

Introduction: Orienting Istanbul – Cultural Capital of Europe?

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The (Re-)Discovery of Istanbul

The realization of this book owes much to digital technologies. Email, skype and Google documents enabled collaboration – across continents and time zones – between Providence, Istanbul and Berkeley.¹ Our world is shrinking, while cities are expanding into each other, continuously reshaping our (and their) sense of place within a global horizon. As cities compete for relevance they are challenged to claim both situated difference *and* global connectedness. This book explores such tensions in various spheres of knowledge production such as art, social sciences, market, and governance, which appear increasingly entangled in the everyday practice of the present-day city. Coming from three disciplines – architecture, anthropology and cinema – our interests in cities and in Istanbul in particular converged. This collection offers new multidisciplinary research focusing on Istanbul, but it also speaks to readers curious about cities elsewhere, in Europe and beyond. We are keenly aware that the world is becoming an ‘endless city’ (Burdett and Sudjic, 2008) – at least for those of us with access to networks of communication.

While we were editing the chapters which follow, the travel sections of international newspapers abounded with articles about Istanbul as a tourist destination. In a list of ‘The 31 Places to Go in 2010’, the New York Times ranked Istanbul at number 19, highlighting as a major selling-point the ‘contemporary art scene ... one of the most innovative in the world’, rather than the historical sights of the city.² In the spirit of participatory digital media, the online edition invited readers to choose their favourite destination and say where they would like to go in 2010 by clicking on an interactive world map.³ The readers’ ranking came out in favour of Istanbul.

The No. 1 spot, by a fairly wide margin, was Istanbul, with 143 recommendations... This is hardly a surprise. Providing a confluence of cultures and continents, with an innovative

art scene, creative food offerings and fascinating architecture, Istanbul is now at the top of many travelers' must-visit lists. Its allure in 2010 is enhanced by its designation as a European Capital of Culture.⁴

Publicity images that go along with this discovery no longer focus primarily on historical buildings such as the Hagia Sophia or the Topkapı Palace, but modern features such as the new skyline at night, which are reminiscent of downtown Chicago.

Istanbul's popular appeal internationally should, however, not be taken for granted. It was only in the 1990s that Turkey emerged as a popular tourist destination for package holidays due to the adoption of tourism as economic development policy and the decreasing costs of international air travel. Turkey has invested in major advertising campaigns announcing itself as the world's largest open-air museum, a 'destination museum' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). Internationally high-profile events, such as the Galatasaray soccer team's UEFA championship in 2000, Sertap Erener's victory in the Eurovision song contest in 2003, and, most prominently, Orhan Pamuk's Nobel Prize for literature in 2006, bolstered national pride and amplified Turkey's and Istanbul's image abroad.

Orhan Pamuk is now a global player who has achieved international recognition as *the* writer of Istanbul. In his memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, he introduced himself as an author living in an age of mass migration, rootlessness and exile, whose imagination was nonetheless fuelled by staying in the same city, the same street, the same house, looking at the same view to write seven (by now eight) novels mostly set in Istanbul (Pamuk, 2006, p. 6). In his opening speech at the 2008 Frankfurt Book Fair, which showcased Turkey as a guest of honour on the 80th anniversary of Turkey's change from Arabic to Latin script, he reflected on the imbalances and shifts in cultural traffic with a fine sense of irony:

during the last century, we Turks have complained so much about the world misunderstanding us that it has become part of our national identity. Most of us believe that our culture and our literature owe their power and their uniqueness to the very fact that no one else knows about them... The political and cultural developments of the last twenty years have made the story of Turkey's two-century-long struggles between tradition and modernity more interesting to world audiences. These days, I almost never hear people complaining about how no one can find Turkey on the map.⁵

Even the proclaimed inside-view is mediated by reflection on how things might look from outside. As Edward Said (1978, 2003) has argued brilliantly in *Orientalism*, the power of discourse is internalized; it does not need to be produced in the West.⁶ Pamuk's memoir is exemplary. His autobiographical portrait of Istanbul breathes melancholia (*hüzün*) and longing for the lost glory of the former imperial city (a perspective that Engin Işın counters in Chapter 2 with the concept of *keyif*, pleasure), openly admitting that Flaubert, Nerval and other travelling Europeans informed his own perspective on the city.

Filmmakers based in Istanbul have made a name for themselves at international festivals, mainly with pensive auteur films, which tend to be met with enthusiasm at the Cannes Film Festival. The image of the brooding photographer against the silhouette of the city from *Distant* (2003), which is also found on the cover of a recently published book length study of Turkish cinema in English (Suner, 2010), is reminiscent of Pamuk's melancholic flâneur. Nuri Bilge Ceylan stages in *Distant* the feeling of encroachment on part of the Istanbulite whose space is invaded by the migrant from the country seeking work on freight ships (see İpek Türeli, Chapter 8). Meanwhile, other migrants – engaging in an imaginary return journey from Western Europe – have been discovering Istanbul with more instantaneous energy. For Western eyes, Istanbul has emerged in the last decade as an outpost of 'authenticity'. Hamburg-based film director Fatih Akin, the son of migrants to Germany, projects a utopian vision of polyphonic diversity and East–West amalgamation in his musical portrait of the city, *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (2005), which acquires a nostalgic undertone only in its Turkish title *Istanbul Hatırası* (Istanbul Memory) (see Deniz Göktürk, Chapter 10). On the other hand, Yılmaz Erdoğan's *Magic Carpet Ride*, a domestic film production of the same year, also notable for its use of Roma music and aerial perspectives, tackles the expanse and totality of the city, contrasts and convergences between affluence and crime, in an ironic light. Although it had no international distribution, this film speaks with much wit to questions of circulation and Europeanization (see Deniz Bayraktar and Elif Akçalı, Chapter 9).

The appeal of Istanbul is surely expanding. Domestically produced Turkish television serials showcasing Istanbul, in particular those set in villas on the Bosphorus, such as *Aşk-ı Memnu*, *Gümüüş*, *Yaprak Dökümü*, are popular in the Gulf States and the rest of the Middle East (and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has created special funds for the production of such series). Indian production companies use Istanbul as a location for TV serials and Bollywood films such as *Mission Istanbul* (2008).

In conjunction with these media representations, Istanbul has also been attracting significant influx of foreign direct investment and international companies. While Turkey's primary trade and investment partnership is with the EU, the growing Asian and Middle Eastern economies are also increasing their engagement in the city. As Saskia Sassen puts it, 'Istanbul is the immutable intersection of vast and diverse mobilities', on the North–South and East–West axes of the world (Urban Age, 2009, pp. 5–6). Social scientists and creative artists compulsively deploy the metaphor of the bridge to locate the city in global maps and cultural imaginaries. However, the extant diversity of flows and mobilities complicate the compartmentalizing geopolitics of 'East' and 'West'.



Orienteering Istanbul is the first book to capture Istanbul's rise to the world stage set by post-industrial capitalism. It offers new insights into the re-presentation

of Istanbul as a city of culture, history, and diversity. Cities around the world adopt global city projects in their competition for a place on the map. However, globalizing desires produce diverse outcomes for civil society, urban politics and mediatized image production in each city. Istanbul's designation as a European Capital of Culture in 2010, while Turkey's membership in the EU is still contested, complicates the logic of area studies separating the Middle East from Europe. This year-long spectacular event aims to foster Turkey's ties to Europe, and via Europe to the world. Taking this event in the making as an occasion, this book analyzes interactions between governmental agencies, NGOs, artists and activists, and publics at large, connected in conspicuous ways.

Divided into five parts (Paths to Globalization; Heritage and Regeneration Debates; The Mediatized City; Art in the City; A European Capital?), with case studies ranging from urban renewal, architecture and heritage preservation to art exhibitions, cinema and literature, *Orienting Istanbul* aims to provide a unique picture of how the course to European integration and globalization is manifested in Istanbul's streetscapes and the lives of its citizens. It includes conversations with practitioners and cultural brokers and thus appeals to audiences beyond an academic readership to public intellectuals and experts in culture industries.

Our introduction to *Orienting Istanbul* proceeds with Istanbul's reign as 2010 European Capital of Culture, an event that focuses the gaze of both foreigners and residents on the city for a year. From the present, we turn to the past, briefly excavating the history of an imperial capital, situated to the east of Europe but with integral connections – material and imaginary – to Europe's economy, politics, wars and culture. Back to the present, we explore how Istanbul's past and present are framed in urban studies – a necessarily concise undertaking, for Istanbul has been seriously neglected in scholarly circles. Istanbul belongs to the 'global cities without privilege', cities which are deemed to be outside the networks that connect 'nerve centres' of the globalized world of the late twentieth century. Even so, we assert, Istanbul, like its counterparts – be they London, New York or Tokyo, the pre-eminent models of the global city, or Mumbai, Sao Paulo or Mexico City, presumed peripheral cities – promises to contribute to and complicate our understanding of the culture, politics and economies of global cities. Istanbul, the city with which we are intimately connected, is not simply an academic concern for us but affects us as citizens. The questions we pose are pressing at a time when culture replaces industry as the economic pillar of the city and a more diffuse politics of difference and identity succeed the nationally organized politics of the earlier decades. We close our introduction with an account of orientation embedded in the cover image of *Orienting Istanbul*, a layered picture taken from the roof of Büyük Valide Han, a building which embodies the presence of the past in the city.

A European Capital of Culture

Spanning two continents, Istanbul is the largest city not only in Turkey but in Europe. Istanbul's selection as one of the three cities (along with Essen/Ruhr and Pécs) celebrated in 2010 as 'European Capitals of Culture' demonstrates that Europe officially acknowledges Istanbul as a key part of its own heritage while remaining ambivalent about Turkey's Europeanness. A paradoxical split imaginary emerges in representations of Istanbul, official or popular: one that separates the city from the rest of Turkey. Some of the contributions to this book examine how this division is internalized and projected onto Istanbul where the national and municipal government, as well as local private capital, stage the city as Turkey's gateway to Europe. Others explore what Istanbul has to offer towards the formation of the 'imagined' identity of a cosmopolitan, post-religious and post-national Europe. Turkey's unresolved bid for membership in the European Union has been employed to legitimate and promote change. European Union membership is expected to bring not only the intensification of relations with Europe but also with the rest of the world. The accession process creates incentives to engage with future-oriented projects to upgrade the city's infrastructure, educational institutions and tourist sites (Keyder, 2008). The city's prospects are implicitly and explicitly connected to Turkey's membership in the EU.

Turkey has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1949 and an associate member of the European Economic Community, the predecessor organization of the European Union, since 1963. Since 1995, the country has been linked with the EU by a Custom's Union Agreement. Turkey's application for full membership in the EU, however, is still pending. The current governments in France and Germany share reservations about admitting Turkey, following the stance of former French President Giscard d'Estaing who had proclaimed in 2002 that accepting Turkey 'would be the end of the European Union'. First and foremost, there are economic reasons for this hesitancy about opening the borders to a country with a mostly young population of over 70 million and a growing economy. Moreover, 'cultural difference' is emphasized as a major obstacle, meaning specifically that a country with a predominantly Muslim population would destabilize Europe's implicit self-definition on the basis of Christian/Western values. The prevailing concerns about terrorism and security following the attacks of 11 September 2001, as well as the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have cast dark shadows over Europe's and the United States' relationship with the Muslim world. The rise of Islamism in the formal political arena has been a contested process in Turkey. Yet, after its victory in the 2002 national election, the Muslim-oriented AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party or JDP) emerged a major promoter of liberal market economy and Turkish membership in the European Union. In Turkey, the European accession is perceived as a civilizing process with implications for

standardization, human rights, NGOs, civil society and participatory democracy (see Levent Soysal, Chapter 17).

The European City of Culture programme is one of the most acclaimed cultural projects endorsed by the EU (Gold and Gold, 2005, p. 221–245; see also Miles, 2007, p.121–142). The programme was launched in 1985 by the Greek Minister for Culture, Melina Mercouri (well-remembered from her role as the stylish jewel-kleptomaniac in *Topkapi* from 1964). Athens served as the first ‘City of Culture’. The programme is designed to showcase the cultural life of the chosen city for one year, encouraging local initiatives to make the city a better environment for its inhabitants and an attractive place for tourists. Cities have to apply with a proposal and are selected by a committee. Some support is granted from the EU, but mostly cities have to raise their own funds to stage their spectacle. For a city like Glasgow in 1990, the festival served as a major catalyst in revitalizing a decaying de-industrialized city (Gold and Gold, 2005). Thus not only ‘beautiful’ cities with historical heritage could claim the title ‘capital of culture’, but less showy cities could also participate and benefit from the programme of European integration. Since 2000, more than one city can hold the title ‘Capital of Culture’ in any one year. The idea of decentralized and mobile capitals is in line with the EU’s efforts to engender unity in diversity and engagement with the European project in all corners of the Union. Since 1999, cities in EU-affiliated, but non-member states have been permitted to apply for the title. Hence Istanbul applied and was chosen as one of the designated Capitals of Culture for 2010 (see Oğuz Öner, Chapter 15).

The programme enables interesting insights into the imaginary construction of Europe in different places. The question arises, however, whether the implementation of the programme is really about imagining Europe and seriously engaging with ideas of post-national integration or whether various initiatives – governmental and non-governmental – in the designated cities grab the occasion to pursue their already-existing projects and ‘opportunistically’ reframe them in European terms (see the argument put forward by Carola Hein, Chapter 14). The programme does not seem to foster much communication and collaboration between cities. There is not a single joint project between Istanbul and Essen, for example, despite the considerable Turkish presence in Germany’s Ruhr area.

In Istanbul, the programme opened with fanfare on 15 January 2010. In his speech at the opening ceremony, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized the flagship importance of the city for his government’s goal of joining the European Union:

Istanbul is a European city. With its history, culture, civilization, people, its past and its future, Istanbul is a city that is facing Europe. As much as Istanbul has absorbed European culture, it has also shaped European culture. Istanbul will only carry the title of a European Capital of Culture for one year, but it will never cease to be a cultural center of Europe. Istanbul alone is proof that Turkey is a European country, that it is a natural member of the European Union.⁷

At the same time, Erdoğan highlighted Istanbul's location at a global crossroads. He stressed the unique confluence of civilizations, races, and colours as well as the coexistence of mosques, churches and synagogues side by side as a source of inspiration for cities across five continents. Despite claiming connections to cities elsewhere, Erdoğan declared that 'Istanbul most of all resembles Istanbul'. This glorification performs a straddling act in multiple directions, gesturing towards Europe, the Middle East and the globe at large, but ultimately looking inward. The paucity of European connections in the 2010 programme suggests that Istanbul is orienting itself to global audiences rather than to a specifically European gaze. One cannot help but ask: What does 'Europe' mean to people on the streets?⁸ Who is showing what to whom and who is doing the 'orienting'?

Imperial Capital on the Outskirts of Europe

Not only is the future of the city subject to reorientation but also its past; indeed, the future of the city is imagined via its cosmopolitan past. A recent programme of theatrical performances on Istanbul makes reference to the Greek origins of its name which translates as 'To the City'.⁹ Its non-Muslim inhabitants referred to Istanbul as Polis/Bolis (*the City*). Armenians, Greeks and Jews at one time constituted half of the city's population (see Nezih Erdoğan, Chapter 7 on multi-ethnicity and multilingualism in the early days of cinema in Istanbul, also Marcy Brink-Danan on Jews in the city today and their orientation towards Europe, Chapter 16). Following the founding of the Republic in 1923, the colloquial Greek name was adopted as the official Turkish name in 1930, rather than Constantinople, which the Ottomans had revered.

Due to population exchanges with Greece in 1923, 'Turkification' policies, and the exodus following the pogroms in 1955, non-Muslim communities in Istanbul have been dwindling. The city has become much more uniformly Turkish and Muslim today than it ever was before.

For over 1500 years of its history, Bolis was an imperial capital – of the Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Empire. It was established by Emperor Constantine in the fourth century on the site of an older Greek colony as New Rome and in 330 CE renamed Constantinople, the city of Constantine. Conquered in 1453, Constantinople became the capital of the Ottoman Empire which had its prized territories in the Balkans and made continual advances into central Europe.

European views of Istanbul's location and whether it belonged to Europe or not have changed over time (Brummett, forthcoming), the current boundaries hardening in the nineteenth century. By the latter two-thirds of the nineteenth century, under the impact of industrialization, European and self-perceptions of Istanbul started to change (Kafadar, 1997/1998). It was due to uneven developments in the nineteenth century that Istanbul emerged as an 'Oriental city'. When the 24-year-old Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) travelled

to the 'Orient' in 1911, Istanbul was the farthest point to the east of his itinerary (Le Corbusier, 2007). Le Corbusier arrived in Istanbul by boat in the footsteps of previous travellers, looking for authenticity, but by this time the city was well connected and serviced.

During the nineteenth century Istanbul had undergone a series of street regularizations, following fires, and infrastructure modernization paralleling that in other world cities. Most of the services, however, had benefited the Galata-Pera area, north of the Golden Horn, across from the historic peninsula, and mainly populated by affluent non-Muslims, of Ottoman or European citizenship – so much so that the duality of the historic peninsula and the northern area might have given the impression of a colonial urban design. However, there was no segregation; bridges and boats connected the two sides with regular traffic (Çelik, 1986, p. 160).

By the 1910s, the city had acquired a modern transport network of commuter boats (begun in 1851 under Şirket-i Hayriye, the first Ottoman joint stock company), trams and trains. The Sirkeci Train Station opened in 1890 as the eastern terminus of the Orient Express. In the first years of the Young Turks' rule (1908–1918), the Grand Post Office (1909) and Haydarpaşa Train Station (1908) opened as the western terminus of Istanbul-Baghdad Railway. The first power station, Silahırağa, was established in 1914 in the deep end of the Golden Horn, to provide electricity to various parts of the city and the new electric-powered tram network.

Modern Istanbul, Back Into Limelight

Istanbul remained the capital of the Ottoman Empire until the Allied occupation from 1918 to 1923. After Ankara was designated the capital of the newly founded Republic of Turkey, Istanbul was cast in official publications in opposition to Ankara. Istanbul was imagined as old and dusty, cosmopolitan and decadent, while Ankara was new and clean – a model for the new Turkey (Bozdoğan, 2001, p. 67).

One of the most important interventions of urban design in the years immediately following the establishment of the Republic was the reorganization of Beyazıt Square, and the opening of the Atatürk Monument in the middle of Taksim Square. After a decade of relative 'neglect' (Gül, 2009), the Republican era city was shaped according to the design of French planner Henri Prost who worked for Istanbul from 1936 to 1950. Prost had experience in the Maghreb and was author of the Master Plan for the Paris Region when recruited for Istanbul. His initial plan for Istanbul targeted the historic peninsula and to its north, the Beyoğlu district (which included the areas formerly called Galata and Pera) and aimed to improve the street network, open new boulevards, preserve monumental buildings and the city's distinct silhouette.

In line with planning paradigms of the time, he sought to reorganize the city into an automobile friendly space with (industrial, commercial, residential

and recreational) zones. The Golden Horn served as the principal industrial zone. Prost's plan was gradually and only partially implemented. Atatürk Boulevard cut through the historic peninsula to divide Sultanahmet and Zeyrek neighbourhoods; major demolitions in Eminönü, Karaköy, Beşiktaş, and Üsküdar, on the Anatolian side, opened up 'squares' by the water; the Artillery Barracks were demolished to reorganize the Taksim Square and to make way for the promenade (*Taksim Gezisi*).

In the 1950s, Turkey's new role in the post-war international order turned the government's attention back to Istanbul. After Prost's departure, the General Directorate of Highways played an important role in the development of Istanbul's urban form, continuing along the lines drawn up in Prost's plan, overseeing massive demolitions to open up wide boulevards through the city.

Several new investments such as the Hilton Hotel in Maçka Park, the first garden suburb of Levent to the north, the model town of Ataköy to the west, along with the new boulevards (e.g., Vatan (Country) and Millet (Nation) Avenues in the historic peninsula, Barbaros Boulevard from Beşiktaş to Levent), became showcases for the government.

Post-war governments continued piecemeal urban form interventions and civic improvements, while closing their eyes to increasingly visible squatter settlements which grew into whole neighbourhoods. The city was rebuilt and expanded with speculative housing developments on all sides. Concrete-frame walk-ups rapidly replaced the existing residential fabric.

One of the most important developments was the building of the first Bosphorus Bridge in 1973; together with its connecting highways, this opened new areas for development and facilitated the west-east expansion of the city along the Marmara Sea. Now served by highways, industry gradually moved out of the Golden Horn area and spread to the Anatolian side.

In the 1980s, with economic liberalization a new phase of urban restructuring carved out the Tarlabası Boulevard and, via demolition and infill, turned the banks of the Golden Horn into public parks. The new Central Business District between Levent and Maslak was now realized with the addition of glass-clad high-rises on the Büyükdere Asphalt. This is the skyline contemporary Istanbul projects as a counterpart to that of the historical peninsula with its domes and minarets.

All this rapid transformation meant that the traditional fabric almost disappeared. Only in the 1970s did calls emerge to preserve not only monuments but the wooden houses and the neighbourhoods they constituted emerge. Parts of the historic peninsula were eventually designated as world heritage by UNESCO in 1985. Some of the older neighbourhoods, especially those Bosphorus villages formerly inhabited by non-Muslim communities, such as Kuzguncuk, were discovered anew as desirable residential areas (Mills, 2010).

Since the 1950s the city has witnessed not only rapid urbanization but also the rise of a consumer society, the expansion and cultural ascendancy of the

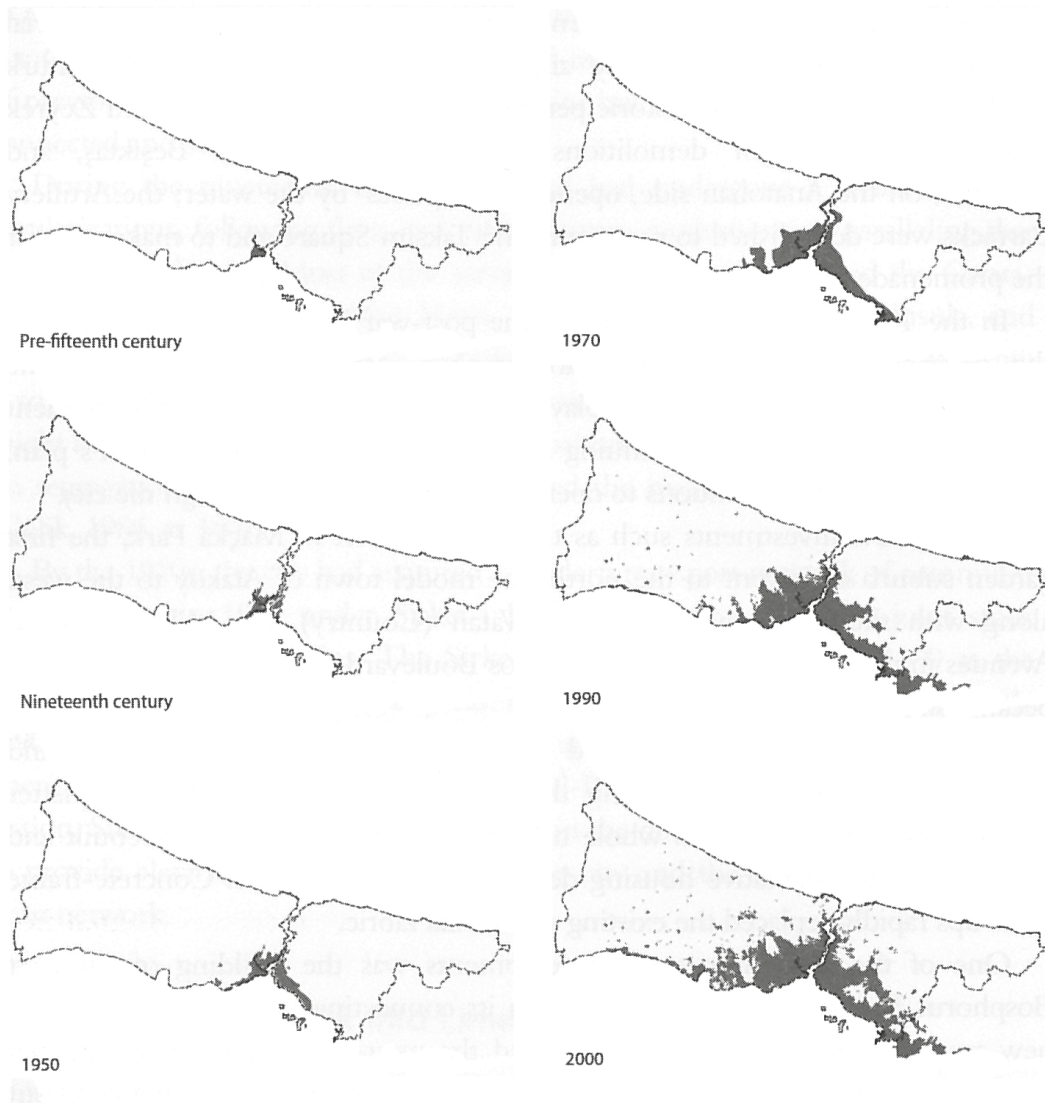


Figure I.1. Historical evolution of Istanbul's footprint. (Source: Urban Age, London School of Economics, www.urban-age.net)

middle class, and the development of modern techniques of image production and consumption. The 'opening' up of the city, through its physical expansion and intense population movements, gave way to an obsession with the city in the realm of culture which persists to the present day (Türel, 2008). The present is heavily burdened with a pervasive feeling of loss in response to Istanbul's unplanned growth and Turkey's inchoate position *vis-à-vis* Europe.

Following worldwide trends, starting in the 1980s, a surge in oral histories, memoirs and exhibitions about the city's past have turned 'Old Istanbul' into a popular site consumed by a larger public (Türel, 2010). Among the most notable are the restoration and commercial opening of several Ottoman-era houses and mansions by the Touring and Automobile Club of Turkey run by Çelik Gülersoy, and the formation of the Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey (*Tarih Vakfı*) in the early 1990s by Turkey's leading historians and social scientists with a focus on Istanbul's history. The Foundation's multifarious activities in

producing histories of the city, such as the 1996 exhibition ‘Istanbul-World City’ at the Imperial Mint Building (*Darphane-i Amire*) on the occasion of the UN Habitat meeting in Istanbul, have generated a lively debate, and many other foundations and organizations have turned their attention to the city’s past. A relatively recent one is the Suna and İnan Kırac Foundation’s Istanbul Research Institute operating under the Pera Museum (2005). Meanwhile, Islamist groups and organizations have also emerged as important actors re-enacting and invoking the city’s Ottoman past (see Jeremy Walton on localized neo-Ottomanist heritage preservation and global aspirations, Chapter 5).

The past remains omnipresent in Istanbul. The construction of Marmaray, a new suburban train line tunnelling under the Bosphorus, was delayed by several years, when in 2005 digging unexpectedly uncovered the site of an ancient port, taking back the time-line to 10,000 years ago. Construction thus turned into archaeology, reminiscent of a scene of the construction of the underground in Federico Fellini’s film *Roma* (1972). The past resurfaces in contentious debates about architectural preservation.

Global Cities without Privilege

Despite increasing popular interest, Istanbul is underrepresented in scholarly publications. This book seeks to fill an obvious gap by assembling recent research on the city conducted in a variety of disciplines. The absence of Istanbul from research agendas has to do with the ‘asymmetrical ignorance’ (Roy, 2001) that inherits Orientalism.

Even though there have been several plans, never fully realized (Çelik, 1986; Gül, 2009), Istanbul’s development in the post-war period with its sprawl, shanty-towns, crooked streets, and unplanned housing development, has been considered explosive, quasi-organic, and dominated by the small-scale ‘build and sell’ system. For these qualities, Istanbul is readily referred to as a ‘Mega City’ or ‘Third World City’.

Recent urban studies in Turkey have been conducted in two realms: architectural urban history and sociological studies (İçduygu, 2004). Architectural histories of the modern era have focused on Republican nation building and neglected Istanbul. This is especially true for the post-war period, a time of rapid urban expansion outside the control of architects’ and planners’ visions. Sociological studies have turned to the city early on, but with a focus on migration, squatter settlements and the question of ‘integration’ (Erman, 2001). It was only in the 1990s that studies of the city started to examine changing ‘lifestyles’ brought about by neoliberal economic policies and efforts to turn Istanbul into a world city, implemented by governments after the coup in 1980 (Bali, 2002).

Çağlar Keyder’s *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local*, published in 1999, was the first book to bring together this new generation of studies with a cultural

perspective and a focus on practices of the middle class (see also Kandiyoti and Saktanber, 2002). The question Keyder asked in the 1990s was whether Istanbul would be able to achieve its potential to become a 'global city' in the sense defined by the concept's theorists such as Sassen or whether it would miss the opportunity which unfolded in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the post-Cold War world order, Turkey gained new geopolitical significance vis-à-vis the Middle East and Central Asian Turkic states. It was not clear in the 1990s which path the Islamists in power, with Erdoğan then Istanbul's mayor from Refah (Welfare) Party, would take regarding the global city project. Contributions to Keyder's volume reflect that anxiety about Istanbul's status and trajectory. Since 2002, under a single party, AKP, an off-shoot of the Welfare Party, Istanbul witnessed relative stability and a more formal push (Keyder, 1992; 1999; and Chapter 1 in this volume).

The concern for Istanbul's status demonstrates the power of the 'global cities discourse' (Smith, 2001) around which much urban studies literature converges. The conceptualization of 'the global city' derives from the assumption that certain privileged Euro-American cities have acquired unique roles in the world economic system, as control and command centres, in the aftermath of the post-Fordist organization of production (Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1991).

Earlier studies of the global city focused on ranking cities based on economic data. They were criticized for narrow-minded ranking at the expense of historical specificity (King, 1990) and agency (Smith, 2001) and for perpetuating, through the 'regulating fiction' of the global city, the divide between 'First World' global cities as models, and 'Third World' mega-cities as problems (Robinson, 2006). Despite sustained criticism, ranking studies are in no way obsolete.¹⁰ More intriguingly, these scholarly abstractions turn into reality by shaping urban policy and even popular perceptions. The experience of global cities has emerged as a field of aesthetic investigation, influencing even the categorization and curation of art. An exhibition at Tate Modern in London on 'Global Cities' (20 June to 27 August 2007) featured Istanbul along with Shanghai, Cairo, London, and Los Angeles and compared the cities according to size, speed, form, density and diversity.¹¹

More recently researchers have focused on the changing role of the state – from a regulator to an agent of the market – and the impact of economic neo-liberalization processes on urban transformations. The shift from manufacturing to services in de-industrializing cities caused class polarization, as cities invest in public-private partnerships, aiming to attract capital, rather than in services for citizens. The relocation of industries to poorer countries and to their special economic zones with lax environmental and labour regulations amplified processes of urbanization and exacerbated problems of access to already limited public services. These shifts were accompanied by important implications for the built environment and architectural culture. Neoliberal restructuring projects have materialized in the built environment of cities in the form of increased

residential segregation (fortification), the growth of networked Central Business Districts and unbundled infrastructure provision – what Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001) called ‘splintering urbanism’.

Scholars who focus on neoliberalization examine how projects of restructuring and inherited institutional, social, and spatial landscapes intersect and produce diverse results in different localities. Scholarship on Istanbul has been conversant with concurrent debates in urban studies – somewhat dominated by the Anglo-American academy. Accordingly, more recently, scholars working on Istanbul have taken up issues of gated communities (Danış and Pérouse, 2005), gentrification in the historic quarters of the city (Behar and Islam, 2006; Mills, 2010; Uzun, 2003), generalized gentrification of slums (Ünsal and Kuyucu, Chapter 3 in this volume), and the revitalization of de-industrialized zones of the city (Bezmez, 2008).

Benefiting from all of the above, we argue that new studies need to take into account various strands of theory together (as in Jacobs, 1996). Furthermore, in order to interpret the politics of the present, we assert that our analytic vistas should focus not only on how the past informs the present, but also on how the present inspires a rethinking of the past – as elegantly elucidated in Michael Herzfeld’s ethnographic explorations of the politics and poetics of historical preservation in cities large and small in Europe, moving from Rethemnos in Crete (1991) to Rome in Italy (2009). We maintain that urban studies need to reveal the role of urban imaginaries in representations of cities. *Orienting Istanbul* follows this path, placing due emphasis on conceptualization of the city, of its past and present, in the arts, visual media and everyday practice.

The experiences of cities like Istanbul can generate a productive theoretical framework for studying new urban formations in a comparative perspective (see Michael Herzfeld’s epilogue). Just as Chicago and Los Angeles provided models with which to compare other cities around the world, so can the study of Istanbul (and Cairo, Bombay or Mexico City) enrich the scholarly perspective on contemporary urban life around the world. Thus *Orienting Istanbul* does not seek merely to fill an obvious gap as a case study, but also to promote the widening of our theoretical horizons. It adds to emergent scholarship that enriches our intellectual map of the global city by attending to urban formations that were formerly deemed invisible (see Singerman and Amar, 2006). As Andreas Huyssen (2008, p. 14) proposes, the aim of such studies is ‘to open up architectural, urban, and cultural studies to the imaginative geographies of alternative or different modernities that are usually sidelined by the still-dominant focus on the northern transatlantic in much of the Western academy’.

The global city and European integration are usually considered disconnected realms. Hence, one of the key contributions of this book is to examine how these two frameworks are intertwined. The 2010 European Capital of Culture programme causes excitement and dissent among policy-makers, intellectuals, and producers of culture. It seeks to forge new connections and to strengthen existing ones towards a new European identity. Istanbul’s version presents itself

primarily as a marketing strategy, highlighting new urban regeneration projects while supposedly celebrating cultural diversity. The EU programme evidently employs culture to remap or raise the status of its key cities with forward-looking economies which are not themselves key players in the global city network. Policy and resources are geared towards culture-led development rather than structural economic change, which could potentially benefit a broader demographic in cities participating in the programme. This is where the EU programme and popularized visions of the global city coalesce. *Orienting Istanbul* asks critical questions about the ways in which cities embrace culture as urban development policy to remedy omission from the global map.

Citizens, Governance, and Participation

According to the census of 2009, Istanbul has a population of 12.9 million. This means 17.8 per cent – or close to one-fifth – of total population of Turkey, which officially stands at 72.5 million. Most experts estimate the real population of the city to be nearer 15 million.¹² Istanbul's population remained around the million mark in the first half of the twentieth century; it started increasing thereafter with nation-wide increased life expectancy and rural to urban migration.¹³ Migration flows from the country to the city, on to Western Europe and back again have been formative forces. Migration still plays a role in population expansion, although births now account for the major factor in growth.

Geographically the city spreads over an area of 5.5 thousand square kilometres. In this vast city-space, one encounters a very high density, 2.4 thousand persons per square kilometre. There are more than 2.2 million residences, mostly situated on the European side of the city, where about 8 million of the city's population lives.¹⁴ The density poses massive infrastructural challenges. Denizens have been overwhelmed by traffic, pollution, crowds, crime and the rapid transformation of the cityscape around them. The city is located on top of one of the major geological faults and is under constant threat of earthquakes (the earthquake of August 17, 1999 killed 17,000 people). Occasional floods, mainly caused by irregular building in vulnerable riverbeds and flood plains, and occasional snow exacerbates the troubles of living in this vast metropolis. As Istanbulites say – and know – ‘when it rains, life in Istanbul stops’.

Istanbul has been serviced, since the 1980s, by a two-tier municipal system and the governorship. The metropolitan municipality (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, IMM) concerns itself with citywide services and district municipalities serve populations within their boundaries. Nonetheless, both, in particular their elected mayors, have vast powers of decision-making that came with changes in the governance of municipalities, decreasing the role of centrally appointed governors' offices and increasing the sources of income for municipal governments. EU integration efforts and adoption of EU models definitely had accelerating effects on these transformations.



Figure I.2. Municipal boundaries. (Source: Urban Age, London School of Economics, www.urban-age.net)

The legal framework, which is at work, does not necessarily facilitate participatory processes in city governance. Working with municipal councils with relatively weak powers, mayors more or less act as CEOs. Citizens learn about decisions through newspaper accounts, mostly after the fact when contracts are assigned and deeds are done. There are citizens' councils (*kent konseyi*) in each municipality, but they operate more like showcases for the mayors than forums for citizens. Although NGOs, citizens' groups and, most effectively, professional organizations of architects and urban planners do raise their voices through the media and courts, it is not wrong to say that there is a lack of accountability to the citizens.

Driven by new powers vested in them, municipalities have been able to privatize the public land and buildings that they owned, found semi-public companies and independently obtain loans and credits, resulting in massive infrastructural investments such as metro-bus lines, subway lines, roads and bridges. For instance, IMM is reported to secure 1.5 billion euros from the European Investment Bank for expansion of the city's metro system.¹⁵ IMM owns twenty-four semi-public companies, ranging from bread factories to ferry transport, landscape design to culture, the revenues or debts of which are not disclosed to the public.

While debts are being incurred, the city's investment and privatization frenzy continues. Two major port areas, Karaköy, where the Istanbul Modern Museum is housed in one of the old cargo warehouses, and Haydarpaşa, where the historic train station that links the city to Anatolia is located, are being opened to construction of prestige residences, hotels and shopping malls. Kartal, one of the heavily industrialized, working-class districts, is set to experience regeneration on a grand scale under a blueprint designed by Zaha Hadid. A third bridge is

being planned for the northern end of the Bosphorus as a way to ease cross traffic between the Anatolian and European sides.

The city has a master plan developed by Istanbul Metropolitan Planning and Design Centre (IMP), an agency founded by the metropolitan municipality in 2004, in the words of Istanbul's mayor Kadir Topbaş, 'to give an end to the problems of Istanbul, such as lack of planning, crooked settlement and uneven growth'.¹⁶ IMP has brought together experts, architects, academics and municipal officers and produced a variety of plans and schemes intended to carry Istanbul forward in line with contemporary precepts of urban planning: de-industrialization of the urban landscape; preservation of the green areas in the north of the city; and construction of infrastructure for a city sustained by culture and creative industries. IMP is criticized for the narrowness of its vision for the future of the city, a vision that almost singularly relies on culture industries and gentrification. It was nonetheless a plan. IMP's reign as a city planning office did not last long, however; it is now a defunct organization, whose grand vision and hundreds of plans have been shelved until further notice.

Istanbul is an 'incomplete' city. The population incessantly complains about the unfinished state of their city, its infrastructural insufficiencies, its unplanned growth and inadequacy of services. Municipal bodies lack transparency; participatory mechanisms that involve citizens in their city's business are completely absent. In a city of such size and complexity, completeness can only be a utopian aspiration. Put differently, incompleteness is not a characteristic that categorizes Istanbul as an 'Oriental' and 'Third World' city as some would claim, but remains indispensable in orienting the city to the future.

Industry Goes, Culture Comes

Turkey's central government and the city's local governments have been pursuing the global city project for a long time through various types of regeneration project. Starting in the mid-1980s, urban administrators and local academics began to debate widely the opportunities and challenges of transforming Istanbul into a global city. The initial building programme of this vision included inter-city highways, five star hotels, and the city's first gated communities and shopping malls. Non-governmental organizations and corporations contributed to the effort by initiating international cultural events. By the 2000s, the city turned exclusively to 'culture' and the government to 'generalized gentrification' (Smith, 2002). Cultural institutions are inserted into formerly decaying urban areas while squatter settlements and slums are cleared to make way for state-financed modern housing schemes for the private market.

Istanbul has made serious inroads into becoming a culture city in recent decades, even if in an ad hoc manner. The case of the Golden Horn (Haliç) is illustrative. The Golden Horn was the major industrial zone of Istanbul. In the 1970s, it was home to Istanbul's historical major shipyard and mid-size

production plants manufacturing items such as household appliances and engines for agricultural production. Soon the industrial waste literally turned the Golden Horn into a sewer. In the 1980s, Istanbul Municipality embarked on a project to rehabilitate the Golden Horn. After expensive and extensive efforts, the water was cleaned and industry was moved out. Now Golden Horn once again has a green shoreline, which is used as a picnic area by the residents of surrounding neighbourhoods.

What has replaced the plants and factories is a variety of cultural and educational institutions. Istanbul Commerce University, Bilgi University and Kadir Has University occupy the two banks of Golden Horn. Both Bilgi and Kadir Has Universities have their own cultural centres. Rezan Has Museum, housed at Kadir Has University, sits on top of a Byzantine cistern and an Ottoman *hamam*. Santral Istanbul, located in the premises of the Silahtarğa Power Station at the far end of Golden Horn is an important exhibition centre. Rahmi Koç Transportation Museum, Miniaturk, a theme park exhibiting models of architectural heritage (see İpek Türeli, Chapter 6), Sütluçe Congress Centre, built in place of an old slaughterhouse, Feshane, the old *fez* factory turned exposition centre, all line the shore, along with restaurants, boutique hotels, small shops of all kinds. The shipyard is still operational but it is imminent that it will be transformed into a cultural centre. Converted ex-industrial buildings are especially favoured as exhibition spaces.

Most of the recent transformations pertaining to the re-presentation of Istanbul as a cultural site can indeed be observed in other contending global cities; that is, they are not exclusive to Istanbul. International film, dance, theatre, and music festivals, art exhibitions and design weeks crowd the city's calendar. To take the example of the 'biennial fever' that spread across formerly peripheral cities from Sao Paolo to Taipei, economic interests, cultural policy and curatorial and artistic experience converge as city marketing strategies; failure to create difference in content pushes organizers to assert difference through the city (see Banu Karaca for a comparison between the Berlin and Istanbul Biennials, Chapter 13).

The demise of manufacturing has led to a rise in policy emphasis on culture as an economic sector (Zukin, 1995). It is even possible to talk about a 'cultural turn' in urban policy (Miles, 2007). Culture and creative industries appear to policy-makers as a panacea to fuel urban economy and even resolve social and financial problems. While recognizing that arts and cultural events are increasingly deployed as vital urban policy, complementing the more permanent, architectural projects of urban regeneration, we believe it would be reductionist to pass the verdict on arts as a mere instrument of urban redevelopment (see Hou Hanru and Jale Erzen, Chapters 11 and 12, for an important debate on national and global frameworks in thinking about art and society). With their trans-disciplinary scope, the contributions to *Orienting Istanbul* bring concrete and grounded perspectives to debates about spectacle, mediatization, and cultural

identity. Contributors consider not only institutional frameworks of arts and cultural events but also the cultural products produced and exhibited on these platforms.

Layered Pictures, Living Monuments

Istanbul's unique topography enables orientation. Throughout the city, hills offer the spectator elevated view points that open onto waterways. This topography connects the dispersed city with its ever expanding outskirts, if only in visual and imaginary terms, and provides a mental map and a sense of place.

We close our introduction with a closer look at the panorama on our book's cover. Taken from the roof of Büyük Valide Han (the living heritage site discussed in Chapter 4 by Baykan *et al.*), this panorama of the city overlooks the silhouette of modern Istanbul from the angle of the historic Peninsula. The photograph contains another picture, a graffiti painting in the foreground on a parapet wall, which mirrors certain structural elements from the visible scene. Photographs tend to be read as direct inscriptions of the real; this quality is referred to as their indexicality. Yet, once overlaid with a highly interpretive 'painting' of the viewed scene, the supposed indexicality is thrown into crisis. Furthermore, this doubling of representation creates the layered effect that renders this photograph symptomatic of the city's experience – simultaneously lived and mediated. The banks of blue that repeat in the graffiti sky, in the waterway between the land pieces, and in the real sky heighten this effect.



Figure I.3. View from the roof of Büyük Valide Han. (Source: Reproduced from *Cityrama*, by courtesy of photographer Arif Aşçı)

The graffiti in the foreground highlights the notion of 'orienting' with the arrows – forcefully pointing to an idealized mosque skyline, and geographically to Asia. The photograph lines up for the viewer three domes that constitute a strong axiality: a segment of a dome on the roof of the building where the photographer is standing, multiple domes that lie flat in the graffiti, and thirdly, the domes of Yeni Camii in Eminönü. These multiple domes create a depth of field that stretches the gaze into the horizon towards the Bosphorus and the

first Bosphorus Bridge. Competing with this axis is another one, perhaps more powerful and right at the centre, defined by the Galata Bridge. Spanning across the Golden Horn in the middle ground, the bridge invites the viewer to cross to the modern side of the city. Yet, a tension arises where s/he is prevented from doing so by intersecting walls.

Behind the minarets of Yeni Camii lies, in the distance, the Istanbul Modern Museum, where this photograph by Arif Aşçı was displayed in an exhibition, Cityrama. Curated by Engin Özende, Cityrama was organized in collaboration with the International Union of Architects' (UIA's) 22nd World Congress of Architecture (held in Istanbul between 2 and 10 July 2005) which brought thousands of architects from around the world to Istanbul. The introduction to the exhibition catalogue poses important questions about the place of architectural heritage in urban life:

With what emotions do we look at the grinding sharp-toothed machines of the age and the old buildings that silently surrender without a fight? While Istanbul expands in all directions, carrying its sorrows with it, is something lost or is it a natural process of growth?

According to information from the research team working on Büyük Valide Han (Burak Sevingen and Zerrin İren), the little white hut behind the graffiti houses a textile dyeing workshop. The grass-covered tower to the left is a very old structure, probably from Byzantine times, which is mentioned in sources ranging from Evliya Çelebi and Wolfgang Gurlitt to John Freely and Murat Belge. Various myths about the history of this tower are in circulation among the residents of the Han. Underneath the tower a metal turning workshop run by an old Armenian is in operation. Residents of the Han date the graffiti after 2004 and claim that a group of 'French' students who were never seen again sprayed it in two days. This rooftop, which is locked and accessed with a key kept by the caretaker, serves as both a 'hidden' tourist sight and as a refuge for the people who live and work in the building. As a 'well-known secret', the Han has turned into an attractive site for artists and social scientists alike.¹⁷

The cover photograph thus emblematically captures some of the processes that we map out in this book, regarding the intersection of contemporary art, social science, lived practices, and urban imaginaries; processes germane not only to Istanbul but pertinent also for our understanding of Europe as a space based on heterogeneity and 'fragmentary unison' (Soysal, 2002).

Notes

1. The seed was planted during a conference at University of California, Berkeley in September 2008. See: <http://www.ced.berkeley.edu/istanbulconference/>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
2. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/travel/2010-places-to-go.html>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
3. *Ibid.*

4. http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/articles/2010/02/01/main_line_times/life/doc4b6091ed56790885937712.txt. Accessed 20 February 2010.
5. <http://www.orhanpamuk.net/news.aspx?id=19&lng=eng>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
6. See also Herzfeld (1996).
7. http://www.istanbul2010.org/HABER/GP_619547. Accessed 20 February 2010.
8. This is a shared question. See photographer Serkan Taycan's project 'Europe?' <http://www.serkantaycan.com>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
9. <http://www.garajistanbul.org>. Accessed 20 February 2010. http://en.istanbul2010.org/BASINODASI/BASINBULTEN/HABER/GP_567197. Accessed 20 February 2010.
10. See, for instance, 'The World According to GaWX 2008' where New York and London are at the top and a city like Istanbul receives at best 'Alpha' status. Available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2008.html>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
11. <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/globalcities/default.shtm>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
12. http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?tb_id=39&ust_id=11. Accessed 20 February 2010.
13. http://www.ibb.gov.tr/sites/ks/tr-TR/0-Istanbul-Tanitim/konum/Pages/Nufus_ve_Demografik_Yapi.aspx. Accessed 20 February 2010.
14. http://www.ibb.gov.tr/sites/ks/tr-TR/0-Istanbul-Tanitim/konum/Pages/Sayilarla_Istanbul.aspx. Accessed 20 February 2010.
15. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Turkey%3a+Int+l+firms+lend+1.5+bln+euros+for+%3fstanbul+metro.-a0180205581>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
16. <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/en-US/Pages/Haber.aspx?NewsID=153>. Accessed 20 February 2010.
17. During the 2003 Biennial, the Han was already used as an exhibition site. The British artist Mike Nelson installed a darkroom in one of the Han's cells. *Magazin*: http://www.friezefoundation.org/commissions/detail/mike_nelson. Accessed 20 February 2010.

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