KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

URBAN CITIZENSHIP IN ISTANBUL:
URBAN IMAGERY, IMAGERIES OF URBAN CITIZENSHIP
THROUGH URBAN PUBLIC SPACES

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"I, Öznur Şahin, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis."

ÖZNUR ŞAHİN

ABSTRACT

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THROUGH URBAN PUBLIC SPACES

Öznur Şahin

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Murat Akser

July, 2013

This thesis aims to analyze the notion of urban citizenship in Istanbul and how it has been mapped onto the urban public spaces of the city. Urban public spaces and thus urban images of Istanbul are constructed around ideas of civilization. In this thesis, the relationship of city dwellers and urban public spaces is scrutinized through conceptualizing the notion of civilization in the context of globalization as an analytical tool which accounts for the governmentality of space. In this context, a discourse of sociality constructed through parks, gardens and green fields, social facilities, open-air gyms and museums formalizes and regulates the practices of urbanites, and thus the notion of urban citizenship is defined through the sense of social belonging to the city.

Keywords: urban citizenship, urban public space, urban image, governmentality, sociality, civilization.

ÖZET

İSTANBUL'DA KENTLİLİK: KAMUSAL ALANLAR ÜZERİNDEN KENT VE KENTLİLİK İMAJLARI

Öznur Şahin

İletişim Bilimleri, Yüksek Lisans

Danışman: Doç. Dr. Murat Akser

July, 2013

Bu tez, İstanbul'da kentli kavramını ve bu kavramın kentin kamusal mekanlarına nasıl haritalandığını analiz etmeyi amaçlıyor. İstanbul'un kent imajları ve kamusal mekanları uygarlaşma kavramının etrafında kurulur. Bu tezde, kent sakinleri ile kamusal mekanlar arasındaki ilişki, mekanın yönetimini de açıklayan uygarlaşma kavramının küreselleşme bağlamında analitik bir araç olarak kavramsallaştırılması yoluyla incelenir. Bu bağlamda, parklar, bahçeler ve yeşil alanlar, sosyal tesisler, açık spor alanları ve müzeler aracılığıyla kurulan sosyallik söylemi, kentlilerin pratiklerini şekillendirir ve düzenler. Böylece kentli kavramı da kentle kurulan sosyal aidiyet duygusuyla tanımlanır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kentli, kamusal mekan, kent imajı, yönetimsellik, sosyallik, uygarlaşma.

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Istanbul is constantly under construction. Istanbulites wake up to a day with the project of constructing the third bridge to relieve the traffic, to another day with a "crazy" Canal Project which is to build a new waterway to divide Istanbul into two peninsulas and an island, and to the other day with a project of the pedestrianization of the Taksim Square which aims at removing vehicle traffic to underground roads to make the square accessible for only pedestrians. Meanwhile, old buildings are being renovated, neighborhoods are being gentrified, waterfronts are being transformed, mass housing by private and state companies is being built in the periphery of the city and incessant new projects for the reconstruction of the city are being released through media.

Urban public spaces of Istanbul have always had symbolic significance as part of the city's image, and also have become a controversial issue around which converge matters of internal migration and the issue of just what it means to be an Istanbulite, a point of contention that arose in the 1950s when the first major waves of internal migration began in Turkey as the result of industrialization. The notion of internal migration, however, is no longer so useful for determining just what defines an Istanbulite in a global metropolis where the population is almost 17 million, as there is a continuous population influx and seemingly no limit to the growth of the city. Furthermore, the city has been undergoing processes of residential and spatial gentrification with the encouragement of the government, and this has sparked intense controversy among community groups, architects and urban planners as well as in artistic and cultural circles. In such a large global metropolis, the construction of the Istanbulite identity in terms of migrants has been replaced by the notion of

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urban citizenship, which refers to the dynamic relations of city dwellers with urban spaces and urban life.

With the aim of better understanding the intricate connections between spatial transformation and urban citizenship, my methods comprise ethnographic research as well as discourse analysis. On one hand, I collected written materials about the spatial policy of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), such as documents, brochures, journals and books, and on the other hand, as part of my ethnographic research, I attended demonstrations, meetings, talks, panels, workshops and conducted interviews with municipal officials.

Reaching municipal officials was a challenge at the beginning of my fieldwork. When I tried to reach them by just knocking their doors, I failed. However, a friend of mine put me in contact with a municipal official who has been working for the Municipality for over 23 years, and then this contact proved to be a snowball among municipal officials particularly in the Departments of Parks, Gardens, and Green Fields, allowing me to conducttwelve interviews in the Municipality. Although the government and the Municipality are from the current ruling party AKP (the Party of Justice and Development), not allmunicipal officials hold the same political views. This is so because some of them have been working for the Municipality longer than the lifespan of the AKP, which in turn has made them critical about the policy of the Municipality. In this respect, it was interesting to realize that the Municipality is indeed not a homogenous unit as a state institution. I just got two recorded interviews, and I took notes for the rest of my interviews, because they are public officials, they did not allow me to record the interviews. It was actually way efficient

than I thought, because they spoke to me without the pressure of recording. Fieldwork has been essential means for my research so to speak.

This thesis explores how the notion of urban citizenship has been mapped onto urban public spaces in the context of civilization. I will trace the spatial regime of the Municipality as it is embodied in parks, gardens, green fields, open-air gyms and social facilities. In the following section, I will try to contextualize this research providing some historical and contemporary approaches to the notion of civilization.

Towards The Discourse of Civilization

"Catching up with the train of civilization" (Mardin 1991: 125) with getting the tools and techniques of the West was the main motivation for Turkish modernity. In this context, civilization was identified with Westernization. Western civilization was taken "as 'superior' to the Ottoman Heritage" and defined their major goal as "ascending Turkey to the level of civilized" (Arat 1998:14). However, Westernization was not taken as the only way to modernity in Turkish nationalism. Catching up with the modern world also includes the construction of nation's culture "as distinct as possible from the Islamic character of the multiethnic, multinational Ottoman Empire" (Fleming 1998:129).

A new modern society functioned at the everyday level had to be created, which also differentiated Turkish nation-state from the West. Family and home became the most suitable realm of 'difference' from the West to emphasize the uniqueness of the Turkish nation. Therefore, the desire to become both 'modern' and unique transformed the way gender relations and the regulation of familial space in the Turkish nationalist framework. Selda Şerifsoy points out the features of boundedness and moral structure embodied in a family, and claims that boundedness associated to the boundaries of country, and moral structure is used to indicate the solidarity among the members of group. Şerifsoy identifies the mutual relationship between nation and family as following: "While the state determines the definition and the task of a family in a society as a social institution; family as a *metaphor* also defines the boundaries of the construction of the state and nation" (2004:168).

Furthermore, the new modern minds could only be created through education, especially women's education. The concentration on achievements in women's

education was not only a performance for the West, but also a way to rewrite the new subject of the new nation. It was only through a new (scientific) system of education that the subjects would be transformed into "nationalist" subjects.

In this thesis, I would argue that the discourse of civilization is still in effect today. This study, however, takes a different perspective on civilization by focusing on the urban public spaces of Istanbul as a social, institutional and cultural formation in the making of urban citizenship in the context of globalization. Since global cities operate "as a partly denationalized platform for global capital" (Sassen 2000:48), and include transnational actors, the civilizing process is not the same as in the process of Westernization or Modernization. I use the term civilization as Levent Soysal articulates it in his article "Future(s) of the City: Istanbul for the New Century":

> I argue that Istanbul is undergoing a civilizing process, discovering and establishing ways of doing things in a civilized manner, adopting and enacting at institutional levels the codes, standards and norms of being civilized and furnishing the urban landscape of the city with monuments, buildings, bridges and emblems, logos and signs that imply the contemporary state of civilization (2010: 298).

Soysal also states that "This civilizing process, however, only seemingly resembles the linear models of change prescribed by modernization or Westernization" (2010:298). The state acts in the same manners as it did in the past. That is, this seemingly evident resemblance is based on the habits of the state as I will indicate in the following chapters how urban public spaces and urban citizenship are correlated with family, women and education. However, although the state holds on to the same tools to perform civilization, Soysal makes the most significant difference of the present transformation quite clear: "Istanbul's transformative venture is co-terminus with those of its counterparts in Europe and the world at large" (2010: 298).

Through the notion of urban citizenship and its connections to urban spaces, my research focuses on the dynamic relationships between city-dwellers and urban spaces in the context of urban public spaces. While the beautification of urban sites such as coastal settings, parks, green fields, squares, social facilities and open-air gyms "is used to jumpstart private property redevelopment, in part because improvements in public space have relational benefit to the value of surrounding private property" (Mitchell and Staeheli 2003: 150), they also herald new spaces of socialization. Sociality as a tool establishes the sense of belonging to the city of Istanbul which is the core element of urban citizenship.

Civilizing Urban Spaces

There is a politics of space, because space is political.

Lefebvre

Urban citizens' everyday lives have been changing through neo-liberal gentrification projects in Istanbul. The neo-liberal spatial regime constructs a new notion of urban citizenship based on a particular social, cultural and political understanding of the city. Through focusing on urban public spaces, I discuss how the notion of civilization shapes the governance of urban public spaces in Istanbul.

The civilized urban imagery has been provided by the constant reconfiguration of urban public spaces by the Municipality. The Municipality invoked the discourse of civilization through the construction of public parks, gardens, social facilities and landfill squares, marinas inaugurated on the Bosporus as "showcases" and "modern faces of Istanbul." In this chapter, I will focus on the spatial policy of the Departments of Parks, Gardens, and Green Fields at the IMM and analyze the discourses on such urban spaces as social facilities and open air gyms through which the discourses of socialization are invoked.

The "Green" Policy of the Municipality: Trees, Flowers, Grass

In order to comprehend the spatial regime of the Municipality, I conducted eight interviews with municipal officials, mostly landscape architects, in the Department of Parks, Gardens and Green Fields. In my interviews, they told me about the policy of the Municipality, the organization and use of urban public spaces. It was also interesting that even though I did not ask about municipal officials' political views

directly, they became obvious when some of the officials expressed their negative or positive opinions regarding the policies of the Municipality.

One of the issues that reveal the differences among municipal officials was the increase in the proportion of green fields. The Municipality (and the government) claims that there is an increase in the number of parks, gardens and green fields in Istanbul during their governance. Some of the municipal officials argued that the number of parks and green fields has not increased but we could observe an increase in the number of the parks that are being reorganized. Some officials regretfully informed me that since Istanbul is a very crowded city and so the residential density is very high, the location of the parks in the plans of residential areas is not a priority for the Municipality. On the other hand, while some argued that there is a gradual increase in the green fields per capita year by year, one of my interviewees claimed that the increase is the result of the fact that the green fields on the highways were taken from the General Directorate of Highways by the Municipality. Another official also stated that the change of the governance of green fields from the district municipalities to the Municipality also affected the increase in the amount of green fields per capita. In brief, although the issue of the increase in green fields is controversial among municipal officials depending on their political views, they all agree that parks and green fields have been reconfigured, which has increased the people's participation in urban public spaces.

The current director of the Department of the Parks, Gardens and Green Fields İhsan Şimşek's green policy as stated by one of my interviewees is "anti-bush planting." Şimşek stated his policy as following: "There are some drought-tolerant shrub species, but that kind of plant pattern has its disadvantages: cases of prostitution,

usurpation, or drug sales behind shrubs. That's why we preferred the concept of flowers, grass, and trees." (Radikal).

As seen in the quote above, the politics of space is produced through the criminalization of bush planted fields. This criminalization not only results in the surveillance and discipline of the society through security guards and cameras, but also shapes the definition of good urbanite. Indeed, this policy made urban public spaces available for more people. Landscape architects Ayşe Sevinç and Sevim Bilge (2012)[1] with whom I conducted interview in the Department of Parks, Gardens and Green Fields state that parks are "accessible and safe," because of the policy of "flower, grass and tree." They also emphasized that the green fields on the edge of highways, which were, they say, filled with bushes and men drinking alcohol are now safe for families and women. This is so because that they removed bushes and planted grass, trees and flowers instead.

"The more common the family life [in urban space] is, the safer the urban space is."[2] says one of my interviewees. She is a single woman in her forties working as a landscape architect for the Municipality. When I mentioned to her about the importance of family discussed in the opening speech of the Haliç Social Facility (November 28, 2007) by the mayor of Istanbul, Kadir Topbaş, she fiercely objected the idea that public spaces are only for families. In the end, however, she made the equation between safety and family. She also told me about her mother, an old woman who used to host her friends at home, meets her friends outside now.

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[1] To protect the anonymity of my informants, I use pseudonyms in this thesis.
[2] Aile hayatı güvenliğin arttığını da gösterir.

In an another interview with a landscape architect Selma Çiçek (2012), I also brought up the issue of family through Topbaş's speech, and asked her if she would consider users of parks as families or as individuals. She clearly stated that they did not make any distinction between families and individuals; they only focused on how they could increase the use of parks and green fields. She said: "Appealing to everybody. The point is that they should be enjoyed as much as possible. That they should be full of life… This is what we aim at: to create parks and open areas where everybody can utilize."[3] But, what makes urban public spaces lively? What kinds of function does the Municipality add to the urban designs of green fields to address everybody? Although she emphasized that urban public spaces are accessible to every citizens, she also stated that "Of course we don't discriminate against anyone, but it [the family] is an important factor…. Our mayor Mr. Kadir [Topbaş] is particularly keen on setting up children's rooms, breastfeeding rooms and care rooms [in social facilities]."[4] Thus, social facilities as urban public spaces give the representation of the way of urban citizens' participation in a defined space.

Social Facilities: Alcohol versus Sociality

The relationship of sociality and family is reinforced through the discourses on social facilities in Istanbul which are mostly located on the waterfronts (Haliç, Bosphorus or Küçükçekmece Lake), and in the woods where people can have their breakfast, lunch, dinner or a beverage, organize informal social gatherings or formal social gatherings such as wedding ceremonies at inexpensive prices. There are sixteen social facilities now, and most of them have been built or renewed when the current

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[3]Herkese hitapeden. Önemli olan dolu dolu kullanılsın. Yaşaması…Yani amacımız hedefimiz o. Herkesin kullanabileceği parklar açık alanlar oluşturmak.
[4]Tabii ayrım yapmıyoruz ama o da önemli bir etken. …Özellikle istiyor Kadir Başkan çocuk odaları, emzirme odaları, çocuk bakım odaları.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the mayor of the IMM. It was Erdoğan

who introduced new policies regarding the management of social facilities in 1994—

and the policies that have been carried on in the same manner over the past 17 years.

When he was the mayor, the subsidiary company of the IMM called BELTUR,

which was set up in 1997, took over the management of social facilities from Turing,

a private company. Through BELTUR the prohibition on alcohol was legitimized by

claiming that the new policy would render the facilities more accessible to people

rather than a small elite group.

Recently, another law that restricts the sale and advertising of alcohol was passed in

the parliament. The new regulations regarding alcohol could be viewed as another

example of the current ruling party's -The Justice and Development Party (AKP) -

hegemonic attitudes that affect lifestyles in Turkey. However, I suggest that we

should take a closer look at the discourse of the Municipality about alcohol sale at

social facilities in order to point out the participation process in urban life through

the new means of socialization. The removal of alcohol from social facilities, thus,

plays a crucial part in these new means of socialization. Kadir Topbaş (November

28, 2007) explained the functions of social facilities in the following terms:

> In the past, there was a prevalent understanding in our country that social
> facilities belong to a specific class of elites. Changing this understanding, we
> opened up social facilities to all Istanbulites, the people. (…) If we can make
> shared spaces available, and share them together, our love, respect and
> tolerance towards each other will increase. A culture of living together will
> develop as one of the requirements for democracy, and this will make it
> possible for us to better know each other. This is the reason why we opened
> these social facilities, beaches, squares, parks, sporting fields, and landscapes
> along the seafronts. (…) These social facilities are also an important means to
> increase awareness of the city and our citizens' consciousness. People who
> have never had dinner outside can benefit from these facilities even if once a
> month. (Arkitera)

The quote above indicates that the reconfiguration of urban citizenship with a strong emphasis on equality and democracy informs the redefinition of urban public spaces such as "social facilities, beaches, squares, parks, sporting fields, and landscapes and urbanites." In my interview with Hüseyin Sert (2012) from the Research and Development Unit of the Social Facilities, this new understanding is also at work. He stated that "we taught people the art of eating."[5] This new understanding reveals that socialization at social facilities is taken as a part of educating process of Istanbulites.

In one of my visits at the Haliç Social Facility, which was populated with families with children, I overheard a conversation of a young couple with a baby. They were having breakfast at noon, which caused confusion regarding the nature of the activity they engaged in: was it breakfast or brunch? The husband's following remark ended the conversation: "This must be brunch, because we are having our breakfast late." The activity named "brunch" in this case represented a new kind of sociality, which requires inculcation of new sensibilities and tastes. This is, indeed, the kind of family that the mayor of the IMM describes in his response to the question of a journalist about the prohibition of alcohol in social facilities at the opening of the Haliç Social Facility:

> Municipal, state-owned centers are restricted by law. Therefore we do not allow alcohol in these centers. (…) Here I would like you to observe one more thing. All the people from the age of 7 to 70 come to these centers with babies in their arms. Of course, if drinking alcohol is allowed here, they would not come here with their babies (Arkitera).

In this speech alcohol becomes a barrier to families' socialization in public space. It would be wrong to suggest that it was the AKP that made the institution of family the main form of socialization in Turkey. Before the AKP took power, there were also

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[5] Biz insanlara yemek yeme sanatını öğrettik.

some restaurants in Istanbul, which had the sign of "we have rooms for families." I remember from my childhood that when we go out for a dinner as a family, even though my family is not a conservative one, we used to prefer restaurants which had this sign. The first floor of these restaurants was usually filled with single men or a group of men and other floors were reserved for families. This sign may have disappeared in restaurants but the notion of family for the Municipality has still significant effects on the discourse of socialization.

However, at present the difference is that the Municipality has established more spaces for socializing in public spaces by renovating urban public waterfronts along the coastlines of the city, increasing the numbers of parks and gardens, constructing open-air gyms and redeveloping public beaches on the Bosporus and the Black Sea as the signs of civilization. Furthermore, the Municipality invokes not only the discourse of civilization in the construction of recreational areas for public use, but also neo-Ottoman discourses by reinventing the historicity of the façades of buildings. The new urban imagery is laden with mixed messages of what might be called *neo-conservative modernization.* The Golden Horn represents modern neo-conservative spaces of symbolic significance. The Haliç Social Facility, located on the Golden Horn in Balat possessing the style of "traditional Turkish architecture," illustrates 'New Ottomanism' in the city. In his article "Greening of Istanbul" Cihan Tuğal discusses Ottomanization as an expression of "the market-oriented Islamization of the city" (2008: 76) "rather than preserve the historical fabric of the city, the current AKP metropolitan municipality seems set on pulling down the original Ottoman buildings and reconstructing ersatz versions" (Tuğal 2008: 76).

Every facility that was constructed or renovated by the Municipality bears the marks of conservative Islamic sensibilities; however, these sensibilities do not constitute the most prominent features. Like fast-breaking tents and Ramadan festivities, which have become sites for the collective consumption (Tuğal 2008: 76), social facilities in the style of "traditional Turkish architecture" also accelerate consumption. What we see is a twofold process: while the Municipality's new policies have created new opportunities for private investments (e.g. the transformation of historical and industrial buildings into universities and cultural centers, residential and spatial gentrification or the Port projects such as the Galata and Haliç Port), urban public spaces for socialization has also increased.

However, what is the function of the notion of family in the discourse of socialization? Why does the Municipality rely on the discourse of family in order to increase sociality in urban public spaces? As Soysal explains in his article "Intimate Engagements of the Public Kind," "sociality is amplified." "It is as if the outside is the new inside, the new space where people socialize and engender intimacy. It seems that nowadays more time is spent out, in public, in the open spaces of sociality" (Soysal 2010: 377). Thus, the emphasis of the Municipality on the familial identities of urban citizens amplifies sociality through constructing intimate bonds with urban public spaces.

Socialization which interpellates the new type of urban citizens within a familial context can be called "familial sociality." The new urban citizenship is imagined through the construction of "familial sociality," laden with gendered meanings, in urban spaces. The notion of family defines the mixed-gender public space, which legitimizes the presence of women in public spaces. I saw women who were like

"ladies who lunch"[6] having their meetings in the Haliç Social Facility rather than home. To a certain extent, women's sociality without their families in the Haliç Social Facility and environs both draws and violates the ambiguous line between the representation of women through familial sociality and the social aspect of everyday life of women.

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[6] "Ladies who lunch" is a song performed by Elaine Stritch in the musical comedy *Company* in 1970, and the lyrics of the musical were written by Stephen Sondheim. This phrase is used to describe women who meet up for lunch during the weekdays. I would like to thank to Prof. Louise Spence who informed me about this phrase.

Open-air Gyms: Sports for Sociality

One of the functions attributed to civilized urban public spaces is open-air gyms which are managed by Spor A.Ş. a subsidiary foundation of the IMM. There are different types of exercise equipment such as cross trainers, stationary bicycles and equipment for arm, shoulder and back exercises in open-air gyms. I conducted an interview with Hüseyin Kılıç who is in charge of the organization and control of sports fields including open air gyms, basketball, volleyball and tennis courts in parks, gardens and green fields and works for Spor A.Ş. He provided me some information about the users of open air gyms and told me how people engaged in open air gyms, and even asked for more exercise equipment and small equipment for children as well. For instance, he talked about the demands of women for exercise equipment which is not made only for a single person but also for two or more people. Thus, he said, they can chat with their friends while doing sports. In other words, doing sports in urban public spaces turns into a way of socialization. As Lefebvre articulated that "Space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations, but it also is producing and produced by social relations" (2009:186).

Eda Ünlü Yücesoy states that "urban public spaces as social constructs that are formed, developed, sustained and/or abandoned in relation to a variety of social, cultural, political, and historical processes, the recognition of women's roles as social actors in these processes is important" (Yücesoy 2006: 9). As one of my interviewees with a headscarf said: "Now my auntie [any 'traditional' woman] wears trainers under her burqa or coat and does sports" (Sevinç and Bilge 2012)[7] The word "auntie"

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[7] Şimdi teyzem, çarşafın, pardesünün altına spor ayakkabısını giyiyor, spor yapıyor.

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refs to a fat old traditional woman, and thus this is found a bit strange as it does not fit the young and dynamic civilized urban imagery of Istanbul in terms of sports. However, although those "aunties" violate urban imagery, they are also included in urban public spaces as part of the discourse of socialization. Thus, while open-air gyms regulate urban public spaces and thus construct the images of Istanbul, women as social actors *distort* them.

In the website of Spor A.Ş. stated that "The primary goals of SPOR A.Ş. are to strengthen the physical and mental health of Istanbulites and to ensure that they have access to sports facilities and can actively participate in sports events" (Spor A.Ş). The discursive construction of the body through sports reminds us of the Turkish modernity project in which human body –in particular female body- is regarded as instruments for social control and power over life. In this project, human body turns into a docile body that "can be subjected, used, transferred and improved" (Foucault 1979: 136). However, I suggest that the focus of the Municipality's appropriation of the Turkish modernist discourse is now rather space than body. The relationship of neoliberal regime and space creates the spatial technology for the concerns of the government/municipality. The governmentality of space, as Lemke stated, organizes and disciplines space like a body:

> The analysis of governmentality reminds us that political economy relies on a political anatomy of the body. We can decipher a neo-liberal governmentality in which not only the individual body, but also collective bodies and institutions (public administrations, universities, etc), corporations and states have to be "lean", "fit", "flexible" and "autonomous". The governmentality approach also focuses on the integral link between micro- and macro-political levels (e.g. globalization or competition for "attractive" sites for companies and personal imperatives as regards beauty or a regimented diet) (2007: 13).

I argue that the governmentality of space affects the city of Istanbul and urban citizens in two ways: While defining urbanites through the discourse of civilization,

the governmentality of space creates civilized urban image. As stated in the short history of Spor A.Ş., "Spor A.Ş. provides Istanbulites with widespread opportunities allowing them to improve the quality of their social lives by ensuring that they engage in regular and structured physical exercise at modern sports facilities." (Spor A.Ş.). The participation and socialization of Istanbulites are once again considered as the target of the Municipality and the physical exercises of Istanbulites is rendered meaningful as part of civilized urban imagery. Even though the body of "auntie" in urban public spaces is taken as opposed to this image, it is also included as part of the engagement in space.

"The consciousness of Urban Citizenship":

Teaching Urbanity through Social and Cultural Belonging to the City

Teaching was one of the oft-used words in the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork. I was told that what they teach urban citizens through the design of urban public spaces is how to be a civilized urban citizen. In this chapter, I will focus on the sense of belonging to the city of Istanbul through social and cultural activities provided by the Municipality, and Istanbul courses offered at primary schools in the context of education. Through the concept of sociality, I will scrutinize the notion of urban citizenship in Istanbul.

Visual Education through the City as a Spectacle

One of my interviewees, while talking about urban public spaces, stated that "We taught them things by showing."[8] This expression reveals that the notion of urban citizenship is linked to the construction of the visuality of urban landscape. She continued that "we spent too much money [for the image of Istanbul]… Istanbul is like a model. We are designing these projects, beautifying the city—but maybe all of this will be used for rent." (Yıldırım, 2012).[9] As she stated, the transformation of urban public spaces not only turns the city of Istanbul into a market product but also promotes it as a spectacle. In that sense, urban public spaces are not only a place to be seen from the inside of the city, but also places to be observed from the outside. The transformation of urban public spaces is aimed to foster the world-city image of Istanbul and to attract the attention of global capital for the investments.

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[8] Göstererek eğittik.
[9] Çok para harcadık… Maket gibi Istanbul. Biz bu projeleri yapıyoruz, güzelleştiriyoruz ama belki de ranta.

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One of the ways through which the urban image of the city is constructed is to beautify the city through planting flowers (e.g. tulips). The landscape architect who used the words "We taught them things by showing" told me about people who used to pluck flowers in the past. However, she said, the Municipality has insistently planted the new ones. Now, she proudly added, people do not pluck the flowers anymore. It would not be wrong to say that the images of Istanbul become the realm where the discourse of civilization is produced and through which people are educated and civilized.

Guy Debord argues that "spectacle is never an image but forms of social practice mediated by images" (1994: 4). The illumination of the Bosporus Bridge, the Ramadan festivities in Sultanahmet Square, the tulip festival at the Emirgan Woods every year and the transformation of urban waterfronts invite all Istanbulites visually experience the city of Istanbul. One of the most common ways of educating people through images of the city is to organize Bosporus tours for lower-class people who have never seen the sea or the Bosporus, even though they have been living in Istanbul for a long time. The target group of these tours is mostly children and women. The Bağcılar Municipality, for instance, has organized Bosporus tours every year since 1994 in order to raise "urban consciousness" (Dezavantaj); a nongovernmental organization called Deniz Temiz (Clean Sea) Association in collaboration with the district municipalities in Istanbul also organizes Bosporus tours for primary school children in order "to create the consciousness of being a citizen of a coastal town" (Turmepa) at April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day every year. The Third International Festival of Sea Culture also organizes these kinds of events for children but the emphasis of the festival is shifted towards globalization through the discourse of "the common European sea culture" as the

Bosporus geographically and historically connects to the world (Deniz Kültürü Festivali). Seeing the sea as a crucial part of the identity of Istanbul that signifies the global images of the city becomes a compulsory social practice in the identification of Istanbulites, too.

The landscape architect Nazife Yıldırım (2012) working for the Departments of Parks, Gardens and Green Fields defines the properties of urban public spaces as following: "1. Providing the opportunity for people for mental and bodily recreation. 2. Having instructive value." In line with the definition above, different kinds of functions (e.g. open-air gyms) are added to the list of urban public spaces. Added to this list are for instance thematic parks such as Japanese Garden, Children Traffic Education Parks and Earthquake Parks. Yıldırım talks about urban public spaces as if they are schools for children. We could argue that the parks function as mechanisms of both social control and medium for social belonging.

It is also worth mentioning another example for the Municipality's spatial policy: future mega landfill projects on the waterfronts of the city. There are two mega landfill squares: Maltepe on the Anatolian side and Yenikapı on the European side. The construction of the Maltepe landfill square has started in summer this year and it is still under construction. While Yenikapı square project is designed for meetings, demonstrations and festivals; Maltepe square project has many functions such as basketball, volleyball and tennis courts for sports, activity and entertainment areas, specific areas of activities and entertainments for children, special constructions for skateboard, recreational areas and spaces for hobbies including model planes, cars etc. Through these projects, it is claimed to construct urban public spaces on the sea, out of non-space indeed. The landfill projects without any intervention from the past

provide a new page for the future of Istanbul on the sea where the city geographically connects to the world. Thus, they are also the spaces to create a new urban imagery for Istanbul and social practices for urbanites. Undoubtedly, the construction, organization and regulation of urban public spaces while increasing social participation in urban life, shapes sociality itself, too.

Culture for Socialization

Kültür A.Ş., which was founded as a subsidiary organization of the IMM, provides services in the fields of culture, art and tourism. There are cultural centers including Tarık Zafer Tunaya Cultural Center, Basilica Cistern, Miniaturk-Turkey's Miniature Park, Cemal Reşit Rey Concert Hall, and Panorama 1453 History Museum owned by the IMM but managed by Kültür A.Ş. Although the activities, events and exhibitions organized by Kültür A.Ş. in these venues are laden with symbolic and representational meanings peculiar to Turkish Republic, I will scrutinize these spaces in terms of sociality that they create.

The education of Istanbulites was officially accepted by the Istanbul Provincial Directorate for National Education first as a project by Istanbul European Capital of Culture Agency in 2010, then as a course in the curriculum of primary school education in 2011 with the textbook *Evimiz Istanbul* (Our Home Istanbul). Within the scope of the project in 2010, it was aimed to raise the urban consciousness and the awareness of urban culture and to strengthen the sense of belonging to Istanbul amongst primary school children. Istanbul Provincial Director of National Education Muammer Yıldız explains the importance of Istanbul classes as following:

> Even though they have been living in Istanbul, people are not able to say that they are Istanbulites. The course is crucial for forming an urban consciousness

and for developing the sense of belonging in children. When this course is included in the curriculum, people asked if it would have a course book. The book for this course is the city itself. Taking our cue from the phrase 'reading the life,' we can read a city, re-discover it with all its historical fabric, re-experience all its beauties, and see all its distinctiveness… Children will not memorize a poem about Istanbul, which has always been a source of inspiration for poets, but rather they will write poems themselves. They walk in the streets of the city, visit its museums, and engage in activities there… We will set up Istanbul libraries at our schools alongside with other libraries. So our children who were born in Istanbul, who have been living in Istanbul, but who have not been able to live this city, will discover it. Then they will begin to live it (Memurlar).

This is another manifestation of the education project on the notion of urban citizenship. In terms of the sense of belonging to the city of Istanbul, Yıldız, in his speech, articulates the formula of being an urban citizen in a way that first the books come, and then the experience. It seems that the mystery around being an urbanite could be solved through educational institutions.

It is also important to note that the textbook *Evimiz İstanbul* reflects the discourse of the government on Istanbul. The basic theme of the book is history (Pre-historic Istanbul, Byzantine Istanbul, Ottoman Istanbul and Modern Istanbul) that promotes the discourse of multiculturalism in Istanbul. (However, in terms of multiculturalism, it should be noted that this book is the product of the project sponsored by the European Capital of Culture Agency.) There are many activities including plays and museum tours assigned for each week of the curriculum, which are intended to produce active participation in the urban life in Istanbul. In order to raise the awareness of children in the city, students are encouraged to explore their environment, if not the crucial historical monuments or museums. The aim of the activities is to encourage students to establish a bond with the city through watching

and listening to various forms of media (documentaries, movies, radio channels), listening to the voice of streets, strolling, museum touring etc.

In particular, primary school education has effects on the development of children's minds and bodies which could be associated with the notion of governmentality. As Foucault points out, "'government' does not refer only to the political structures or to the management of states; rather it designates the ways in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick" (Foucault 1979: 221). In the Foucauldian perspective, the power over everyday life of urban citizens is exercised at schools as an institution of governmentality. Thus, children, who have been educated as good citizens of the nation-state at schools, are now educated as urban citizens in the age of globalization where cities are replaced by nations within interconnected and fragmented networks. Thus, the knowledge of everyday life practices of children produced through the construction of relationship with Istanbul in classes engenders social control, discipline and regulations of life on the one hand, and enables the persistence of neoliberal spatial regime on the other. For this reason, the Municipality frantically uses any means to define the notion of urban citizenship.

Istanbul courses at primary schools are aimed at producing the sense of belonging to the city through particularly organizing museum tours. Although the museums listed above, which are managed by Kültür A.Ş., basically serve as the ideological construction of citizenship, subjectivity and national identity by means of re-presentation of urban history and landscape (Türeli 2010; Isaac Hand 2013), they also encourage socialization through parks and recreational areas in and around

museums. In that sense, taking students to museum tours not only promotes cultural activity, but also leads to socialization in the city.

The title of the book *Evimiz Istanbul* ("Our Home Istanbul") invokes the metaphor of home used in the discourse of Turkish modernity. Through this discourse, home as a private space was designated as the extension of public space in order to achieve the Turkish modernization project. However, today the relationship between private and public is reversed: public space is now coded as private space (home) in order to increase the use of urban public spaces. The boundaries of home are extended to the city of Istanbul for the purpose of encouraging people to engage in urban life. In the light of what this metaphor implies, the notion of familial sociality discussed above also becomes clear: Istanbul as a home evokes the intimate (familial) relationship with the city.

The Failure of the Civilization Project:

From *Mangal* (Barbecue) to Gezi Resistance

In this chapter, I will focus on deviations from the norms and regularities of civilization attributed to urban public spaces. In spite of all the efforts of the Municipality to teach how to be a civilized urban citizen, *mangal* (Barbecue) in parks and the uprising in Gezi Park which triggered citizen forums in many parks in Istanbul disrupt the civilized urban image of the Municipality. Although *mangal* is not allowed in parks and woods because of the danger of fire—regardless of the symbolic meaning attached to it—it is more tolerable than the uprising in the city, because it is much more controllable.

How do *mangal* and the Gezi Resistance violate the notion of urban citizenship, then? The contradiction in the discourse of urban citizenship is that having *mangal* and attending protests and forums in parks indeed establish the sense of belonging to the city which is the goal of the Municipality in order to construct the civilized image of Istanbul.

Mangal **(Barbecue)**

In my interviews with municipal officials in the Department of Parks, Gardens and Green Fields, the question of *mangal* was not my concern indeed. I was trying to figure out what municipal officials think about the active participation of people in urban life in open urban public spaces. Thus, *mangal* was first put into words as a matter of inappropriate manners in urban public spaces by municipal officials.

Having *mangal* is officially banned in open urban public spaces, but violators are not fined, they are rather ignored. Security guards who work for the Department of Parks, Gardens and Green Fields stroll among picnickers to prevent the potential dangers that *mangal* can cause.

Why does *mangal* violate the discourse of civilization? This is because *mangal* signifies low culture, lower class and migrants. People have *mangal* mostly on the waterfronts of Istanbul for the view where the world city image of Istanbul is also presented. Although there is no segregation on the waterfronts, the lower-class districts can be recognized by the high amount of picnickers who have *mangal*. However, in the end, it seems that the transformation of urban waterfronts with ports, landfill squares, and privatization of public spaces will turn the city into a spectacle which "mask[s] and disguise[s] the fundamentals of class relations." (Harvey 2006: 23)

Whoever talked about *mangal* in the Municipality expressed their discontent with it in an elitist manner. One of my interviewees marked the class difference between different neighborhoods: "*Mangal* can be prevented in Kadıköy. Not in Haliç."[10] Thus, *mangal* violates class difference. Another one criticized people who have *mangal* in a space open to the public—because of fume and smell after *mangal*. She also stated that dogs and cats can crave for food. Thus *mangal* violates the codes of ethics. One of my interviewees said that "*Mangal* is part of our culture–but it should be within limits."[11] The notion of culture as "*the common sense* in ordering, organizing, and managing the world" (Soysal 2009: 5) finds a place in the words of municipal officials. Thus, *mangal* violates the notion of culture as well.

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[10] Sıcak piknik Kadıköy'de engellenebilir. Haliç'te olmaz.
[11] Mangal, kültürümüzde olan bir şey- yeter ki kontrollü olsun.

However, having *mangal* in parks and waterfronts of the city actually helps people to improve their sense of belonging to the city. Especially in summer times at the weekends, green fields, parks and waterfronts are packed with people who have picnic. In that sense, it would not be wrong to say that the discourse of sociality on the basis of the notion of civilization also includes *uncivilized* acts which are not manageable and ordered as well.

The Gezi Resistance

On the 31st of May a most unexpected event broke out in Taksim, Istanbul, and spread out from there to all over Turkey. The protests in the Gezi Park started as a sit-in demonstration in the tents put up on the 27th of May against cutting down of trees for the road broadening, and also rebuilding of Ottoman artillery barracks including a shopping mall in the Gezi Park. On the 31st of May, the police dispersed the protestors with violence including tear gas bombs and water cannons. It was just a park, but it has inflamed large-scale protests in many cities of Turkey, and even echoed in the world as well, because as Harvey stated "urban design in general, and the shaping of urban public space in particular, might influence politics in the public sphere" (2006: 18).

Although the confrontation of the protestors with the police has kept going on for a long time, the police withdrew and people entered the park on the 1st of June and stayed there with some interventions of tear gas bombs until the 15th of June peacefully. In the park, people put up their tents spontaneously, and established a new kind of life form. There were mini vegetable gardens, infirmaries, libraries, revolutionary museum, revolutionary market and canteen where everything was provided through the support of volunteers and delivered freely to whoever is in

need. It was the first time that people from very different political views united in the

Park, physically at least, against the neo-liberal politics of the state. In Sassen words:

> The centrality of place in a context of global processes makes possible a
> transnational economic and political opening for the formation of new claims
> and hence for the construction of entitlements, notably rights to place. At the
> limit, this could be an opening for new forms of 'citizenship' (2000: 49-50).

The Gezi Park Resistance, hence, opened up a realm to perform new kinds of

citizenship. Protests, resistance, solidarity and struggle are key themes to define this

citizenship. People in the Gezi Park established a relationship with urban public

spaces through reclaiming the space which actually belongs to the public as a park.

The conflict, however, does not stem form the question raised by Sassen: "whose city

is it?" (2000: 49). It is, rather, a question of "how does one own the city?" Although

there are national and transnational actors, at present the way of urbanites to establish

connection to the city is also a matter of fact.

The sense of belonging to the city of Istanbul has strongly established in the park,

and developed in the forums in the several parks of Istanbul. However, since it is

uncontrollable, it does not fit the civilized urban image of the Municipality.

Moreover, as soon as the protestors removed from the park on the 15th of June, the

Department of Parks and Gardens was at work in the Gezi Park. They planted trees,

flowers, and brought grass to the Gezi Park, and thus the history of the Gezi

Resistance was removed in order to re-construct the discourse of civilization in the

park through governmental strategy of the Municipality. The park was surrounded by

the police for a long time to re-establish the spatial regime of the state, and opened to

the public with a ceremony, and closed down again by the order of the governor on

the same day. Thus, while the Municipality claimed that the park was expanded

physically, it was the contraction of the park for people who are opposed to the politics of the Municipality. Lefebvre talks about "*instrumental space* (space as a tool)" through the spatial practice of the capitalist mode of production. He argues that instrumental space which is institutionalized "in order to introduce a coherence into exploitation and oppression" (2009: 203). The attempts of the Municipality and the state, thus, obviously engender the instrumentality of the Gezi Park as an institution which regulates and controls the reorganization of social life.

Conclusion

The discourse of civilization is not distinguished from the fact that Istanbul is in the category of global city through which the urban spatial regime is functioned. In this context, urban public spaces become the locale for the construction of the urban image of the city and urban citizenship at the same time.

In the civilizing process at present, sociality is amplified as a signifier of civilization. The transformation or re-development of urban public spaces caused to increase sociality outside. The discourse of socialization as part of the civilized image of the city is the base for urban citizenship. Socialization is provided through transformation of urban public spaces, social facilities, open-air gyms, museums and even Istanbul lessons at primary schools. The whole civilization process of the Municipality and the state evokes the process of Westernization or modernization in the late Ottoman and early Republican period, but now at a historical juncture when the nation as a unit loses ground and cities rise as a space for global capital, the civilization process of cities gets synchronized.

However, since the civilization process now situated in a complex networks including transnational actors as well as the state itself, the discipline and social control gain importance in the governance of urban public spaces in neoliberalism. Therefore, although people simultaneously construct the sense of belonging to the city by their own ways, they are labeled as *uncivilized* in the case of organizers of *mangal* picnics or *vandals* who violate the civilized urban imagery of the city through protests as shown in the Gezi Park. Therefore, the Municipality ardently *cleaned up* the park as soon as it was emptied. Although the political and ideological influence of the Gezi Resistance in Taksim, Turkey in a broader scale, is not

comparable to the issue of *mangal,* but they both succeed in the unmasking of neoliberal spatial regime which is hidden behind the discourse of civilization in Istanbul.

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