FRAGMENTS OF LOST ORIGINS
AUTHENTICITY, BELONGING AND CONTESTING HISTORIES IN CONTEMPORARY ISTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

The cityscape of contemporary Istanbul consists of intricate boundaries that play a significant role in the everyday lives of its inhabitants. This research report explores how various historical narratives of Turkishness are related to spatial divisions of the city and different frameworks of belonging and argues that a notion of an authentic self has become crucial in defining urbanity in Istanbul. In contesting historical understandings, the ancestral Central Asian Turkic civilizations, the imperial history of the Ottoman Sultans, and the birth of the Turkish Republic are seen as a series of ruptures with complex definitions of authenticity and foreignness, especially in relation to religion and ethnicity. The aim of the study is to show how different historically constructed frameworks of appropriate practices and norms are associated with urban egalitarian spaces and traditional neighbourhoods and how Istanbulites cross boundaries between them.

Keywords: Turkey, Istanbul, authenticity, modernity, urbanity, belonging, community

Introduction

In Istanbul the notion of authenticity is constantly used to legitimize one's own ideas and practices and to distinguish them from others'. Here, I want to explore how shared narratives of historical events and epochs are employed to construct otherness, often in the form of the Islamic and backward Other, in contrast to characteristics attributed to modern individuals. I will link these issues to the production of different spaces within the city and especially to how the boundaries between them are created and maintained.

First, I will show how the idea of authentic Turkish 'essence' became crucial for the early modernizers who saw the birth of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 as a massive rupture with the times of the Ottoman Empire as well as a return to authentic Turkic roots in a true modernist sense of the times. The nationalist rhetoric of specifically Turkish modernity was based on the teleological development that would naturally help Turks to find their innately modern characteristics that had been obscured by foreign Ottoman customs. Furthermore, I will argue that the discourse of the authentic modern self has both temporal and spatial dimensions within the city and is still at the core of Istanbul's modernization and urbanization but increasingly framed through shifting categories of

identity politics that range from primordial senses of ethnic and religious affiliations to ephemeral fashions.

In my research, I have concentrated on how these issues are present in everyday practices in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district and particularly its central boulevard Istiklal Caddesi which has a distinct urban history and signifies a symbolic space of freedom and individuality unlike any other in Turkey. The exemplary urbanity of the area is frequently contrasted to traditionally organized neighbourhoods (*mahalles*), some of which are just few minutes' walk away from the urban centre. Referring to my field data, I will discuss how certain appearances and practices are tolerated in the area, how others are considered as inappropriate, inauthentic or even threatening and how Tarlabaşı Bulvarı, a busy eight-lane road that marks the separation between the inner-city neighbourhood of Tarlabaşı and the urban centre around Istiklal, has become such an important symbolic boundary defining the complex relations of authenticity, modernity and religion.

History and the authentic Turkish self

In the late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey the position of Islam in public life was at the centre of the authoritarian modernization project. An inordinate amount of the time and energy of Republican elites was spent on regulating the outward appearance of the people, in the treatment of architectural reminders of the Ottoman times and on the representational reforms of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin and calendar from Islamic to Gregorian (see Kasaba 1997: 24; Gül 2006: 75). This manifestation of modernity as a radical break with the past was legitimized by an emphasis on the 'Turkish essence' that linked the Republic to the chain of the ancient Anatolian civilizations of Central Asian Turks. The 700 years of the Ottoman Empire along with the Sultanate and Caliphate were presented as cultural corruptions rather than a glorious chapter in the history of Islam (Kandiyoti 2002: 10). The thoroughly modernist standards of the progressive Turkish nation were supposed to be based, in the words of Atatürk, 'not on the lethargic mentality of the past centuries but on the concepts of speed and movement that define our century' (in Kasaba 1997: 26). During the first years of the Republic, the public expression of Islamic identities was severely restricted. These reforms ranged from prohibition of the fez headgear to the criminalization of the Sufi orders and closing down the theological faculty of Istanbul on grounds of 'lack of demand' (Mango 2004). Even the War of Independence (1919–1923), originally mobilized as a union of Muslim brothers of distinct ethnic groups and 'sibling nations' in Anatolia and Rumelia, was by the early 1930s re-conceived as a Turkish War of Independence. Both the Muslim and ethnically diverse elements had been omitted and silenced (Altınay 2004: 18–19). In reality, the Republic had in many ways derived from its Ottoman past but the idea of 'rupture' and the radical rejection of the this past is still the foundation of the Official Republican History and a central part of school curricula (Meeker 2002; Altınay 2004).

As I will discuss below, these narratives are employed to categorise various practices in relation to authenticity and spatial organization of the city. Indeed, the identity politics in Istanbul revolve around polarisations between modern and traditional, universal and particular as well as conscious and involuntary action, and while my informants were

quick to point out the clichés, stereotypes and errors associated with these categories they nevertheless use them frequently. My field data consists mostly of the observed practices and narratives of people living in different areas of Beyoğlu with a particular focus on men between 20 and 30 years of age, most of whom moved to Istanbul as teenagers to work or study. From this material, I wish to identify how historically developed ideas of selfhood are realised in close proximity to the urban core. Of course, I am not arguing that everybody living in Istanbul shares these views in this straightforward and simplified manner but rather that there are distinguishable historical dynamics within these sociocultural structures in which the Republican view of history is interestingly combined with another 'rupture', associated with more recent cultural transformations.

Universal civilization, conscious practice and the threat of the foreign

Turkey's rapid integration into global capitalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the increasing importance of identity politics have transformed the Turks' understandings of ways to express desired identity in an urban sphere (Öncü 2002: 173–175; Navaro-Yashin 2002: 223). Many of my informants consider cultivating a distinct identity (*kimlik*) to be the basis for a reflective, individualistic self: an integral part of modern life that is in distinct contrast to the unreflective practices of the non-modern masses. It is conceptualized as a prerequisite to taking part in a universal civilization, expressed in the Turkish word *çağdaş* with a range of meanings from 'contemporary' to 'civilized' and 'modern'. *Çağdaş* is often contrasted with the word *yerel* which literally means local but also 'traditional' in opposition to the universal civilization (see Navaro-Yashin 2003: 23–24; Kandiyoti 2002: 4). However, these concepts should be taken as heuristic utilities that are deployed in specific ways to illuminate historically specific phenomena rather than descriptions of empirical realities (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 294).

Following the lines of the Republican civilizing discourse, people who claim to embody modern and individualistic identities see themselves as belonging to a universalist civilization and familiar with global modernity. They often compare themselves with their opposites (the masses) who are perceived as living in closed worlds and incapable of breaking free from their restricted identities. Thus, the spatial metaphor of freedom as a universal value, in contrast to closed spheres of distinct localities, is linked with the teleological history of the Turks finally freed from the Ottoman repression of their true essence. The nationalistic civilizing discourse can be neatly summarized as a combination of nostalgia for lost origins and a demand to civilize; differences between the glorious past (the village life of uncorrupted Turks) and civilized existence (that of modern urbanites) are dissolved in the form of authentic Turkishness (Nalbantoğlu 1997: 200).

However, this simplistic model of development is contested by many of Istanbul's inhabitants. The ideas of universal civilization and authentic Turkishness are increasingly criticized from perspectives that emphasize different understandings of Islam and ethnicity. Alternative definitions of modernization, individualism and authenticity are based on a careful negotiation of these shared historical narratives. Rather than assuming that Turkey merely comprised Turks—and Turks who had forgotten their Turkishness—as was asserted at the height of early Republican propaganda, it has become generally acknowledged (at

least among my informants and mainstream media) that there are also ethnic groups with distinct cultures and languages in Turkey who should be included into Turkish modernity as equal citizens whose traditions, when portrayed as 'cultural' expressions, do not threaten national values. Nevertheless, the paranoia of separatism has not disappeared despite the recent reforms on minority rights—education and broadcasting in the Kurdish languages is now officially permitted but there are bizarre cases such as ongoing legal action against the use of letters Q, W and X, common in Kurdish, on the grounds that they are not part of the Turkish (national) alphabet.

Elements labelled as Islamic are monitored in similar ways. Republican reforms were committed to shifting religious expression into the private sphere or under strict governmental control. Prohibition of veiling in universities and state administration and the state control of the content of sermons are the most common examples of this. Some features of Turkish Islam, such as the Mevlevi Sufi[1] ceremonies, are tolerated as long as they are presented as artistic performances. My non-religious informants defined 'real' Turkish religion as the original shamanistic religion of the Central Asian Turks or the egalitarian Sufi orders which were corrupted by the (foreign) Ottoman influence (see Mardin 2002). This heritage was commonly celebrated as a source of cultural artefacts whose true worth can be found only by people who can manage them responsibly or use them creatively in contemporary art. Alternatively, features like nomadic egalitarianism and mystical sciences were seen as examples of gender equality or scientific principles realized by Turks much before the West. Most importantly, by emphasizing the responsible application of the past in the contemporary world, the reflective practices of modern individuals were distinguished from the masses characterised by backwardness and lack of reason and self-control. Thus, the moral narrative of modernity as the emergence of true human autonomy in the shape of modern individuals was distinguished from the superstitious and erroneous practices of the past, embodied in the masses, that could potentially violate the positive historical progress (see Keane 2007: 116–120). However, urban developments have not followed the idealistic vision above; conflicts over legitimate history and representation abound and are reflected in the practices of people moving within the cityscape.

Revolutionary spatial arrangements

In the early years of the Republic, the Ottoman presence was forcefully erased from the public spaces of Istanbul and replaced with symbols of the Republic: the Ottoman coat-of arms and insignia were removed from public buildings, the archival documents of the Empire sold to Bulgaria as recycled paper and the great mosque of Aya Sofia (Hagia Sofia) turned into a museum.[2] There were also unsuccessful attempts to transform the famous Sultanahmet Camii (Blue Mosque) into an art gallery that would exhibit the works of young Republican artists of the Republic (Gül 2006: 75). In the residential arrangements, there were attempts to establish a 'new collective identity where religion would no longer be of any determining power' and thus liberate individuals from the 'idiocy of traditional, community-oriented life'. This was to be achieved by secularising daily life, breaking traditional social relationships and destroying the power of the imam at the local level of

the neighbourhood (*mahalle*) (Mardin in Gül 2006: 79). In the districts of my study, the opposition between the *mahalle* and the modern environment has become a key factor in the ways people relate themselves to modernity, history and authenticity. The unique historical development of Beyoğlu is central to these discourses.

While symbolic transformation of the most famous Ottoman monuments associated with the glories of the Empire took place on the classical Stamboul side of the Golden Horn, developments in the Beyoğlu district across the bridge have taken a different historical course. A distinct sense of freedom and cosmopolitanism has been associated with Beyoğlu over the centuries but there are also symbolic boundaries within the district that separate urban space from *mahalles*.

The history of Beyoğlu differs from the rest of Istanbul in many respects. In Ottoman times, mostly Greek, Venetian, Armenian, Jewish and other non-Muslim residents inhabited the area along with the old embassies of the Western nations with their contributions to the urban mosaic. The district's cosmopolitan spirit is still emphasized although most of the historical minorities have now either left Turkey or moved to other districts of Istanbul. The area is dotted with churches of different denominations and there is only one relatively small mosque on the central boulevard Istiklal Caddesi (see Map 1). Approximately three kilometres long, this pedestrian street has a unique symbolic position as the peak of Turkish modernity where there is diversity and freedom unlike any other place in Turkey. At the same time, it has become a contested space in relation to religious expression. Its specific history as non-Muslim space is significant feature in these debates.

During my fieldwork, I noticed how my informants were constantly classifying the signs and boundaries of the area using categories such as modern, nationalistic and religious. These ideas have become social facts that are present in both elite and popular discourses and cannot be approached neutrally. The categories are also crucial in mediating self-awareness of what is really happening and this is distinguished from the supposedly unreflective practices of the masses (Keane 2007: 48–49). This inability to engage in self-reflection is seen as the most significant obstacle to Turkey keeping in touch with global modernity because both secular and religious people emphasize the importance of conscious reflection to cultivate an authentic Turkish self. The masses are for everyone somewhere else: people living in urban areas situate them in the *mahalles* and my informants living in *mahalles* locate them in the villages or shantytowns further away from the city centre. Both urbanistes and *mahalle*-dwellers share the idea that the masses, whoever they are, need to be monitored in urban space because of their lack of ability to live in the city according to the appropriate norms.

In Istanbul the project of Turkish modernization is closely related to accelerating mass migration to the city from Anatolia since the 1950s, and hopes for a naturally occurring modernization of the immigrants is a constant theme of discussions. For some, the situation is seen as an invasion (*istila*), siege (*kusatma*) or assault (*saldiri*) on Istanbul by culturally untrained 'outsiders' who endanger the distinctions within the city (Öncü 2002: 184). Before the rise of the discourse of identity politics, the failure of the immigrants to become modern Turks was explained by reference to their regionally organized and closed *mahalles* away from the city centre even though, according to Republican developmental history, their increasing contact with urban life should make them modern—for thus is

Map 1. Istakla

their intrinsic nature. Now the situation has changed as more migrants move directly to dilapidated inner-city neighbourhoods close to the centre and the spatial logic of migrants gradually entering the urban sphere after their 'urban training' in the *mahalles* on the outskirts of the city has collapsed. The direct encounter with urban life without necessary skills is frequently associated with a danger of drifting into practices foreign to authentic Turks, 'foreign' being a recurrent theme in my field material. The Turkish word *yabancı* has a range of connotations from actual foreigners to practices contrary to shared values and norms. For example, in religious matters, it is used to distinguish Republican religious norms from those associated with the history of the Ottoman Empire and an array of practices lumped under Arab Islam; labelling the latter as foreign is legitimized by the spatial distance of their origins and their temporal backwardness. In comparison to the Republican revolution—proclaimed as a genuine cultural rebirth and the beginning of a progressive future—their revival is seen as a sign of cultural decadence which can only bring forth 'the simulacra of a dead past' (Sahlins 2000 [1993]: 479); therefore their inclusion in modern public space otherwise celebrated for its diversity is rejected.

In the Turkish media the polarization of religious and secular identities is extreme, and the notion of authenticity is at the centre of these debates. Just a quick look at the daily newspaper columns produces labels such as Republican Kemalists, who see themselves as guardians of secular values and are accused of blindly imitating the West; or neo-Ottoman Islamists, who claim to revive the cultural heritage of the Ottoman past and are blamed for secretly trying to introduce Islamic Sharia law to Turkey. In the mainstream media, both labels are used at the slightest provocation. Among my informants, both the extremes are essentially defined by their inability to reflect critically on the modern world, and are understood as struggling for political power. Both are routinely seen as corrupt and inauthentic outcomes of Turkish modernity. Furthermore, the grand narratives related to nation and religion are constantly discussed and evaluated in relation to their authenticity. The tiny details in everyday life in the urban bustle—ways of greeting people, seemingly insignificant details in clothing and choices of different consumer goods—are observed and their meanings debated. This is at the heart of discussions of how various practices produce specific groups and boundaries in the urban sphere, and how the city is monitored and protected from the imagined threats that come in various but structurally coherent forms.

Spaces within the city—policing the urban sphere

Istiklal Caddesi is striking in its deep sense of history, so unlike other parts of Istanbul. In addition to the silhouettes of the churches and embassies, French patisseries and Greek and Jewish taverns have retained their old names and furnishings but are now almost exclusively operated by Turks. In spite of the departure of their original patrons, contemporary Istiklal is considered by many to be an inevitable outcome of Turkish modernity, an urban sphere of freedom in contrast to the closed worlds of the traditional neighbourhoods. In contrast to the liberal freedom of Istiklal, the *mahalles* are characterised by the presence of Islamic practices: abundance of veiling (which is also very common around Istiklal) and the prohibition of alcohol (in reality available almost

throughout the city). I argue here that these stereotypes are a result of the polarisation of nationalistic history and that the importance of the area lies in the possibility it offers to participate in a specific kind of modernity of equal citizens amidst the rigid hierarchies of Turkish society. Its exceptional character is maintained through the shared narrative of urban space that is constantly contrasted to a non-modern Other located somewhere else. Spatial and temporal dynamics that define especially impoverished *mahalles* like Tarlabaşı as urban corruptions of the original Turkish village shed light on these issues.

Since Istanbul's population has increased from around 1 million in 1950 to over 6 million in 1990 and to 13 million in 2009, very few of its current inhabitants have been born in the city. In my fieldwork, one crucial focus was on how moving to Istanbul is reflected on by my informants. Life in the city is stereotypically characterized as society becoming secularized, individuals isolated, kinship organizations breaking down and social relationships becoming impersonal, superficial and utilitarian, with Western metropolises being seen as examples of these trends (see Sahlins 2000 [1999]: 522–523). These images of city life are widely shared but their practical implications are understood very differently by many living in *mahalles*. The emphasis on conscious reflection does not just follow the great divide between traditional and modern self but had many criteria and contours. James Faubion (1993:160) sums up the range of possibilities:

> The former [traditional] are paradigmatically 'primitive' or 'traditional'; but they are also classical, also medieval, also 'countermodern.' The latter [modern] are perhaps paradigmatically 'modern,' but also 'countermythological' and 'counterclassical,' sometimes only inchoately modern or 'protomodern.'

While these complex criteria are evaluated according to desired models of urbanity and modernity, their temporal and spatial dimensions are employed to make the urban multitude intelligible. The desired authentic self can also be a 'mannerist self, so long as its manners are self-willed. It can reflect precedent, it can even repeat precedent, so long as its repetitions are not passive, so long as they are chosen at will' (ibid.: 164). To understand how authenticity of one's conscious practices is linked to mental mappings of the spaces within Istanbul, the idealized constructions of *mahalle* and urban boulevard are helpful. The crossing of the symbolic boundaries from controlled environments to spaces of freedom is at the heart of the matter.

Crossing the boundaries—authentic self and neighbourhood control

In the everyday discussions of Istanbul, the boundaries between areas are constantly referred to, and often crossing a particular street is seen as moving between two distinct worlds. Here, I will concentrate on perhaps the most crucial one. Tarlabaşı Bulvarı is a busy eight-lane road that was built 1986–1988 to provide quick access from the historical peninsula in the south across Atatürk Bridge to the traffic hub of the Taksim Square and further to the northern suburbs (see Map 1). It has become a boundary that separates the celebrated urbanity and freedom of Istiklal Caddesi from the urban poverty of Tarlabaşı *mahalle*[3] on the other side. The sense of boundary is further emphasized by identity checks by the police on the Tarlabaşı side of the underpasses and the 24-hour presence

of an army vehicle equipped with a water cannon which is used to calm the frequent social unrest in the area. In comparison to this, the boundary on the east side of Istiklal to the Tophane district is not as physically visible but is similarly pronounced in mental mappings of the city centre.

The difference of *mahalles* from Istiklal's modernity is described as distance in temporal and spatial terms. The most common metaphors of crossing are going back to village life or to the Ottoman times. People on each side use these characterisations frequently—however, people living in the centre rarely cross this boundary while many living in Tarlabaşı cross very frequently. A very different idea of community distinguishes these areas from each other. In Ottoman times, a *mahalle* was the core of social life, an enclosed world in which the inhabitants had a joint responsibility for their neighbourhood in the maintenance of order, street cleaning, tax collection and other general obligations to the state. The average Ottoman citizen of Istanbul would be born, educated, married and buried in the same *mahalle* (Gül 2006:17, 79). In the contemporary city, many of the *mahalles* still have a strong sense of communal identity and are divided along ethnic or regional lines (see Ayata 2002: 25; Kandiyoti 2002: 121).

On a topological level, the classic image of a Muslim neighbourhood as an enclosed and community-controlled maze of narrow alleyways with shifting prohibitions and rights depending on one's loyalties is often contrasted to the modern egalitarian space in which people are positioned as equal citizens governed by the same norms (see Mitchell 1988). Furthermore, the rational planning of the boulevard as an open space bringing together the statistically determined units can be contrasted to the miserable world of poverty which remains an inaccessible mystery for most of the population and seems to be outside the control of the state. Tarlabaşı confirms the stereotype, for it symbolizes almost all the evils of contemporary Turkey for people living in other areas: the contradictory narratives of historical backwardness, in which authoritarian Islamism and tribal clashes are lumped together with the modern malaises of drug trade, prostitution, ethnic separatism and radical Islamist/terrorist organizations. The inhabitants are either considered to be uncivilized masses controlled by corrupt community leaders and criminal gangs or inchoate individuals who might deviate from their traditions but only to find themselves in misguided and hedonistic lifestyles or radical Islamist behaviour. Consequently, the backwardness and lack of self-control of the village past is conflated with the corruptions of modernity.

The same issues are also extremely important but very differently articulated for my informants living in Tarlabaşı. The majority are Kurdish migrants from the Southeast of Turkey who escaped the civil war and came to Istanbul in search of better lives. Rather than embracing the stereotypes, they emphasize their simultaneously Kurdish, Islamic and modern identities and feel they are forced to live in an area that has deteriorated because of the neglect of state and municipality. In contrast to perceived urban anonymity, the sense of community as helping its most vulnerable and protecting its inhabitants on a *mahalle* level is a source of pride. My informants make a clear distinction between the prevailing set of rules and loyalties in their *mahalles* and the city centre. Most of them work either as waiters or street sellers around Istiklal or have informal jobs that require them to cross the Tarlabaşı Bulvarı frequently.

The sense of self required by modernity is expressed in interesting ways. It is very common for them to distinguish earlier generations or people living in villages from people capable of reflecting on things individually. Islamic and ethnic identities as well as kinship loyalties are seen as a core of the authentic self that can be wholly modern without contradictions. The sense of modernity is defined as an ability to participate in city life and global modernity and to behave fluidly in different situations without compromising one's authenticity. The authentic self is capable of operating on both sides of the boundary according to different sets of rules without compromise. On the other hand, many urbanites are frowned upon and seen as blind imitators of the West who have abandoned their religious and cultural traditions or trivialised them as false surface features.

Islamic practices and appearances in public in particular are perceived very differently. While the neighbourhood mosques (*mahalle camii*) on the Tarlabaşı side are frequented and very important for many of my informants, they see that there is no need for them around Istiklal. For people living on the Istiklal side the only mosque on the street is a source of complaints on the grounds that it is in the wrong place or corrupts the atmosphere of the area. The same sense of fear and a need to protect the area is evident in ubiquitous urban legends of turbaned men beating immodestly dressed women on Istiklal with sticks, or plans to construct a massive mosque on the square where the monument of the independence is situated. The logic is that Islamists can have their own neighbourhoods outside the centre but should stay away from Istiklal.

The same concerns are shared in Tarlabaşı. Many of my more religious informants consider Islamist politics to be backward—either the surreal fantasies of people not guided by reason or of ignorant people living in closed village environments. Their backwardness is explained by the lack of education and experience of what modern life really is. Thus, the *mahalle* environment is seen as suitable for the elderly and those lacking the skills to survive in the urban sphere while the sense of individualistic modernity characterising Istiklal is celebrated as separate space that can be visited. Some state explicitly that they want to live in a *mahalle*—although not the impoverished Tarlabaşı: integrated with their kin and their neighbourhood mosque but with occasional escape into the space of freedom around Istiklal.

Conclusion—subjectivity as a double life

Marshall Berman explores relations between modernity and subjectivity in his influential work *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (1982). He considers the boulevard to be a distinctive sign of nineteenth-century urbanism, bringing explosive material and human forces together to produce citizens. He also sees this new form of public space—the possibility to move not only within neighbourhoods but also through them—as crucial for a new kind of modern subjectivity (1982: 165). He discusses streets in a way that resonates strongly with Istanbul's Istiklal Caddesi (1982:196):

> The essential purpose of this street, which gives it its special character, is sociability: people come here to see and to be seen, and to communicate their visions to one another, not for any ulterior purpose, without greed or compensation, but as an end in itself. Their communication, and the message of the street as a whole, is a strange mixture of reality and fantasy: on the one hand, it acts as a setting for people's fantasies of who they want to be; on the other hand, it provides true knowledge—for those who can decode it—of who people really are.

The spatial construction of Istiklal as a world of free individuals, where people can meet as equals, is extremely important for my informants living on both sides of the symbolic boundary between the centre and *mahalle*. It is based on a civilizational norm of self-control and conscious practice that is demanded of people entering the cherished urban space. People living around Istiklal generally assume that urban space belongs to them, and people from *mahalles* visit it reluctantly and thus fail to notice that people labelled as cultural outsiders can also enjoy Istiklal's surroundings and have a strong sense of belonging without compromising their values. The freedom of the area is celebrated and its diversity tolerated as long as it falls within specific liberal norms. Neil Smith summarizes the basis of this urban ideology neatly: 'It embodies a search for diversity as long as it is highly ordered, and a glorification of the past as along as it is safely brought into the present' (1996: 114). The constant presence of large numbers of armed police officers on Istiklal also reminds people of this control. For many people living in Tarlabaşı the crossing of this boundary to modernity is something that they do daily, often being required to show their identity cards at the police checkpoints on Tarlabaşı Bulvarı—a reminder of their difference and dangerous status.

In this case, the integration of frequent shifts between practices in the *mahalle* and the urban environment poses no problems to people nor does it compromise their authentic selves. They, in turn, shift the notion of dangerous and inauthentic people to other places or times. According to their reasoning, former generations in a village might have been backward and intolerant because they did not know about the world outside. If educated and living in the city, they would have naturally cultivated modern identities perfectly compatible with their traditions. The memory of living in the non-modern world and the present sense of alternating between modern and non-modern spaces makes people more sensitive to details of how modernity and tradition as social facts are constructed, how the spatial and temporal relations between backwardness and authenticity are structured and how the movement between the spaces of the city is a process of constant negotiation. The crossing of the symbolic and physical boundary of Tarlabaşı Bulvarı is movement across a space that is supposed to keep different elements asunder into the space of modernity that brings them together in a way guided by the uniquely Turkish urban development.

NOTES

[1] The Sufi lodge better known globally as 'whirling dervishes' based on the teachings of Muhammed Celaleddin-i Rumi.

[2] It is interesting to note that Aya Sofia was also the first place that Sultan Mehmet Fatih ritually claimed for the Ottomans immediately after the conquest of Constantinople.

[3] Tarbaşı itself consists of several smaller enclaves but their names are rarely used by its inhabitants and other Istanbullus.

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