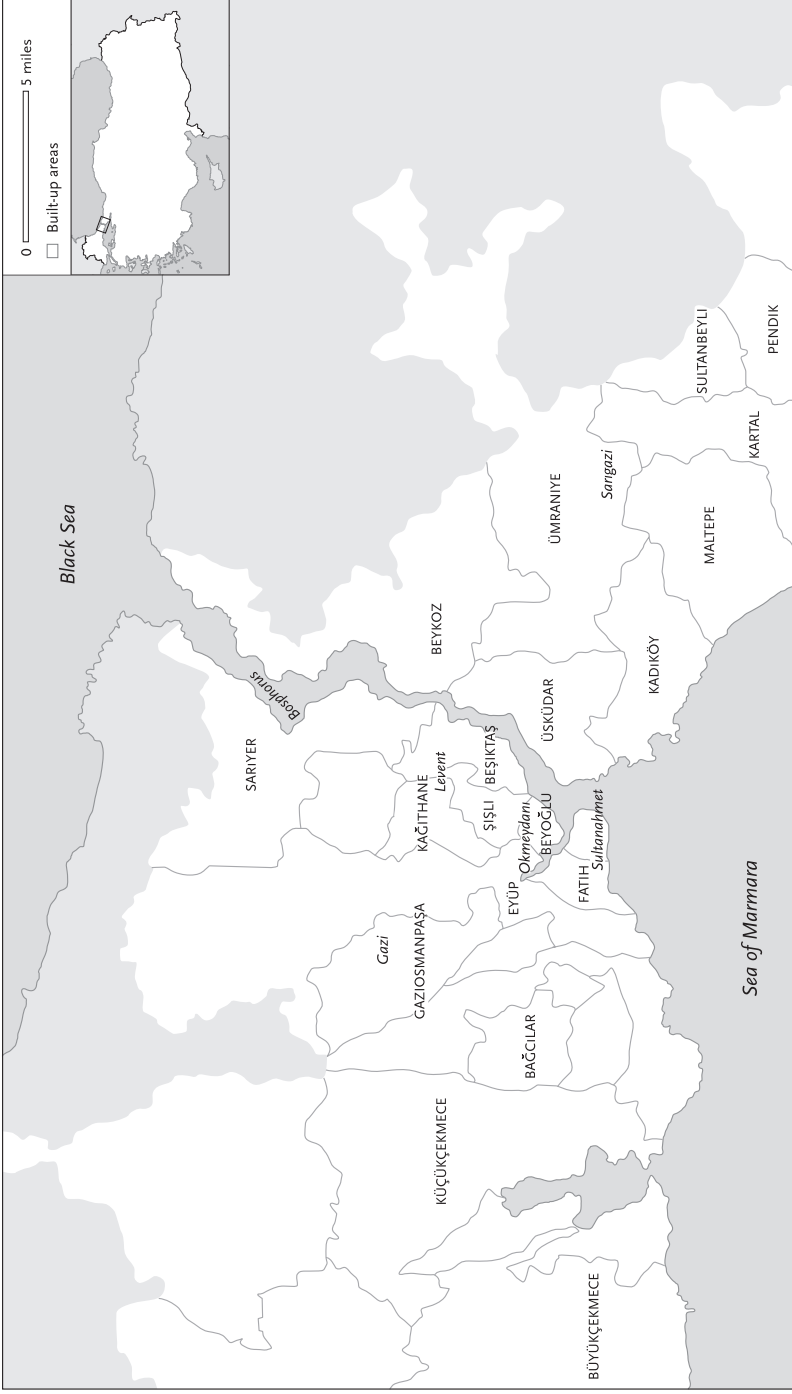


Istanbul, with administrative divisions



CIHAN TUĞAL

THE GREENING OF ISTANBUL

LIKE ITS PREDECESSORS, Istanbul has always been positioned as a ‘world city’, as much by its geo-economic location—at the crossroads between Europe and the Middle East, Russia and the Mediterranean—as by its spectacular setting, straddling the wooded hillsides on both sides of the Bosphorus, with the perfect natural harbour of the Golden Horn slicing its western bank. Its social dynamics in the age of global capital have been scarcely less dramatic. In the last twenty years the city’s population has doubled to over 10 million, reflecting the massive upheavals of the Turkish countryside. Uprooted villagers have poured into the post-imperial city, throwing up whole neighbourhoods of *gecekondular*—self-built ‘overnight’ dwellings. Istanbul’s transformation in these decades has been aptly described by Çağlar Keyder and Ayşe Öncü as the globalization of a Third World metropolis.¹

First- and second-generation squatters, who now make up well over half of Istanbul’s population, have constituted a double problem for the ‘world-city’ image to which its rulers aspired in the neoliberal era. The newcomers have not only mounted militant campaigns against the highways and other infrastructural ‘improvements’ scheduled to be driven through their neighbourhoods. They have also provided a vast vote bank for an Islamism that proclaimed itself totally opposed to the architectural pretensions of global capital—high-rise buildings, ostentatious consumption, luxurious lifestyles—and demanded an environmentally sustainable form of urban development, in harmony with nature. It is these contradictions, worked out against the background of broader

economic and ideological upheaval across the region as a whole, that have driven the remaking of the city in recent times.

After the empire

Istanbul's modernizing rulers have long struggled to impose their visions of what a world city should be upon its complex urban realities. From 1839, the Ottoman 'reorganization' of the Tanzimat era aimed to create a modern capital for the Empire that could compete with Paris or London. At that stage, the main problem for planners was the irregular historical fabric of the city: mosques and palaces, cobbled alleyways, ancient bazaars. Development focused on broadening the streets, constructing transport networks, improving public hygiene and instituting a shift from timber to masonry as building material, in a city plagued by fires.

After the defeat and dismemberment of the Empire, the founders of the Turkish Republic abandoned Istanbul, still occupied by the victors of World War I, to establish the new state's capital in Ankara. A small, insignificant town—unlike other central Anatolian cities such as Konya, which had a rich Seljuk, Ottoman and Islamic history—Ankara was a blank slate upon which the Atatürk government could construct its own version of urban modernity. It also had an ethnic meaning for the new elite as the heartland of an allegedly 'pure' Turkish people—the central ideological bulwark of the Republic—in contrast to the cosmopolitanism of Istanbul with its large Greek population. The development of Ankara absorbed virtually the entirety of infrastructural investment. Although Istanbul retained its role as the country's main trading centre, its population halved from a pre-war 1.6 million to 806,000 in 1927, and would not regain its 1914 level until 1960 (see Table 1).

During its first two decades the new state imposed draconian restrictions on population movement: cities were for those who were already 'urban'—in other words, secular and westernized. The small number of rural immigrants who did make their way to Istanbul in the 1920s and 30s generally rented cheap apartments, and had little effect on the make-up of the city. Residential controls were eased in the late 1940s after Turkey's shift to a parliamentary regime, considered more compatible with the country's membership of NATO than the previous one-party system. Incipient industrialization and the mechanization of agriculture

¹ Çağlar Keyder and Ayşe Öncü, 'Globalization of a Third World Metropolis: Istanbul in the 1980s', *Review*, Summer 1994.

TABLE I: *Istanbul's Population, 1900–2000*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>
1901	1,159,000
1914–16	1,600,000
1927	806,863
1940	991,237
1950	1,166,477
1960	1,882,092
1970	3,019,032
1980	4,741,890
1985	5,842,985
1990	7,309,190
1997	9,198,809
2000	10,072,447

Sources: *İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, Sayılarla İstanbul*, İstanbul, 2001; Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 103. The numbers for 1901 and 1914–1916 are based on estimates, the rest on official censuses. Since 1950, the official numbers have lagged behind actual population growth, due to the informal migrations.

brought a new generation of incomers from the countryside. Unable to afford the rents in the factory districts, they settled in low-control agricultural zones on the outskirts: north and west of the historic centre on the European side of the city, and east and northeast of Kadıköy and Üsküdar on the Anatolian side.

The authorities' first reaction was to demolish these unofficial settlements; but the easily bought votes of the squatter population, their cheap labour and willingness to take on any kind of work, soon convinced policy makers that the settlers should be incorporated, rather than combated; a strategy that was institutionalized under the centre-right governments of the 1950s. By the 1960s, scattered settlements had grown into substantial squatter neighbourhoods. State policies of import-substitute industrialization intensified the 'pull factor' of Istanbul, which now

temporarily outweighed the ‘push factor’ of rural unemployment, and drew in provincial town-dwellers as well as the ex-peasants who had constituted the bulk of new arrivals. Squatters offered a growing market for the cheap goods produced by expanding domestic industries, as well as a source of labour. Land and rents in the new neighbourhoods became increasingly commercialized.

During the 1960s and 70s sizeable neighbourhoods in Anatolian Kartal, Pendik and Ümraniye, and European Gaziosmanpaşa, Sarıyer and Kağıthane became left-wing strongholds, sometimes in coalition with the Kemalists. In the 70s, student militants worked to help poorer immigrants build houses, spreading revolutionary ideas and recruiting impressive numbers to their organizations. ‘Liberated zones’ were proclaimed in the squatter districts, attracting armed attacks by the far-right Grey Wolves, allies of the nationalist MHP, which was also trying to create bases there. The Turkish left remained plagued by internal strife and sectarian recrimination, however. By the time of the military coup in 1980, a dozen different groups were competing for the squatters’ allegiance. The dictatorship of 1980–83 crushed them with relative ease.

Entrepreneurial makeover

Military rule decimated the militant trade unions and cleared the way for Turkey’s shift in the 1980s from state-sponsored developmentalism to free-market economy. Finance, construction and the service industry became Istanbul’s most dynamic sectors, accompanied by a huge expansion of the informal economy fuelled by trade with ex-Soviet republics and a growing narcotics industry; meanwhile formal manufacturing employment declined. There was a sharp increase in social polarization, with the growth of an ostentatious new rich on the one hand, and burgeoning squatter settlements on the other, as the phasing out of agricultural subsidies accelerated the flight to the city. Emerging from martial law, Turgut Özal’s ANAP government was complemented at city level by an ANAP mayor, Bedrettin Dalan, equipped with new executive authority. Dalan embarked on a pro-business make-over of Istanbul: bulldozing the old streets along the shores of the Golden Horn, concretising the Bosphorus and Marmara corniches, throwing up new highways lined by monumental middle-class apartment blocks. This was a vision that showcased the ancient city for a new era of accumulation:

The historical peninsula, cleansed of unsightly buildings and activities, was envisaged as an open-air museum of historical monuments and picturesque old wooden houses . . . The internationalized business centre to the north of the Golden Horn, with its deluxe hotels, modern offices and wide avenues, would host global functions concretized in conventions, businessmen and tourists. Visitors could use the new highway network from the airport to bypass the congestion, noise and traffic of the inner city to arrive at their hotels, and later tour the open-air museum or drive along the Bosphorus.²

Dalan's strategy for the city's outskirts was to legalize, and thus eventually financialize, the squatter settlements. Falling real wages and the repression of trade-union activity meant that other types of compromise had to be offered to the millions of working-class migrants. Laws enacted between 1983 and 1988 aimed to recognize and upgrade the unofficial districts in line with World Bank recommendations.³ Squatters were now legally permitted to build their plots up to four storeys; make-shift houses could be expanded into apartments and let for rent.

Such investment was usually beyond the means of ex-peasant immigrants, so it was contractors (*yapısatıcılar*) who collected most of the burgeoning rents, creating a multi-layered hierarchy among the squatters that was partially distinct from their position in the labour force. Shanties were upgraded into concrete-built apartment blocks, often using cheap and inadequate materials that left them highly vulnerable to earthquakes or flooding. The new lax zoning regulations imposed few limits. Most people aspired to add extra floors, sometimes as part of a deal with a contractor, in the hope of renting them out or leaving them to their children, a guarantee of some security in a precarious economy. Often families would go hungry so the construction could go ahead. But the building was frequently left incomplete, due to lack of funds or fluctuations in the zoning regulations. The result of this process has been to create an uncanny architectural cityscape, where poor and sometimes hungry people live in their own unfinished multi-storey concrete buildings. This new type of dwelling is informally called an *apartkondu*, a hybrid of *gecekondu* (squatter residence) and *apartman* (middle-class apartments). *Aparkondus* are socially distinct from *apartmans* as well:

² Keyder and Öncü, 'Globalization of a Third World Metropolis', p. 409.

³ For a critique of these policies see Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, London and New York 2006, chapter 4.

the blocks are usually shared with close kin or other trusted dependents, whose behaviour and lifestyles are closely scrutinized and monitored.

Localisms

Since the crushing of the organized Left in 1980, political authority in the squatter neighbourhoods has largely been mediated through informal organizations based on kinship and place of origin (*hemşehrilik*), dominated by rural notables or local men with more education, political ties, income and urban experience. Such networks sprang up with the onset of mass migration from the countryside in the 1950s, helping newcomers to find land, housing and jobs. They became the national norm in the 1980s. In this sense, the outcome of neoliberal urbanization in Turkey has differed from the social ‘vacuum’ that has been described in American or European cities, after the decline of unions, families and welfare institutions.⁴ Localistic associations, themselves intertwined with sectarian, ethnic and Sufi communities, have played a central role in organizing the cohesion of Istanbul’s new districts. Within the rapidly transforming social geography of Turkey as a whole, they have also served to reproduce inter- and intra-regional inequalities.

Migrants from the Black Sea region had predominated in the first wave of arrivals in Istanbul in the 1950s; they eventually secured influential positions in the construction industry and other sectors, encouraging more to join them. By the 1980s, however, with the cuts in agricultural and industrial subsidies, growing numbers of villagers arrived from the inland regions—Central, Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia—where traditional forms of non-specialized subsistence farming had become untenable, while consumerist appetites were whetted by advertising and TV. Migration also increased from the Black Sea, as living standards were hit by the collapse of state-backed industries in the west of the region and cuts in farming subsidies for the agricultural east.⁵ Perhaps the biggest single influx in the 1990s was the arrival of an estimated 1.5 million Kurds, many of whose villages had been razed during the brutal military

⁴ Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Sign and Space*, London 1994.

⁵ By contrast, from the 1980s migration decreased from villages in the coastal regions—Marmara, the Aegean, and to a lesser extent the Mediterranean—which managed the transition to market-oriented production, and often earned substantial revenues from tourism.

campaign against the PKK guerrilla movement.⁶ The war also devastated the traditional husbandry that had been one of the chief means of livelihood and commerce in the mountainous east.

The highest concentrations of Kurdish settlers are in the districts of Sultanbeyli, Eminönü, Bağcılar, Büyükçekmece, Küçükçekmece, Gaziosmanpaşa and Ümraniye. In general the earlier migrants—with wider kinship networks, better political contacts, and majority (ie, Turkish and Sunni) ethnic and sectarian status—have retained the lion's share of rents in the squatter neighbourhoods. Kurds and Alevis have got a piece of the pie, but they are more likely to end up on a lower rung of Istanbul's land and labour-market hierarchies. In most of Anatolia, the Sunnis occupy town centres and better-connected villages, while Alevis live in outlying villages and mountainous areas. This pattern is now reproduced in modern urban settings, with Alevis relegated to the peripheral neighbourhoods of squatter districts.

The arrival of perhaps 6 million newcomers over the last three decades has transformed the municipal politics of Istanbul. Pera, the most cosmopolitan district in the 19th century, and other smaller neighbourhoods on the European side and along the Bosphorus, were occupied by the republican upper-middle classes, who split their votes between centre-right and Kemalist parties, as did Kadıköy. The historic centre of Fatih, as well as Üsküdar on the Anatolian side, remained bastions of the right, providing a home for Sufi orders and Grey Wolf activists. But the rapidly expanding squatter districts were becoming a substantial electoral force.⁷ By the late 1980s, Dalan's road-building projects were provoking furious resistance in some of the new municipalities. In 1989, these districts voted heavily for the left-tilted ex-Kemalist SHP, which had recruited many former revolutionaries in the post-dictatorship era. The SHP produced a powerful denunciation of Dalan's 'world city' project and gestured towards a more popular-democratic vision. But its administration of the city between 1989 and 1994 was a disaster. The corruption and favouritism of the municipal authority alienated the SHP's popular

⁶ The figure of 1.5 million is the estimate of mainstream research institution KONDA; Kurdish nationalists give much higher numbers. The official figure of those evicted from their homes in the Kurdish regions is 400,000, while human-rights organizations give estimates ranging from 2 to 4 million.

⁷ By 1992, close to 60 per cent of Istanbul's buildings were squatter or legalized squatter residences: see Mustafa Sönmez, *Statistical Guide to Istanbul in the 1990s*, Istanbul 1994.

base in the squatter neighbourhoods. In 1994 they voted overwhelmingly for the Islamist Welfare Party (RP), electing Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as Mayor of Istanbul.

'Second conquest'

The Islamists had built their first municipal base in Istanbul in Sultanbeyli, a squatter district in the east of the city. In the early 1980s Sultanbeyli had been little more than a village on the edge of the forest, with a population of around 4,000 and no distinctive political or religious colouration. The people living there were mainly Black Sea migrants, SHP supporters who co-existed peacefully enough with more religious residents. News of the Qur'an schools there drew a fresh influx from the mid-80s, including several prominent *Nakşibendi* and *Kadiri* communities (the most widespread religious orders—*tarikats*—in Turkey). By 1989 Sultanbeyli had a population of 80,000 and an RP mayor, Ali Nabi Koçak. The squatters fought off an attempt by Dalan's metropolitan administration to demolish the whole area to make way for highways and luxury residential complexes. Koçak, who came from the Central Anatolian town of Yozgat, developed a reputation as an Islamist Robin Hood. The Sultanbeyli municipality offered new settlers easy access to land and help with construction materials, food, clothing and coal. The RP's influence extended to resolving land and legal disputes, even arranging marriages and divorces. The district's emerging religious-political character became another factor in attracting rural immigrants, including a large Kurdish influx in the 1990s which raised the district's population to over 200,000.⁸

In the language of its activists, Sultanbeyli became the 'fortress' from which Islamists would conquer the rest of Istanbul. In Turkey, as throughout the Middle East, Islamist intellectuals in the 80s were developing notions of the ideal Muslim city: centred around a mosque, further surrounded by markets, schools and cultural centres; architectural modesty and harmony with nature would be its defining features; urban development would respect the historical texture of the city. Buildings should reflect humility before God: high-rise developments, the very symbol of

⁸ For an in-depth analysis of migration to Sultanbeyli and its social hierarchies, see Oğuz Işık and Melih M. Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Gecekondulaşma ve Kent Yoksulları: Sultanbeyli Örneği*, Istanbul 2001.

an aggressive, atheistic modernity, were to be banned. Moral propriety and a rather underspecified socio-political egalitarianism would flourish.⁹

As Janet Abu-Lughod has demonstrated, such an image, drawn uncritically from Orientalist texts, is a product of the contemporary imagination rather than a reflection of the historical realities of the Muslim world.¹⁰ Nevertheless, for a short period this was the model that the Sultanbeyli administration attempted to follow. It became an alcohol-free, gender-segregated zone, where elected officials would pray and read the Qur'an in their offices. Residents took their shoes off at the door of public buildings and workplaces, to keep the floor clean for daily prayers. The municipality was organized around a main mosque, surrounded by teahouses, Islamist cultural centres, gender-segregated restaurants and stores carrying Islamic paraphernalia, along with regular shops and schools; many streets were given holy names. Initially, there were no buildings higher than a minaret, as a sign of Muslim humility—although, contradicting the Islamist respect for nature, forests were cut down to make way for many of the outer neighbourhoods. In time, too, buildings started to be higher than minarets; it was rumoured that the local officials had started taking bribes.

The victory of Erdoğan and the RP in the 1994 metropolitan municipal elections created both panic and euphoria in the city, at the prospect that this Islamist urban *imaginaire* would be applied wholesale. Passionate controversy raged around a 'second conquest' of Istanbul, with the Ottoman seizure of the city in 1453 as the first. Both Islamists and their opponents compared the secular inhabitants of the city centre to the Christians of Byzantine times. Celebrations on the anniversaries of 1453, traditionally a focus for mobilizations of the political right, became a symbol of growing Islamist strength.¹¹ In fact, the Islamist intellectuals were divided over their plans for urban development, and not least in their attitudes towards the squatters. Some glorified the pious squatters as agents of retribution against the goddess urban elite.¹² Others were more ambivalent, at times

⁹ For the best exemplars, see Mustafa Armağan, *Şehir, ey Şehir*, Istanbul 1997; Turgut Cansever, *Kubbeyi Yere Koymamak*, Istanbul 1997; and Rasim Özdenören, *Kent İlişkileri*, Istanbul 1998.

¹⁰ Abu-Lughod, 'The Islamic City: Historic Myth, Islamic Essence and Contemporary Relevance', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, May 1987.

¹¹ Tanıl Bora, 'Istanbul of the Conqueror: the "Alternative Global City" Dreams of Political Islam', in Keyder, ed., *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local*, Oxford 1999.

¹² For this populist line, see İdris Özyol, *Lanetli Sınır*, Istanbul 1999.

applauding their creative contribution to the cityscape, at others scolding them for pillaging history and nature. But an influential section of the RP leadership saw the ‘conquest’, and prospective sidelining of the secularist establishment, as a way to integrate Istanbul more successfully with the world economy and exploit its rich Ottoman history to attract more tourists. These strategists were also less forgiving towards the squatters, whom they perceived as nomads, at odds with the urban spirit of Islam and a potential problem for the re-conquered Istanbul of the future. The egalitarianism and pro-squatter populism of earlier Islamist thinking was stripped away in this current’s approach.¹³

The RP, as a pragmatic party, gave voice to all these concerns. Under Mayor Erdoğan, the Istanbul metropolitan authority tightened control on alcohol consumption, re-centred Islamic symbols in public places, introduced prayer rooms in municipal buildings.¹⁴ It sought, without success, to re-convert Hagia Sophia into a mosque and to build another mosque in the centre of Taksim Square, Istanbul’s main public space. The RP had fought the 1994 municipal elections on an anti-globalization platform and as mayoral candidate, Erdoğan had opposed the construction of new skyscrapers. In 1995, the metropolitan municipality announced it would freeze financial development in the city centre and shift investment to the urban periphery. Political tensions heightened amid worsening economic conditions. There were clashes between police and the urban poor in some of the remaining left-led strongholds.¹⁵ In the mainstream media widespread worry was expressed about a coming ‘social explosion’ (*sosyal patlama*) in squatter districts. Concerns focused especially on the Islamist-controlled settlements, as these were far larger than those of the left. There were predictions of insurrection in Sultanbeyli, due to its rapidly growing population and strong Islamist support.

Secularization at gunpoint

The rising fury of the Turkish military put paid to further RP experiments. An early clash came in Sultanbeyli in 1996, when a military unit

¹³ These views were voiced in Mustafa Kutlu, *Şehir Mektupları*, Istanbul 1995; and İhsan Sezal, *Şehirleşme*, Istanbul 1992.

¹⁴ Alev Çınar, *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places and Time*, Minneapolis 2005.

¹⁵ Today, the main left-wing neighbourhoods are Gazi, Alibeyköy, Küçük Armutlu and Okmeydanı, on the European side; Mustafa Kemal—known as ‘May Day’—and Sarıgazi on the Asian side.

stationed nearby erected a statue of Kemal Atatürk in the centre of the main shopping street. Mayor Koçak had it removed to a distant park. The military stormed the district and forcibly reinstalled the statue. The confrontation paved the way for full-scale military intervention the following year, which closed down Islamist organizations and parties nationwide. The repression targeted particular hotbeds of agitation in Sultanbeyli, such as the Islamic teahouses and youth organizations. Koçak was replaced by the more conciliatory Yahya Karakaya, also from the RP; but the rigid governor appointed in 1997, Hüseyin Eren, dismissed such concessions and waged an all-out battle against the alcohol ban, gender segregation, religious education and Islamic dress. By the end of his term in 2003, Sultanbeyli had opened its gates to alcohol and to the first mixed cafés.

Yet Eren and the generals cannot take all the credit for this ‘victory’. The Islamists themselves were already shifting to a different approach. Ditching the more inflammatory talk, a ‘modernizing’ wing led by Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül and Bülent Arınç began courting American and EU support for their pro-business brand of ‘moderate Islam’. Though technically disbarred, the Islamists retained their widespread support and organizational networks as the national economy plunged into a series of crises between 1997 and 2001. Refounded as the Justice and Development Party (AKP) under Erdoğan’s leadership, they won a landslide victory in Turkey’s 2002 general election.

Even before 1997, Mayor Erdoğan had been using Istanbul’s religious heritage as a means of attracting global capital and tourism, rather than the basis for an Islamic republic. The process accelerated after 2002, when the former Islamists began championing the construction of skyscrapers in the city’s new financial centre. More importantly, in contrast to the protests that greeted Dalan’s pro-corporate mayoralty, the Islamic free-market conservatives succeeded in further integrating Istanbul into the circuits of global capital without mobilizing opposition in the sprawling squatter neighbourhoods that ringed the city. This was the urban-spatial dimension of what I have called Turkey’s passive revolution: absorbing the challenge of Islamism into free-market Atlanticism.¹⁶ The pious Muslims of the AKP—who now held that they were no longer Islamists, but conservatives—would henceforth mobilize religion to reconstruct the city in ways that contradicted their earlier radical aspirations. Istanbul

¹⁶ Cihan Tuğal, ‘NATO’s Islamists’, *NLR* 44, March–April 2007.

would be mildly ‘Islamized’; it would not be ‘Islamicized’—if that means becoming the centre of an Islamic republic.

Tulip time

The market-oriented Islamization of the city has many expressions. During the 1990s, fast-breaking tents for the poor during the month of Ramazan were a symbol of Islamism’s rising political challenge. They signalled both the impoverishment of the masses under the rule of the ‘secular’ elite, and the existence of a god-fearing material alternative. Increasingly, however, fast-breaking tents have become sites of collective consumption. The AKP-controlled municipalities began to organize nightly Ramazan festivities that went on till daybreak, where people of all classes would go to enjoy sufi music (along with pop and rock), *nargile*, stand-up shows and a wide variety of food. While some of this was free, merchants and shopkeepers also participated on a cash basis. Muslim tourists came from all over the region, especially to the historic mosques in Sultanahmet and Eyüp, boosting the ‘world city’ image. There is a certain irony here: in the 90s, Islamist newspapers used to contrast their puritanical Ramazan to the consumer-oriented fast-breaking of wealthy secularized Muslims, with their expensive feasts. Now the sectors have merged, thanks to the passive revolution, which has assimilated the month of fasting into the sphere of public entertainment.

‘Ottomanization’ has been another theme. Superficially, this celebration of the age of the Caliphate may seem in line with the Islamist urban *imaginaire*; yet 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. It is secularists, rather than Islamists, who are now resisting such redevelopments, accusing the municipality of wanting to re-create the historic centre of Istanbul in glossy tourist fashion. Similarly, in commemoration of the Ottoman ‘Tulip Era’ of the 1720s, the AKP has taken to decorating the city with the flowers. This was an act of defiance against the anti-Ottoman puritanism of Kemalist ideology, which has traditionally attacked the import of expensive tulip bulbs as a sign of the Sultanate’s degeneracy. The period involved a precocious experiment with petty industrialization, the printing press, and the aestheticization of art and architecture. It was brought to an incendiary end in 1730 by a popular rebellion against aristocratic ostentation, led by the ex-janissary, secondhand-clothes dealer Patrona

Halil: the palaces were pillaged and leading modernizers killed.¹⁷ The AKP's current tulip-mania not only celebrates the Ottoman reformers—and their luxurious excesses—but also signifies, through the overflow of tulips from the upper-class neighbourhoods to the squatter districts, that conspicuous consumption is now for the enjoyment of all. The garish illumination of the Bosphorus Bridge, attacked by angry Kemalists as 'nightclub'—*pavyon*—lighting, also signals the political will to make ostentation available to all, breaking the bourgeoisie's monopoly. Such a strategy is intended to ensure that there will be no Patrona Halils in the Republic's 'Tulip Era'.

The so-far unsuccessful attempt to build the highest skyscrapers in the region further demonstrates how the AKP governors of Istanbul are mobilizing Islamic ties to build a non-Islamist city. The municipality wants to hand over a prime piece of real estate in Levent, on the European side, to a Dubai development company, owned by Crown Prince al-Maqtum, which plans to build a giant residential complex and shopping mall. Its centrepiece, 'Dubai Towers', is to be a 300m drill-shaped edifice. The site borders both working-class Çeliktepe and upper-middle-class shore-side Beşiktaş. The development has met with popular opposition on the grounds that it would harm the environment, block traffic and take away the only available open space in case of earthquake—Çeliktepe residents had gathered there during the quake of 1999. Kemalists have attacked the Dubai project as an instance of the AKP's Islamizing, Arabizing agenda; but the influx of Gulf capital has done nothing to arrest the torrent of Western financial and real-estate development in the city; nor does the 300m tower fulfil Islamist notions of modesty and harmony with nature. On the contrary: secular capital's disregard for nature comes back in Islamic garb, further sanctified thanks to Kemalist opposition.¹⁸

¹⁷ Halil controlled the city for a while, after which the Sultan massacred 7,000 janissaries along with him: John Freely, *Istanbul: The Imperial City*, London 1998, pp. 252–53. On Western impact during the Tulip Era, see Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, New York 1987.

¹⁸ Ironically, the Tanzimat modernizers of the 1830s—in opposition to whom organized Islamism in the region first took form—had been more sensitive. In 1836 the diplomat Mustafa Reşid Paşa, later a grand vizier, emphasized the need for European expertise in the modernization of Istanbul, but added the caveat that the architects and engineers should be summoned not from France, where the buildings were 'bulky' and 'disproportional', housing up to twenty families at a time, but from England where, 'like in Islamic countries', each family has its own house, 'shapely, unostentatious and spacious'. M. Cavid Baysun, 'Mustafa Reşid Paşa'nın Siyasi Yazıları', *Tarih Dergisi* vol. 11, no. 15, 1960, p. 125.

The AKP's brand of pious free-market conservatism had also triumphed over the remaining hardline Islamists of Sultanbeyli in the municipal elections of 2004. This dealt a final blow to the vision of the ideal Muslim city. The new AKP municipality proceeded to demolish the old RP Town Hall in Sultanbeyli, which had become a symbol of Islamist power. The main shopping street was pedestrianized—still retaining the statue of Atatürk in its midst—with the explicit goal of creating 'urban' citizen-consumers. In this part of Sultanbeyli at least, gender segregation has ended: women, headscarved or not, swarm the streets, linger at the windows of clothes and jewellery shops, sit in the cafés. Daily prayers are no longer held in the council offices; shoes no longer line their outer doorways. The combination of 2002–07 economic boom and AKP patronage, showering small-scale building projects on Istanbul during election campaigns, has left Sultanbeyli more bustling and prosperous.

Ümraniye, the former squatter district to its northwest, is what Sultanbeyli might aspire to be.¹⁹ Istanbul's first Ikea and Media Markt were opened here. Transnational hypermarkets such as Carrefour and Real have been built and businesses like Bayer, Siemens and Citibank have set up their regional headquarters. Yet shopping malls and gated communities, chic restaurants and tennis clubs exist side-by-side with semi-rural lifestyles and impoverished Islamist-stronghold neighbourhoods, where calls to prayer from multiple mosques mingle with each other. Middle-class apartments look out on small plots of grass where women—some wearing the *çarşaf*, the long black overgarment similar to the Iranian *chador*—are grazing cows or washing carpets. Even if Ümraniye has left behind the signs of extreme poverty still visible in Sultanbeyli—schools without running water, unpaved roads—many residents still live in harsh conditions. Yet the shopping malls are thronged by people of all classes: big and small bourgeoisie; headscarved squatter women in family groups, mainly strolling rather than shopping; groups of young male Islamists, eyeing the consumers suspiciously—a teeming reality very different from the melancholic Istanbul, immobilized by post-imperial nostalgia, evoked by Orhan Pamuk.

Looming tensions?

The AKP, it seemed, had found a way to square breakneck Third World urbanization with the demands of global capital, financial speculation

¹⁹ For a sociological analysis of Ümraniye up till 1996, see Sema Erder, *Ümraniye: İstanbul'a bir Kent Kondu*, Istanbul 1996.

with the Islamic world city: combining the construction of high-rise office buildings and shopping malls with a proliferation of domes, minarets, Islamic clothes shops, reconstructed Ottoman neighbourhoods, Ramazan festivities and Qur'an schools; retaining the votes of the poor while remaking Istanbul to cater to the whims of global finance. In the mid-90s there had been serious concern about popular explosions in the squatter neighbourhoods. Thanks to their integration into the market, mediated by the Islamist parties, that explosion never came.

Or perhaps it was only displaced and postponed. From the late 1990s, drugs, petty crime and prostitution established a new hold in squatter neighbourhoods—even in pious Sultanbeyli. This went hand in hand with the decline of the textile sector, as a result of liberalization and competition with China, and political disorganization of both radical Islamists and the remaining left. The youth were now recruited to gangs rather than political parties or Qur'anic networks. Reactions to rising crime and poverty began to take hardline nationalist form, as residents attributed the social 'degeneration' to Kurdish migrants.²⁰ Among a sizeable minority, fantasies of ethnic cleansing are now rehearsed daily in the teahouses. Without their former Islamist zeal, AKP activists could no longer fight effectively against crime or unite different ethnic groups via religion. The party leadership has not been able to prevent the mounting animosity between Kurds and Turks, even among its own members. The emerging Kurdish autonomous region in Northern Iraq, the Kurdish guerrilla's ongoing attacks and the cross-border military campaign waged in the Southeast by Erdoğan's government have heightened tensions, threatening to destabilize the 'market peace' of Istanbul.

Though experts have been warning for some years now that urban development has reached its limits, the city continues to swallow the forests around it. The metropolitan municipality has no serious strategy to deal with further expansion, let alone prepare the city for natural calamities such as earthquakes. Its current plan for dealing with the growing congestion caused by the new transnational businesses and shopping centres is a programme of large-scale demolitions around highway exits, to make way for the construction of new roads. Informal districts are all the more vulnerable to such clearances, and residents have mounted militant resistance campaigns against demolition in

²⁰ For similar trends in the leftist squatter neighbourhood Gazi, see the Turkish magazine *Nokta* 1/5, November 30–December 6, 2006.

several neighbourhoods—finding themselves, in the process, pitched into conflict with the interests of transnational capital, which has so far benefited more than any other sector from this unending expansion.

Ethnic and environmental tensions are now being compounded by economic downturn. With soaring commodity prices, a global credit crunch and faltering world economy, rising inflation and interest rates are hurting Turkey's small businesses and indebted households. Output is falling and deficits widening in an economy heavily reliant on capital inflows; the institutional crisis threatened by the Constitutional Court's recent moves to ban the governing party for its 'threat to secularism' will likely further damage short-term investment prospects. Millions of Istanbul's squatters have put their faith in the AKP's Islamically embellished paradise of speculation. It remains to be seen whether this formula will weather harsher economic times.