocultural realities of the young nation, the various categories of modern life, some referring primarily to spatially bounded wholes (Europe, Turkey), others to notions of progress (modern [çağdaş]), still others to supposedly shared standards (civilized [medeniyetli], decent [terbiyeli]) were evaluated very differently in the arguments pointing at the direction the country should take. Many of the solutions on questions of gender were based on another sets of distinctions, namely those between the elites and the masses as well as the public and private realms.

Strongly influenced by the Republican reforms, the spatial attributes assigned to expected gender roles, together with the teleological perspective of Turkey’s gradual encounter with modernity, still play crucial role in how gender is conceptualized. The message the reformers sent was twofold: the state encouraged the elite women to be involved in the public life as professionals but the modernization of the perceived masses was tied to the private realm. Yeşim Arat argues that the reforms were pushing forward a form of Taylorist modernity – in the private realm, the women were expected to bring “order,” “discipline” and “rationality” to homemaking (1997:100). In the public realm, at the time restricted to a few spaces of urban egalitarianism, the aims and their targets were different. The emphasis was on strong representations of equality between the sexes and on iconic examples that would show how Turkey had reached a higher level of civilization. There were famous examples such as Sabiha Gökçen, Atatürk's adopted daughter and world’s first female combat pilot, who was presented
to the world as an emblem of the rapid modernization of the country (see Tuominen 2013:45).

However, these were isolated cases and rare examples in a country that was mostly conservative and where the reforms had had only a minor effect on gender relations. The understanding of equality that stressed the sameness between men and women could be created in the limited public realm artificially but it transformed into a hierarchical relationship when the differences between sexes were acknowledged in the private domain (Arat 1997:101). Ayşe Kadioğlu (1996) argues that for the women of the early Republic combining the expectations between officially constructed identities and the sociocultural realities were impossible to fulfil. Their appearances were expected to be modern but simultaneously the traditional virtues such as modesty were supposed to be kept at guard. This involved constant balancing between the undesirable extremes: “the former are usually portrayed as too ambitious, and promiscuous ‘loose women’ while the latter as old-fashioned and outmoded types” (177).

These dynamics still had an influence in present-day Istanbul. For women, this meant constant surveillance of the surroundings and adjustment of behaviour to conform to the appropriate standards. This became apparent when I had a walk with Didem in Beyoğlu, concentrating on her characterizations of the attributes of specific streets, squares and other spaces. The discussion moved effortlessly from larger wholes, districts epitomizing specific ambience, into smaller entities, sometimes consisting of just one notable street or apartment block. The combination of different scales presented a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of the urban environment.

I discussed earlier how she was interested in the history of the old quarters but said that she mostly limited her movements to Beyoğlu and her home in Ataköy because she did not feel comfortable in other parts of the city. She did not consider the wealthy quarter of Nişantaşı, with its French-style cafes and luxurious fashion boutiques, north from Taksim Square, welcoming or exciting, and the new business centres, with their skyscrapers and shopping malls, further away in the north, were to her soulless – modern, but simultaneously an antithesis of the modernity she loved. However, those two spaces were considered safe to her in gender terms; there would usually be no harassment but there would be nothing of interest either. She continued by saying that consumption, buying things at the chain stores and drinking coffee at the multinational coffee chains, were not the ways she would want to spend her time. This modernity represented Westernization gone wrong; even though she did not subscribe to the strict Kemalist principles, especially its ethnoracial understandings, her models of

81 Didem used the Turkish term modern throughout our discussion.
proper taste were associated with high culture, in opposition to consumerism. In an interesting way, she saw the absence of problems associated with gender often being substituted by artificial equality, a corrupt display of “American” modernity expressed in the semi-public realm of the shopping mall. In a similar manner, she clumped the numerous gated communities further away from the city centre into the same category, not really as part of her city, and considered them as an offence to urban life.

She avoided the affluent northern parts of Istanbul because she saw them as boring, but also felt that many areas of Istanbul were out of bounds to her. Their gender dynamics could be traced to Republican imaginations of urban space. For Didem, the city was clearly divided into spaces of freedom (özgürlük) where at least the minimal standards of equality could be met, and areas that were governed according to unchallengeable conservative norms. Again, the symbolic battles were being played in relation to the few imageable parts of the city that had significant roles in history, defining Turkey’s relation towards modernity. Didem expressed clearly that she was not interested in the vast stretches of newly built housing, homes of the rural migrants who had clustered together with others from their areas of origin. There would be nothing to see, but, more importantly, she would not feel safe as a woman in those surroundings. Her explanation for this was very pragmatic; because there was nothing to see, visitors would be treated with suspicion by both men and women. However, her line of reasoning extended quickly to other categories of Turkish modernity. She told me, restating the early Republican narrative of the spread of modernity, that people in the peripheries did not have bad character but needed to be instructed to the modern ways of life gradually. Too rapid or intense encounters with the modern world would disrupt them and make them confused. She linked this especially to men who could not control their sexuality: again, not because they would be predators who have decided to abuse women but because they operated instinctively, not being able to restrain themselves. According to Didem, their entry to contemporary civilization would be possible, perhaps unavoidable, as in the teleological visions of the new nation, but she added that it was not up to her to change the world in this way.

What bothered her more was the destiny of the areas she considered significant. She said that the atmosphere in Istanbul had changed after the AKP had gotten into power in 2002 and that this had had consequences even in Beyoğlu. Sexual harassment had become more common and some spaces, formerly associated with freedom and tolerance, had become intimidating. The battle was fought over the control of these spaces and had become a matter of life and death. The change was related to the physical makeup and the functions of spaces. Didem mentioned the construction of a mosque into Taksim Square and the reconversion of Hagia Sophia back into a mosque as
examples of planned initiatives that would have dramatic outcomes, not just for their immediate surroundings but for the whole city. Moreover, she echoed the understanding expressed throughout the social spectrum, sometimes in the form of elaborate analyses, more often with fitting anecdotes: the biggest changes happen gradually through dynamics that can be consolidated under ambiguous terms such as gentrification or authoritarianism, while in reality they consist of series of seemingly insignificant social interventions. The constant cat-and-mouse game over the number of chairs outside Beyoğlu’s bars (that later culminated into a ban on serving alcoholic drinks outdoors in most of the streets), the prevalence of religious symbols, such as the expanding Ramadan markets or mosques displaying religious slogans composed of LED lights, as well as the age-old complaint of foreign junk foods (the unholy union of Arabic Lahmacun pizzas and American Coca-Cola) invading the streetscape were examples Didem had in mind of the gradual changes that could produce remarkable outcomes. What I found fascinating, was that even the specifically religious themes were connected to present-day politics rather than to Islam as such.

In general terms, for Didem, the radical modernity of the Republican reformers had become outdated. It was incommensurable with the modernity of today that allowed gathering of desirable features from different periods, not just as superficial representations: for her, the Ottoman era contained many features that were not on a collision course with modernity. She held the idea of multicultural and tolerant imperial Istanbul in high esteem, not as a decadent deviation from the authentic Turkishness but a societal model, closer to a mindset, with some aspects that could be adapted to present-day conditions. She felt sorry for the disappearance of the old religious minorities and hoped that they would some day return to the social mosaic of Istanbul. Introjective metalepsis, prioritizing the Ottoman Empire as an exemplary model, was overshadowed by projective metalepsis that acknowledged the work of interpretation in bringing its features into the present day. She was aiming at a more accurate construction of historical consciousness that would prioritize the desired forms of modernity and civilization. Same applied to the core values of the Republican revolution. The goal of the early Republican period can be summarized as “closing the gap with civilized countries” (Ahiska and Yenal 2006:160). In the terms of technological and bureaucratic modernization, the early twentieth-century Republic was advancing fast but the whole population did not follow the lead of the reformers. Didem saw the problem resulting from a wrong kind of integration between the urban and the rural, societal transformation that had its roots in the birth of the Republic but that had intensified from the 1950s onwards. Looking back at the early Republic would be futile because
the centres of power had shifted considerably and the old models did not correspond to contemporary realities.

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In addition to abstract ideals, concrete transformations occurred during the period of “radical” modernity between 1923 and 1950. The population of Istanbul rose at a steady pace (under 10 percent yearly) but did not reach the pre-war numbers before the early 1950s. The dynamics between the urban and the rural were extremely significant; the city was “the principal transmission mechanism for the ‘modernization’ of the peasantry” (Keyder 2010:25) while the peripheries were held suspect by the national elites as areas of potential disaffection (Mardin 1973:182). There were several rebellions, easily interpreted as Islamist or ethnoracial uprisings, but in reality constituting of much complex dissent against the Republic that kept the authorities alert and reminded everyone that the encounter with modernity had several potential complications. Republican modernity spread throughout the country in the form of better transport connections, a growing electricity grid and the establishment of village institutes, expected to spread modern skills and global outlook to the rural communities (Mango 2004:35). On the other hand, some of the more radical reforms were pulled back. Religious education was reintroduced in primary schools on a voluntary basis in 1949 and the faculty of theology was reopened in Ankara the same year (43); the Sufi orders (tarikat) were officially banned but continued to exercise their influence underground and reasserted themselves after 1950 (Ahmad 2008:229), functioning in a somewhat “public secret” fashion throughout the Republican era (Silverstein 2011:17). The composition of society, especially in the cosmopolitan centre of Istanbul, changed again considerably with the introduction of the Varlık Vergisi (“wealth tax”) in 1942, imposing heavy taxes on the non-Muslim minorities and restrictions on their property ownership and schools (Keyder 2008:508), forcing many to leave the country. The year 1950 can be considered a significant watershed in Turkish politics because it marks the landslide victory of the Democrat Party (DP) and the end of the single-party period. DP’s presentation of itself as a champion of the Turkish people, a voice against the Western-minded elites of the Republican People’s Party (CHP), provides a good introduction to the most significant dynamic of the following decades.

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82 For example, the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925 and the Dersim rebellion 1937–1938 have become deeply ingrained into the national consciousness. Analysis of the events is outside the scope of this study. I have found Christopher de Bellaigue’s book Rebel Land (2010) a well-researched albeit not strictly academic presentation of the complexities. See also Bozarslan (2008:340–342) for a discussion of the nature of the conflict.
Chapter 6: 
Populist Modernity

The period beginning in 1950 saw changes that created a more liberal country with a multiparty system, increased freedom of religion and continuing modernization. It also marks a shift in influence in Turkey overwhelmingly towards Istanbul, instead of the Republican centre of Ankara. The first decade of Democrat Party rule was also the period of massive urban restructuring in Istanbul; the redevelopment programme of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes (1950–1960) led to the demolition of thousands of buildings, the construction of gigantic boulevards and the outward expansion of the urban area (Gül 2006:3). On the more quotidian level, the changes were intimately tied to novel encounters that became a constant reality in Istanbul. The age-old binaries of modernity; rural and urban, traditional and modern, had not merged according to the teleological logic of Kemalist developmentalism but had begun to intermix and create hybrid outcomes. In the urban sphere, rural Turkey was no longer limited to series of imaginations and representations but something that was encountered face-to-face, as the migrants from the countryside settled into the city in large numbers. A widely known phrase attributed to Atatürk, “The villager is the lord of the nation” (“Köylü milletin efendisidir”), changed from a polite gesture into a real possibility of transformation of power relations. Albeit expressed in a humorous manner, the following quote from columnist Nazlan Ertan serves as an illustration of the ambiguity between the nationalistic ideals and the new urban realities.

It is not up to me to dispute the words of Atatürk, but if the villagers are rulers of the country, can they not simply rule in their villages without having to come here?” said one politician, who shall not be named, after a drink too many.83

It goes without saying that it was not just the elites who were disturbed by the newcomers but there was suspicion on both sides. The villagers located in the gecekondu settlements in the outskirts of the city felt resentment at the privileged classes and saw their status as based on linguistic competence and emulation of European lifestyles (Markoff 1994:228–229). In this chapter, I

will focus on how this new form of modernity developed and how it has clashed with the other understandings. I suggest that it also marks the emergence of another set of possibilities for metaleptic acts: new beginnings, reassemblies of the concreta of the past and adjustment of historical consciousness. I will argue that the predominant concerns of the period between the DP victory of 1950 and the military coup of 1980 are far from forgotten in the neoliberal atmosphere of twenty-first century Istanbul – the dynamics that animated the era continue to re-emerge in new contexts and influence myriad encounters with modernity.

If the radical modernity of Atatürk’s times rested on the gradual coming together of authentic Turkishness and the universal standard of modernity, it depended largely on the condition that the elites and the masses were kept spatially separate, of course to be united in the future. In my introductory discussion of Turkish modernity, I referred to Ilhan Tekeli’s term “populist modernity” for the years between 1950 and 1980 (2009:16); I believe the term captures very well the increasingly liberal country that had abandoned many of its most utopian ideas of modernity and had to reckon with the actual encounters that had come to define not just its urbanity but the rearrangement of its most fundamental societal hierarchies.

Migration and the Urban Mosaic

The increasing migration to the city, beginning around 1950, occurred in the midst of significant changes. The shrinking of Istanbul’s long-established minorities of Greeks, Armenians and Jews culminated in 1955 with the “İstanbul pogrom” (6–7 Eylül Olayları), a mob attack principally against the Greek population, after which only small fragments of their communities remained in the city. Many of their accommodations were taken by the migrants and the social composition of several districts transformed almost completely. In general, the rural migrants did not settle into the city in an organized way but had to rely on a wide variety of possibilities available to them. The outcome consisted of “a jigsaw pattern of established private property, abandoned non-Muslim holdings, vakıf84 land without claimants, former agricultural holdings and, above all, various kinds of publicly owned land, translated to a similarly unpredictable intertwining of zoned and gecekondu settlements, resulting in a surprising juxtaposition of villas and expensive blocks of flats with shacks, even in the wealthiest neighbourhoods of the city” (Keyder 2008:512). The urban development of the time had informal character and the administration’s role was in guaranteeing the

84 Religious or charitable foundation.
implicit policy of permitting land occupation and construction of informal housing for the new migrants (Keyder 2005:131). The reconciliation between informal housing and planning regulations has been expressed in a series of amnesty laws that have retroactively legitimized some previously illegal gecekondus (Tekeli 2009:16).

This did not, however, mean a free-for-all land guarantee, a familiar story of a city with its streets paved with gold: the newcomers did not spread within the city limits in a random way but relied largely on solidarities based in place of origin and Islamic identity. Colocal (hemşehri) identity, referring to belonging based on the place of origin, is still a significant factor shaping political struggles in the squatter areas (Tuğal 2009:428) and many residents highly valued the bonded set of relationships instead of the anonymity associated with urban life (Büker 2002:155). Squatting practices were also subject to change. Ayşe Yönder argues that by the mid-1960s, access, even for public land, was in the control of the local strongmen. In the mid-1970s, the public land in some parts of Istanbul was controlled by entrepreneurs with underground connections who could sell the land and have a monopoly over the construction activities (in Davis 2006:42).

The themes related to migration are encountered daily in present-day Istanbul. When strangers meet, one of the first questions is usually about one’s place of origin – “nerelisiniz?” (“Where are you from?”). If it rarely happens that the answer is Istanbul, the discussion will move onto parents’ and even grandparents’ origins. It is remarkably uncommon to meet people who have roots of several generations in Istanbul; a fact regularly emphasized by those who have had their predecessors living in the city. The situation with migrants outnumbering those born in Istanbul, exemplified by the population increase from less than one million in 1950 to 2 million in 1970, passing the 5 million mark around 1985, 10 million around 2000 and officially reaching the figure of 14 million in 2014, has redefined its urbanity.

Migrants have consolidated all the regions of Turkey into Istanbul. Cihan Tuğal presents an illustration of the migrant experience through a fragment of speech given by Recai Kutan, a leader of the Islamist Virtue Party (FP), addressing the crowd in the Şişli district of Istanbul in 2001: “Istanbul is the mirror of Turkey. Istanbul is also Rize, Gumushane, Artvin and Kars (some provincial Anatolian cities). This magnificent crowd is the voice of the sacred millet.” (2009:429). According to Tuğal, these three sentences combine following elements: “coming from a certain provincial place, living in a big city, and being religious” (429). I would go a step further and argue that, rather than a set of properties, the nature of urban encounter should be emphasized. The encounters between the elites and the masses, the rural and urban populations, the traditionals and the moderns have had various labels and been anchored to several features of speech, dress and
behaviour; after the mass migration they have become an essential part of
daily life, creating and reproducing contextual boundaries between different
groups.

My brief account of how migrants have been perceived in Istanbul is by
no means complete but concentrates on the most pressing issues I observed
during my fieldwork – the variety of encounters, from awkward to
productive, in the Beyoğlu district where they cannot be avoided. I will relate
them to the principal themes of the topic in the research literature and media
representations, to examine how various components of the earlier debates
have influenced contemporary historical consciousness. What differentiates
the discussion of this period from the previous ones is the focus on a
specifically modern sense of hybridity, a series of encounters that produce
unexpected outcomes, as opposed to rigid modernism where the boundaries
between the spaces were still intact. This dynamic has also led to
diversification of the desirable characteristics of modernity. As I will show,
many of the migrants questioned the Republican narrative very soon after
their arrival.

STORIES OF INVASION AND HARMONY

An iconic, even stereotypical but very fitting example the spirit of the times
is the figure of the Haydarpaşa train station (Figure 4). Located at the shores
of the Bosphorus, it is the final destination for the trains from the East and has
been widely depicted as a point of entry in numerous films of the era, as a
metaphor for those who have just arrived into Istanbul (Altınsay in Sumer
2010:142). In the early films, the newcomers were depicted sympathetically
through their struggle to survive in a new environment (Sumer 2010:142).
Similar to the early Republican ideology, the populist political imaginary of
the times stressed the gradual integration of the migrants into urbanity and
modernity, (Mardin 1973; Öncü 2002:185), of course, according to the
standards of the people welcoming their peripheral cousins. This was to
change very soon. Ayşe Öncü points at the lengthy history of the terms
“invasion” (“ıstila”), “siege” (“kusatma”) and “assault” (“saldırı”) that have
been used to describe the waves of “outsiders,” defined in historically
contingent and variable labels (2002:184). In the 1960s, the divisions had
been largely solidified with the urbanites residing in the central
neighbourhoods and the migrants in the coloically organized gecekondu
settlements in the outskirts of the city (Öncü 2002:185). In this chapter, I
wish to emphasize the contextual character of how migration is perceived in
present-day Istanbul. There are situations where the cultural authenticity of
rural Turkey becomes foregrounded and evaluated positively, but also many
others where the migrants turn into metaphors of malice, resembling
Didem’s thoughts at the end of the previous chapter.
The idealized openness of the city towards the migrants, the still untainted stage where both sides expect things to turn out in a harmonious way, has not disappeared completely. Authentic rural Turks, not corrupted by the urban environment are cherished in stories of these rare encounters. Once, walking down the street towards the Bosporus from Taksim Square with Osman, I came across a telling example. Despite Osman’s emphasis on himself as a true urbanite who participated in global modernity in an effortless manner, he also took pride of being familiar with the other side of Istanbul, the reality of the mahalles and their connection to rural Turkey. He preferred living in Tarlabası to other parts of Istanbul and had developed an easy-going relationship with his neighbours, most of whom had no idea of his well-paid job in the financial sector. We passed on a busy crossing and he suddenly pointed out to me one of the small food-carts selling rice pilaf with chick peas (nohutlu pilav). The young man in charge caught his attention: “I can see in a second that this guy does not know how to cook and the food he sells is awful. He gets it from someone who does not know either, he does not even know how to keep it warm – you would definitely end up with food...
poisoning if you buy anything from him.” As it had already become clear to me, this modest but delicious dish occupies a special place in Turkish imagination and represents the kind of honest food that can be perfected with skilful preparation.

Next, Osman referred to a counterexample that represented the values associated with the dish: “You should come with me to this place in the shore some Saturday evening when this famous guy comes to serve his nohutlu pilav. The food is prepared overnight in a wood-fired oven by his grandmother and the taste is just perfect. There is always a long queue waiting for him to arrive and all the food disappears in a blink of an eye. That is real village food; you can see a real mix of people queuing, young and old, rich and poor. You were asking me before what unites people in a big city like Istanbul, I would say that this is a perfect case.” I went with him to the shore next week and the situation was just as described. A large crowd had arrived for this specific occasion: there were groups of young men, families and older men who, according to Osman, would come every week and later continue to the teahouse nearby to discuss politics. There was a powerful presence of mutual belonging, an ephemeral community brought together for this purpose: while queuing and eating, there was almost no talking between people and the occasion was over after a very short time. The tiny food-cart had established a temporary pocket into the space of the city that would disappear soon after the food was gone. In these moments, the rural and the urban can be brought together in a safe way, if only for a limited time. Having said that, the other portrayal of the rural migrant is nowadays much more common.

**Arabesk Urbanity**

The idealized encounter between the rural and urban populations can also be challenged on historical grounds. Erik Zürcher considers the Republican model of societal dynamics as faulty from the beginning. He argues that the developments after 1950 should not be seen as a counterrevolution following the Kemalist revolution, for Kemalism had largely been an attempt by the military and bureaucratic elites to reshape the society from above (1992:252). The targets of modernization were expected to take part in urban life and leave behind their rural traits but they often countered the demand by emphasizing their rural identities and participating in public life through communal ties (Tuğal 2009:434). The migrants were not against modernity as such but their pride expressed the urge to be active participants in its formation. I see the backlash as a constitutive factor of Istanbul’s urbanity.
rather than a reactionary impulse to deny the modern realities. The exemplary past can be imagined somewhere between the rigid categories.

The 1970s saw the amalgam of the rural and the urban producing new forms that did not fit comfortably into either category. For the elites, it seemed that the migrants had lost the purity and authenticity of their origins in Istanbul but had remained ignorant and developed their own half-breed pseudo-urbanity that threatened to pollute the entire city. To sum up the process, Öncü claims that “in the language of Istanbul’s mainstream middle-classes, arabesk culture had invaded Istanbul” (2002:185). Within this particular formation of historical consciousness, arabesk should be seen as an umbrella term, a shorthand for urban hybridity that changes its form according to circumstances. According to Irene Markoff, arabesk was seen as “an ‘alien cultural artefact’ that represented an overt expression of the suppressed orientalism in the Turkish psyche” (1994:227) and Martin Stokes associates it with “the domain of morbid emotion and sensitivity (duygu), a domain entirely separable from that of ‘culture’ (kültür)” (1992:12). Both of the definitions point at the deeply felt cultural intimacy, celebrating in the imperfections of life, of not belonging into either the category of the culturally pure peasants, nor the educated urbanites. It also reflects the historically specific social and demographic imbalance of the period, the urban transition expressed in the language of alienation and fatalism (Stokes 1992:99). Stokes summarizes the spirit of arabesk brilliantly in his description of the films of the genre:

Films assert that the gap between image and reality, isolated self and society, “Turkish” honour and “modern” morality, the rural and the urban, is ultimately unbridgeable. Through the attempt to bridge the gap, the protagonist is reduced to his lowest level: his own honour is dragged through the mud, cutting him off from society, forcing him into a series of moral conundrums involving theft, alcohol, and acts of violence which drive him ultimately to self-destruction. (Stokes 1992:145)

These attributes are very closely related to the lack of self-reflection and too rapid entry to modernity. They also relate to the change in the channels of cultural appropriation. This is especially potent in the field of mass-consumption, an imperfect sense of modernity’s material culture, where the established hierarchies can be violated relatively easily (Öncü 2002:185). The great cultural debates, stretching to abstract qualities of selfhood, have mostly very quotidian origins; the choices of food, clothing and entertainment, together with the learned standards associated with the urban way of life. I follow Öncü’s (2002) use of the term arabesk to refer to this in-betweeness in a general way, not the more specific definition that emphasizes the masculinity of the dolmuş and taxi drivers, the world of cassettes where the arabesk music is situated. She argues that the
connotations with the term have expanded in the 1980s to the newly emergent wealth in Istanbul, and that in the 1990s it has become an all-encompassing metaphor to describe and identify “a general malaise which seemed to plague every aspect of life in Turkish society” (2002:185–186). Furthermore, the dominant definitions of arabsêk have changed considerably. Perhaps the distinction between “black Turks” (siyah or kara Türkler) and “white Turks” (beyaz Türkler), discussed in the following chapter on neoliberal Turkey, is the latest sway (see Ferguson 2014; White 2013:47), characteristic of the specific conditions of the 1990s. Ultimately, the masses and the elites, the rural migrants and the self-confessed urbanites, arabsêk and high culture, black and white Turks form a continuum of oppositions that refer to the hierarchy of value, to the formal and culturally intimate understandings of modernity. Often the tone and the context are enough to condense complex meanings into simple oppositions – everybody will understand who are “us” and “them” when the sociocultural divisions arise in the course of daily life.

RULES OF THE PICNIC

One of the best examples of the debates that have carried on through decades concerns appropriate dress and behaviour in public spaces, especially in parks and public beaches. The stereotypes are so strong that they have acquired a life of their own and cannot be dissolved easily. Mine Kırıkkanat, a well-known columnist and writer, sparked the debate once again after her derogatory column, titled *Halkımız eğleniyor* (“Our People/Folk Are Having a Good Time”) in the mainstream newspaper *Radikal* in 2005. In the piece, she describes the scene of a picnic on a beach in a way that brings up the opposed sections of Turkish society in a brutal way:

Men in their underwear rest ruminating, women wearing black chadors or headscarves are brewing tea, swinging their babies, fanning the barbecue […] our dark people cooking meat by the sea that they turn their [behinds] toward […] Here it is impossible to find one single family grilling fish. Well, if they liked fish, and if they knew how to grill it, they would not be just lying there in their dirty undershirts, underpants and long johns; they would not ruminate and belch; and they would not in any case be this chubby, short-legged, long-armed, and this hairy!86 (translation in Ozkan 2008:101)

The column caused uproar and has also been discussed in academic settings (Özkan 2008, Stoetzer 2014),87 perhaps because it exposes a side of Turkey

87 Özkan gives a detailed description of the history of the beach, its uses and the following public debates while Stoetzer considers the story in comparison to the criticism on barbecuing in Tiergarten Park of Berlin.
that is ubiquitous in daily life but difficult to discuss in a sensible way. The column, in all of its intended nastiness, has clearly hit on a nerve of a public debate as a dimension of cultural intimacy, dark secret of the divided nation, ready to resurface at times when the tensions boil over. The quote above reads like recapitulation of the binary opposites of the country, many dating back to the birth of the Republic but ultimately finding their expressive power in the encounter of the rural and the urban in the antagonistic spaces of Istanbul. The following are the archetypal characteristics of the divisions, recognized by everyone very soon after moving into Istanbul. Here, I will briefly clarify the dichotomies as a foundation for my own ethnographic examples.

First, there is reference to dress: men not sufficiently clad (wearing underwear – not swimming trunks – in public), women dressed inappropriately at the other end of the spectrum (covered in chadors or at least wearing headscarves). Next, Kırıkkalan moves to an age-old distinction in the city; the preference of the urbanites for fish, implicitly understood to be eaten accompanied with rakı, an alcoholic drink representing the urban sphere. The skillful grilling of fish is compared to fanning of the barbecue in “Carnivore Islamistan” (Etobur İslamistan), Anatolian anti-urbanity that has invaded the limits of the city (cf. Stoetzer 2014:81). The last sentences of the column extend the argument, the perceived failure of the migrants to adapt as their own fault, (“if they knew how to grill it [fish], they would not be just lying there”), a combination of negligence (wearing dirty clothes), inability to control their bodily movements (belching, ruminating [geviş getirmek means ruminating in the sense of chewing the cud, not ruminating on the nature of existence]), and, as being ill-formed, resembling monkeys, in the first place (“chubby, short-legged, long-armed and hairy!”).

I have come across people who have been just as rude with their depictions, arguing that all urbanites ultimately agree with them, but codes of cultural permissiveness prevent many from speaking their minds. This corresponded to a wider pattern that I encountered regularly: a view of contemporary urbanity as a compromise between irreconcilable elements, an abandonment of the Republican promise of incorporation. The result is a fragmented city where tension, suspicion and discrimination mark the encounters between different groups (see Ayata 2002:25). At the same time, it is widely acknowledged that there are really no alternatives. The situation is summarized very well in a commentary on public beach by Ali Çarkoğlu, a political scientist at the Sabancı University, following the debate initiated in Kırıkkalan’s column and picked up by Washington Post: “The people who were baking there were the prime establishment of Istanbul, imitating perhaps the French Riviera at the time, and they did not have to worry about the Anatolian newcomers […] but times have changed. Now they don’t own
this place. They don’t even own the intellectual space. So they’re going to have to live with this, I’m afraid.”

A similar dynamic of invasion, in this case concerning not just a particular location but more complex flows of people, characterized a brief discussion I had with Veli about the changing geography of the city. We were talking about the expansion of Istanbul’s public transportation system and how some of the destinations would thus be easier to reach. I told him that I was happy about the planned connection across the Golden Horn that would make travel from the Atatürk Airport to Beyoğlu a much smoother experience. He agreed with me about the travel time but was slightly reserved about the news. He pointed out that this will also make it easier for people living in the massive housing projects to come to Istiklal Street, especially in the evenings. It was clear to me that he was referring particularly to groups of young men who were blamed for all kinds misbehaviour in the area. “What I am saying,” Veli begun in a slightly hesitant manner, “is that in the future people can jump directly from a seedy bar in Aksaray to Istiklal Street. There will be much more harassment of women and street fights.” He paused for a while and contemplated the right words: “I mean, of course everyone has a right to come here. We cannot stop people from coming – I just think that this will lead into problems and I have no idea what would be the solution.” Afterwards, he said that he had brought up the issue because his friend had been harassed by this kind of group but that this, naturally, should not have been basis for wider generalization.

In these cases, arabesk identity was assigned to large groups of people whose presence in specific spaces pointed at a potential problem. They were lumped into a uniform category that represented the menacing side of Turkish modernity, an ever-present danger of corrupting its course. Next, I wish to discuss how these distinctions operate in the actual encounters between people in Beyoğlu. The following examples from my fieldwork stress the everyday realities of identifying the societal divisions and acting on their basis. As will be clear, occasionally the outcomes might be surprising for all the participants.

APPEARANCE AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

At a very basic level, linguistic competence is one of the most significant ways to show one’s urbanity. Many of my informants, especially from the lower-income neighbourhoods, were very good at imitating different accents, a surprising feat especially for those who had learned Turkish

during their military service or after moving to Istanbul at an adult age. Of course, my accent with its idiosyncrasies was a constant source for jokes. Linguistic competence was, however, also a much more serious matter. The seriousness was related to how linguistic hierarchies were realized in the daily conduct of life in a socioculturally mixed area like Beyoğlu. I was once waiting for an interviewee in one of the more stylish cafes in the backstreets of Beyoğlu when an approximately fifty-year old man with a large moustache and a thick eastern accent walked in and asked for directions to a place nearby. A waitress by the bar answered to him very loudly in unintelligible murmur and stared at him in an aggressive way. The man left in an abrupt manner without saying anything. Later, I overheard the waitress complaining to the others working in the place: “What do we need to do to stop them coming here? It should be clear from the door that we do not sell kebab or kokoreç.” If nohutlu pilav represents the untainted rural Turkey, kokoreç, a spicy dish made of lamb intestines, captures the cultural intimacy of arabesk better than any other. Again, the food as a signifier of origins, values and mentalities repeats itself in practices of inclusion and exclusion.

I came across a similar, albeit a more ambiguous situation about linguistic proficiency a couple of months later when I thought I had learned these distinctions pretty well. This time I was with Okan, a recent friend of mine who had just graduated from a university-level engineering course. My attempts of mixing circles of friends, by no means an easy task in any country, had not always worked too harmoniously and I had learned to be cautious when introducing people from different backgrounds to each other. Okan did not fit very well into the stereotypical definitions of the elites and the masses; he came from a relatively wealthy family in Izmir, spoke very good English and had travelled widely. A couple of years younger than me, he had participated in the emerging, nowadays very prominent, Erasmus student activities in the city. He often told me in very pragmatic terms that the Erasmus connections enabled him to build networks throughout Europe but had also helped him to find some of his best friends. Always dressed very stylishly, he, nonetheless, did not look like people identifying with Beyoğlu’s subcultural elites. He preferred to live in recently renovated house in the district of Eyüp, famous mostly as a centre for historical Islamic sites, but also catering for the middle-classes. At the same time, he enjoyed the bars around the Istiklal area and one was guaranteed to came across new acquaintances when spending time with him.

We had just climbed up the hill to Istiklal Street from the seashore when Didem called me and asked me to come to pick up a CD she had compiled. She was drinking beer with friends in a nearby club, famous of its

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89 The Erasmus Programme is a very popular student exchange programme between universities across Europe. For details, see http://www.erasmusprogramme.com/
uncompromising indie rock performances and a variety of DJs, from the outside not too different from the adjacent establishments, but one that had acquired a status of a subcultural hub for a group of Istanbulites. At first, Okan was happy to meet some of my friends; we had gotten to know each other only a few days ago when he sat in the same table while I was writing field notes in a bar nearby. When he heard the name of the place we were going to, he began to hesitate, told me that he has to make some phone calls and that we could meet after I come back. We started to discuss the matter – the exchange about the calls was just a polite way of checking if both are happy to talk about the real issues – and Okan told me that the bouncer had not let him in when he had gone to the club with some foreign women. I told him that I was surprised to hear this for he did not correspond to the stereotype of a troublemaker. He said that he could not care less about the people running the place and suggested that we go to check out what happens.

We went to the door and to my surprise the doorman stopped Okan and asked him bluntly where he wants to go. I felt the need to interfere as the doorman also recognized me and looked at me for an explanation. I told him that Okan was a friend of mine and we will go upstairs to meet my friends. He let us in but the atmosphere had changed. We continued upstairs and sat at the table with Didem and two of her friends. The encounter began in a friendly way but I could sense some sort of caution on both sides. To my surprise, Okan switched to English immediately after sitting down (we generally spoke Turkish with each other). Didem knew English but her two artist friends, Batuhan and Neşe, knew only the basics. I tried to lighten up the mood by saying that I will be happy to speak the worst Turkish in the room but this did not alter the state of affairs. Neşe, in turn visibly disturbed by the situation, asked Okan what he does for living. He told her that he had just graduated and would work as an engineer for a big Turkish company. Okan followed by asking about her work and she answered very politely that she is an artist, specializing in multimedia installations. Okan interrupted the exchange at once and declared in a relatively aggressive way that I had not encountered before, nor ever after this occasion, that he had absolutely no idea what her words meant, nor interest to learn. It was clearly the time to pick up my CD and leave with Okan.

What surprised me the most was that there was almost no aftermath subsequent to the encounter. Once we had walked out, Okan said laughing that I should never take him back to this place and that I should be careful not to become like my friends inside. The next time I met Didem, she was rather amused about what happened and surprised of my new acquaintance and his behaviour. She interpreted Okan’s choice of speaking English as rude towards me, as offence against my Turkish, by no means perfect but
relatively fluent. For her, Okan was just in a wrong place and did not know how to behave. Not a big deal (bir şey değil).

These two examples point at the centrality of appearance and linguistic competence as related to modernity and the limits of urban diversity. The use of regional accents and different languages acts as a tactical way to establish solidarities across the whole spectrum of groups, ranging from those created in ephemeral encounters to ones that reflect the strongest sentiments of belonging. The examples are ultimately about the global hierarchy of value. The local and global hierarchies have clashed before, their clashes have taken different shapes, situated in the framework of shifting power relations, but also reflected the tactics of the everyday, realized in occurrences that utilize the classifications in unpredictable ways. The diversity has also a spatial dimension; both Okan and Didem told me that they found the heterogeneity of the Western cities exciting and fascinating (see Ayata 2002 for similar reactions in a middle-class housing estate [site]) while in Istanbul the surprise encounters between different elements were associated with unpredictability and tension.

When I discussed the incident at the club later with other people, they unanimously agreed that the most probable cause for the doorman’s behaviour was based on gender dynamics. The idea of someone unalike the other customers, no matter how well-dressed and well-behaved, coming to the place would need to have predatory intentions. On Okan’s side, the prejudices were on the side of the patrons and clientele, who did not recognize him as an equal because he did not conform to a particular subcultural type. Misunderstandings like this are very common and have made a sense of urban belonging problematic. The waitress mumbling pejoratively to someone who she thinks is lower class is a blow below the belt, a gesture of humiliation on one’s own turf, that sets a clear boundary, in the manner of the times of the early Anatolian migration, of the separate worlds that the migrants and the urbanites inhabited. Okan’s case portrays many of the same themes but includes much more complex dynamics of power, drawing from the same principles, but getting lost from the paramount trajectories in the midst of intricate dividing lines.

It is correct to identify the key symbols of Republican urban sphere as alcohol and open display of women’s hair, in contrast to abstention and covering, that serve as markers of the lower-class or village origin (White 2009:5). We can also define the culture of the uncouth masculinity (maganda) as a hybrid formation born in the interaction between the gecekondus and the urban centre (Öncü 2002). Most of the Turks acknowledge the generalized nature and redundancy of these categories but, nonetheless, keep using them to make sense of urban diversity. I consider them as reflecting a specific historical consciousness of modernity,
influenced by different periods and re-emerging in varied contexts. The ideas of the era of “populist modernity” influence the urban encounters in significant ways but they are nowadays located in the world that is very different from the conditions of their initial development. Next, I will discuss the qualities of what can be called the emergence of neoliberal Turkey, the period covering years from the military coup of 1980 until this day.
Chapter 7:
The Emergence of Neoliberalism and Post-Kemalist Turkey

The time after the military coup of 1980 has been described as “casting aside a period” and a “beginning of a new age” (Ahiska and Yenal 2006:8), a period of economic restructuring that made Istanbul the “capitalist” capital of the country (Tokatli and Boyaci 1999:187), and an era of “epochal and totalizing transformation” (Öncü 2002:173), but many of the radical changes reflect back on the fundamental concerns that have resurfaced at different points of history. In the 1980s, Turgut Özal, Prime Minister of Turkey (1983–1989), would declare that the country had “skipped an epoch” (çağ atlamak) in its modernization, “implying that the reforms that were implemented were irreversible and that Turkey had been firmly placed on the path of continuing liberalisation and progress” (Kasaba 2008:1). In their emphasis on novelty, the expressions, nevertheless, resemble considerably the rhetoric of the early Republic, especially its goal of “closing the gap with civilized countries” (Ahiska and Yenal 2006:160).

The flood of foreign influences in the form of commodities, images and sounds gave birth to increased differentiation through consumption, saw the emergence of a concept of lifestyle (yaşam tarzı, yaşam stili) and transformed many of the established boundaries and hierarchies of the city (Ahiska and Yenal 2006:5, Öncü 2002:173). The typically postmodern emphasis on consumption choices as the prime matter of identity politics, out of which the real political changes will derive, has become increasingly criticized (see especially Graeber 2001:x–xii), but, in my view, it cannot be ignored completely. More than anything, it represents consciousness of a new era with its different practices of self-creation, perhaps masking ideological processes but nevertheless experienced as real. Öncü describes the shift as diversification on several grounds, not restricted to the foreign imports:

In the 1980s, when the inhabitants of Istanbul were introduced to McDonald hamburgers, Toblerone chocolate and Italian pizzas, they also got to know hamsili kebap, the taste of Kayseri manti, red cabbage, and the distinct flavours of Urfa, Antep and Bursa kebaps. They adopted the image of an
Istanbul that linked past and present, opening its arms to the various cultures of the last 1500 years. (in Robins and Aksoy 1995:228)

While conducting my fieldwork, the common experience of the impoverished precariat and the middle-class urbanites was of increased fragmentation of their life-worlds, unpredictable future with shifting senses of belonging, combined with constant insecurity of the achievements disappearing into thin air.

In my analysis, the emphasis is on the awareness of the value assigned to urbanity, not defined as a singular concept, but an array of sociocultural dimensions specific to a life in a megalopolis. It shares foundations with Simmel’s *Metropolis and Mental Life* (1976 [1903]); combination of blasé and relentless eye for detail; Berman's strange mixture of reality and fantasy, the message of the street as a whole (1982:196), the shared experience of being together, even if only stuck in an endless traffic jam (2006:xxii), or, as my friend Ridvan put it, having one foot in the city centre to know what's happening in the world. In the manner of my analysis of the previous periodizations, the focus here is not on the properties of an isolated subject, but on encounters, both with the abstract principles of modernity and the actual encounters of people in the city, involving persistent traits of cultural intimacy, reactions to “relocation of Istanbul in the national imaginary” (Stokes 2010:151), organized again and again through metaleptic acts of communication. In order to understand the specificities of this period, it is best to begin with a discussion of societal changes and definitions associated with neoliberalism. I will discuss them in the light the AKP’s rise to power, new social fault lines created by neo-Ottomanism and the shift in the role of the military in twenty-first century Turkey.

**Neoliberal Configuration in Istanbul and Turkey**

In many ways, Istanbul has followed the course of de-industrialized global cities around the world. Its service sectors and culture industries have become increasingly prominent, albeit employing less people than in New York or London (Keyder 2010:26), and there are ambitious plans to create new urban centres, often involving radical restructuring, both to the east and west of the city centre (Sudjic 2009:4). At the same time, Istanbul's urban space remains polarized: its central area is becoming unattainable for poorer segments of society and its peripheries resemble small Anatolian towns (Keyder 2008:521). In the political sphere, Republican modernity has become increasingly challenged by political Islam and global currents of capitalism, not necessarily hostile to one another, but, as I will suggest,
presenting together an exemplary case to understand Turkey’s neoliberal configuration.

In its most widely spread usage, the term neoliberalism (neoliberalizm) refers to free-market capitalism, “belief in the ontological primacy of market economic frames of reference as a way of acting within the economy and the state” (Atasöy 2009:19), or, on a more concrete level, “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005:2). In Turkey, the term is usually used with reference to global questions of the directions capitalism has taken. At the time of my fieldwork, its use was restricted mostly to discussions in the social sciences but it has later gained prominence in other contexts, especially after the Gezi Park protests. I wish to ask here how neoliberalism, as a set of historically emerging tendencies, a distinct sense of self and a set of attitudes towards modernity, redefines historical narratives and shifts Turkey’s relative location.

Helga Leitner’s characterization of neoliberalism at the level of the subject summarizes these tendencies excellently: “logics of individualism and entrepreneurialism, equating individual freedom with self-interested choices, making individuals responsible for their own well-being, and redefining citizens as consumers and clients” (2007:1–2). These transformations are, of course, closely tied to macro-economic policies but have also surprising connections with culturally intimate sociocultural categories. The change from a state-dominated and protectionist model of modernization to the market-led one has brought up new conceptual frameworks of belonging, related especially to religion, often adopted enthusiastically by people who have been in power during both periods (Atasöy 2009, Özyürek 2006). In addition to new rules and regulations, neoliberal attitudes have altered senses of nostalgia and relationships towards history (Özyürek 2006:8), social hierarchies related to consumption patterns and, most importantly with regard to this study, produced new kinds of encounters that have redrawn the urban boundaries and redefined modernity and Turkey’s position in the global scale.

AFTER THE 1980 COUP – THE RISE OF ISLAMIC POLITICS

If the birth of the Republic in 1923 symbolically marked the boundary between two epochs, and the victory of the Democrat Party in the 1950 parliamentary elections was another important watershed between the old and the new, the 1980 military coup defines the rupture in another novel way. In brief, the violence between left-wing and right-wing factions had left over 5,000 dead and nearly 20,000 wounded in the two years before the coup d’etat, initiated by the military (Çağlar 1990:79). It is noteworthy that the
Chief of the General Staff, General Kenan Evren, used the metaphor of a sick body in relation to Turkey to describe the crisis: “If sickness is not diagnosed, proper medication cannot be prescribed. Because proper medication had not been administered, sickness spread through the entire body. At this point, the Turkish Armed Forces, with the power delegated by the people, had to intervene once again to initiate medical treatment” (in Ahiska and Yenal 2006:43). The nation as a living body, subject to operations to keep it healthy, is a recurrent theme in the Republican narrative – still very prominent among nationalists (see especially White 2013). I will argue below that this sense of unity has given way to fragmentation and unbridgeable divisions, associated with neoliberal politics.

The coup was followed by three years of military rule and a new constitution in 1982, before Turgut Özal’s Motherland Party (ANAP) won a majority in the election and he became the Prime Minister in 1983. This marked a change in the political culture of the nation. The simultaneously neoliberal and conservative strain of the new government is summarized by Andrew Mango as a change in the paramount values of the Republic: “to serve the state as a soldier or an administrator was the proper career for a gentleman. Özal gave social status to moneymaking” (2004:86). The new administration was at first increasingly critical of religious sensibilities: for example, in line with the Republican tradition of micro-politics through control of appearances, government employees were ordered to remove all facial hair (Kandiyoti 1997:124). However, the radical varieties of the politics at the left–right spectrum were the principal concern and gradually the administration allowed more room for religious expression. This had an impact on the position of the Anatolian segments within the urban sphere; first transformed from authentic peasants to corrupt hybrids, contaminated by the arabesk culture, the cultural hierarchy was about change again. The Anatolians, previously forcefully separated from their histories, institutions, beliefs, identities and cultures, started to concentrate on them with a renewed vigour (Kasaba 1997:16). The increasingly wealthy pious populations expressed their values, formerly restricted into the privacy of their homes, in the form of newly established hotels with sex-segregated pools, restaurants which did not serve alcohol and through Islamic media and fashion (Özyürek 2006:97–98). This signified yet another sense of modernity, the prerogative to participate in its global reach from an Islamic position.

The changed atmosphere reached also the impoverished and squatter neighbourhoods where the Republican People’s Party (CHP), associated with the values of Atatürk, secular Republic and social democracy, began to lose hold for the Islamic parties such as the Welfare Party (RP) and its successor.
the Virtue Party (FP), whose political preferences were closer to those of the migrants (Kirişci 2008:189). The neoliberal reforms of the Özal government would, however, be abandoned shortly after a spirited entry into a new epoch. Kasaba summarizes the 1990s as a “a decade of protracted paralysis, prompting at least one analyst to describe the 1990s as ‘the years that the locust hath eaten’” (2008:1). The instability of the governments, widespread corruption and dependency on foreign investment ultimately led into an economic crisis in 2001, a year that also signalled a profound change in the political sphere.

THE AKP AND THE BLACK TURKS

The Justice and Development Party (AKP), founded in 2001, won the 2002 elections with over one third of the national vote and has maintained its position as the largest party for the following 13 years with a very successful combination emphasizing its Islamic roots and populist orientation to politics. The values promoted by the AKP highlight the themes that have been at the heart of Turkish politics throughout the modern period but the party has shifted some of their emphases in crucial ways. A quote outlining the aims of the party, from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the founder of the AKP, the Prime Minister of Turkey from 2003 to 2014, the leader of the party until 2014, and currently the President of Turkey, illustrates the closeness of its values to those promoted by Atatürk:

The reproduction of our own authentic value systems on the basis of our deeply rooted ideational tradition, along with the universal standards adopted within a conservative political orientation. (Akdoğan in Atasöy 2009:10, translation by Atasöy, italics in the original)

On a surface level, the emphasis on authenticity and universal standards could be from an early Republican speech, stressing the glorious past of the Turks and the universal criteria of civilization to be achieved. However, on a closer look, the categories of belonging are reorganized according to a very different, distinctively post-Kemalist sense of modernity.

I use the term post-Kemalism to refer to a country that is increasingly questioning its Kemalist heritage: the strict secularism, preeminence of military and strong ideology of nationalism. The shift is expressed in the rhetoric of the quote above. First, there is ambiguity over the “deeply rooted ideational tradition” and “universal standards”: in Kemalist terms, the first would refer to Turkic origins in Central Asia and the second to Western, Enlightenment-influenced modernity. While the AKP is not strictly opposed

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90 After the ban of the Constitutional Court in 2001, the party split into strongly Islamist Felicity Party (SAADET) and reformist AKP.
to these definitions of authenticity and modernity, its focus has been more selective. Jenny White outlines the AKP’s projected values with an aim to establish “an idealized Muslim community set within democratic, secular (but not laicist) system of governance” (2013:176). This sense of belonging is based on taking part in the Muslim community (ümmet) while still being ethnic Turk and embracing modernity as democracy and secularism – but opposing the Republican administration’s elitism and antidemocratic practices. Erdoğan has himself referred to the relationship between Islam and democracy in a way that highlights his pragmatist populism: “Islam is a religion; democracy is a way of ruling. You can’t compare the two. We just want to increase the happiness of the people” (in Pope 2012).

The AKP has reshuffled the hierarchies of value in Turkey on different levels. On a macro-level, its identification with the borders of the Ottoman Empire and aspiration to play more substantial role as leader in regional developments has marked a shift in the relative location of the country. While this orientation has become more pronounced in the later years of its rule, it is also important to remember that the AKP started with a very strong pro-EU stance. The neo-Ottoman current of its politics has been balanced vis-à-vis Turkey’s integration with Europe. On a smaller scale, referring to Istanbul’s spatial relations, Erdoğan has emphasized his origins in its mahalles, and, thus, himself as natural protector of their inhabitants. Of the four pre-eminent politicians to rule Turkey after the World War II, only Adnan Menderes came from a relatively wealthy family of landowners. While his successors, Süleyman Demirel and Turgut Özal came from modest provincial backgrounds, Erdoğan was the first one born in Istanbul, in 1954, in an impoverished neighbourhood of Kasımpaşa, next to Tarlabası and almost across the road from the Istiklal area. This has allowed him to tie his politics intimately to the classificatory practices of urban Istanbul.

The rift between the elites and the masses has been revitalized in Erdoğan’s politics but he no longer addresses the separate communities of Anatolian villagers or the recently arrived peasants on their way to urbanity and modernity in gecekondu settlements. The division between arabesk and high culture has shifted into Black Turks (siyah or kara Türkler) and White Turks (beyaz Türkler), with Erdoğan associating himself and his party on the side of an “average Turk.” Michael Ferguson describes this strategy as “a staple of his self-branding as the great outsider, disinterested and removed from the politics of twentieth-century single-party rule and corruption, just a simple man trying to get things done for Turkey” (2014:79). According to Erdoğan, Black Turks have been suffering from discrimination in a society characterized by unequal opportunities but now, as his own example would show, the time for change has come and the upward social mobility would be determined by anyone’s own actions, not by the circumstances of their birth.
This has led to populist divisive politics instead of coalition-building, perhaps a strategic move by the party to secure electoral victories, summarized simply but very effectively by Erdoğan: “In this country there are White Turks, as well as Black Turks. Your Brother Tayyip [Erdoğan] is from the Black Turks” (in Ferguson 2014:79). However, not everyone felt included into this new category. My informants living in the impoverished mahalles connected his proposed revival of more authentic and just Turkey into the chain of betrayals and unfulfilled political promises.

FOOLING THE POPULACE – THE CASE OF ELECTIONS AND REFRIGERATORS

Ridvan was particularly disturbed by the recent events before the local elections in March 2009. Like most of my friends, he experienced party politics as somewhat distant from his everyday life, in his own words as “something that you could relate to only when you have an adequate salary and possessions.” He was not too interested in differences between the political parties and had developed a distrustful attitude towards the promises of the politicians. He had seen the discussions of reforms and improvements resurfacing consistently before the elections but being forgotten soon afterwards. Most of all, he was angry and disappointed of the false promises of modernity, for him a cynical game carried out to fool the ignorant voters.

There had just been news of the AKP’s aggressive campaigning in the Eastern Anatolian province of Tunceli that caught the attention of the media. The government had initiated a campaign to distribute household appliances worth millions of dollars to its inhabitants, on the basis of providing access to basic necessities. The items consisted of a wide variety but the campaign became quickly identified with refrigerators, often donated to households cut off from the electric grid. For Ridvan, this was an insult, intricately tied to his sense of modernity. Interestingly, he saw the act as redrawing the societal fault lines. The people who had managed to rise into power were now abusing their privilege by buying votes, repeating the populist patterns of the dominant parties before, only to secure their re-election. Despite the criticism, he said that the scheme would probably work because the villagers and the small-town folk would not understand the meaning of politics. He also stated that before the AKP other parties had only had a minimal contact with people outside the cities. Our discussion in front of my home was interrupted by an Islamist Felicity Party (SAADET) campaign van, circling around Tophane with a catchy tune blaring from its speakers. Ridvan was just as cynical of their promises: he claimed angrily that this was another

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example of a party that used religion to acquire high societal positions: if they would ever win, they would retreat back to their own networks and secure favours for one another.

We carried on the discussion that soon extended outside the boundaries of villages and mahalles. According to Ridvan, the European Union accession talks were part of the same plot to buy votes with false promises. Everyone who would stop to think for a moment would know that the plan was unrealistic, and the politicians knew it too. He used the example of the Ottoman army at the Gates of Vienna, still a very common trope in Turkey, as an event from which Europe had still not recovered. For Ridvan, it was this narrative that still constructed Turkey as an enemy among the globally dominant powers. The promises of membership were giving false hope for people who dreamed about moving to Western Europe. If handing out fridges was pure corruption, the promise of EU accession was just another slightly more sophisticated way of fooling the people. He said that the AKP had thus constructed its own Black Turks while claiming to be their brothers and representatives. Ridvan finished by saying that this was not modern (modern) politics – urbanites would be aware of these contradictions.

For people like Ridvan, despite their humble backgrounds and low levels of education, support for a political party would not be defined by straightforward identification with its declared values, nor on self-interested individual choices. The question was about recognition and dignity. Even if the actions of the parties were not identified as explicitly neoliberal, the perceived ethos of selfishness and constant competition for profits in the short term were very close to definitions of neoliberal governance. Living in Istanbul had enabled him to see behind the empty rhetoric, unlike people who lived in small villages, out of touch with what is happening in the wider world. Nonetheless, what kept him feeling even more alienated from politics was the lack of alternatives – the authoritarian modernity of the Kemalist military-state was even worse than the deceptive populism of the AKP. He saw Kemalists largely through their connection with the military, an institution whose position had altered significantly in recent times.

A CHOICE BETWEEN THE AKP AND THE MILITARY

The increased freedom of religious practices in the 1990s was countered by the military on February 28, 1997, in what has been labelled “Postmodern coup” ("post-modern darbe"), a bloodless campaign concerted by the military with an aim to penalize businesses financing political Islam and restrict its role in society, especially in education (Mango 2004:96). The action led to resignation of the Welfare Party Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (1996–1997), paving the way for the victories of the AKP in 2002. For many of my informants, when conducting my fieldwork in 2008–2009, the postmodern
coup marked the last successful intervention by the military; after that the scales had turned for the AKP’s favour. The clashes between the military and the AKP government continued over the “e-memorandum” (“e-muhtıra”) controversy over the presidential election of Abdullah Gül in 2007. In this occasion, the age-old pattern over the control of appearances in public space, showcasing Turkey’s relationship to modernity, was raised again.

The attention focussed on the türban-style headscarf worn by Gül’s wife, a choice (and a statement) that the military objected to by publishing a note on its website. The wording gave clear suggestion that the boundaries of secularist modernity had been crossed: “Loyalty to the Republican regime must be demonstrated through action, not on the surface but in essence” (Genelkurmay Baskanlığı 27 April 2007, in Atasöy 2009:4, translated by Atasöy). Ersel Aydınlı identifies a different attitude towards the military after the 1997 coup, suggesting decreasing trust towards the institution and its increased non-hierarchical initiatives, in comparison to the powerful homogeneous force that organized the 1980 coup (2011:228). The e-memorandum, regarded by large segments of Turkish society as excessive and inappropriate, contributed negatively to the military’s image (230–231). This was followed shortly by series of trials associated with the clandestine organization named Ergenekon, with a supposed aim to bring down the AKP government. Many of the military officers were put on trial and received lengthy prison sentences in 2013. At the time of writing, the latest development in the relations between the AKP and the military has been the sentencing of Kenan Evren, the leader of the 1980 military coup, to life imprisonment in June 2014. Here, I am summarizing very complex historical developments in a few sentences because the focus of my study is not on the assessment of politics per se, but on how the changes are entangled with the formation of a specific historical consciousness of the everyday. The latest developments signified a sense of the beginning of a new era, another break with the past, perhaps even more volatile but no longer dominated by the threat of military dictatorship.

EXPERIENCES OF MILITARY SERVICE

Before moving on to assess in detail how the neo-Ottoman position has challenged the dominant Republican understanding of Turkish modernity, I want to show how different attitudes towards the military in present-day Turkey utilize metaleptic operations to comment on its role. The following experiences of Osman and Şivan take several principles of Turkish modernity from different times together and provide yet another way to combine them. They point at the persistence of the early Republican narrative of the military as the champion of secular Turkey.
At the time of my fieldwork, Osman was struggling with the inevitable reality of compulsory military service, a duty for all Turkish males. Like many others with higher education and lucrative job prospects, he had managed to deter his military service for years, but now he had no alternatives left. He was most afraid of the uncertainty and had no idea where he would be drafted to. In Turkey, the military has adopted a practice of often making those from the big cities to serve in the peripheral outposts and, vice versa, assigning rural Turks to urban environments. I asked him whether he was afraid and was somewhat surprised by his reaction. Instead of reflecting on his feelings, he brought up his ethnic origins as an important quality. “I have told you several times that I come from a Tartar family. We are the true Turkic nomads, not like the sedentary Turks who now control this country.” He then connected his origins to personal characteristics: “We are also different from the majority in that we still act like nomads; we are not frightened easily and we adapt fluently to constantly changing environments. We are the original Turkish warriors that have now been sidelined by people who claim to be authentic Turks. I would be happy to serve in a real Turkish army but not in one ruled by these idiots.”

Following this, Osman pointed out how the nomadic past is used “politically” – “Every Turk is born a soldier” (“her Türk asker doğar”) is a common phrase, found in everyday discussions, school textbooks and used as a drill slogan in military service (Altınıay 2004:13; White 2013:3). He uttered these words full of contempt in reference to his own situation. They were usually associated with courage and self-reliance when facing threat or opposition, but could also be used to communicate disappointment at a nation that would cling to its corrupt stereotypes and send its men to inhospitable locations for what, in the opinion of many, was waste of time. At the same time, he connected the exemplary origins of his ancient roots with qualities of quick adaptation and individual daring necessary in the contemporary world. The narrative rested on the modernist principles of Republican Turkey but, simultaneously, accused the people in power of corrupting the Turkish essence. This was very different from Şivan’s understanding of the military, an institution he related to in more practical terms.

Şivan expressed his relationship towards the military by balancing between personal experiences and widely shared narratives of the most fundamental categories of belonging. He shared stories of the violent acts committed by the military in his youth, culminating in the evacuation of his village. After having been humiliated by its soldiers, he was called for military service. On one of our first ever discussions, he raised the issue of military service. Usually calm and a bit reserved, especially when expected to talk about himself, Şivan became very agitated, called military service a form of slavery and said that the period, in his case over a year of service, had
been the worst of his life. In his group, there were clear divisions; some people were getting preferential treatment and the others, especially the Kurds, were being treated like animals. He pointed at the fundamental division that became apparent on his first day of service. Most of the Kurds in his group could only speak basic Turkish and Şivan thought that they had been intentionally grouped together. They would then be shouted at by the officers and allocated menial tasks, to remind them, as well as the others, constantly of their status.

According to Şivan, the experience had made him to lose his faith in the Turkish nation; all the promises of the politicians would not make any difference if this kind of behaviour was allowed. After telling me of the inhumane conditions, he said that he did not want to carry on talking about the matter; he was now done with it and wanted to have as little as possible to do with the military, or the state for that matter. He was deservedly proud for landing on a job at the real estate agency, with good (and later attained) prospects for a better position, of learning relatively good Turkish and basic English and cultivating his streetwise personality, feeling at home within the community-oriented life in Tarlabası, as well as in the urban bustle of the Istiklal area. In the neoliberal spirit of contemporary Istanbul, he considered himself close to an entrepreneur who had achieved his position despite the antagonistic policies of the Turkish state, symbolized by its military, without compromising his authentic sense of self.

The cases of Osman and Şivan point at the metaleptic operations combining the culturally intimate understandings of history with the grand narratives of Republican Turkey. In the previous sections I have argued that the historical consciousness of modernity does not consist of a uniform set of practices, values and appearances that could be tested against an ideal model. Turkish modernity can be divided into different periods, each redefining societal boundaries with their distinct spheres of influence, hierarchies and promises. However, the influence of its previous configurations does not stop when a new era begins and they do not form a coherent evolutionary continuum. In the next section, I wish to conclude my discussion on Turkish modernity by showing how the dominant Republican narrative has been challenged with another one that prioritizes the Ottoman period as the authentic and exemplary sociocultural reality.

**Neo-Ottomanism and New Forms of Islam as Challenges to Dominant Hierarchies**

In the last sections, I have traced the themes of Turkish modernity mostly from the Republican viewpoint because both my informants and majority of
historical studies frame it according to the dominant reading. Even the most critical accounts of the topic have to deal with this authoritative position. However, the picture becomes richer with a look at the stances that prioritize the Ottoman and Islamic readings of history. I have referred to them in the previous chapters of the study in several different forms: the spatial order of the mahalles obstructing the modernization of the country, the plans to “reconquer” Taksim Square by building a new mosque and restoring the Ottoman-era military barracks, the shift of Turkey’s relative location with an emphasis on alliances with the former Ottoman dominions, and, how the sociocultural principles of the Ottoman era have been preserved and cultivated despite their forceful suppression by the state.

Here, I will examine the relatively new formation of neo-Ottomanism (Yeni Osmanlıcılık) as a case that sheds light on these dynamics. It emphasizes conscious appropriation of particular features and elements of the Ottoman times into the present-day conditions and is thus deeply integrated into the metaleptic operations of the modern self. Arguably, it rose into wider public recognition through Islamic politics, such as Necmettin Erbakan’s Millî Görüş (National View) movement, based on universalistic Islamic aspirations in the 1970s, and inspired several Islamic parties, often banned quickly after their foundation by the secular authorities. In the recent years, the emphasis on the formerly downplayed glories of the Ottoman Empire has been on the rise in imaginative ways, enforced especially by the political calls of the current President Erdoğan and Prime Minister Davutoğlu from the AKP. Neo-Ottomanism has brought together policy makers, intellectuals and popular movements looking for alternatives to what they see as the authoritarian and elitist character of the Kemalist values. It is important to note here, that the neo-Ottoman paradigm in the political sphere, distinct from its everyday understandings, should be seen as “essentially about projecting Turkey’s ‘soft power’ – a bridge between East and West, a Muslim nation, a secular state, a democratic political system, and a capitalistic economic force” (Taşpınar 2008:3) – not a straightforward “denial of achievements of Atatürk, but as a sign of reconciliation, normalization, and correction of excesses associated with radical Kemalism” (3). White summarizes the novel formation of Muslim nationalism as a distinctively post-imperial sensitivity acted out by a “pious Muslim Turk whose subjectivity and vision for the future is shaped by an imperial Ottoman past overlaid onto republican state framework, but divorced from the Kemalist state project” (2013:9). In my analysis, I will continue with the juxtaposition of official narratives with culturally intimate understandings.

I argue that the resurgent neo-Ottoman principles have challenged the official histories and reshaped the categories of Muslimhood. Jenny White
summarizes this theme excellently in an interview for the newspaper Today’s Zaman:

Muslimhood implies a different understanding of personhood. If you are a pious Muslim and you enter politics, the assumption is that you become an Islamist. But the theologians behind the Muslimhood model ask: "Why should that be so? Do Christian politicians become Christianists when they enter politics?"

According to this view, the category of pious Muslim has been extended to cover a wider sense of personhood, including novel connections to traditions. The past can be evaluated in a new light if it can be connected with the present in morally appropriate ways. The ideology of neo-Ottomanism has been popular among large segments of society, offering a desirable category of identification compatible with the contemporary conditions (Walton 2010).

REBIRTH OF THE EMPIRE

In everyday life, it is easy to fall under the charm of the grandeur of the Ottoman era. In Istanbul, its legacy is encountered on a daily basis: the monumental Ottoman mosques dominate the skyline, numerous fountains and tombs are scattered around the city, often in unexpected places, signifying the past era with descriptions in Ottoman Arabic script, indecipherable for the great majority of the inhabitants. There are also novel contexts that bring culturally intimate understandings of the past into the present: architectural styles with references to the Ottoman period have become increasingly popular (Walton 2010), there are fashion houses whose collections are influenced heavily by the Ottoman legacy, catering for both pious and secular publics (Gökariksel and Secor 2010, White 2002) and Ottoman-style food, especially in luxury settings and complemented with stories reflecting the bygone era, has hit Istanbul by the storm (Karaosmanoğlu 2009). It is often difficult to distinguish, especially in a country where the outward appearances have been strictly regulated and employ complex significations, where the boundary between superficial decoration and a moral or political message is drawn. Representations influenced by the Ottoman era cater for very different communities; some are drawn to them as ephemeral styles and fashions, others with archival interest of the period disregarded in Kemalist Turkey, and there is a group of people who take the social structure based on the Ottoman era and its Islamic principles much more seriously, as models for the creation of a better

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society. As a moral issue, connected to the qualities of the modern self, the question is largely about the rediscovery of an authentic tradition or, conversely, a sign of cultural decadence which can only bring forth “the simulacra of a dead past” (cf. Sahlins 2000:479).

Furthermore, the practices and appearances associated with the Ottoman Empire are not based on a uniform tradition of thought but combine and reinterpret Islamic and Ottoman histories, making use of categories that are without clear boundaries and subject to ferocious debates, especially when projected on realities of the present day. Among the people with just a little formal education, many ideas of Ottoman social fabric were based on vernacular accounts, popular newspapers and the rhetoric of the political parties advocating these positions. Their principles often resonated with moral qualities of dignified life. Of my key informants, Ahmet subscribed to many of these views but found it difficult to express them in a coherent manner. He aimed at more pious life in the city but both the exemplary past and the progressive future felt elusive to him: “The problem here is that so many people use Islam to advocate corrupt aims. We would need to establish a society that is law-abiding and just – I know it has never existed after the times of the prophet, but we would need to make it happen. The Ottomans tried but did not succeed.” I asked him what was wrong with the Ottoman model and he called it imperialist. He also felt that the epochs of the past cannot be replicated but would need to be updated to something completely new. Thus, the introjective and projective metaleptic operations worked hand in hand but did not result in a satisfying historical consciousness.

Ahmet added that he wants to live in an Islamic society but that does not mean Afghanistan's Taliban regime nor the Islamic Republic of Iran. Our discussion ended with Ahmet saying that he is just a village-boy in a big city – these things are too complicated for him and Turkey would need new leadership that knows how to take care of them. He would prefer several features associated with the Ottoman epoch, entangled in the folk histories of the era, but could not come up with a comprehensive model of a society. He, like my other informants living in impoverished conditions, associated Republican rule with the arbitrary power of the military and the police democracy as restricted to the upper echelons of the society and the others' complete entry to modernity still prevented by these constraints. To counter this, he saw the politics of the Ottoman era as more flexible in relation to minority identities and diversity within society. The notion of *millet*

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93 In 2009, the secular elites and the heads of military were seen as ones to receive most of the blame. On the basis of face-to-face meetings, Skype calls and comments in social media in 2009–2015, it seems that the focus has shifted significantly to seeing the AKP and President Erdoğan as responsible for the repression.
provided a fitting way to illustrate the relationship between written history and its tactical application to societal realities.

SOLIDARITY AND COMMUNITY IN THE OTTOMAN REALM

In Chapter 2, I described how Ahmet was perplexed by the Ottoman social mosaic he still imagined inhabiting the Greek and Jewish neighbourhoods of Fener and Balat. This *millet* system, as an abstract principle, has been embraced in contemporary times as a way to relate to the problems of coexistence, pluralism and democracy (see e.g. Akyol 2011). In the popular understandings that I encountered, it was the almost disappeared non-Muslim *millets* that especially influenced the present-day readings. The estimates\(^{94}\) suggest that by the 1980s the number of Armenians was down to 50,000, Jews to 25,000 and Greeks to between 2,000 and 3,000 (Keyder 2008:509) and the numbers have remained close to those levels (Kirişci 2008:183). According to the contemporary neo-Ottoman view, found in everyday discussions, political programs and academic discussions (see Taşpınar 2008 for an analysis of different positions), the *millets* represent the harmonious multiculturalism of the Ottoman times, as the solution to contemporary problems of cultural difference despite the fact that most people from the model communities have left long ago.

In addition to religious communities, Ahmet connected the *millet* solidarities to regional specialization. He would often refer to these stereotypical qualities to make his point about someone. The Thracians had the best sense of humour in Turkey and were closer to the West in their manners; the Laz of the Black Sea coast had shrewd business instincts and dominated the construction industries, the Kurds were strict about questions of honour. In a similar manner, Mango traces the occupational specialization as continuum from the Ottoman era:

This [Ottoman] mosaic was gradually destroyed by nationalists in the nineteenth century. Almost all Christians are gone, but there are still traces of ethnic and regional specialization: sailors come predominantly from the Black Sea coast; the central Anatolian town of Kayseri keeps alive Armenian skills in trade; people of Caucasian origin are prominent in senior military ranks; heavy manual labour often falls to the lot of the Kurds. (Mango 2004:18)

It goes without saying that most countries have powerful stereotypes of their different regions. However, in Turkey, this was a constant fact encountered in everyday life. Just as many buildings – even whole blocks or streets – in neighbourhoods like Tarlabaşı accommodated people originating from same region, many of the jobs were also organized to a large degree according regional principles. For example, a stereotype that corresponds to reality is

\(^{94}\) Turkish censuses have not included ethnic or religious background since 1965.
that people selling stuffed mussels (midiye dolma) in the streets of Istanbul are from Mardin (Ahiska and Yenal 2006:134). Most of the smaller enterprises dealing with construction and renovation consist, based in my experience, from people originating from the same area and many other businesses would pay attention to regional origins when employing people – resulting in practices of inclusion as well as exclusion. When I once asked Ahmet what he thinks about the future of Istanbul in these terms, whether the long-established categories of belonging are going to wither away in increasingly globalized Turkey, he denied the possibility: “I have relatives living in Germany and the Kurds there are united like a family, it is something you cannot take away. Without my family and friends in the mahalle I would be scared to death of Istanbul. I just could not live here and I do not understand why you come here alone. I understand that you can keep in contact with your relatives using the Internet but for me that would be impossible way of life.”

For Ahmet, just like to many others in the earlier examples of cultural intimacy, these were inescapable realities: the categories from ethnicity to religion, from clan (aşiret) to village, formed important classifications that resulted in loyalties. Ahmet associated them with his ambiguous notion of the Ottoman Empire and explicitly opposed them to the Republican category of citizenship to distance himself from modernist uniformity. What made the situation difficult was the necessity to be included in both: modern citizenship was not clear-cut from the other categories but they emerged in different situations and spaces. Ultimately, they were based on different moral frameworks, resting on often contradictory conceptualizations of community and agency.

The rights associated with citizenship could be claimed on individual, ethnic or class-based grounds, often in the course of the same discussion. To observe these contextual shifts, I have chosen to present my ethnographic material in this section mostly as individual narratives that combine different orientations towards history and deal with the apparent confusion. In one particularly illuminating case, Ridvan, after telling me of the treacherous nature of his position, by referring to individuals, ethnic categories as well as class positions, and contrasted these to what he saw as the Ottoman order:

As a Kurd you do not have a chance in Turkey. When I say this somebody always points out that there are successful Kurdish people in politics, culture, sports, everywhere. This is true but it also means that if these people would defend Kurdish rights like I do they would not be successful anymore. We should stick together because that is the only way to succeed in Turkey. It does not help if just some people become rich and famous. In the Ottoman times, when the
Southeast was Kurdish territory, we did great things and nobody would interfere with us because we were united. This is no longer the case.

The strive for social justice can be presented as a critique of elitist Kemalism by emphasizing the Ottoman multiculturalism as well as its standards of fairness and just behaviour towards others. The early neo-Ottoman political position, advanced by the Welfare Party in the 1980s and 1990s, extolled Islam as a system of statecraft and emphasized the Islamic state as the protector of peaceful coexistence of cultural multiplicity (Houston 2002; Navaro-Yashin 2002a:140–141). On a more practical level, not requiring a comprehensive Islamic state, the neo-Ottoman ideals can be extended to business practices; while partaking in the competitive environment of contemporary capitalism, the companies can present themselves as distinctively Islamic by claiming higher values: “following the dietary prescriptions of Islam, not investing in interest, not serving food to employees during the month of fasting, reserving money for charity (zekat), producing good quality products, and making ‘just’ profits” (Navaro-Yashin 2002b:224). On the level of the individual, the cleanliness and piety can be valued as higher moral norms of Islamic civilization (Navaro-Yashin 2002a:93) and the practices of communal assistance and just treatment between neighbours and employees can be seen as Islamic responsibilities and obligations (White 2013:41). In sum, the position emphasizes qualities of people as good Muslims within the specific historically developed framework of Muslimhood in Turkey. Both Ahmet and Ridvan stressed this dimension of justice as related to being a good Muslim, anchored into values of what they saw as a bygone era that would need to be revitalized – but not imitated – in the present day. What would this Muslimhood consist of?

THE MODERN SELF AND ISLAM

In Turkey, 99.8 percent of the inhabitants are Muslim. However, this is not a uniform category but includes people whose Muslimhood others might deny as well as those who do not identify as Muslims but are labelled as such. I have encountered these positions among atheists, staunch secularists and members of the Alevi faith. Another significant fault line is located not just between Muslims and non-Muslims but between conscious (şuurlu, also modern) and “traditional” Muslims (e.g. Navaro-Yashin 2002b; White 2013). What can be labelled as the Islamic movement in Turkey is comprised of networks of individuals who participate in activities taken by a broad

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96 Interestingly, traditional is here an unmarked category, designated and referred only as “Muslims.”
coalition of Islamic actors. This multifaceted grouping consists of “political parties, religious sects and orders, Islamic educational and welfare foundations, Islamic financial and investment institutions, minuscule clandestine organizations, Islamic publishing houses, and free-floating intellectuals” (Sayari 1994:214). Both the secular and religious actors acknowledge the diversity and have to find ways to relate to its manifestations. It is also important to note here that approaches to Islam do not originate from any universal point of view but their outlook has been decisively shaped by the secularist institutions of the Republic, unalike their foundation in other countries (Arat 2004, Meeker 1994:162).

Even the terminology has changed and many of the old labels have become rejected as tainted by their former histories. Ayşe Saktanber presents an example of changing terms of identification. She argues that the term dinci, used interchangeably with “Islamist,” would have been perfectly acceptable before but nowadays religious young people would prefer dindar signifying “pious” or “devout,” to dissociate themselves from the Islamist label (2007:419). The former term with its suffix -ci suggests a more tightly bound group identifying under the religious banner while the latter has much wider connotations and more room for reflection. This is an example of terms of identification escaping the rigid definitions, people refusing their objectification by the others, and, instead, emphasizes their attempts to define themselves and their everyday lives in their own terms (see Navaro-Yashin 2002a:35). In this tradition of thought, Islam and modernity are not contrasted but “Islam has been transformed into a religion on the liberal model in Turkey, that is, as a phenomenon having primarily to do with personal choice and private belief” (Silverstein 2011:2–3).

My informants shared a very pragmatic and relaxed outlook towards Islam, to the extent that I initially felt that I had not concentrated on the question sufficiently. Among those living in Tarlabası, being a devout Muslim was a taken-for-granted category of belonging that was brought up in some contexts but usually not pronounced. It was closely connected to the modern self, careful adjustment of appropriate behaviour in different contexts. Most of the other people I spent time with identified themselves either as non-observant Muslims or atheists, liked to discuss religion in politics and culture but did not relate to religious questions themselves. When dealing with Islam, I found that even the most pious of my informants would very rarely refer to theological principles without connecting them to the ancient origins, the Ottoman society, birth of the Republic or some other historical anchoring point. This finely tuned historical consciousness, referring to a variety of traditions and pasts, governed the negotiation of values associated with being a good Muslim. As I will show below, it meant identifying with a distinct tradition, not to be confused with “Arab Islam.”
The neo-Ottoman approach emphasizes the distinctiveness and superiority of Turkish Islam as its central value which, interestingly, resembles the common Kemalist position, according to which being Turkish means to be Muslim and Turkish Islam is seen as the better form of Islam (White 2013:19). Again, the Kurds do not fit neatly into this definition but have to reflect on the relationship differently.

Some of my friends had been to Koranic schools (*medrese*) when younger, many prayed daily but only a very few showed interest in studying the Koran or theology extensively. Especially towards the end of my fieldwork, I had extensive discussions with Şivan about possibilities to be a good Muslim and feel at home in Istanbul. His views focussed on the demanding task of combining desirable moral positions with the requirements of modern life and of cultivating his faith despite the limitations on his expertise:

*I am, of course, Muslim and try to live as a good Muslim in the city. At the same time I do not want to be associated with the Islamists living in Fatih, or, even less with the Arabs here that just bring to mind Taliban, fanatics and lunatics. Kurdish Islam is very different from this; you might meet some Kurds who are Islamist but they are usually young men and it will be over with them soon. Kurds are proud of their religion but they also tolerate other people – we have our own tradition and we need to be careful not to compromise or destroy it. I see that there can be several kinds of good Islam: for different times, different countries, to the village and to the city. Still it is the same religion. I have heard some say that we are ignorant and do not know our religion; it is true that I cannot recite the Koran but I know it by my heart, and I know it from my parents and family. Poor people like us cannot go to study Islam in universities.*

[quotes from two separate discussions]

On closer inspection, Şivan's account of desired religious belonging brings together many of the most important themes of Turkish modernity in contemporary Istanbul. Firstly, there is the spatial dimension that allows different forms of Islam to be practiced, here mentioned in a vague sense of different Islam in the city, further differentiated into its conservative quarters and geographically distinct and ambiguous "Arab Islam." Secondly, Şivan distinguishes Kurdish Islam from other varieties and emphasizes the need to preserve the tradition. The stress is on reflection: the ability to find a right balance between tradition and modernity, and to understand what type of Islam would be appropriate in different conditions. Thirdly, he refers to discrimination he has encountered on the basis of his low level of education and how his comprehension of Islam, handed down from his family, is just as valuable as the more educated variety. In sum, he underlines his reflective understanding of religion that is connected with the most important themes of Turkish modernity but does not subscribe fully to any one of them. Throughout my study, my fieldwork observations point to a tendency to
escape altogether the uncompromising labels and instead to selectively appropriate their specific connotations in varying situations. My informants did not express straightforward acceptance of the grand narratives. The sense of selective neo-Ottomanism did not intend to return to the institutions of the Ottoman era but provided an alternative way of exploring a period that had been judged as decadent and inauthentic by the Kemalists. In turn, the radical Kemalists were allocated to the same category with fanatic Islamists, being incapable of interpreting the past in a neutral or balanced manner. The position outside the polar extremes was based on the ability to recognize different shades of history and question the logic of ruptures and continuities in novel ways. It was an absolute prerequisite for participating in contemporary modernity.

**Contemporary Categories of Belonging and the Personal Quest for Dignity**

I wish to conclude my discussion on Turkish modernity with an exploration of senses of belonging in present-day Turkey. I suggest that, especially in the urban sphere, characterized by the coexistence of radically different senses of self, their range and flexibility are crucial in the formation of groups and solidarities, representing a “bewildering variety of choices of values, practices and modes of affiliation” (White 2014:187). However, the former categories of identification have not lost their significance. Even when restricting the criteria to religious, nationalist and long-standing political values, White presents a very broad list of multiple forms of being a Turk that expresses the fluidity and overlap of different positions, with possibilities for unity and antagonism:

Kemalist (broadly, follower of the principles of the nation’s founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, secularist, laicist), the related and equally potent Atatürkçü (Atatürk admirer, secularist), İslami (adherent of politicized Islam), milliyetçi (rightist nationalist), ülkücü (right-wing ultra-nationalist with Islamist or pan-Turkist tendencies), ulusalci (left-wing or neo-nationalist, secularist, supporter of a strong state and military, anti-West), liberal (supporter of cosmopolitanism and freedom of speech), and Türkiyeli, a recent neologism that aims to circumvent the ethnic assumptions inherent in the term Turk, without bleaching it of communal identity altogether. (White: 2009:7)

Moreover, the increasingly complex senses of political affiliation and solidarity have altered life in thorough ways. The divisive utopian politics of the extremist leftist and rightist groups in the 1960s and 1970s, culminating in the 1980 military coup, have given way to novel configurations of political
issues, permitting a more diverse spectrum of participants. Nilüfer Göle brings up especially women, ecologists, veiled students, homosexuals and transsexuals as new groups, and environmental protection, female identity and individual freedom as the new issues (in Navaro-Yashin 2002a:131). The values associated with urbanity and modernity cut across a spectrum of communities that do not always agree on the criteria of belonging among themselves. They should rather be seen as arising in particular contexts, often defined by spatial boundaries and their corresponding moral frameworks.

I have discussed above the fluidity and selective appropriation of history – in conjunction with the refusal of the extreme positions – among my informants. This development has also led to the marginalization of the formerly dominant senses of belonging across society; the “children of the Republic,” embodiments of Atatürk’s future-oriented project in the foundational years of the Republic, cultural classicists whose historical consciousness is based strongly on the trope of introjective metalepsis, have found it difficult to relate what they see as the “self-interest-seeking mentality of neoliberal era” (Özyürek 2006:31–32). The position of these former elites, militant laic actors identifying with the core values of the Republic, has crumbled down so significantly with the success of the populist-liberal tendencies of the AKP, that they resemble, in an ironic manner, radical Muslims, who would also require a revolution and a top-down program to govern the plural society (Houston 2013:341). Their previously cherished values, aiming at the collective national identity, have become for many markers of an antidemocratic tendency bordering fascism.

These themes were illustrated exceptionally well in an evolutionary view of Turkish history that Ridvan presented to me once, being very anxious of the direction his country had taken:

There have been so many mistakes in Turkey for the last hundred years, or more. Turkey has had all the possibilities for success but failed miserably. It was clear that the Sultanate could not rule a modern country and Turkey needed to move forward. We needed Atatürk. He was a heroic military commander (Gazi) and did many good things but could not give freedom to everyone in Turkey. After him, things have only gone downhill. For the Kurds, the whole Southeastern situation has been a catastrophe. Istanbul is not any better – life in Tarlabası is often like hell. In the Ottoman times, we had our rights and were not forced to be Turks – we were recognized as human beings. This country could be at the top of the world if the nationalists would have left people freedom to be themselves.

Ridvan’s account echoes the flexible relationship towards history that is at the heart of neo-Ottomanism and modern Muslimhood. Even the Republican revolution, taught at schools as a massive break with the past, a victory over the stagnant mindset of the Empire, could be interpreted positively. For
Muslim intellectuals the problem has not necessarily been the Kemalist Republic – many observant and sophisticated Muslims supported many or even the most of the reforms (Silverstein 2011:13) – but because the country has stayed with it for too long. Kasaba argues that they see Turkey’s future in rejoining the Islamic world and creating a society which is technologically modern and more “just” than the one created by the Kemalist elites after the Western image (1997:17). In the quote above, Ridvan emphasizes Atatürk’s positive role in providing the push to modernize the country but blames his followers and successors for the suppression of religious and ethnic identities. What is important about the new Muslimhood is its flexibility, its potential to evoke diverse possibilities for self-making, solidarities and boundaries.

CONSTANT REJECTION – A WALK WITH RİDVAN

In the mahalles that I studied, the narratives of belonging were dominated by a powerful sense of exclusion and rejection. Of my friends, Ridvan was especially vocal about his undeserved series of disappointments and commented on them with his very sophisticated understanding of the historical dynamics. On one of our aimless walks, we were talking about changes in Beyoğlu and their effects on the quality of life. The unpredictability of developments, together with the lack of institutional support, became quickly the focus of our discussion. He told me that what bothered him most, especially now after his marriage, was constant insecurity and feeling of not belonging into the city. He had been working in several restaurants and was running a small bakkal with a friend but could never be sure what would happen the next day. If he would be mistreated at work, there would be no point to complain – who could he even complain to? – he wondered. For him, at the heart of the matter was his background as a rural Kurd, speaking Turkish with an accent and dressing differently from İstiklal’s urbanites. In a way, the increased freedom of a big city had turned against him. When we walked past a new coffee shop, part of a multinational chain, he said that he could, of course, enter but would not feel welcome in the place. He added that foreigners do not recognize the unfriendly stares and tiny changes in behaviour but these are constantly present when moving in the city. The natural reaction would be to resist but it also felt futile; the capacity to change the situation was in the hands of the more powerful and wealthy people. At this point he interrupted his narrative of powerlessness in a tactical way and shifted his attention to his earlier attempts to strive for approval in the eyes of the others.

He said that when younger he had gone through several phases. As a teenager, he had supported the PKK in several demonstrations, not really sympathetic to, or even familiar with the ideology of its leader Abdullah
Öcalan, but out of frustration. A couple of years later, he had been involved in a political Islamic movement; according to him, not really an organized section but rather a group of friends who prayed together, cursed the world and dreamed of a new kind of society: Islamic, just and equal. He added quickly that he had not really believed in their aims either but the group had given him self-confidence, at the time new to Istanbul and hating the city. He felt that these were the only political movements where he was accepted, a fact that now amused him. One could simplistically argue that this was another familiar narrative of personal growth, commentary on the misguided radicalism at younger age. However, when we discussed the issue further, he told me that he had grown out of his views gradually and noticed by observing his friends that successful life in Istanbul was possible only by learning the rules of the city, very different from any other place he had been to. The acknowledgement of the qualities of lived environment, the characteristics of the other people and understanding of the best ways to interact with them were essential; especially in the absence of other means, they were the only possible way to live a satisfactory life in Istanbul. For Ridvan, these rules were subject to change and negotiation, not based on just securing rewards but cultivating a sense of dignity and self-respect.

Even more important was the critical attitude towards classifications of the urban sphere, intimately tied to particular spaces in the city. While the enjoyment of the urban bustle was appreciated in the romanticized descriptions of life in Istanbul, another significant theme was a wish for a space where one could be at home and at peace. Of course, this does not relate to just the physical characteristics of a space: peaceful and quiet, or safe and comfortable – the exact opposites could constitute a feeling of homeliness, the safety of the crowds and the joy of partaking in the urban excitement. Ridvan concluded our discussion by saying that freedom (özgürlük) is the most essential goal he is aiming at. When I asked him to explicate, he replied that he was talking about liberal (liberal) and modern (modern) societies, just like those in the West. He gave me an ironic smile and said that his freedom could not reside in the mountains of the Southeast, nor in the Kurdish village where he came from. He was now an urbanite and could not go back. He said that in Turkey he had exhausted his possibilities; he would not be taken seriously no matter what he did – as long as there was no equality there could be no freedom. He continued that he would prefer a new beginning in Finland, thought for a bit and said that he would, in fact, even move to Israel the next day if he would be given a chance. At the same time, he acknowledged, based on the stories of his relatives living in Germany, that his background would play a major role also in other countries.97 In Turkey, he was either stuck in Tarlabası, cut off from the

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97 See Mandel (1996, 2008) on the complex hierarchies among Turkish immigrants in Germany.
surrounding society or participating in modernity across its boundaries as an unwanted and unrecognized subject. For him, the district of Beyoğlu was far from neutral space but consisted of different boundaries and intensities that were extremely significant for his daily conduct.

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In these three chapters, I have discussed Turkish modernity as an interplay of several pasts that come to light in different contexts. They do not fit wholly into the teleological model of sociocultural advancement, nor to the trajectory of deterioration from the glorious past. In Turkey, both the cultural classicists and historical constructivists are struggling in their efforts to relate to the past, present and future successfully. My aim has been to describe the sense of in-betweenness, defining the life-worlds of Istanbul’s inhabitants, balancing between the grand narratives and culturally intimate understandings of historical dimensions of modernity. I have also connected the senses of modernity and modern self to questions of spatiality; how historical developments have related to spatial relations on the levels of the city, country and Turkey’s relative location globally. In the last chapter of the study, I will combine these issues with the experience of boundaries and moral frameworks in the streets and squares of Beyoğlu, together with the most recent developments of Turkish modernity: the radical transformations of the cityscape, associated with redefinition of public space, gentrification and their new possibilities for solidarity.
Chapter 8:
Morality, Public Space and Urban Transformation:
New Solidarities in Beyoğlu

There is a revealing anecdote of how the notion of the public has been understood in Turkey. Bülent Tanju presents it in a provocative manner that hints at the cultural intimacy of the issue: “According to the definition of a ‘great’ state official in the very recent past, public sphere is the place where the police can ask you for identification documents, therefore the publicity in Istanbul is the police demanding identification and the citizen presenting it” (2008:233). However, the absurdity of the definition uncloaks a sense of familiarity, the awkward recognition of the massive police presence in public spaces of Turkey.

The sense of belonging, based on practices of inclusion and exclusion, has been a prominent theme throughout my study. It is also at the heart of the spatial politics of Istanbul: a city divided into spaces that call for different standards of behaviour. They can be central to national identification like Taksim Square, with its troubled relationship with different shades of Republican and Ottoman histories, or, emerge in quotidian locations where inhabitants from all walks of life share a modest meal of chick peas and rice, as described in the previous chapter. In the urban environment, the variety of reference points, anchored to specific periods and different spaces, creates multiplicity but not chaos. With its pluralization of lifeworlds, the city acts, in the words of David Harvey, “as a theatre, a series of stages upon which individuals could work their own distinctive magic while performing a multiplicity of roles” (1990:5). What caught my attention early on during my fieldwork, was the remarkable ease that many of my informants expressed when adapting to new situations, a detailed knowledge of the moral environment, and how the range of appropriate practices could be analyzed. In this chapter, I will discuss the moral qualities of Istanbul’s spaces from perspectives that can be summarized under Henri Lefebvre’s influential idea of “right to the city,” not conceived as a “simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life” (Lefebvre 1996:158, italics in the original). My focus will be on diverse phenomena that illustrate the most recent transformations of
urban Istanbul: reconfigurations of public and private spaces, encounters with the state power, commodification of the urban sphere, and gentrification as redrawing the boundaries of Beyoğlu.

**Public and Private Spaces**

In the social sciences, discussion of “publicness” has centred around the remarkably influential theory of the modern public sphere by Habermas (1989) and its critiques or reinterpretations (e.g. Mitchell 1988; 2002; Taylor 1989; Warner 2002). In the historical context of Turkey, its application poses several problems. These range from very different ideas of privacy in the Ottoman times98 (Murphey 1990), to the Republican ideologies of public space, regulated by the extremely detailed control of the state (Altınay 2004; Özyürek 2006). I prefer to use the term “public space” over “public sphere” because of the latter’s close connections with the specifically Western European liberal modernity but I acknowledge the overlap between the terms. For public space, I follow Charles Taylor’s definition of the public sphere as “a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about these (1992:220). I emphasize the lived character of public space, bringing together the historical formation of mediated encounters, civil society and gendered space with the pragmatic realities, ongoing life and commentary of what publicness means (Dahlgren 2010:4). For the purposes of this study, perhaps the most fitting definition of the publics and public space is Martin Stokes’ cautious note, following Richard Sennett, of them being “yet to be understood” and considering them as “positive opportunities for group life” (2010:5 fn.9).

As a theoretical or political concept, public space/sphere (*kamu alanı, kamusal alan*) was not as regularly used in public debates at the time of my fieldwork, as it is increasingly now, after the Gezi Park protests. Yet, many of its integral principles have been central for the cases that I have examined ethnographically: the different notions of rights and responsibilities in the *mahalle* and the urban sphere, the boundaries regulating movement in the city and the right to occupy particular locations. To provide a comprehensive

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98 A detailed discussion of the Ottoman notions of public space, subject to profound changes at different stages of the Empire, is outside the scope of this study. Murphey suggests that the principles of Islamic law played a major role in designating the character of spaces: “Because of the strongly developed sense of social welfare expressed in concepts such as *mashala* or ‘public benefit,’ the spheres in which private and individual rights could prevail were strictly delimited. Nonetheless, the sanctity of those spheres was all the more jealously guarded precisely because it was so exceptional” (Murphey 1990:119).
framework, Setha Low (2002) distinguishes between five principles to analyze the publicness of spaces, ordered according to different degrees of agency:

- Access – right to enter and remain in a public space
- Freedom of action – the ability to carry on activities in the public space
- Claim – the ability to take over the space and resources in it
- Change – the ability to modify the environment
- Ownership – the ultimate form of control

(Low 2000:241)

I will return to these principles throughout the chapter in my discussion of the extensive changes in the spatiality of Beyoğlu in the most recent times. During my fieldwork, there was a clear and growing feeling that public space was becoming increasingly restricted for several reasons, not always originating from the same sources of power.

**ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND THE ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR**

Above all, in Istanbul the power of the state reveals itself in an arbitrary manner. In conflict situations, the final word is on the state actors, often manifests in the actions of the police, and there is very little that can be done to counter the commands of the state. In Beyoğlu, the massive police presence in Istiklal Street had become a normal state of affairs (Navaro-Yashin 2002a:5), represented by the number of police busses and TOMA intervention vehicles parked very visibly at Galatasaray Square, together with high numbers of police officers at Taksim Square, sometimes rising up to hundreds without an immediately evident reason.

The arbitrariness of power in public space sparked countless stories. One of the most widely shared narratives concerned the police arresting people on arbitrary grounds. This was happening regularly in public space, changing its rules considerably – according to my informants, the arrest could happen at any time and for whatever reason. I came across a few of these occasions myself. On one Saturday evening, I was walking in jam-packed Istiklal Street to meet friends in a bar close to Taksim Square when the atmosphere suddenly electrified. A man next to me began an individual political protest by chanting the name of the PKK very loudly, instantly filling the air with nervous expectation. People close to him tried to move away from his wild gesticulations, while those further away came curiously closer to see what was happening. The state intervention was amazingly fast. An unmarked white lorry van appeared from a side-street where it had been waiting, drove a few metres to the street, next to the man, now screaming his allegiance to “Apo.” He probably knew what to expect for his protest had

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99 A compassionate nickname for PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.
erupted in just a few seconds and already culminated into violent screams. Two men jumped out from the back of the lorry, took the protester forcefully inside and the van drove off with its doors half-closed. The intervention was so fast and smooth that it took me a while to understand what had just happened. People in the incredibly busy street occupied the empty space within seconds and all the traces of the encounter were gone.

I happened to see a slightly similar incident the next day, this time in broad daylight. I was crossing the Galata Bridge, filled with fishermen and casual strollers in the morning hours. This time no provocation was needed. A police car slowed on the curb, two policemen got out and took one of the men walking, around fifty years of age in a suit and moustache, inside the car, not in a violent but in a very determined manner. Again, the scene was over in just a few seconds. Most of the people in the immediate proximity turned to see what was happening but returned very soon to their activities. I asked a man selling tea for the fishermen what had just happened and he told me that this is nothing new or special, ordinary life in Istanbul. He did not want to speculate on the suspect, saying that the police can take anyone and they often make mistakes. His comments echoed those of my friends: everyone had a story, if not him/herself having problems with the law, definitely knowing someone who has had. The sense of normalcy of these events and the lack of means to react to them changed the character of public space considerably. The five principles set out by Low above could be elaborated and their boundaries debated in different contexts, but they could just as well be side-stepped in an arbitrary manner, without explanations or justifications. The unpredictability of the state power had changed the whole conception of public space into a very specific Turkish configuration.

This related directly to questions of freedom and dignity. In the end of the previous chapter, Ridvan referred to Western societies as examples of freedom, characterized by liberal modernity. In another discussion, he extended this notion to desired qualities of urban space. He saw the West as a qualitatively different space of freedom, where access and freedom of action within public space would be self-evident rights and its modification or even ownership negotiable. He mentioned that he had seen in the news people occupying empty buildings, making unused spaces into urban gardens and holding festivals spontaneously in central locations, without any kind of state intervention. Of course, similar things happened in Turkey, but they were overshadowed by a constant danger of a violent encounter with the state. Ridvan summed up his perspective: “It does not help at all to talk about new cultural rights: the right to speak Kurdish freely, to publish and advertise in different languages, to hold demonstrations and cultural events in the streets and squares, if all these rights can be taken away in the blink of an eye.”
Interestingly, the present-day reality reiterated the earlier problematic. For Ridvan and many others, Republican modernity, with its emphasis on rationality in the arrangement of public space, had become arbitrary. The justification for Republican rule, in contrast to supposedly decadent Ottoman governance, had, in many ways, come full circle into a reality where power gained its strength from its arbitrariness, contrary to widely shared understanding of public space in relation to civil society. Charles Taylor defines another dimension of the modern public sphere as “a space of discussion which is self-consciously seen as being outside power. It is supposed to be listened to by power, but it is not itself an exercise of power” (1992:232). This was not the case in present-day Istanbul: public space had become increasingly politicized and guarded by the unpredictable state actors. Before my discussion of how group action in Beyoğlu has taken new political forms to counter the state, I wish to analyze a parallel stream of urban development in the recent times, the impact of market forces in the urban sphere, to discuss another kind of regulation of public space.

SİMİT – COMMODIFICATION OF PUBLIC SPACE IN BEYOĞLU

The history of a famous simit bagel tells a story of the changing geography and the reconfiguration of boundaries in Beyoğlu. The much prided simit carts, selling fresh bagels at a low cost to passers-by, have been subject to regulations on their appearance, in a way that reflects the wider trends of urban development. For many Istanbulites, these were not trivial matters but integral features of Beyoğlu's urbanity, ways to establish intimate connections to particular spaces. The comparison of different bakeries and the perfect consistency of their products, the crunch and freshness of the bagel, usually served plain, is one of the definitive Istanbul experiences, something that can be elaborated into great heights. Many of the simit salesmen were also distinctive personalities who got to know customers across class boundaries and provided news and gossip of the area. The encounters were usually brief but became meaningful when repeated over the years, in some cases decades.

At the first glance, the most recent transformation of Beyoğlu is characterized by large-scale renovation of the buildings lining İstiklal Street and the march of international retail chains. However, on a closer look, there are other forces at work over the change of its historically defined ambience. The local municipality has been active in initiating new policies, referring to yet another “golden age” of the area. In the beginning of the 2000s, the simit carts were re-designed to fit into the new nostalgic image of the street, (Figure 5) and all the stores were instructed to change their signs into ones with brass lettering on a wooden background (Ertep 2009; Esen 2008:267) (Figure 6). This change, again, is deeply ingrained with history. The glorious İstiklal Street of the post-war era had been lost in the 1980s and the early
1990s to an environment plagued by derelicts and drug addicts with many of businesses leaving the area (Ertep 2009). The following aesthetic interventions were part of “The Beautiful Beyoğlu Project” (“Güzel Beyoğlu Projesi”), initiated to bring back the former glory of the area (Adanalı 2011). It is noteworthy that the 1980s, generally depicted as the rebirth of more open, international and liberal Turkey, were in Beyoğlu experienced as the loss of its status as the apex of modernity and urbanity.

Figure 5. The uniform appearance of the simit carts reflects the desired historical markers of the municipal beautification project.  

100 "Simit Seller," Travel Aficionado, Creative Commons, https://www.flickr.com/photos/10190604@N06/2279635943/
When I talked about the uniform appearance of the carts with the simit-sellers, they were initially cautious with their choices of the words and mentioned the changes as “the signs of times” but, after a couple of introductions to the topic, unvaryingly felt offended of the intrusion and regulation of something they had established and developed, and which had now become homogeneous and regulated. Of course, many of the younger had only worked with the new carts but they also acknowledged the change for it reflected the wider considerations of the cityscape and the role of the simit-sellers as unique individuals, commentators on the neighbourhood’s news and wider issues concerning Turkey and the world.

Ümit had been working close to Galatasaray Square, halfway between Taksim and Tünel squares, for decades, and was increasingly renting out his simit cart to his brother’s grandson, blaming his old age and frail health especially on hot summer days. He was very proud of his personal history connected to Istanbul’s changes and explained in detail how he had seen several demonstrations around the square, many of them culminating in violence, and the character of the area changing into a run-down and even dangerous enclave before it started to attract great masses of people again. Back then, he said, you would not see families strolling in the street and, especially in the evenings, the space was exclusively male, except for the prostitutes. Following the narrative of populist modernity, he associated the deterioration of Beyoğlu with the influx of Anatolian migrants, bringing the
arabesk culture to the area with dreadful consequences. Now, according to him, the area had become cultured (kültürlü) again, and people were behaving in a more sophisticated manner.

This transformation is the latest in the series of urban developments in Beyoğlu that I have been discussing. It also shows how the transformation of urban space is linked to collective memory in a double sense, from above and below. It is expressed from above “through architectural order, monuments and symbols, commemorative sites, street names, civic spaces, and historic conservation” (Hebbert 2005:592) that interact with the accumulation of memories from below, “through the physical and associative traces left by interweaving patterns of everyday life” (592). The top-down modernization of public space in the years of the early Republic is still visible in the street and square names: Istiklal (Independence), Meşrutiyet (Constitution) and Tünel (Tunnel – from the world’s third oldest subterranean urban rail line connecting the square with the northern shore of the Golden Horn) and its populist modernity is associated with the informal arabesk culture of the area. Now the goal is to combine the hypermodern centre of shopping malls and cinema multiplexes with the nostalgic past.

The revival of the nostalgic age of Istiklal Street has been strictly regulated except for some distinctive exceptions. Adanalı criticizes the campaign by Vodafone that transformed the simit carts into mobile advertising stands as “leaving no room for breathing in public spaces” (2011:6). The intimate connection between simit as food anyone can afford and a monthly deal with Vodafone for the price of a bagel suggests the inclusivity the future of Turkish modernity. Despite the strict orders of the appearances in the environment, the campaign was allowed, perhaps reflecting the global standards of neoliberal urbanity, something outside the frame of reference of the beautification project. In the locally framed context, the diverse designs of the carts, still possible to find in the other areas of Istanbul, were seen as a distraction to the uniform image of the nostalgic depiction. The same applies to the regulations of the shop signs. It seems that the regulation of wood-and-brass signs applies only the companies that are somehow connected to Turkey or the supposed spirit of the street. Nowadays, the international brands are allowed to have their own signs with no clear rules and many of the global Turkish brands, not specifically associated with the nostalgic spirit of Beyoğlu, also seem to operate without restrictions. However, the commodification of public space was not restricted to appearances but also had an effect on the everyday practices of the inhabitants.
NO PLACE TO SIT

Istiklal Street, all the way from Tünel to Taksim Square has no public benches. The nearest ones are at Gezi Park, during my fieldwork an insignificant and abandoned place\textsuperscript{101} behind Taksim Square, with just a few lonely characters spending their days in the grey park. For a place to sit down for free one could go down the hill to the seafront of Karaköy, to the squares of the Historical Peninsula, or, alternatively, to Kadıköy, a substantial urban centre in the Asian side of Istanbul. In the Istiklal area, you either paid for a seat in a commercial establishment or occupied a street corner.\textsuperscript{102} This left people to choose between various kinds of teahouses, cafes, bars and restaurants; the preferences here varied considerably, often with overtones that were directly related to what Low connects to degrees of publicness of space, the access and claims over activities. They were semi-public spaces that had an important role in establishing social links.

I found it interesting, how people in Beyoğlu would discuss their choice of a teahouse or a bar at length, employing ideas of sociality and solidarity, in addition to the looks of the place and the quality of its products. In these descriptions, notions of urbanity, class and differently framed senses of belonging distinguished Beyoğlu from the other districts of Istanbul. The variety of establishments corresponded to the variety of people found in the area, a microcosm of Turkey’s social relations. The establishments were also ordered spatially – many cafes along Istiklal Street were decorated in the classic French style, reminding of the Golden Age of the cosmopolitan urbanity of the area, but they were rapidly giving way to multinational coffee chains and fast-food joints. To complement these, there were a few simple teahouses that catered mostly for people who wanted to sit down for a quick glass of tea on their way somewhere else. In the side-streets the situation changed considerably; the number of multinational branches diminished radically, and the cafes and bars expressed much wider variety in narrow but busy streets with many of the establishments tucked into the upper floors of the buildings and extending to their roof terraces. This classification provided a framework for solidarities, a cherished mosaic of variable senses

\textsuperscript{101} In light of the recent events, the isolation of Gezi Park might seem odd. It was, nonetheless, confirmed to me in many occasions. When applying my “virtual walks” methodology it became clear that the park carried next to no connotations before it became a focus of the massive protest movement.

\textsuperscript{102} Interesting exceptions to this pattern were some staircases where people would congregate to sit. At the time of my fieldwork, the one behind Galatasaray Lycée attracted slightly sinister crowd, with some groups sniffing glue. The other famous one, in the middle of the Cihangir neighbourhood with a beautiful view to the sea from the hill, pulled a crowd of people drinking beer and wine bought from the shops nearby.
of belonging, a solution in an environment where truly public space was not a permanent condition.

In addition to tea and coffee, the establishments provided different kinds of encounters. In a city where the supposedly different configurations of selfhood could be found in the shared space of Beyoğlu, encounters with others were often marked by suspicion. The globally familiar branches lining İstiklal Street offered a sense of anonymity and much of the clientele consisted of irregular visitors and tourists. Sometimes the anonymity could be made to serve a purpose; many wanted to have a snack or a drink with minimal social interaction and these places were perfect for that. On the other extreme, there were places where the entry was restricted. In Chapter 6 I discussed at length how my friend Okan faced problems in entering a club favoured by Beyoğlu’s subcultural elites. In my understanding, based on numerous discussions on the topic, these situations did not occur too frequently because people did not want to push the boundaries. The question had much more to do with nuances of recognition and acceptance: the degree to which places were welcoming played a huge role. At the same time, the city was seductive in its possibilities to establish a wide range of contacts in different spaces.

Most of the teahouses (çay evi, çay bahçesi), reading cafes (kıraathane), modest cafes (kahve) and European-style cafes (cafe) had strong connotations with different senses of sociality, intimately interwoven with the notions of modernity and publicness, forming spaces within the area that connected – as well as excluded – people in various ways. Here, it is important to remember the integral quality of the urban sphere as providing unexpected encounters; there are, of course, cafes and teahouses in mahalles as well, but they retain very private character and are only extremely rarely visited by people not part of the daily clientele.

If Şivan was not spending his evenings in the İstiklal area, he went to play tavla\textsuperscript{103} into Özdemir kiraathanesi in Tarlabası. The place was filled with people from the neighbourhood, all of them male, some playing games and others reading newspapers. At first, I felt somewhat hesitant at entering to this place, almost next door to where I lived, and wanted to have Şivan to accompany me. As usual, he seemed to know everyone present and wanted me to shake hands with them on our first visit. That was enough to make me welcome to a space that before felt extremely private. It was frequented mostly by Kurds and acted as an extension to their homes, with the same faces at their regular tables every day. Şivan joked to me that everybody came to read the papers also in the daytime during the Ramadan fast, even though tea was not served, a fact that I had encountered in teahouses during my earlier trips to rural Turkey. Now cigarette smoke filled the air and

\textsuperscript{103} A game very similar to backgammon.
people were discussing politics and the latest gossip freely across the tables. This was a perfect combination of homeliness and acceptance Istanbul had to offer to Şivan. At the same time, he was drawn to another kind of space across the boundary, filled with chance encounters and the possibility to meet women. The establishments around Istiklal Street represented different kinds of solidarities.

One of my first friends in Istanbul, Ozan, was a true connoisseur of cafe culture of Istanbul. He was working in a gallery exhibiting the work of Turkey’s upcoming artists and often moved to work with his laptop into the coffee houses nearby. For him, Istanbul’s cafes were a unique phenomenon, something that he had not come across elsewhere. The finely tuned distinctions were important: he loathed the coffee chains lining Istiklal Street and preferred kahves. This is a general name for modest coffee houses, known for their informal atmosphere and sometimes heated debates on politics and other matters. There were several of them in the side-streets of Istiklal and he liked to alternate between a couple of favourites. When I joined him, I entered to a sphere very close to Habermas’ definition of the public sphere (1989) in the early eighteenth century, taken into present-day Istanbul. Our kahve attracted a wide variety of people, men and women; construction workers on a coffee break, retired academics who spent most of their days around the same table, students preparing for exams and people working in media industries. No one was obliged to take part in discussions – some concentrated on their books and others just smoked cigarettes and listened to the others. The discussions were not centred on one topic but flowed from one to another with constantly changing groups of participants. This was a pocket in Istanbul’s urbanity that Ozan cherished the most: he said with pride that it was only here you could meet people from all walks of life in an atmosphere of a mutual respect. After my first visit, I asked about this kahve from Şivan who said that it was a good place, he would sometimes stop by, but he felt too shy to talk with all the educated people around.

The publicness of cafes and teahouses was a highly valued characteristic especially for those who lived in crammed conditions with extended families and felt sometimes suffocated by the watchful atmosphere of their mahalles. In addition, they provided possibilities to test the boundaries of conservative culture and to try out new ways to participate in urbanity and modernity. Some of my friends did not believe that I had been drinking beer with friends living in Tarlabası and Tophane in Nevizade and Asmalı Mescit, popular areas lined with bars and meyhanes just around Istiklal Street. They could not associate people from the impoverished mahalles in the hip centre and justified their doubt rationally: “Why would people doing badly paid and unreliable jobs spend their income buying expensive drinks in the heart of the city?” I claim that these practices,
crossing of boundaries and testing of the degrees of access, are intimately associated with redrawing the boundaries of Istanbul through everyday practices. They provide a way to participate in its urbanity and modernity and to extend social relations in public space. However, they portray just one variant of sociality. With the lack of truly public space, squares have become extremely important and resonate with the central questions of publicness and participation.

Moral Qualities of the Town Square

The units that make up a city range from those found throughout the country, such as bridge (köprü) or cemetery (mezarlık), to ones that are exclusive to urbanity. Boulevards (bulvar) and squares (meydan) carry with them strong political overtones that the purely descriptive terms lack. Their meanings are also at the heart of the practices of urbanity and city planning. Open boulevards have been seen as moral projects from the times of Baron von Haussmann, eliminating the filth and the squalor of the inaccessible slums in the nineteenth-century Paris (Mitchell 1988:65). In turn, squares have even more connotations with political action, often related to their specific histories. Especially in the case of political protests, these meanings are embodied into the space itself, placing demands on the symbolic centres of society and capturing larger national attention (Low 2000:184).

The concept of the square in the Ottoman city was very different from its modern sense. The spaces where public and private would intersect were not emphasized in the architecture of the times; open spaces, if they existed, were used for pitching tents or for sports (Goodwin 1998:111). The large public squares in Turkey are a specifically modern phenomenon with strong connections to Republican history. They are also intimately tied into the international developments of the times; the opening of large spaces in the master plan of Henri Prost, an enormous project after an invitation by Atatürk in 1936 and implementation beginning in 1939, was in line with the modernist planning principles of the times – the ideas of conserving the vernacular heritage were not valued, not just in Turkey, but also more widely (Gül 2006:174). Prost saw the future of Istanbul as “a city of public squares” (in Yıldırım 2012:1). It is important to note that this history has not consisted of straightforward movement: Prost’s original idea of the square for the Republican Day celebrations was not located at Taksim, but at Sultanahmet’s Hippodrome and squares were established throughout the city, often by clearing the buildings next to the monuments, “parasites” according to Prost. These actions created a new kind of spatial order,
The squares also act as catalysts for establishing solidarities: people who would otherwise have little to do with each other and whose encounters are limited to short exchanges, have found common points of interest through participating in politics in the shared space of a square. The principle can be summarized, following Hannah Arendt, as “space of appearance,” a minimal requirement for political action. However, rather than just occupying a physical location, the basis for life in urban condition arises from the organization of people acting and speaking together (Butler 2011). If Taksim Square is the apex of the politicized spaces in Turkey, intensifying the questions of freedom, liberalism and democracy, there are other squares that present different constellations.

**GALATASARAY SQUARE**

The events that sometimes explode in Taksim Square are repeated at a smaller scale in Galatasaray Square. Taking its name from Galatasaray Lycée, a revered institution that has had a crucial role in educating many of Turkey’s intellectuals and political leaders (Sumner-Boyd and Freely 2000:431), its massive gates still dominate the location and create a discernible ambience. It is no wonder, that Ümit, selling simit bagels outside the gates, emphasized his location as the best to observe all kinds of changes in Beyoğlu. The square is a location to arrange meetings and to find a quick snack around the clock, but also a space for political action. Most of the activities have only a few participants, reflecting a wide spectrum of political actors: alongside the LGBT, animal rights and environmental protection activists, the trade unions and small leftist parties are often present in the almost daily demonstrations. Sometimes the political events of the day bring spontaneously people from different groups to the square to protest or to celebrate.

Galatasaray Square has no public benches and the nearby cafes also work chiefly as takeaways. As a result, most of the people stand around in groups, lean against the walls or sit on the ground. The atmosphere is generally very relaxed and informal, with a diverse mix of people. This was where I often came to spend time with Şivan. He and his friends frequented a street corner next to a bakkal close to the square. The group would not have precise composition; people would come, say hello to others and take part in the current discussions; some would buy a small glass of tea from a vendor nearby, often to drink it standing, and continue somewhere else, only to come back soon to repeat the pattern. Most of the participants were males between twenty and thirty years of age but often their friends and relatives,
or women married to or dating the regulars, would stop by, exchange the latest gossip and move on.

They described this activity by using spatially defined terms. It was referred to as going to Istiklal or Taksim; many of the evenings would consist of wandering around the area, with the bakkal as the focal point. Şivan styled this as life in a big city, a quintessentially urban way to spend time for those who claimed the area as theirs. Şivan and his friends distinguished themselves from tourists and casual visitors in harsh terms. According to them, these were the ones who would walk Istiklal Street from one end to another like a flock of sheep, with their mouths open from the amazement. Here, the criteria was based in streetwise knowledge, shared by people from all social classes but not tied to them. It was a specific quality possessed by the Istanbulites spending their time in the streets, in constant interaction with very different people. A quick wit, a self-confident demeanour and an avid eye for even the tiniest markers in the urban sphere were the celebrated features of life in Istiklal Street for people who would, at the first glimpse, be unlikely candidates to promote contemporary urbanity in the metropolis.

Mostly originating from remote villages in the Southeast, many of them had a poor command of formal Turkish and no foundation for sophisticated manners conventionally associated with modern life in metropolitan centres. Nonetheless, despite the discriminating practices I have described throughout the study, they felt at home in the area and explicitly claimed to belong within its boundaries just as much as anyone else. In addition, in a manner reminiscent of the higher-class urbanites, they shared the pride of having in-depth knowledge of the city and situated their discussions into very familiar sociopolitical frameworks, the dynamics that have animated discussions of modernity and urbanity in Istanbul for over a century. These combined the ideological notions of particular spaces and boundaries with historical knowledge and abilities to read the rhythms of the city in a masterly way.

UNEQUAL BALANCE OF POWER

On one very uneventful evening on the street corner, I heard from Şivan that a small demonstration for Kurdish language rights would begin at Tünel Square with an intention to march to Taksim. This, he said, was what all the organizers always declared, knowing that the police would stop the demonstrations coming from the Tünel direction latest at Galatasaray Square. Even though Şivan was a firm supporter of the Kurdish cause, he did not feel it necessary to join the demonstration. For him, it was just another small-scale political squabble, organized by people with leftist solidarities. When I later asked around who had organized the demonstration, I came across individual names that were associated with the left-wing parties. Şivan
said that it was waste of time to join with the people of the past, mostly arguing with each other about historical details, especially when it was so few of them. I told him that I wanted to see what the demonstration was about and he agreed to walk with me a few hundred meters to Tünel Square. We had not even left Galatasaray Square when he told me that the demonstration was over. He saw a large animated group of people walking towards Tarlabası just at the intersection of Meşrutiyet Street and Hamalbaşı Street, visible from the square. The police had stopped the demonstration at its beginning and the participants were on their way home. Şivan stated dryly: “They want to have a separate state but they will never win it like this. They have good intentions but they cannot achieve their goals this way. Nobody will even know that there had been a demonstration today.”

After stating this, he began to analyze the precarious balance of power in everyday politics. In Istanbul, Galatasaray Square functions as a scene for encounters between the police and people who want to raise awareness over political issues. The presence of the state is always overpowering; the police are wearing helmets and shields and carrying automatic weapons with water cannon-equipped TOMA intervention vehicles in the immediate vicinity. Sometimes this led to comical situations. Şivan told me that he had witnessed a demonstration on behalf of the rights of the blind at the square some time ago. There had been a group protesters, mostly blind and elderly, carrying white canes, distributing leaflets and occupying the square in very small numbers. All the same, in front of the giant doors of Galatasaray Lycée, they were met by the police in full riot gear. Şivan said that he felt that even some of the police officers were rather ashamed about the situation. Unsurprisingly, the sympathies had turned on the side of the blind. For the Kurds, he noted, the situation would be completely different; most of the Turks saw them as primitive people, responsible for violence and terrorism; it would be very difficult to make their concerns, especially those associated with Kurdish self-governance, accepted by means of demonstrations.

Alongside the individual pre-planned demonstrations, there are spontaneous political actions in Galatasaray Square; I was just recently, in January 2015, at the square following the cheerful dancing of the participants after the victory of the Kurdish fighters in Kobane. It also fills up for wild celebrations after the victories of Istanbul’s three big football teams. There is, however, another spatial pattern for activism, one that aims at leaving a more permanent mark on the location. It aspires to freedom of action, claims over a location, and even ownership of public space and rests on the possibility of occupying a particular space in a repeated manner, forming solidarities that are not limited to a single event but have become an integral part of everyday life, a reminder of the passing of time and the persistence of societal problems. They can be recurring every week, such as the demonstration
demanding justice for the people who have disappeared in the hands of the state by Saturday Mothers (Cumartesi Anneleri), a group inspired by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. In Istanbul, the group, carrying pictures of the victims, has occupied Galatasaray Square every Saturday from the mid-1990s and celebrated their 500th gathering in October 25, 2014. However, even before the Gezi Park protests, there have been moments when the forces could be united, albeit momentarily, with a promise – if not of a revolution – of something that carried on for a whole year to reoccur and confront the authorities in public space. The events of May Day (bir mayıs) show how history and space become entangled in distinctive ways.

MAY DAY – TAKSİM SQUARE AND ITS ARTERIES

The yearly event of May Day transformed urban space of Istanbul in a radical manner and was especially interesting in how it altered the production of solidarities that deviated from everyday life and demonstrated cracks in the order of symbolic spaces, normally reproducing and enforcing widely shared stereotypes. In Istanbul, May Day has strong connotations to what is referred to as the Taksim Square Massacre of 1977. The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (DİSK) had organized the first big rally in Taksim Square in 1976 and the bloody events of the following year were anticipated in Turkey amidst the violent confrontations along politically divided lines, culminating in the military coup of 1980. It is still uncertain who opened the fire from the roof of the Intercontinental Hotel, now called Marmara, killing four people and resulting in a chaos that caused the death of 34 people and injured hundreds (Baykan and Hatuka 2010). Here, I will focus on how the present-day protests manage to create solidarities among people from different backgrounds – I consider the May Day protests as extracting material from historical events and utilizing their significance creatively in the yearly reproduction of ephemeral solidarities. The rhythms of the May Day activities redraw boundaries of the city in unusual ways and provide an outlet to express tensions in public space, especially in relation to Istanbul’s most politicized sites.

In 2009, there was again nervous expectation of what was going to happen; May Day had been declared as a holiday in April but people had not been allowed to gather into Taksim Square the year before. Now different leftist parties had received permission to allow 5,000 people to march into

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the square under a heavy police presence. In local 
bakkals, cafes and teahouses there was a fair amount of 
speculation on the security situation; how the security 
forces would be positioned and whether people would be 
allowed to Istiklal Street or Taksim Square freely. The 
preparations were already underway with an increased 
police presence in the streets and people were 
discussing the different signals in the cityscape.

While much of the speculation was done in a curious, 
even joking manner, there were instances that portrayed 
tension over the spatial order of the city. Ridvan came to 
visit me furious at what had happened to him two 
days before May Day. As usual, he had been spending 
time with his friends around Taksim Square, when a 
policeman had approached them. The officer had told 
the group of five to go back to Tarlabası (see also 
Secor 2004:358 on regular ID checks at Taksim). I could not be sure if 
this was just a way to offend them by designating their 
place in a derogatory way but in this case the words had 
really hit their target. He told me that one of his friends had 
argued for their right to be in the public space of the square as citizens 
(vatandaş) and this had led to policeman slapping him, arresting 
the whole group and taking them to be verbally disciplined by the nearby 
police van. The message from the police had been that they were prohibited to be near 
the square on May Day and should do their rioting in their own 
nearhood. It was hard to estimate which was more offensive to him: to 
deprive him of his right to be in public space as a Turkish citizen or to 
alienate him from urban space by suggesting he should rather cause trouble 
in his own neighbourhood, a space that the police would not be interested 
in. His version of what had happened fluctuated between contempt for the 
state that would discriminate against the poor and the Kurds, and the pride 
of supporting himself financially and contributing to Turkish society with 
his bakkal and job as a waiter. The reoccurring confrontations with the 
police seemed like repetitions of the same pattern; constant regulatory work 
to remind the undesirable elements of their place in society.

My actual observations of the May Day demonstrations in 
Beyoğlu ended up being limited to the view from my window in Tophane 
and rapidly updated news on several internet sites and social media. Back then, Twitter 
and other real-time social media applications had not yet reached 
the popularity they nowadays enjoy in political activism. My flatmate Veli had a 
history of participating in the May Day demonstrations and thought this 
time of combining art with activism by throwing balloons filled with paint to 
colour the security forces and “to make them look like a rainbow.” However, 
he had to leave the town to visit his relatives and he wanted me to look after 
the house, in case rocks or Molotov cocktails would hit our windows and

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break or set something on fire. He had been vehemently against us going to the square together and kept repeating that May Day was different from other demonstrations we had participated in, that the police could do anything to the protesters, and that as a foreigner I did not know the rules of this particular game. Of course, there are foreigners taking part in the demonstrations as well as old trade union activists and people just curious to know what is happening. In the following years, May Day had started to attract larger and larger crowds reaching up to half a million in 2011 with a more carnivalesque atmosphere but in 2009 the atmosphere was tense because of the tragic events of the years before.

On that morning, the police cordon blocking the way to Istiklal Street was located just outside our window, signifying the boundary between Tophane and the urban sphere of Istiklal Street. I visited the bakkal across the street and started to talk about the day with the owner. There were no other customers at the moment and Bülent, the usually very talkative patron seemed bored. He started complaining about the bad business of the day but quickly moved into its political significance. In his opinion, the workers’ celebrations were a good, albeit a bit old-fashioned thing: the world had become more dynamic and Turkey needed entrepreneurs rather than factory workers. He also told me that as a foreigner, I should not go to Istiklal Street or Taksim Square – the police would not let me anyway, he marked sardonically. Our discussion moved back to politics: he argued, that trade-unionists were people with courage and dignity but the strong police presence was necessary to prevent the angry mobs, especially the politically radical Kurds from Tophane and Tarlabası, from entering Taksim Square. He said that Tarlabası would be burning again and that the rioting would need to be contained there. He expressed no sympathy for political protest from those segments of Turkish society, but, instead, reasoned that every May Day is proof and a reminder that those people should not be allowed to participate in urban life. He added, referring to the Republican idea of the gradual spread of modernity, that they were not yet ready to take part in responsible politics. When I was about to leave, he noted dryly, that after two o’clock everything would be calm again, making the whole day seem like a repeated performance with set duration.

I also exchanged some words with the police who seemed bored patrolling the street in a group of ten on hot day carrying full riot gear. They would let through some people after asking about their business and told me clearly – I thought there would no longer be danger of the flat burning because of their presence – that it would be too dangerous for me to go up the street. I should only wait for a couple of hours and things would be back to normal. They also stated in clear terms that their job was not to let the dangerous people up the street. Again, it felt like a staged drama; there was
no need for us to elaborate why the police cordons were encircling the symbolically significant spaces of Istiklal Street and Taksim Square and protecting them from undesirable elements, or, who those elements were. The intrusion of dangerous people causing mayhem in the city centre was not specified but followed the familiar spatial logic of the egalitarian centre of responsible citizens and their incommensurability with the inner-city populations who could only be controlled by the strong state.

From my window I could see only one occasion when the police used force to stop a group of young men trying to push their way through – after a couple of seconds the situation was calm again with one of them arrested and others running back down the road; however, I could follow news reports showing violent confrontations, tear gas and Molotov cocktails around Tarlababaşı Boulevard with large numbers of police and military forces securing the boundary between the two areas. I met Ridvan later in the day – he said that their demonstrations had been useless and that he would want to move abroad as soon as possible. The yearly occurring drama seemed to yield the same results and remind the people of the boundaries in the area. Having said that, the political significance of town squares in Istanbul is not stable and new forms of possibilities, altering the spatial makeup of the city, have emerged.

THE YENİKAPI RALLY SQUARE PROJECT – THE POSTMODERN SENSIBILITY OF A SQUARE

In addition to Galatasaray and Taksim Squares, there are other significant public squares in Istanbul. For example, demonstrations in the in the Historical Peninsula are commonly situated at Beyazıt Square,¹⁰⁶ in the heart of the Fatih district. However, to illustrate how the idea of a town square relates to the grand narratives of modernity and the individual senses of agency and belonging at this stage of history, I will discuss briefly the Yenikapı Rally Square Project (Yenikapı Meydan Projesi)¹⁰⁷ as an example of how the concept of a public square as a site for political activism can be stretched. Situated on the underside of the peninsula, by the new Marmaray railway link connecting the European and Asian sides of the city, this approximately 1.4 kilometres long and 500 meters wide construction (in total 715,000 m² out of which the staging area consists 270,000 m²) was planned to accommodate gatherings of various sorts¹⁰⁸ (Figure 7). Even

¹⁰⁶ It is telling of Istanbul's moral geography that Beyazıt Square was renamed as Freedom Square (Hürriyet Meydanı) in the Republican period. My educated guess is that most of Istanbul's inhabitants would not recognize this name.

¹⁰⁷ This is the official name of the site by Nuhoğlu Construction, the company responsible for the project. It is telling that their English translation includes the word “rally” to designate its uses.

though it did not exist at the time of my fieldwork, it captures perfectly the logic of the spatial order I am sketching here, as a combination of neoliberalism, majoritarian democracy and a discourse of safety and security as the radical reorganizational principles of Istanbul’s new urbanity.

Figure 7. The Yenikapı Rally Square Project, constructed on a land reclaimed from the Sea of Marmara.

Opened in 2013, the square is larger than all of Istanbul’s public spaces combined, a massive concrete ground, surrounded by water from all the sides except the north. Accommodating a maximum of 1,250,000 people, with gigantic parking places, the government has offered it as a well-facilitated alternative for demonstrations, not disturbing people in the other locations. Prime Minister Erdoğan made this clear in his speech on April 22, 2014, during a group meeting about the May Day protests:

I am now requesting, saying it again as the prime minister of the Republic of Turkey: First, give up on Taksim. Please do not engage in tension here with the state. Please do not disturb the peace of our people, our tradesmen there.

For understandable reasons, the new rallying ground has been popular among the supporters of the current government but attracted very little users from the other segments of society. On May Day 2014 it was deserted. The construction might seem like an absurd joke but should be taken

seriously as continuation of the new topographies of Istanbul, an arrangement that operates on massive scales and offers a very different conception of the relationship between private and public, the state and civil society and the present and the future of the country. Justin McGuirk illustrates this tendency very well in his description of how students of Bilgi University approached the square:

Charged with creating a public awareness campaign about Yenikapi City Park [The Yenikapi Rally Square Project], the students gave it a new name based on its suggestive shape: Üçüncü Billur, the third testicle. Aside from its satirical, schoolboy humour, the nickname fits an official narrative of Istanbul in which progress is measured in thirds: a third airport, a third bridge across the Bosphorus (an obtuse solution to the city's gridlock) and a third child (to keep the Turkish state young and burgeoning).111

Together with the spatial orders of the mahalle and the urban sphere, squares play a central function in channeling senses of belonging, sociality and agency. At the heart of these definitions are the changes in public and private spaces. My ethnographic examples point at the serious work of redetermining the “right to the city” through Low's categories of access, freedom of action, taking over space, ability to modify the environment and ownership of public space. In Istanbul, the definition of public resides within a rich semantic network, consisting of a number of oppositions and complementary relations with concepts such as “privacy, secrecy, domesticity, isolation, individualism, sectarianism, market, state” (Starrett 2008:1036), all built on the top of earlier historical formations. I maintain that different definitions of publicness play a very significant role in the geographical, conceptual and symbolic reworking of the urban topography of present-day Istanbul. Lastly, I want to draw attention to another scale of urban transformation, that, together with changing approaches to public space, is currently redrawing the boundaries between the moral frameworks of the city.

Urban Transformation: Spatial Orders Collide

The spatially bounded notion of mahalle, subject to reconditioning by different means throughout history, has retained many of its historically persistent characteristics and social dynamics. They have been conceptualized predominantly as dichotomies between public and private space, modernity and tradition, and secularism and religion. In the inner-city neighbourhoods of my study, many of the responsibilities, formally

assigned to the state, were in practice in the hands of the residents. Similar informality characterized the lack of official information about the areas: the correct data of the residents was difficult to come by, a fact that has been used by the state as a justification to tear down the labyrinth of alleyways and complex networks of solidarities. In the early Republican period, the aim was to restrict the powers associated with the religious order (Gül 2006:79–80): nowadays, the key term is “urban transformation” (“kentsel dönüşüm”), used rarely with positive connotations but almost interchangeably with the more value-laden term “gentrification.”

The dictionary definition of gentrification as transformation towards the middle-class taste does not mean that the markers of the taste are universally shared. The analysis is severely limited if it is restricted to the expansion of the multinational chains of coffee shops and bohemian bourgeoisie taking over the apartments – pointed to as examples of the process in countless popular articles. In this final section of my study, I will compare the dynamics of urban transformation in Tarlabası and Tophane districts, especially from the perspective historical legitimization of boundaries and morality. I will suggest that Istanbul’s urban transformation since the 1980s, together with Turkey’s opening to the global economy after the 1980 military coup, has produced new dynamics but these are intertwined with much earlier formations of historical consciousness and qualities of urban space. For the purposes of my study, I will outline the general developments very briefly, in a couple of paragraphs focussing on the areas that I have studied, and move on to an ethnographic description of the dynamics on the ground.

VARIETIES OF URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN ISTANBUL

Compared to the totalizing discourses of modernist architecture, gentrification in the urban sphere is influenced by the historical characteristics of the areas. The peak of radical modernism was perhaps demonstrated in the thoughts of Cemil Topuzlu, former mayor of Istanbul, in 1937:

> In my opinion, in order to transform Istanbul into a contemporary city, there is no solution but total demolition, with the exception of Istanbul’s monuments, and gradual reconstruction. (in Gül 2006:80)

Contrary to this, gentrification efforts consist of gradual processes that pay attention to, or, are sometimes founded upon, the qualities of particular periods. In the early 1980s, Istanbul’s gentrification began with a few neighbourhoods on the shores of the Bosphorus, such as Kuzguncuk and Arnavutköy, and in

112 In Turkish, my informants referred to “kentsel dönüşüm” or used the English term for gentrification. There is also a term “mutenaştırma” which is gaining popularity nowadays.
Beyoğlu, such as Galata and Cihangir (Islam 2008:90). Especially in Beyoğlu, the scale of transformation was modest and mostly relied on the wave of artists moving into the districts. However, the processes were aided by the aforementioned pedestrianization and beautification of Istiklal Street, decayed from its glory days and associated mostly with poverty and crime (Adanalı 2011:3).

The shift from relatively spontaneous processes by individual actors to forced gentrification based on institutional investment started to occur in the 1990s, when renewal on the scale of whole buildings – as opposed to individual flats – in the historical districts of Fener and Balat, increased into systematic purchases of buildings by the wealthy real estate investors in Beyoğlu, especially in the Galata district, and has reached an even larger scale with the renovation of whole blocks (Islam 2008:90). The present-day acquisitions can be broadly divided into two types: public/public partnerships between the municipalities and the TOKİ housing development administration and private/public partnerships between the private businesses and the municipalities (90). In general terms, the former are gigantic construction projects, replacing the squatter settlements on the outskirts of the city with mass-housing, while the latter are famous for providing flats of a higher caliber. The difference can be seen in the representations of two projects (Figures 8 and 9 below).

Figure 8. An aerial photograph promoting the Kayaşehir development.

113 Islam uses the term “ennoblement” instead of “gentrification.” I consider the terms synonymous.
114 TOKİ (Başbakanlık Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı) is an institution providing social housing in Turkey, a non-profit government organization. More info on its history, position and reach can be found at http://www.toki.gov.tr/en/index.html
115 http://www.tokikayabasikonutlari.net/toki-kayasehir-havadan-fotograflari/
The first picture is of Kayaşehir, a huge satellite city development, located approximately 30 kilometres north-west from Beyoğlu. In Istanbul, the word TOKİ has come to signify a typology of construction, repetitious stretches of high-rises, often in isolated locations. They stand for the amorphous mass surrounding the urban core, homes to Istanbul’s newcomers and relocated people. Often very difficult to reach with public transport, they have come to signify the excess population of the city, the gecekondu squatters of the booming migration in the 1950s and 1960s taken up to the current day. They are separated from the central areas not just by symbolic boundaries but by a passage that takes a long time, approximately two hours from Kayaşehir to Taksim Square, and costs several liras, even with the cheapest public transport options. For people like Şivan, TOKİ housing signified the most unfortunate destiny: “Moving into these new housing areas would be the worst thing to occur to me,” he said, while we were looking at a magazine with an advert of the new middle-class government housing project. “In these pictures everything is clean and the sun is shining but the reality, I have heard, is completely different. There is nothing to do and it takes hours to travel to work. They are just a way to relocate poor people into remote areas – out of sight, out of mind.”

In Beyoğlu, the gentrification of historical neighbourhoods rests on their imageability, on their historical layers that resist complete demolition. What in radical modernism would be a necessary rupture through complete demolition, creation of a clean slate to reassemble society, has found subtler form in the Turkey of today. In the picture above, the future of Tarlabası is not transformed into the brutal repetition of living containers in the manner of the TOKİ construction projects. The atmosphere is closer to new leafy suburbs in Western European towns; modern, albeit not experimental architecture, big windows and wooden surfaces. Some elements of the old Greek and Armenian buildings have been preserved, as surfaces protruding from the newly built background. The end result is an absurd juxtaposition of elements, a simulation of artificial ruins blending into upper-middle-class taste in a haphazard way.

This reshuffling of historical categories is one of the most prominent ways of re-imaging the environment in contemporary Istanbul. Another recent example is found in Sulukule, a centuries-old Roma settlement adjacent to the ancient city walls. The large-scale transformation has forced many of the Roma inhabitants to distant TOKİ projects and now the area is rebuilt in what has been presented as neo-Ottoman style (see Uysal 2011) (Figure 10). From these examples, it is easy to distinguish the different currents of modernity and how different epochs are foregrounded in urban planning.

Figure 10. Neo-Ottoman architecture in Sulukule

117 John Lubbock, Creative Commons, https://www.flickr.com/photos/130535894@N08/16581014925/
In the impoverished quarters of Beyoğlu, the dynamic of gentrification was present on different scales; on the one hand, there was the informal process of newcomers renting apartments through local real estate agencies or through internet sites listing local classifieds, such as craigslist.com, popular especially among foreigners. On the other hand, there were the medium-size real estate companies that would buy buildings and renovate them thoroughly. On the top of these were the large-scale projects, in Tarlabası still at a planning stage. Şivan was already prepared for a change and the districts on the belt surrounding the centre had begun to seem his next destination. He, like several young men that I spent most of my time with, had wishes to start a family soon and hoped to have more living space in the areas like Bahçelievler, Zeytinburnu or Ümraniye. My friends had visited the areas very rarely, if ever, but they had developed the air of preferable destinations, if moving out of Tarlabası would be unavoidable. Living there would still allow travelling into Beyoğlu and the areas would have at least some identifiable features, or, “their names would be recognized by others than people living there,” as Şivan said half-jokingly. Clearly the worst choice would be life in a nondescript TOKİ settlement, with no services, work, character or even access to other places.

Keyder (2010) suggests that in comparison to other global models of urban transformation, Istanbul’s future might conform to the European model, with central areas as the tourist showcase, consisting of entertainment facilities and upscale residential neighbourhoods, and the poor districts close to the city centre being gentrified. Circumscribing the central areas would be the old peripheral neighbourhoods, the early gecekondu-settlements that now accommodate middle- and lower-income segments. Outside these, there would be a third belt, where the old industrial zones are turned into both affluent gated communities and high-rise complexes for the poor and lower-middle-classes under auspices of TOKİ. My data also confirms these developments as cultural categories that have been adopted by the residents. With the rapid rise of the rents in central Beyoğlu and the beginning of the influx of mostly artists, students and foreigners into Tarlabası and Tophane neighbourhoods – Galata and Cihangir being already outside their budget – the direction of the development was understood in clear terms.

TARLABAŞI IS BEING RENEWED

I conducted my fieldwork at the time when there was a lot of nervous excitement around. The following five years have seen monumental changes in the area; I will concentrate here on issues that I have field data to support and my analysis of the later stages of urban transformation is based on discussions using social media and stories on the websites, newspapers and
magazines. Rather than presenting a detailed study of different phases, causes and consequences, I will continue to focus on how the change was understood and anticipated in relation to boundaries and moral frameworks.

The profound changes in Tarlabası are associated with the renewal of an urban area of around 20,000 m², consisting of 9 blocks and 278 plots in the middle of the district, presenting a clear-cut transformation of its spatial arrangement (Map 7). The decision was made in 2006 but the work had not yet begun at the time of my fieldwork. Unlike in earlier decades, the possibility of transformation on this scale had been guaranteed by Law 5366, for the Protection of Deteriorated Historic and Cultural Heritage through Renewal and Re-use, which gave the authorities powers to implement renewal projects without the consent of the property owners (Islam 2009:51). The same legislation formed a basis for forced renewal projects in other districts, including Sulukule. In Tarlabası, a private development company GAP İnşaat, part of the Çalık Holding Group employing around 20,000 people in 17 countries, won the bid for the preparation and implementation of the redevelopment. The plans were initiated with seven local architecture firms to transform the area into a mixed-use development, combining residential units, shopping centres, cafes, restaurants and hotels (51). The future of this part of the district corresponded very closely to the view of the centre proposed by Keyder above.

Map 7. The area of urban renewal in Tarlabası.

119 Project map from http://www.beyoglubuyukdonusum.com/iletisim/detay/Bize-Ulasin/46/170/0
During my latest visit to Istanbul in 2015 the outcomes of the redevelopment were far from clear. The area for renewal was surrounded by high fences with only a few shapes of the old buildings visible (see the cover of the study). However, the area towards Kasımpaşa and the Golden Horn from the boundary of the renewal area did not have a very different feel. According to my friends, the biggest differences were in the increasing number of foreigners and renovated apartments for tourists, available through internet sites such as airbnb.com. The area towards Taksim from the fenced renewal space seemed to have developed in a similar direction. The latest changes during my fieldwork and the anticipation of a troubled future suggested that different elements of the urban sphere had coalesced in an unexpected manner. In Tarlabası, busy Tarlabası Boulevard maintained a powerful sense of separation between the districts but the sociocultural dynamics of the mahalle were changing. Tarlabası was becoming more diverse, punctuated by people representing different social classes. However, the massive renewal project would be of a radically different kind: erasing the earlier social fabric in its entirety – wild rumours of digging a massive hole into the ground and filling the space with a huge hotel or a shopping mall circulated among my friends. This was very different to what was happening in Tophane, on the other side of Istiklal Street.

POROUS BOUNDARIES AND GRADUAL GENTRIFICATION IN TOPHANE

In Tophane, shifts of boundary dynamics and processes of gentrification resulted in practices that demonstrated small-scale adjustments and creative solutions. One could sense the change in atmosphere when walking down the hill towards the shore of the Bosporus. The chic boutiques close to Istiklal Street decreased in number, the buildings began to look more worn-out and the all-male neighbourhood teahouses would become the norm, instead of the mixed-gender European-style cafes. The boundary was not as clear as in Tarlabası and more open to negotiation in the course of daily life. The change was also present in the stereotypical features of the mahalle. The lines of drying laundry started to appear gradually when descending but there was no real geographic boundary.

Yet, Tophane was gentrifying rapidly. The central Boğazkesen Street, the lower part of the passage from Galatasaray Square to the Bosporus, saw a succession of newly opened galleries and stores selling designer artefacts. In addition, the other main passageways from the top of the hill, Kumbaracı Yokuşu (Kumbaracı Hill) and Lüleci Hendek Street, were spaces where the urban transformation was most obvious, the entanglement of narrower streets between them still being relatively intact. There had also been responses to the development from the inhabitants. I discussed the changes with my friends living in the district, the shopkeepers and the teahouse...
patrons. Mustafa was a young man, originally from Erzurum in eastern Turkey, but had settled in Istanbul after graduating from an engineering college. He had had difficulties in finding a job in the city and had decided to start a bakkal with a friend, selling mostly cigarettes, beer and snacks. The store was located at the ambiguous zone between the mahalle and the urban sphere, close to where I lived sharing a flat with Veli towards the end of my fieldwork, and Mustafa would often refer to the changes over the last few years in our regular conversations.

He felt that he was being pressurized from both sides of the boundary. The more conservative section down the road did not appreciate him selling alcohol and he felt that his bakkal was not good enough for the wealthier people moving into the neighbourhood. His overall mood was of worried expectation: “In a way, the decision to start a bakkal was to find a reliable source of income. We are selling things that people will always buy and I thought that this would be enough. I have education for a much better-paid job but I wanted to have certainty and security in my life. Now that seems to be gone – Istanbul is changing too fast and it might be that I will have to move away.” This feeling was echoed in many other commentaries. In general, the issues concerning urban transformation were expressed in a very pragmatic manner – the biggest worry was the increase in rents, already going on for some time and there was a strong feeling of powerlessness within a system that did not provide reasonable alternatives. The inhabitants had the same fears as people living in Tarlabası, of having no other choice than the TOKİ housing on the peripheries of Istanbul.

This had already brought some tension in the air and the urban transformation of the area had acquired moral characteristics. Soon after my fieldwork, the strained relations burst out in the form of attacks on two gallery openings on September 22, 2010, mostly explained as a result of the attendees breaking the moral standards of the mahalle by drinking alcohol in front of the galleries (see Tuominen 2013). These have not been isolated occasions – just at the time of editing this chapter, there was another incident at the opening of an exhibition on February 21, 2015, a threatening encounter that became a police matter between the inhabitants and the visitors after a couple kissing outside the gallery door had been instructed not to act like that, because that is “not how things are done in our culture” (“bizim kültürümüzde böyle şeyler olmaz”). In the claim, “our” covers a wide spectrum of differently bounded identities and the boundaries of the mahalle represent moral standards associated with its foundational senses of belonging. The news article of the incident was titled “Reactionaries assaulted a gallery in Tophane” (“Tophane’de gericiler galeriye saldırdı”), a

120 Sol Haber Merkezi. 21.2.2015 http://haber.sol.org.tr/turkiye/tophanede-gericiler-galeriye-saldirdi-108346
repetition of the historical dynamic associated with the spatial order of \textit{mahalle}. However, the encounter was further complicated when the residents explained that their reaction was not against art, but against the behaviour of the visitors.\textsuperscript{121} The moral frameworks and conceptions of public and private space in Tophane were different from the surrounding areas and its inhabitants wanted to defend their values. In the recent years there have been various attempts to redraw the boundaries of the \textit{mahalle}. Because they are not always supported by clear geographic markers people have carved them into the cityscape by informal means. The solutions vary and create further distinctions.

**MARKING THE BOUNDARIES**

As names, both Tarlabası and Tophane carried strong connotations of poverty, dilapidation and crime but were also, especially among their inhabitants, associated with positive qualities of community and authenticity. In Tophane, this had manifested in the form of slogan “\textit{Burası Tophane}”\textsuperscript{122} (“Here is Tophane”) (Figure 11), a marker crafting a boundary into urban space. I took the photo below in the corner of Kumbaracı Yokuşu and Serdar-ı Ekrem Street, just one hundred metres downhill from İstiklal Street. Across the boundary, the physical characteristics of the \textit{mahalle} increase in density, one can see the difference in the condition of the buildings and there are no establishments selling alcohol. Moreover, the relationship between the consumption of alcohol and public space has been at the heart of numerous conflicts in Istanbul and symbolizes the incommensurability of different moral frameworks.

There is a famous culture centre, Depo,\textsuperscript{123} located at the old tobacco factory at the end of the Kumbaracı Yokuşu, another one hundred meters down the street, an example of an institution that is trying to integrate into the \textit{mahalle} environment. In addition to exhibitions, the centre arranges debates and workshops, also involving the residents nearby in some of the projects. In one case, the demands of the moral framework of the \textit{mahalle} had led into alternative spatial arrangements. The exhibition openings in Istanbul usually involve wine being served. This had, at least symbolically, led to confrontations with neighbourhood’s inhabitants, so Depo had come up with a solution. Serving wine inside the gallery had not presented a

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{121} Ulusal kanal 21.2.2015 http://www.ulusalkanal.com.tr/gundem/tophanede-sanat-galerisine-saldiri-h50729.html

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Burası Tophane} is also a name of the radio program in Açık Radyo channel, dealing with the issues in the neighbourhood. It is tempting to think, that sound waves are another way of designating the boundaries in virtual space with the same slogan.

\textsuperscript{123} http://www.depoistanbul.net/en/index.asp
\end{footnotes}
problem, but difficulties arose when visitors went outside to the front for a cigarette with their wine glasses. To solve them, the centre had installed mobile walls by the door that restricted the visibility of the alcohol consumption (Figure 12).

Figure 11. Graffiti designating the boundary of Tophane. (Photo by the author)
Figure 12. Depo: Mobile walls that restrict visibility during the exhibition openings. (Photo by the author)
In these small-scale actions, establishing boundaries presents an example of their contextual character; movement between the spatial orders consists of strategic and tactical maneuvers, attempts to retain the desirable qualities of urban space through reflection and cultivation of desired selfhood. Moral frameworks are not restricted to the consciousness of individual actors but operate in relation to the qualities of the spaces. Furthermore, the categories of urban space are sensitive to layers of historical consciousness and easily modifiable. Dissimilar to strict categories of ethnicity, origins and blood, urbanity, at once alienating and exhilarating, prioritizes the urban environment that is rooted in a man-made place (Boym 2001:76). The examples above show ways to mark the moral qualities of spaces by initiating boundaries that can be easily altered.

Consequently, the struggle for defining desirable moral characteristics of urban space was following dynamics in very different scales, from huge interventions that combined municipal and private actors, into the cultural centre adjusting the boundaries between public and private, and, at the other extreme, kisses in the streets escalating into police matters. In all of these cases, different senses of belonging and encounters with modernity were constructing coherent narratives from the spatial classification. However, their coherence does not mean that the actors would be represented in an equal and democratic manner.

BOUNDARY AS A FRONTIER

Neil Smith likens the processes of gentrification to the frontier imagery, and inner-city populations to Native Americans in the wilderness, a natural element of their physical surroundings (1996:xiv). These designations of discriminatory processes travel effortlessly from Smith’s examples in the US into the contemporary realities of Istanbul. He suggests that gentrification is likely to produce a city of sharpened bipolarity, with a very narrow conception of civil society. This would also lead into a deepening villainization of the poorer segments of society through narratives of violence, drugs and crime (230). My findings support this line of development in Istanbul. The language of urban transformation is highly dependent on the markers of cultural distinction. This, in turn, is directly related to access, claims and ownership of the urban space. Michael Herzfeld’s analysis of urban transformation in Rome presents another aspect of the larger dynamic, similar to my study; the presence of the poor in the areas undergoing gentrification is incompatible with the pretensions of the new arrivals (2009:22). The terms might vary in different cities but the governing principles are very similar. The questions are ultimately about the limits of tolerance and diversity. Smith summarizes the basis of these criteria brilliantly:
The pursuit of difference, diversity and distinction forms the basis of the new urban ideology but it is not without contradiction. It embodies a search for diversity as long as it is highly ordered, and a glorification of the past as long as it is safely brought into the present. (1996:114)

In Istanbul, the dangers posed by the residents of mahalles are rationalized as the qualities of their non-modernity or anti-modernity. They might be seen as ignorant and uneducated (cahil) or reactionaries (gerici), having different sense of selfhood, worlds apart from the ones with whom they are supposed to share the same space. Mitchell Duneier comments on the ideal of urban life through dry, almost cynical sense, as “having superficial contact with all these people whose eyes and ears bode security without getting too involved with them” (1999:192, italics in the original). The spatial order of the mahalle presents a paradox in a gentrified city; the global hierarchy of value in the urban sphere equates variety, diversity of colour and disparity of opinions with the expression of freedom, presenting a mix of international and indigenous cultures (Öncü in Robins and Aksoy 1995:229). It, nonetheless, looks like the spatial order of the mahalle cannot be contained within the highly imageable central districts of Istanbul. According to the values dominating the current urban transformation, its historically developed senses of community, belonging and morality cannot be brought safely into the present day.
Conclusion: Contextual Moral Frameworks

Over the course of this study, I have discussed the fluidity of practices in the urbanity of Istanbul, seemingly random occurrences that, on a closer look, portray intricate patterns relating to historical narratives and spatial arrangements. Life falling short of grand schemes forms an integral part of urbanity, invites curiosity and even celebratory attitudes towards the ambiguous and the unexpected. The existence of shared moral frameworks, conscious practices referring to the past and to powerful notions of belonging, does not mean that people would reduce their daily lives to the task of acting out or imitating these modalities. In the words of Charles Taylor, “rather than representations being the primary locus of understanding, they are only islands in the sea of our unformulated practical grasp on the world.” (1995:170). Embodied practices, realized as elements of sociality through encounters, connect supposedly trivial actions into larger discussions with several reflective dimensions. They originate from expressions, gestures, styles of walking, greetings and idioms and extend over the most crucial categories ordering the historical palimpsest. The capability to distinguish between appropriate practices and, especially, to spot inconsistencies in someone's actions, is at the heart of urbanity; the ability to navigate between different registers and to improvise successfully in different social contexts, while retaining a coherent sense of one's actions, is essentially important.

In Istanbul, the multiplicity is not restricted to just one exemplary past but operates at several registers, combining the strategies of the powerful with the constant tactical work of locating the cracks within the system. Historical narratives coexist alongside one another and even the self-confessed classicists or modernists do not always agree on which era to prioritize. The ancient roots of the nomadic Turks in the Central Asian steppes are effortlessly transferred into the present as carriers of the Turkish essence and over six hundred years of the Ottoman Empire are either cherished as a glorious chapter in history or cast away as foreign corruption sidetracking the teleological destiny of the country. The entanglement of these narratives is present even in the most quotidian operations of the everyday, often with far-reaching potential for social interventions. The history is also intertwined with spatial attributes; social orders experienced in the movement across the city, illuminating the historically established
dynamics, often referring to distant epochs, specific to imagined senses of belonging and sociality.

During my fieldwork in the Beyoğlu district, this relationship to history was not restricted to abstract reasoning but had very real consequences, for the friction characteristic to the lives of my informants was rooted in these polarities and juxtapositions. The questions resurfaced at spaces dense with poetic intimacies: Taksim Square, for a casual visitor the symbolic centre of Republican Istanbul, concealed a complex arrangement of historical layers, referring to variously accentuated pasts and dynamics. I have argued that their most recent culmination in the form of the Gezi Park protests was not an unexpected eruption but an anticipated result of the patient building of new kinds of historical connections and solidarities. They were realized previously in interventions to the sociospatial composition of the area and in instances such as the May Day protests, uniting actors across the social spectrum, from the Kurds of Tarlabaşı to activists grouped under human rights and environmental protection, aiming at what academic andjournalist Ahmet İnsel terms “revolt for self-respect” (“haysiyet ayaklanması”).124 My aim throughout the study has been to explore the limits and boundaries of the uses of histories and social orders of specific spaces.

MASTERY OF THE URBAN SPHERE

I have studied these phenomena on various scales; examining parallels and divergencies between the dynamics operating within the confines of the mahalle, as well as in immensely larger wholes, the clashes breaking down ideas of urbanity within the nation and tactical manoeuvres combining different registers in creative ways; not based on actors reaching for predetermined goals but, instead, mastering shifts between different situations and contexts to reach morally appropriate solutions and thus cultivating their senses of the modern self. Much of this has to do with notions of dignity; being able to act in an appropriate manner in encounters with people who share the same space but not necessarily the same values, without compromising one’s most significant loyalties. I have tried to find a balance between the joys and the anxieties of everyday life and to approach urbanity as a specific constellation of overlapping values, extremely sensitive to the context. The lack of rigid moral codes, or, rather, their ambiguity when moving in across sociospatial boundaries, has became a treasured quality of life in Istanbul.

Many of these issues are brought together under the rubric of modernity, a quintessential designator of ruptures and gradual degrees of

separation in Turkey since the late Ottoman era. Its ubiquity in different contexts has led me to consider life in contemporary Istanbul through an underlying narrative of the histories of young men, living in inner-city neighbourhoods in close proximity to Taksim Square and the entertainment district around Istiklal Street. Concentrating on people, who according to the dominant developmentalist narrative represented those being left out of modernity, has revealed a very interesting configuration of its reach. Their mastery of urbanity was realized in the constant crossing of boundaries designating different moral frameworks, bringing together their mahalles with the urban sphere of Istanbul.

In their lives, modernity was not seen as a teleological development radiating from centres to peripheries and spreading alongside modernization of society, but as unevenly distributed into different pockets, defined through notions of publicness, freedom and tolerance. Furthermore, the narrative of progress, in both national and universal terms, revealed compromises, limitations and contestations, intersecting differently bounded spatial wholes in the search for a combination that would enable dignified life within the urban mosaic. The coexistence of different moral frameworks was not without contradictions: they were tied to specific spaces and urban transformation in Istanbul was intimately connected to their qualities and shifts in their boundaries.

The spatial reach of moral frameworks has several real-life consequences, crisscrossing political, religious and communal concerns. In contemporary Istanbul, the boundaries emerging on a moral basis reproduce the spatial logic of the egalitarian centre of responsible citizens and the inner-city populations of its mahalles. The struggle over defining the moral qualities of urban space extends to dynamics on various levels; from the grand schemes of urban transformation, bulldozing whole quarters to be gentrified, to tactical operations redrawing boundaries on a smaller scale, occupying spaces and establishing new kinds of solidarities. In these processes, the boundaries between public and private become blurred but enable a powerful sense of belonging to urbanity, attraction to the transformative potential of the city, the essential condition that makes life worth living in Istanbul.
Glossary of Commonly Used Turkish Terms

Alevi – Heterodox branch of Islam, with elements from Twelver Shia Islam and Bektaşi order. There are approximately 10 million Alevis in Turkey.

Arabesk – Popular style of music with influences from the Arabic-pop genre with wider connotations of the lifestyle of the rural migrants – not to be confused with the style of ornamental design.

Bakkal – Modest grocery store.

Çağdaş – Term for “contemporary” and “modern” with strong Republican connotations.

Çapulcu – Literally “looter” or “pillager,” the term was adopted by protesters in the Gezi Park protests as a shared identity.

Çarşaf – Full body veil leaving only part of woman’s face visible.

Dolmuş – Shared taxi operating on fixed routes.

Gecekondu – Informal housing constructed without proper permissions by the rural migrants.

Hemşehri (or hemşeri) – “Colocal” identity, based on origins in the same part of the country.

Kâfir – “Infidel” or “non-Muslim,” with strong pejorative connotations.

Mahalle – “Neighbourhood,” with diverse connotations from an administrative unit to culturally intimate locality.

Mevlevi – Follower of the teachings of Rumi (Mevlâna Celâleddin-i Rûmî).

Meyhane – Tavern serving traditional foods, usually accompanied by raki or beer.

Millet – Historically a system of governance in the Ottoman times that allowed confessional communities extensive self-governance and separate legal courts. Nowadays the term is used for a nation or any specific group of people, e.g. kadın milleti – womankind.
**Glossary**

*Muhtar* – The elected head of a village or of a neighbourhood with an office in the area.

*Raki* – Popular aniseed-flavoured alcoholic drink.

*Ramazan* – Ramadan, the holy month of fasting for Muslims.

*Rum* – Term for Greeks in the Ottoman Empire and now for those who hold Turkish citizenship.

*Simit* – Crispy, ring-shaped bagel covered with sesame seeds.

*Site* – Housing development consisting of apartment blocks.

*Tanzimat* – Term referring to the period of reforms in the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1839.

*TOKİ* (Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı) – Institution that provides social housing, a non-profit government organization.

*TOMA* (Toplumsal Olaylara Müdahale Aracı) – Armored Intervention Vehicle used regularly in demonstrations.

*Türban* – Type of headscarf, usually referring to brightly coloured silk fabrics.

*Ümmet* – “Ummah,” community of Muslims bound together by ties of religion.

*Vakıf* – Religious or charitable foundation.

**Political Parties Mentioned in the Text**

*AKP* – *(Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)* (2001–) Justice and Development Party, a conservative party with an emphasis on Islamic values, built on the legacy of earlier Islamic parties. The party won the general election in 2002 and has remained the largest party in Turkey for 13 years. Its current leader is the current Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu while the former leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been the President of Turkey since August 2014.

*ANAP* – *(Anavatan Partisi)* (1983–2009) Motherland Party, a centre-right nationalist party, strongly associated with it leader Turgut Özal, Prime minister from 1983 to 1989, the prime architect of Turkey’s liberalization after the 1980 military coup. Also abbreviated as ANAVATAN.

*CHP* – *(Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)* (1923–) Republican People's Party, the oldest political party in Turkey, organized around Kemalist and social-
democratic lines. It is currently the main opposition party in Turkey and prides itself as continuing the national project initiated by Atatürk.

CUP – (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) (1889–1918) Committee of Union and Progress, a liberal reform movement in the late Ottoman Empire that paved the way for many initiatives of the Republic.

DP – (Demokrat Parti) (1946–1961) Democrat Party, a centre-right reform party that won the elections of 1950 with a landslide victory that marked Turkey's effective entry into the multiparty era.

FP – (Fazilet Partisi) (1998–2001) Virtue Party, an Islamist political party that succeeded the Welfare Party (RP) and preceded the AKP and SAADET, split into separate factions. The party was banned in 2001 for violating the secularist articles of the Constitution by the Constitutional court.

PKK – (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê) (1978–) Kurdistan Worker's Party, a radical organization, listed as a terrorist group by the US and the EU, has shifted its political agenda from Marxist-Leninism to one based on the anarchist principles of Bookchin. Led by imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan, the party remains very important component of the Turkish political field.


SAADET – (Saadet Partisi) (2001–) Felicity Party, an Islamist party founded by conservative Muslims after the ban on RP and formation of AKP, which they considered too reformist and liberal. Currently occupying no seats in the parliament, it nevertheless has an active organization with branches all over the country.
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