The Urban Dynamism of Islamic Hegemony: Absorbing Squatter Creativity in Istanbul

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What is unique about Islamic politics that allowed it to become the voice of rural-to-urban immigrants in Turkey? Why did not the center-left become the leaders of the urban poor? Why did Turkish cities become more pious in the previous decades? While the civil society and urban subjectivity literatures have asked similar questions about poor quarters in Turkey and provided informative answers, they cannot account for one important aspect of urban transformation. These literatures have rightfully emphasized that Islamic politics in Turkey has been more open to associational activities and the agency of the poor when compared with the center-left. But a political party's openness to associational activity and agency cannot by itself explain why urban Turkey has become gradually more Islamic, as many of the actors engaged in these associational activities were not pious prior to their interaction with Islamic political actors. I argue that Islamism has become hegemonic by both being open to and absorbing the creativity of rural immigrants.

I look at the interaction between Islamist political activism and city dwellers in Sultanbeyli, the first district in Istanbul to have an elected Islamist municipality, to shed light on the dynamics of increasing urban piety in Turkey. Before the mid-1980s, Sultanbeyli (which was only a village) had no dominant political or religious color. The decisive politicization started after the mid-1980s, when religious people in provincial towns and villages heard about the Islamic educational activities that were organized by Islamic booksellers and publishers who had moved from old Istanbul to the region in the few preceding years. (The booksellers and publishers had chosen this district because they wanted to be in proximity of the Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan's close kin, who had a summer resort in the region.) Islamist activists spread the word as far as Erzurum (a provincial city of eastern Turkey) in the east and Germany in the west, after which many pious families bought land in the district without ever having seen it. Immigrant women were also active in attracting relatives to the district, by telling them that this was the primary site of religious awakening in Turkey.

The civil society literature would emphasize the centrality of immigrant and merchant networks in this Islamic transformation, and it would neglect the role of political work in bringing together potentially conflicting networks and also influencing previously nonreligious immigrants. Hegemonic analysis, by contrast, would combine an analysis of civil society with political analysis to account for how civil society itself changes through political interaction: many former peasants came to the district with the hope of finding cheap land and housing, not an Islamic haven. However, as a result of their interactions with the other, religiously dedicated immigrants and the control of the Islamists in the making of the district, many of these immigrants also became voters of the Islamist party in the process.

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A peripheral village of Istanbul thus gradually turned into a large urban district with a distinctly Islamic color as a result of interactions between the Islamists and the rural immigrants. One of the high officials in the municipality of Sultanbeyli, who has been quite influential in the establishment of the district and the victory of the Islamist party, lucidly expressed the resulting urban Islamic identity:

> Sultanbeyli is an outcry [*çığlık*]. Not everything is perfect, but we have been successful. Fifteen years is not a short period of time. If prostitution, adultery, and alcohol have not entered the district for so many years, that means there is something [Islamic] here. Our [Koran] schools have raised students who ranked second and third in worldwide competitions [in Koran recitation]. Sultanbeyli was a seed. It has been crushed and thrown into the soil. Its fruits are now all over the world.[1]

The establishment of such an Islamic urban identity in Istanbul through political work as well as active immigrant participation (implied here by the ambiguous "we," which might refer both to the Islamist leaders and the rural-to-urban immigrant followers) requires us to look closely at both Islamism and the immigrants rather than assume that immigrants build their own worlds autonomously. It is only through such a double focus that the seemingly opaque protest voiced by this municipal official (why would building an Islamic urban district be an "outcry," and against whom?) can be properly understood. The ambiguity of this quotation signals that Islamist leaders are open to the input of the immigrants but that they also incorporate it into a pious project.

Islamism emerged as a viable political option in the 1970s with the establishment of the Islamist party (named the Virtue Party during the time of my research).[2] Islamists differentiated themselves from the antireligious "center-left" (especially the Republican People's Party) by emphasizing Islam and local culture. Their main difference from the center-right, however, was calling for an Islamic state and economy that would allegedly serve the interests of the majority, whereas the center-right used Islam only to legitimize the modern state and its control by secular big business (Islamists argued). After the 1980s, urban politics was mostly dominated by the struggle between the center-left and Islamism. Yet center-leftists were not well organized, while the Islamic parties had women's and youth commissions, ballot box observers (*müşahit*s), and neighborhood units everywhere. In the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the center-left's agenda gradually shifted from socioeconomic issues to opposing conservatism, which interested secular middle classes more than it did the newly urbanized poor. During the governmental and metropolitan rule of the center-left in the early 1990s, Istanbul experienced drought, corruption, and unemployment, which added to the dissatisfaction with the Left. Finally, the center-left could not produce any leader of the caliber of Islamists' charismatic figure in Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. As a result, Islamists held most key urban municipalities by the end of the 1990s.

Islamism and the City

Civil society theorists have seen the Islamist movement as a creative bottom-up response to modernity's ills. Similarly, analysts of subjectivity have drawn attention to how Islamic actors creatively construct new meanings and distinctions. As an alternative, I propose a Gramscian analysis, which handles civic activity and creative subjectivity as central dimensions of a hegemonic project.

Civil Society

The recent blooming literature on civil society in the Muslim world draws our attention to the creativity of the actors on the ground.[3] This liter-

1. Interview with one of the top elected municipal officials, Sultanbeyli, 2002.

2. Since this party was closed by the authorities four times in the course of three decades, I refer to it in this article generically as "the Islamist party" whenever I talk about its general tendencies, instead of giving the party's name, which changed each time it was banned. For more on the historical development of the Islamist party, its internal tensions, and its differences from other Islamic groups in Turkey, see Yeşim Arat, *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); and M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3. Augustus Norton, ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1995–96); Elisabeth Ozdalga and Sune Persson, eds., *Civil Society, Democracy, and the Muslim World: Papers Read at a Conference Held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul 28–30 October, 1996* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1997); Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

ature emphasizes that urban poor sectors build their own networks, which might even have an impact on formal institutions.[4] In this account, Islam or Islamism enters after the fact of civic creativity as a political or religious channel that gives a voice to the already-formed urban poor communities and identities. Spontaneous associational activities are at the root of the Islamization of cities.

Even scholars who have revised and developed the civil society paradigm by recognizing the intersections between politics and civil society hold that networks exist before politics and that "institutions are products of the underlying society."[5] By contrast, I take civil society as an effect of hegemonic projects. Rural immigrants indeed associate together to take control over their lives, but this gathering is deeply influenced by urban political organizations.

Urban Subjectivity

Other scholars have discussed urban poor creativity not in the context of civil society but as a dimension of "subjectivity" and neighborhood morality.[6] This literature focuses on the meanings actors give to words, distinctions, and symbols.[7] This emphasis on meaning and subjectivity is helpful in analyzing one important binary opposition that frequently comes up in urban poor discourse, the one between urban and rural.

In urban sociology and anthropology, the discussion about whether immigrants are rural or urban or a mixture of the two has a long history.[8] This debate has been quite loaded because of the established perception of cities as beacons of modern values (freedom, individualism, civility, etc.) and the construction of the rural as the cradle of authenticity. Here, I move beyond ascribing urban-ness or rural-ness to actors and look at how they use the rural and the urban as categories in everyday practice. I take the urban/rural distinction as an "effect of discourse" in the Foucauldian sense: distinctions that have no empirical validity prior to their deployment in discourse systematically shape reality afterwards, though not necessarily in the way predicted in and desired by discourse.[9] I argue that it is not what the urban and the rural really are but how they are used in everyday practice that can help us understand immigrant experience.

However, unlike most other analysts of urban subjectivity, I also argue that the creative deployment of these categories develops not only through the agency of immigrants but as a result of the interaction between immigrants and activists or politicians.[10] The same logic can be applied, as I show below, to other prominent binaries in urban poor discourse, such as open/closed.

Islamism as Hegemony

I demonstrate below that the poor are not autonomous actors. The poor are creative; they do start to establish new identities, but their agency has an impact on the urban scene only when Islamism gives a direction to it. Islamist activists guide identity formation among the poor, and in this process they transform the poor's identities remarkably.[11] While networks, communi-

4. Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

5. Ibid., 21, 26.

6. Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Anna Secor, "The Veil and Urban Space in Istanbul: Women's Dress, Mobility and Islamic Knowledge," *Gender, Place and Culture* 9 (2002): 5–22.

7. According to Anna Secor, "Ideas about what it means to be urban are important . . . because it is through . . . discourses . . . that the boundaries of the urban community are drawn." Secor, "Citizenship in the City: Identity, Community, and Rights among Women Migrants to Istanbul," *Urban Geography* 24 (2003): 148–49.

8. Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York: Free Press, 1962); Peter Gutkind, *Urban Anthropology: Perspectives on "Third World" Urbanization and Urbanism* (Assen, the Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1974); Peter Lloyd, *Slums of Hope? Shanty Towns of the Third World* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1979); William Mangin, ed., *Peasants in Cities* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970).

9. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977); Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critiques," *American Political Science Review* 85 (1991): 77–96.

10. The quiet encroachment perspective is akin to the subjectivity paradigm, as it emphasizes the agency of the poor in transforming the city. See Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). In this process, the poor manipulate some political and ideological networks for their own self-interest (and remain un-Islamized). I argue that, even when the interaction of the poor with Islamic political parties starts with self-interested motives, they are thoroughly transformed afterward.

11. While some scholars have assumed that the poor in Turkey are authentic and Islamic, others have criticized this attribution of authenticity and emphasized the state's role in forging Islamic identities. See Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, "Istanbul between Civilization and Discontent," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 10 (1994): 57–74; and Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). While rejecting the notion of authenticity, I draw attention rather to the interaction among political parties, movements, and actors on the ground in the making of religiosity.

ties, and society *precede* politics and ideology in the civil society literature, my account shows that politics is *formative* of society and urban communities.[12] Islamist politics and urban poor identity are mutually constitutive. My perspective regarding religion and civil society is mostly inspired by Antonio Gramsci, who has argued that "free" associational life in modern democracies is tightly related to the leadership of powerful groups in society.[13] Through civil society, these groups go beyond only dominating the disadvantaged sectors: they build consent for their rule. However, I also revise the Gramscian framework by integrating the construction of subjectivity to the heart of the urban political process.

In my account, civil society is not so much a countervailing force against the state, but both civil society and the state are battlegrounds for competing hegemonic projects. Since civil society, as the realm of civic activity and network building, is by definition more intertwined with the creativity of actors on the ground, hegemonic projects need to be open to this bottom-up creativity to secure a foot in civil society. I argue that Islamism's novelty and difference from other hegemonic projects in Turkey come from being more open to this creativity when establishing its hegemony. In other words, Islamism appeals to the poor not because it simply liberates them as against an oppressive state but because it successfully intervenes in the constitution of their subjectivity and absorbs their creativity when implementing its own project. After describing the setting of the study, I discuss the interaction between Islamist leadership and immigrant subjectivity based on the following examples: colocal networks, the sense of being in need of guidance, reaction against the elite, the urban-rural distinction, and, finally, gender segregation.

Politics and Immigration in the Making of a District

Sultanbeyli, located on the outskirts of the city (near Izmit, which is to the east of Istanbul), is marked by the preponderance of its urban poor population, the unparalleled strength of the Islamist party, and the widely publicized struggle between the secularists and the Islamists.[14] The district, with its population of 175,000 (in 2001), is the poorest district of Istanbul and also the locality with the highest Islamist party votes.[15] A village of thirty-seven hundred people before 1985, it had become an urban region of eighty thousand by 1989. This has mostly been an informal development, and most of the buildings are still unregistered.[16]

From 1989 onward, the Islamist party has been the dominant popular political force in Sultanbeyli—a political situation until then unseen in metropolitan Turkey, where elections have been held since 1946. Together with its political affiliation, its informal growth has

12. Berna Turam has developed a similar perspective on civil society. She emphasizes the formative role of the state rather than of Islamist politics. Her focus on a religious community that works with the state rather than confronts it (i.e., the difference in our empirical foci) partially accounts for the differences in our analyses. See Turam, "The Politics of Engagement between Islam and the Secular State: Ambivalences of 'Civil Society,'" *British Journal of Sociology* 55 (2004): 259–81.

13. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

14. I use "secularism" to denote an ideology that restricts the influence of religion to individual lives by using official sanctions. In this sense, Turkish secularism (*laiklik*) is closer to French *laïcité* than to Anglo-Saxon secularism. Yet Turkish secularism also involves the official propagation of a secularized and nationalist interpretation of Islam in order to protect the regime from (Islamic, ethnic, and leftist) subversion. See Simon Bromley, *Rethinking Middle East Politics: State Formation and Development* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Beverley, North Humberside, UK: Eothen, 1985); and Serif Mardin, "Religion and Politics in Modern Turkey," in *Islam and the Political Process*, ed. James Piscatori (Cambridge: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1983), 138–59. Because of these local peculiarities, Turkish secularism should be differentiated from the mainstream social scientific understanding of the "secular" as simply the differentiation of social spheres and the privatization of religion. See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967); Philip Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700," *American Sociological Review* 65 (2000): 138–67; Olivier Tschannen, "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30 (1991): 395–415; and David Yamane, "Secularization on Trial: In Defense of a Neosecularization Paradigm," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (1997): 109–22.

15. As I have analyzed the religious and political dynamics of the support for Islamism in Sultanbeyli and Turkey in the context of the party's relations with the state (which has intervened especially after 1980 in favor of Turkish-Islamic identity formation), international networks and influences, American foreign policy, Sufi orders (*tarikat*s), the media, education, and radical Islamic groups elsewhere, here I focus mostly on urban-spatial dynamics. See Cihan Tugal, "The Appeal of Islamic Politics: Ritual and Dialogue in a Poor District of Turkey," *Sociological Quarterly* 47 (2006): 245–73; and Tugal, "NATO's Islamists: Hegemony and Americanization in Turkey," *New Left Review* 44 (2007): 5–34.

16. For information on the population dynamics in and ethnic makeup of the district, see Oguz Isik and Melih Pinarcioglu, *Nobetlese yoksulluk: Gecekondulasma ve kent yoksullari; Sultanbeyli ornegi* (*Poverty by Turns: Squatterization and the Urban Poor; The Example of Sultanbeyli*) (Istanbul: Iletisim, 2001).

earned a bad reputation for the district among agencies of the secularist state (e.g., the local government, the secular courts, and the military). Successive governments avoided making Sultanbeyli, a large district within the boundaries of Istanbul, a part of the metropolitan municipality until late 2004.[17] Therefore, the district could not make use of the metropolis's funds for a long time and depended on its own resources.

Since the financial strength of the district's municipality was not sufficient for solving infrastructural problems, the inhabitants suffered from a lack of basic urban amenities such as running water, a functioning sewage system, and well-paved roads. What is more, Sultanbeyli's lack of connection with the highway, which passes right through the middle of the district, restricts labor mobility and discourages incoming business. Partially as a result of these peculiarities, local enterprises are far fewer than in other squatter districts of Istanbul, and many of the adult men work in construction sites outside the district.

Islamizing activities in the district abated after the secularist military intervention of 1997, which restricted Islamic schools and religious orders throughout Turkey, in addition to closing down the (Islamist) Welfare Party, youth organizations, and some teahouses.[18] After the intervention, Islamists organized in the Virtue Party, which had toned down its criticism of the establishment. Despite this moderation, the regime ratcheted up its pressure on the Islamists, and the Virtue Party was going through a split during the final stages of this study.

This nationally unfavorable climate was coupled with increasing local pressure in 2001, when decisions taken by Ankara put a nearly complete end to construction in Sultanbeyli, which slowed down the immigration. The ethnographic analysis below was conducted around this time when Islamists were still the most popular party in the district, but they were losing some ground because of these official pressures.[19]

I sustained an ongoing relationship with Sultanbeyli for twenty-seven months (summer 2000–summer 2002), during which I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork and carried out fifty in-depth, semistructured interviews. These mostly lasted one to one and a half hours. I asked fifty-six interviewees about their life in the district, their interpretation of religion, and their opinions on local and national politics. Given the segregated life among the religious residents, I could have meaningful access only to the male half of the district because of my position as a male researcher, even though three females were interviewed formally. The interviewees were chosen through snowball sampling. Both individual and group interviews were conducted. The individual interviews (a total of forty-seven) were with eleven small merchants and shopkeepers, sixteen workers, two retired workers, three housewives, an imam (prayer leader), two religion teachers, three primary school teachers, three real estate dealers, three politicians, and three functionaries from the municipality. Of the three group interviews, two were with construction workers (in groups of two and three) and one was with four recent graduates of Sultanbeyli's theological high school.

I also taught at a primary school within the borders of the district. After a year of teaching (2000–2001), I rented an apartment located close to my previous school so that I could retain the networks I established while teaching and develop new ones. Having built trust thanks to these networks, I was able to access many party

17. Governments and municipalities have had complex and sometimes tension-ridden relations with squatter settlements throughout Istanbul and Turkey. Caglar Keyder, *Istanbul: Between the Local and the Global* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999). However, Sultanbeyli has been exceptional in its exclusion from the administrative boundaries of the city for a long time.

18. Pious teahouses in Turkey serve tea and other beverages just like coffeehouses, but in teahouses men do not gamble or play cards or board games (as is the convention in coffeehouses).

19. A couple of years after the completion of my ethnography, a new, conservative political party (the Justice and Development Party, or JDP) took control of metropolitan municipalities, including Sultanbeyli. This was possible, one could argue, because the key activists of the Islamist party split from the Islamist mainstream and established the JDP, carrying over their urban-spatial strategies to the new party. The existing literature on the JDP, admittedly a young party, has not yet explored the urban-spatial strategies of the party. See Fulya Atacan, "Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP," *Turkish Studies* 6 (2005): 187–99; Gamze Cavdar, "Islamist New Thinking in Turkey: A Model for Political Learning?" *Political Science Quarterly* 121 (2006): 477–97; Quinn Mecham, "From the Ashes of Virtue, a Promise of Light: The Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 25 (2005): 339–58; and Marcie Patton, "The Economic Policies of Turkey's AKP Government: Rabbits from a Hat?" *Middle East Journal* 60 (2006): 513–36. This can be a fruitful venue for future research. For a first attempt, see Cihan Tugal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

activists and municipal officials. The school also allowed me to bypass gender segregation partially, interact informally with female residents of the district (mostly the parents of my students), and observe the gendered dimension of Islamism. The ethnographic material presented below comes from my systematic participation in and observation of coffeehouses and teahouses frequented by construction workers, the public education system of the district, the activities of the Islamist party and the municipality, and neighborhood life around the apartment where I resided.

The Terrain of Urban Politics

We can understand Islamism's capacity to influence and foster immigrant subjectivities only if we situate it in the context of its competitors. The Islamist party is differentiated from its alternatives, especially in its approach to immigrant agency. While establishment parties of the center-left and center-right use conventional venues for propaganda (newspapers, rallies, fliers, etc.), Islamists spread their messages also through door-to-door propaganda, informal talks in mosque yards, and occasional meetings in coffeehouses and religious teahouses. This allows them to politicize every public and even private site. The relatively restricted political space of establishment parties—which is partially related to their dismissive stance with respect to coffeehouses, mosques, and immigrants' domestic practices—has been one cause of their lack of appeal in the district. Mainstream parties in Turkey are controlled by elites, with few roots among the people.[20] In such contexts, populist movements can appeal to the people based on antielite platforms.

Along these lines, an additional reason of the center-left's failure in the district, as reported by its former activists, has been its publicly aggressive stance with respect to religion. This has cost it many votes, especially in the 1989 elections, the first and only elections in the history of the district when the center-left was a viable contender.

Another difference between the Islamists and establishment parties, which I expand on below, is the way they interact with urban identity. Rural immigrants in Turkey have creatively organized in colocal networks (to secure lodging, work, etc.) instead of falling prey to market forces or simply waiting for the state to take care of them. Islamists further mobilized and reshaped this creativity. Since the center-left has historically been the main rival of the Islamist party in squatter areas, I focus on the difference between these two main adversaries regarding colocal networks.

Hemşehri (colocal) identity, which is based on people's places of origin, is frequently the axis around which political struggles are shaped in squatter districts of Turkey. The distribution of resources, political power, and recognition is often influenced by *hemşehri* communities. In Sultanbeyli, *hemşehri* identity is publicly illegitimate among center-leftist squatters. Like other parties in Turkey, center-left parties also draw on communities of origin as a resource but condemn them publicly. For example, the Republican People's Party is based on Alevi (heterodox Muslim) networks as well as *hemşehri* networks, but it does not acknowledge the symbiosis between these networks and the party.[21] The party's ruling elite is not recruited from these networks and is rather detached from them.

Kadir, a construction worker active in one of the center-left parties (the Democratic Left Party, or DSP), expressed the center-leftist attitude against the rampancy of *hemşehri* identity:

> [Among squatters] there is a mentality like "my relative is from Sivas, my relative is from Kars. I can take refuge in them." But instead, people should think, "No, here there are neighbors [rather than *hemşehri*s]." We have to know that we are all from Turkey. The municipality has to say: "Friends, we have left our cities and villages and we have come to Istanbul. In Istanbul we have formed a lifestyle, but this lifestyle is definitely not from Kars, or from any other city. We have to live here as residents of Sultanbeyli, and we have to forget our hometowns."

20. Mehran Kamrava, "Pseudo-democratic Politics and Populist Possibilities: The Rise and Demise of Turkey's Refah Party," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1998): 275–301.

21. Harald Schüler, *Turkiye'de sosyal demokrasi: Partıcilik, hemsehrilik, Alevilik* (*Social Democracy in Turkey: Partisanship, Colocalism, Alevism*) (Istanbul: Iletisim, 1999).

Center-leftists criticized the municipality for failing to fulfil its "civic duty" of making people put their national identity before their place of origin. Hence they saw Islamism as a retreat not only from secularism but also from the formation of the nation. The center-left thus sees itself as a part of the nationalist state, which appeals to some squatters but leaves others out.

The Islamist party's difference from other political parties becomes clear especially in its definition of the immigrant as a religious subject with a definite place of origin.[22] Whereas the center-leftist parties saw relations of kinship and *hemşehri* identity as backward and rural, the Islamist party recognized the immigrant subject as the subject wanted to see him- or herself but emphasized the role of religion in bridging the differences between kin and colocal communities. Party activists recognized place-based differentiations among squatters but brought people of different origins together in *sohbet*s (religious talks in informal settings) and cultural and political activities. Whereas other parties publicly bracketed the imagined primary belongings of their members and audiences, the Islamist party went as far as organizing its committees on the basis of *hemşehri* identity. It did this, for example, by taking one person from each place of origin when constituting a neighborhood committee. In sum, what differentiated the Islamist party was not its use of colocal communities. As noted above, many parties in Turkey use these communities to an extent. What was specific to the Islamists was their ability to infuse these communities with ideological meaning and connect them to the party's organizational structure.[23]

The party also carried out mass agitation based on the recognition of this subjectivity. Recai Kutan's (the national leader of the Virtue Party) appeal to the mostly immigrant and poor crowd in a mass meeting held in Sisli (a central district of Istanbul) exemplifies such agitation: "Istanbul is the mirror of Turkey. Istanbul is also Rize, Gumushane, Artvin and Kars [some provincial Anatolian cities]. This magnificent crowd is the voice of the sacred *millet*."[24] In three sentences, Kutan combined three salient elements of immigrant subjectivity: coming from a certain provincial place, living in a big city, and being religious. Kutan played here on the ambiguity of *millet*—a word with multiple connotations, especially in the way it is used in Islamist discourse. In the Ottoman Empire, *millet* referred to separate religious communities with different legal systems and administrative structures. In modern Turkey, it is used as a translation of "nation."[25] The early republic created a nation of Turks only from the Muslim groups in the empire, effectively collapsing Turkish and Islamic identities. Islamists make use of the ambivalence involved in this historical transformation and imply a religio-national unit when they are ostensibly talking of an exclusively national one. Kutan's combination of religion, national identity, and provincial belonging also redefines what the city is, partially in line with immigrant desires: the city is not "itself" but the mirror of regions from where it has attracted immigrants. By blurring the distinction between belonging to Istanbul and belonging to provincial towns, the Islamist party was able to win the hearts of the immigrants. Islamists thus constructed a solid relationship with the urban poor not only by protecting preexisting immigrant communities but by expanding and transforming these communities. In other words, the Islamic party did not simply reflect an Islamic civil society or Islamic urban subjects. It interacted with these subjects but also redefined their communities along the lines of its project. Below, I elaborate on how Islamism reshapes the city based

22. The Islamists' definition of religiosity excludes not only non-Muslims but also heterodox Muslim Alevis, as it takes Sunni Islam for granted.

23. The only other major party that articulated colocal networks to an ideological organizational structure was the Kurdish nationalist party, named the Democratic People's Party, or DEHAP, at the time of this research. However, the Kurdish nationalist party is disadvantaged by being openly a minority party and by institutional barriers that diminish its influence, such as the 10 percent threshold for gaining representation in the Grand National Assembly. For about fifteen years, the Kurdish vote has been split between the Kurdish nationalist party and the Islamist party. For the complex relations between the Kurdish minority in Turkey and Islamic politics, see Fehmi Calmuk, *Erbakan'in Kurtleri: Milli gorus'un guneydogu politikasi* (*Erbakan's Kurds: The National Outlook's Southeast Policy*) (Istanbul: Metis, 2001); and Christopher Houston, *Islam, Kurds, and the Turkish Nation-State* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2001).

24. Recai Kutan, speech at Virtue Party rally, Sisli, 2001 (from my fieldnotes).

25. Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

on its own interpretation of immigrant agency and then demonstrate how immigrants develop their agencies under Islamist leadership.

Islamism's Redefinition of the City and the Immigrants

Islamism transforms the city and its new residents by supplying guidance to former peasants and organizing dissent against central and prosperous districts. This guidance is based on a sustained (and contested) intellectual engagement with what it means to be Muslim in a rapidly urbanizing and stratified society.

The Metaphor of "Conquest": The Islamist Takeover of Urban Space

The Islamist movement in Turkey has always had an ambivalent position regarding the city. For example, Istanbul has been embraced as the symbol of Muslim glory and yet also condemned as the place where Westernization was initiated. However, two shifts in the class base of the Islamist party (which received its votes mostly from peasants, provincial businesspeople, and the traditional petty bourgeoisie in the 1970s) changed this attitude.

First, the Islamist party started to appeal to a rural-to-urban immigrant population after the 1980s—due in part to its social justice agenda as well as to the repression of the Left, the previous carrier of that agenda. The center-left's increasing emphasis on secularism at the expense of social justice after 1980 also facilitated this transformation. In the 1980s and 1990s the failure of rural development and the war in eastern Turkey fueled a partially involuntary immigration, while urban settings were losing their power to incorporate the incoming peasants as a result of the neoliberalization of the economy. The repression and disorganization of the Left and the center-left in such a context opened up the political field to unconventional forces.[26]

Second, the provincial bourgeoisie, which has constituted the leading sector in the movement ever since the 1970s, became powerful enough to compete with the established (urban and secular) bourgeoisie and embarked on doing more business in big cities.[27] Whereas the voting base of the party was restricted to the provinces in the 1970s, in the 1990s the party also got votes from metropolitan centers. As a result, the connotations of "the urban" began to be more positive. Islamist intellectuals and ideologues now put more emphasis on the great tradition of Ottoman and Islamic cities, as can be seen in the writings of Mustafa Armagan and Rasim Ozdenoren.[28]

Nevertheless, the Islamist movement could not accept the city as it was. The metropolitan centers had become symbols of Westernization and of the removal of religion from public life. Islamists thought that the authoritarian secularists had taken the cities by force and divested them of their religious character. Therefore, they now talked about a "reconquest," especially of Istanbul, referring to the Ottoman seizure of the city in 1453 as the first conquest. The secularist inhabitants of the city center were thus implicitly compared to the Christians residing in Istanbul in Byzantine times. Conquest celebrations on the anniversaries of the 1453 seizure, which had always been a mobilizing ground for the Right in republican times, began to attract more and more people and became a symbol of growing Islamist strength.[29]

As the Islamist party triumphed in many municipal elections in urban centers starting

26. Socialists and communists had some appeal to working classes only during the 1960s and 1970s. For the extent and restrictions of that appeal, as well as the social justice orientation of the center-left in the 1970s, see Necmi Erdogan, "Demokratik soldan devrimci yol'a: 1970'lerde sol populizm uzerine notlar" ("From the Democratic Left to the Revolutionary Path: Notes on Left Populism in the 1970s"), *Toplum ve Bilim* 78 (1998): 22–36; and Ahmet Samim [Murat Belge], "The Tragedy of the Turkish Left," *New Left Review* 126 (1981): 60–85.

27. Ayse Bugra, "Political Islam in Turkey in Historical Context: Strengths and Weaknesses," in *The Politics of Permanent Crisis: Class, Ideology, and State in Turkey*, ed. Nesecan Balkan and Sungur Savran (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 107–44. For the political positions of the business sectors that support Islamic politics in Turkey, see Mehran Kamrava, "The Semi-formal Sector and the Turkish Political Economy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (2004): 63–87; and Ziya Onis, "The Political Economy of Turkey's Justice and Development Party," in *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006), 207–34.

28. Mustafa Armagan, *Sehir, ey sehir* (*City, Oh City*) (Istanbul: Iz, 1997); Rasim Ozdenoren, *Kent iliskileri* (*Urban Relations*) (Istanbul: Iz, 1998).

29. Tanil Bora, "Istanbul of the Conqueror: The 'Alternative Global City' Dreams of Political Islam," in Keyder, *Istanbul*, 47–58; Alev Cinar, "National History as a Contested Site: The Conquest of Istanbul and Islamist Negotiations of the Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43 (2001): 364–91.

with the victories in Sultanbeyli and Arnavutkoy (in 1989), large metropolitan centers gradually became more pious. The Islamist party came out of the 1994 municipal elections as the leading party and assumed offices in key localities throughout Turkey. Islamist municipalities carried out a thorough redistribution of urban resources, as they channeled more services to urban poor regions and distributed free coal, food, and clothes to the poor. Moreover, as the Islamists had largely curtailed municipal corruption, the quality of urban services increased perceptibly. At the same time, the Islamist party set about redefining urban public culture, with tighter control on bars and the consumption of alcohol and the recentering of Islamic and traditional symbols in public places.[30]

However, the content of reconquest was defined in contrasting ways by multiple actors. The neoliberalization of the Turkish economy after 1980 had created both impoverishment for working populations and new opportunities for owners of small and medium-size businesses. People from these two classes, now frustrated with the establishment parties, looked to religious politics for expression of their hopes and grievances. Different Islamists, in turn, appealed to these two different populations. Islamist voices with more neoliberal tendencies, as exemplified by Mustafa Kutlu, argued that after its "conquest" Istanbul would be more integrated with the world.[31] They pointed out that a rich Ottoman history could be used to attract more tourists. They also contended that the inclusion of Muslim energies in the redevelopment of the city would make it compete better in world capitalism. Others such as Idris Ozyol, however, were less concerned with market efficiency.[32] They wanted to see the termination of the elitist exclusion that had kept the masses on the borders of cities. They were more interested in retribution against the urban elite and redistribution.

These differences in opinion regarding the use of space echoed other class tensions in the composition of the movement as well. On the one hand, Islamist strength in cities clearly became a function of squatter votes. Islamists were successful in mobilizing various kinds of squatter networks for political purposes. On the other hand, though not as numerous as squatters, a new religious middle class was also emerging,[33] and some within its ranks had started to voice dissatisfaction with the movement's identification with subordinate classes. Some of these professionals and intellectuals wanted the movement to develop along more bourgeois lines and therefore were more sympathetic to the leadership of ex-provincial businesspeople. At least until 2001, the party was able to contain these explosive differences. The combination of all these sectors' political energies engendered a gradual Islamization of cities.

The Party's Interpellation of the Immigrant Subject

What connected newly urbanized, conservative business sectors with newly urbanized poor in this tension-ridden environment? How could the Islamist project be sustained despite the differences among its base? Although class differences would be resolved to the disadvantage of the subordinate sectors toward the end of the 1990s, the Islamist call comprised elements that cut across classes within rural-to-urban immigrants and ensured the continuing support of the poor. The most prominent crosscutting elements were providing an answer to the desire to find one's place in the city and articulating the shared populist reaction against the urban center and the urban elite. In other words, two elements were central to the Islamist construction of the urbanizing subject: being in need of guidance (being "lost") and being different from the elite.

During an event organized by the semiofficial newspaper of the Islamist party (*Milli Gazete*) in Sultanbeyli, the host told a capturing story about an immigrant woman before he invited the editor of the newspaper to the stage. This incident demonstrates the former dimension of the Islamist call, its claim to constitute an answer to the desire to find guidance in the city:

30. Alev Cinar, "Refah Party and the City Administration of Istanbul: Liberal Islam, Localism, and Hybridity," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 16 (1997): 23–40.

31. Mustafa Kutlu, *Sehir mektuplari* (*Letters from the City*) (Istanbul: Dergah, 1995).

32. Idris Ozyol, *Lanetli sinif* (*Cursed Class*) (Istanbul: Birey, 1999).

33. Nilüfer Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites," *Middle East Journal* 51 (1997): 46–58; Ayse Saktanber, *Living Islam: Women, Religion, and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

> An old woman who came to Istanbul from Anatolia at a very early time in the morning looked around to see that all the stores were closed. She found a *Milli Gazete* stand and stood by it, saying to herself: "the one who sells this newspaper would have fear of God anyway. He would think that service to a human being is service to God. I am sure that he will show me the way and find me a place."[34]

In turn, the editor of the newspaper took the microphone and responded to this narrative: "I had also heard this story. Our brother did not tell us how it ends, and nor do I know it. But I am sure that a sincere servant of God has helped her. I have also helped a lot of people who have mounted down from buses coming from Anatolia to Istanbul."[35] The way religious activists imagine the situation of immigrants in the city bears a structural analogy to the way religious people in general imagine their positions in the universe.[36] The traditional Islamic construction of the person is based on the sense of being potential prey to certain weak characteristics always present in human beings (generally summed up by the term *nefis*, which is usually translated as "self" or "the flesh"), such as greed, pride, and thrift. If it were not for the message of God, people would be driven by these evil qualities. They would consequently be unable to find the proper way, and they would suffer in the other world. When activists in Sultanbeyli make reference to the life experiences of its inhabitants, these references establish equivalence between the role of religion in personal life and the role of religious activism in the life of the immigrants. Just as it is religion that is going to save souls from being lost in the universe, it is religious actors who are going to show the correct path in the urban jungle. Through striking this resemblance with immigrants' religious beliefs, Islamists counterpose their urban activities to the allegedly corrupting and disorienting urban life.

If this is how religious activists perceive their own leadership, how do the residents of the district interpret their interventions? The religious stance on alcohol can be used as an example to demonstrate the residents' willingness to be guided. Most inhabitants of the district talk about the former ban on the sale of alcohol in Sultanbeyli in an approbatory tone. Remzi, a temporary cleaning worker in the local municipality, has come to Istanbul for better education and job opportunities. He first moved to one of the central districts, as his brother used to run a teahouse there, and he could work with him while going to a primary school in the district. He eventually moved to Sultanbeyli because it was cheaper. While an infrequent consumer of alcohol before moving to the district, he quit drinking after his interactions with Islamist party members. Remzi now shared the positive sentiment about the former alcohol ban (during the 1990s) with other conservative inhabitants:

> I gave a birthday party six months after I settled in this district. One of my friends, who had come from outside the district, asked if we could buy alcohol. I said of course, and we collected money. Someone at the party said that alcohol is not sold in Sultanbeyli. We would have to go to another district to buy it. That would take too long, and we gave up. If we had bought alcohol, if we had drunk, bad things could have happened. But thank God, the ban on alcohol prevented us.

Remzi pictures himself and his friends as naturally open to alcohol. In accordance with the traditional Islamic outlook on human nature or "creation" (*fitrat*) and society, Remzi assumes that naturally self-destructive impulses must be controlled by authorities, as well as by people themselves and their close relations. This understanding of human nature can be seen as one of the reasons why Ali Nabi Kocak, the former Islamist mayor who banned alcohol sales during his time in office, was so much revered in the district. The power of the Islamist party, therefore, came from the sense of control it conferred on immigrants. In a district dominated by the Islamists, the immigrants felt that they could live in a city without suffering the unwanted consequences of urban life. In the case of repentant

34. Speech at Milli Gazete event, Sultanbeyli, 2001 (from my fieldnotes).

35. Ibid.

36. Here, I am mostly drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of "homology." Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

Muslims like Remzi, this perception of the Islamist leadership was projected to their past and provided to me as a reason for ongoing support for the Islamist party. Remzi's account of transformation demonstrates that the spontaneous associational activities of the district's residents were not always shaped along Islamic lines (as he and his friends were spontaneously inclined to consume alcohol in their gatherings initially). It was only in the pious context the Islamist party created that Remzi's associational life gradually took on a more Islamic color.

The second dimension of the Islamist call, the populist reaction against the urban center and the urban elite, can be observed in the party's recognition of the immigrant subject. Ahmet, a high functionary of the Islamist local municipality, distinguishes the practice of the (elected) municipal leaders from that of the (appointed) local governor by referring to this recognition:

> The local governor should descend to the level of the people. If you treat them the same way you treat retired women from Beyoglu [a central district of Istanbul], you will not succeed. . . . The administrator should himself get involved with the people. If they go to the coffeehouse, he should go to the coffeehouse. If they go to the mosque, he should go to the mosque. If he has to visit their houses, and if they eat their meals on the floor, he should sit down and eat with them. There is no other way you can learn their lifestyle and social structure. You can call the people to your presence by using the gendarmerie, you can scare them, but you cannot discover their brain and lifestyle.

Ahmet is drawing on popular resentment against the local government's coalition with a secularist organization that comes to the district and tries to mobilize, unsuccessfully, against religious activism.[37] According to the Islamists, the activists of these organizations share nothing with the people. Islamist legitimacy, in contrast, is closely related to shared everyday practices between top Islamist administrators and the poorest of immigrants. Nevertheless, Islamists keep a distance and feel superior to the poor, as suggested by the word Ahmet uses, at least when speaking to me, to depict the ideal relation between the politicians and the people—"descend": the Islamist project respects the immigrants but reproduces stratification (i.e., it absorbs the immigrants' antielite reaction).

Secularist functionaries and activists (the local governor, secularist teachers, activists of secularist organizations, etc.) not only avoid the practices they associate with poor and/or newly urbanizing people (eating on the floor, going to the mosque, going to the coffeehouse, etc.), but they publicly attack them. Sultanbeyli residents, in turn, describe Islamist politicians as "one of us" and center-leftists as "different people." But this is not due to some unassailable authenticity of the Islamists. The center-leftists could, hypothetically, tap into other immigrant practices and construct alternative model subjects. Indeed, center-left parties intermittently deploy the idea of a more permissive "Anatolian Islam" (allegedly more loyal to the traditional beliefs of the Turkish countryside) as against the conservative Islam of their rivals. However, this is not backed by any persistent intellectual work. The activists on the ground do not internalize these ideals, and, consequently, they cannot provide consistent model subjects to the immigrants. As a result, they do not absorb immigrant subjectivities like the Islamists do.

Creative Immigrant Subjectivities

Despite this heavy top-down political and ideological influence, immigrants play an active role in the making of the city. They do not blindly follow the Islamist leadership, even though they are shaped by it. Below, I discuss how the urban poor construct space through imagined distinctions between the urban and the rural as well as

37. This organization was the Cagdas Yasami Destekleme Dernegi (Association for the Support of Modern Life), the activists of which are predominantly upper-middle-class women. While only some of the activists were known to be retired women from Beyoglu, Ahmet generalized this characteristic to the whole population of activists in order to imply an elite status and old age and thereby delegitimate the movement.

through the negotiation of gender segregation, both under the leadership of the Islamist party.

The Urban/Rural Distinction as an Everyday Strategy

Even though scholarship is now moving away from the established outlook that takes rural-to-urban immigrants as essentially peasants,[38] for elite and subordinate city dwellers, as well as for the media, the informal city is still "rural." How can one account for the persistence of these categories in everyday practice? Why do squatters themselves fall back on the very category that is used for excluding them from the city? The answer, I argue, lies in how the categories "urban" and "rural" are configured in the practice of squatters and how this differs from their configuration in dominant discourse.

Both the media and the squatters themselves say that immigrants have brought to the city their "mores" and "peasant mentalities." However, some of the behaviors perceived as rural are maneuvers that can be frequently observed in urban settings in a variety of contexts. For example, living in tight and closed communities and religious mobilization—which both the Turkish media and the squatters refer to as "rural"—are urban as much as they are rural strategies. Scholars of Latin American urbanization and religion have demonstrated that these strategies can be quite conducive to neighborhood improvement.[39]

The rural/urban distinction is still frequently resorted to, not necessarily because it is based on empirical reality, but because it lends itself to strategic use. The dominant sectors of Turkey take the city as a haven for freedom, individualism, and civility. The (alleged) communalism, traditionalism, and uncivil manners of immigrants, they hold, threaten the city. This dominant discourse invites squatters to participate in urban life, but it expects them to leave behind rural traits in order to mingle. Squatters answer by claiming their rural identity and participating in public life through their communal ties (e.g., going to political meetings with extended family). Being rural is also a precept for not understanding the ways of the city and practicing one's own laws. Azim, a middle-aged Islamist construction worker, argues that people's use of public land as private lodging (squatting), which as I have mentioned was encouraged by the Islamist party, is justified by their lack of knowledge concerning urban planning terms: "The people of this district do not know parcels and green areas. In our village we call pasture [*mera*] what they call green areas. And what they call parcels is just arable fields for us." It is also significant that squatters not connected to the Islamist party were quite apologetic about their use of informal land and lodging. They lacked Azim's self-confidence and accepted that they corrupted Istanbul by "ruralizing" it. While squatters connected to the party also bought into the dominant perception of squatting as a rural practice, they were not ashamed by it. Immigrants were indeed creative in appropriating urban space, but this creativity was mediated by political mobilization.

Open/Closed: The Reproduction and Transformation of Gender Segregation

According to Nilüfer Göle, the distinctiveness of Islamic culture lies in its emphasis on closed spaces that make women less visible and contactable, thereby preserving communal morality.[40] Its inhabitants actively built Sultanbeyli by keeping this precept in mind. Those who could afford it built gardens surrounded by high walls that provided space for the socialization of women in a manner not observable from the outside. A lot of poor immigrants, however, lacked the resources to finance such an architectural structure. The most conservative among them compensated for this disadvantage by building their houses so that the interior was not visible from the windows. Another architectural feature in some of these houses is the layout of the rooms, the doors of which are not immediately visible from other doors in the house. For example, some corridors are L-shaped so that if male visitors in one room and female visitors in

38. But see Ayse Erdentug and Burcak Berrak, "Political Tuning in Ankara as Reflected in Its Urban Symbols and Images," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22 (1998): 589–601.

39. John Burdick, *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil's Religious Arena* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Bryan Roberts, *The Making of Citizens: Cities of Peasants Revisited* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995).

40. Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

another happen to open the doors at the same time, they would not see anybody from the opposite sex. As a result of this layout, males who are not members of a conservative family's kin network can still visit the family without necessarily encountering the female members of the household.

Various layers of female practice reproduce, negotiate, and challenge this spatial configuration. The women of families that have settled without their *hemşehri* networks, or a wide network of relatives, generally do not leave their streets. Their house visits are restricted, the neighbors see them as outsiders, and they have nobody to accompany them on walks through the district. This leaves them with little to do, since the city is seen as unpredictable and dangerous, which keeps them from going out by themselves. Immigrant subjectivity might be creative, but it is also restrictive in these regards.

Women with wide networks of relatives, by contrast, frequently go on house visits. They know by heart the streets of the neighborhood thanks to their relatives and *hemşehri*s who are spread across the district. They go in packs of neighbors to the bazaars, their own and those of other neighborhoods, not only to buy food but also to see relatives and *hemşehri*s in other neighborhoods. Short house visits of relatives and *hemşehri*s follow bazaar incursions in other neighborhoods.

These networks have their own drawbacks, however, since mechanisms of control over women might also become more intense to the degree that the community itself is wide. Women with wide networks always have to take into account the opinions of their neighbors; they have to keep their houses tidy and clean, since they are always in interaction with others: anyone can visit them at any moment of the day. There is very little of what might be called personal space in their homes, since most of the space there is in community use.

Women living in small community networks, such as the apartment building of three stories of agnates in the case of Halime, feel the pressures of networks without enjoying the benefits of community life: they are imprisoned in their buildings or on their streets and are also under tight control. Halime's husband, who owns a small workshop, has married a young woman without divorcing Halime and settled in another district, leaving her with his brothers and their families in two adjacent apartment buildings.[41] Halime's female as well as her male kin who live on her street restrict her contacts with outsiders. Halime expressed her restrictions poignantly as she told me the reason why she encourages her son (then in eighth grade) to pursue his studies: "In the village I wandered around more. Since I came here, I haven't done that. As I haven't gone to school I can't wander around in the city. I only know two streets beyond this one. I want him to be educated so that he can wander around." Even though I witnessed how Halime's kin prevented her from wandering around in the neighborhood, Halime faulted herself rather than her agnates who actually instituted these limits. As there is consistent emphasis in Turkish public discourse on the liberating influence of education, immigrants sometimes blame themselves and their ignorance for their lack of freedom (as when Halime speaks as if it were her lack of formal education that prevented her from getting to know the district's other streets).[42] Patriarchy (in Halime's case, the control of a bride by her agnates), however, is not a legitimate target in conservative neighborhoods. This prevents Halime from criticizing the restrictions imposed by her kin network. In other words, while immigrant subjectivities are creative, this creativity cannot be taken as absolutely liberating.

For women from conservative families, one strategy of expanding their space within these restrictions is by pushing religious reasoning to its logical conclusions and arguing that everybody, irrespective of gender, should work for God's glory.[43] When this strategy is used, the political participation of women is specifically

41. Polygamy, though prohibited by secular law, is still practiced in both urban and rural areas of Turkey. Ihsan Yilmaz, "Non-recognition of Post-modern Turkish Socio-legal Reality and the Predicament of Women," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 30 (2003): 25–41.

42. One must, however, grant that there is a partial truth in Halime's comments, in that similarly conservative kin networks have a harder time when they try to limit the urban mobility of women with formal diplomas.

43. For the mixed blessings of this strategy, see Arat, *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy*; and Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

enabled through the architectural arrangement of the district. Under the current regime of segregation, their participation in political and public life is not perceived as a threat to morality or as an invitation to sexual permissiveness. Fatma, a young activist of the Islamist party, told me that she enjoyed the district very much because she could go everywhere without being noticed too much by men.[44] She added: "We would be suffocated in districts like Kadıkoy [a central district of Istanbul]. We would be imprisoned within four walls. Here we can breathe. Thanks to *sohbet*s and [Islamist] party activities, we can always go out. I have visited so many homes because of these activities." Fatma also said that she started going out more after she became politically involved. Religious activism confers on women the right to get out, associate with others (even with those outside family and *hemşehri* networks), and organize. Hence it was not simply the bottom-up agency of poor actors but their thorough politicization and engagement in party politics that expanded the boundaries of conservative life.

As leftist and secularist options were either disorganized or appeared elitist, the most feasible option out of restrictive local communities for many women was Islamic mobilization. However, the Islamist party did not have an agenda of abolishing all barriers to women's participation. Moreover, the female activists I spoke to did not have any demands about increasing the role of women in the administration of the Islamist party or the local municipality. Gramscian analysis emphasizes that such active consent of subordinate sectors for hegemonic institutions, and mobilization built around this consent, both perpetuate inegalitarian structures and secure concessions for the disadvantaged within the boundaries of those structures. In other words, urban poor creativity blossoms as a result of its interaction with Islamism, but it is nevertheless kept within certain conservative limits and is incorporated into the Islamist project.

Conclusion

The civil society literature treats Islamism as a symbolic vehicle that carries urban communities' opposition to the authoritarian state. In this perspective, Islamism has no shaping power; it only lets civil society express its dissatisfaction with the state and acts as an idiom of self-organization. I have argued that there are active and creative urban communities (as in civil society accounts) but that Islamism also gives marginal settlements and rural-to-urban immigrants a new sense of identity. The analysis of Islamism as a hegemonic project can theorize these two dimensions of urban politics conjointly. According to the perspective developed in this article, the function of the Islamist party is to cultivate, explore, and shape the new popular imagination, but it does not work with nothing: it builds itself on the identities and self-organizing capacity of the immigrants as much as it shapes these.

Immigrant poor subjectivities are mainly built on developing creative responses to the urban-rural distinction, as well as on reconfigurations of gender segregation. Communal belonging (as defined through place of origin) also constitutes a vital node in the production and reproduction of immigrant subjectivities. Yet poor communities do not operate in a vacuum but work in conjunction with a political movement that guides them in the new urban spatial structure. Islamism develops and transforms the ways in which poor immigrants interpret, gain control over, and find their place in urban space. Also, some outcomes of urban poor spatial practices—such as the transmutation of the meaning of belonging to certain

44. Studies on the gendered dimension of Islamism have mostly focused on the issue of women's dress and conduct. See Zeliha Etoz, "Power and Education in Turkey as a Matter of Public Sphere," *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 40 (2003): 13–31; Muge Gocek, "To Veil or Not to Veil: The Contested Location of Gender in Contemporary Turkey," *Interventions* 1 (1999): 521–35; Elisabeth Ozdalga, "Womanhood, Dignity, and Faith: Reflections on an Islamic Woman's Life Story," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 4 (1997): 473–97; and Lisa Taraki, "Islam Is the Solution: Jordanian Islamists and the Dilemma of the 'Modern Woman,'" *British Journal of Sociology* 46 (1995): 643–61. This architectural dimension of gendered Islamization has been only rarely noticed: see Ismail, *Political Life*; Saktanber, *Living Islam*; and Secor, "Veil and Urban Space."

provincial towns and the meaning of Istanbul itself—do not come about spontaneously but are facilitated by religious politics.

Through articulation to Islamist politics, the subjectivity and communities that rural-to-urban immigrants develop gain meanings well beyond self-organization. Islamist politics actually comes in when existing immigrant identities and communities risk remaining parochial and weak. Islamism, rather than simply support and include immigrants' subjectivities and communities, transforms the city through interacting with them, but also redefining them. It is partially this elasticity and interactive dynamism that gives Islamism its power.