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Streets of Memory:

The Kuzguncuk Mahalle in Cultural Practice and Imagination

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Streets of Memory:
The Kuzguncuk Mahalle in Cultural Practice and Imagination

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Dissertation

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Streets of Memory:
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The *mahalle* (neighborhood) was the historic space of urban culture in the Middle East. Cities in the region possessed a rich religious and linguistic diversity. The daily life of a religious community was centered in its *mahalle*. This cosmopolitanism was fractured with the birth of nationalism and its ethnic and linguistic claims to territory, and minorities migrated to new nations. Researchers have explored migration histories of various groups in the region, but this dissertation is the first to examine the consequences of this migration for the spaces of urban life. In this ethnography of Kuzguncuk, Istanbul, I relate narratives of place that challenge both popular discourse surrounding Istanbul's recent history as well as nostalgic images of past cosmopolitan *mahalle* life. The contemporary *mahalle* is a Turkish, urban cultural space created by

social practices of neighboring. These social practices are eroding, however, in contemporary Istanbul. The *mahalle* has moved into the realm of collective memory, and has come to embody familiarity in place. Historic landscapes in Istanbul signify the collective memory even as they manifest the rips of recent cultural change in the city. My work lies in the interstices of three spheres of contemporary theory in geography: the production of space; the co-constitutive nature of landscape morphology and representation; and the relationship between landscape and collective memory.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	ix
Introduction	1
Pathways Into the Mahalle	
Chapter 1	14
Cosmopolitan Kuzguncuk	
Chapter 2	34
Bostan Sokak/Garden Street	
Narratives of Contested Place	
Chapter 3	60
Uryanizade Sokak/Uryanizade Street	
Gentrification and the Landscape of Collective Memory	
Chapter 4	88
Icadiye Sokak/Icadiye Street	
Nostalgia	
Chapter 5	117
Yenigün Sokak/New Day Street	
Neighborliness and Knowing	
Conclusion	139
Reading the Urban Landscape	
Appendix	146
Historic Timeline	
Glossary	147
Bibliography	149
Vita	159

List of Figures

Fig.1 Streets in Kuzguncuk	13
Fig.2 Map of Turkey	14
Fig.3 Istanbul Neighborhoods	15
Fig.4 Kuzguncuk, Istanbul	16
Fig.5 Religious Sites in Kuzguncuk	17
Fig.6 Settlement Patterns and Land Use in Kuzguncuk	31
Fig.7 The Garden Belongs to the Kuzguncuk People	35
Fig.8 Dimitria Teyze's Mental Map	53
Fig.9 Ekmek Teknesi	61
Fig.10 Uryanizade Street	62
Fig.11 Church and Mosque	74
Fig.12 Icadiye Street	89
Fig.13 Traditional Karagoz <i>Mahalle</i> Puppet	120
Fig.14 Neighbor Women – From the Window to the Street	126
Fig.15 Gravestones in the Jewish Cemetery	139
Fig.16 <i>Gecekonu</i> in the Cemetery	140

Introduction

Pathways into the *Mahalle*

The *mahalle* (neighborhood) was the historic space of cosmopolitan urban culture in the Middle East. This cosmopolitanism was fractured with the birth of nationalism and its ethnic and linguistic claims to territory. Beirut, Alexandria, Damascus, and Istanbul once possessed a rich ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. The daily life of a religious or ethnic community was centered in its *mahalle*. Nationalism used language and religion as excuses for violence, and minority communities migrated to new nations. New landscapes of urbanization have replaced the cosmopolitanism of the past. While researchers have explored the migration histories of ethnic groups in the region, this dissertation is the first to examine the consequences of this migration for the spaces of urban life. With ethnography in Kuzguncuk, I gathered narratives of place that challenge both popular discourse surrounding Istanbul's recent history as well as nostalgic images of past cosmopolitan *mahalle* life.

The contemporary *mahalle* is a Turkish, urban cultural space. The social practices of neighboring that create the daily lived space of the *mahalle* are eroding, however, in contemporary Istanbul culture. The *mahalle* has come to signify familiarity and belonging in the imagined space of collective memory. Historic landscapes in Istanbul, such as in Kuzguncuk, signify the collective memory even as they manifest the rips of recent cultural change in the city.

Kuzguncuk Mahallesi

Kuzguncuk, a small neighborhood on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, was once a mixed community of Greeks, Jews, and Armenians (Akin 1994). These minorities left Istanbul in response to the frightening political climate between the 1940s and the 1960s. During this same period, rural-urban migration from Anatolian villages created a cultural shift in the old *mahalle*. Remaining Greeks, Jews, and Armenians moved to new areas of the city. Most Kuzguncuk residents today are connected to the Black Sea migrant community which began to arrive in the late 1930s. Very few non-Muslims remain.

Despite its tumultuous history, Kuzguncuk is a popular subject of nostalgic media representation. Its landscape of old Greek and Jewish houses has come to represent the collective memory of the old Istanbul *mahalle* with values of harmony and cosmopolitan tolerance. The houses are being rebuilt by a growing number of Muslim artists and intellectuals. However, state censorship of the press and the remaining minorities' fear of retribution has silenced the history of Istanbul's minorities. The landscape of collective memory becomes popular as it smoothes over historic tension and violence.

This dissertation examines the cultural politics of the *mahalle* with oral histories of members of Kuzguncuk's remaining minorities as well its early Black Sea Muslim migrants and newer residents who moved there to restore old buildings and protect its historic character. The interviews with minorities provide valuable evidence of 'Turkification' in Istanbul, a claim to territory that remains largely undocumented

because of state censorship and the restriction of access to archival resources (with the exception of Aktar 2000; Bali 1999; Akar 1998; Demir and Akar 1999; and Ökte 1987(1953)). Stories from the older Black Sea residents subtly challenge the narrative of inclusivity promoted by the gentrifying community that romanticizes the past and contemporary neighborhood life. This ethnography of Kuzguncuk contests the prevailing historic narrative of the city and the nation as they are embodied in the collective memory of the *mahalle*.

The Mahalle

I argue that the spatiality of the *mahalle* is not defined by its physical geography or administrative relationship to the city, but rather by social practice and cultural meaning. This argument responds to the way the *mahalle*, as a subject of Anglo- and Francophone intellectual inquiry, has traditionally been characterized as a unit of the ‘Islamic City’.¹ This model describes the *mahalle* as the urban residential quarter, with physical characteristics that manifest the culture of an Islamic polity.² The *mahalle*’s

¹ The ‘Islamic City’ is a model used to describe and analyze urban environments of the Middle East. In its very name it is rooted in Orientalism, the European intellectual project of defining and representing the Orient (Said 1978). The concept was developed by Jean Sauvaget (1965), Georges Marcais (1926), Gustave von Grunebaum (1946), and other, primarily French, scholars. Later, Albert Hourani (1970), R. B. Serjeant (1980), Ira Lapidus (1969 and 1973), Andre Raymond (1984), Kenneth Brown (1986) and Oleg Grabar (1987) continued to explore the ‘Islamic City’. Most scholarship viewed the ‘Islamic City’ as a type, with no specification of temporal or locational context (e.g. Lapidus 1973). The characteristics most essential to the type are the mosque, the bazaar, the differentiation between public and private space, a defense system with walls, gates, and the citadel, and the *mahalle*.

² The model’s reliance on Islam as the determining element shaping the city proved limiting. In 1987 Janet Abu-Lughod’s historiography of the ‘Islamic City’ traced its roots to studies of only a few North African cities. Her question undermined the

winding, narrow streets and walled off houses reflected Islamic culture by creating semi-private spaces for the brief passages of women between family spaces inside the home. The segregation of religious groups into separate *mahalles* reflected their segregation administratively and socially under the *millet* system³. In fact, however, *mahalles* were not always religiously or ethnically homogenous.⁴ Studies of the *mahalle* have focused narrowly on its spatial organization, as well as its relation to the larger city

concept's contemporary relevance: "Why would one expect Islamic cities to be similar and in what ways?" (Abu-Lughod 1987, 160.) Abu-Lughod urged consideration of the variety of factors besides Islam, although she acknowledged elements shared by cities in the Islamic world, including the relative presence or exclusion of women and the phenomenon of the *mahalle*. While she deconstructed the 'Islamic City', she also sought a quality unique to cities in Islamic societies. Recent scholarship focuses on particular contexts to illuminate larger processes (e.g. Marcus 1989 and Behar 2003). Other studies continue to rely on the 'Islamic City' as a conceptual starting point (see Bierman et al 1991; Eldem 1999; and Kheirabadi 1991). The concept is also used by Muslim architects interested in how Islamic law shapes urban form.

³ The Tanzimat reforms created the *millet* system which made Ottoman subjects equal regardless of religion or language. Yet while minorities gained theoretical equality, the new system reified separate, group identity (Schroeter 2002, 88), and social difference and prejudices remained (Augustinos 1992, 38). The reforms created a hierarchical structure, with a religious leader in charge of the *millet*, or distinct religious community. The *millet* system shaped local life in that *mahalles* were governed by a local religious leader. The *millet* system made *mahalles* somewhat autonomous communities.

Mahalles had more than one leader if there was more than one congregation. *Millets* were not ethnically homogenous or consistent in religious practice; differences existed in origin and language. Ethnic and religious identity was sometimes confused, as in the cases of Greek Orthodox communities that spoke Turkish, or Greek Jews speaking Ladino (Clogg 1999, 117). Most important for the construction of identity was locality in the *mahalle*, rather than membership in the *millet* system. In Istanbul, before the creation of surnames, for example, legal documents identified individuals by *mahalle* (Behar 2003, 5).

⁴ In Herat, Afghanistan, residential quarters were not segregated (English 1973 83). Neither were the quarters of Aleppo, Syria (Marcus 1989), or Istanbul (Behar 2003 and Rosen 2002) completely homogeneous.

as an administrative and socio-geographic unit culturally defined by a particular religious community.

This dissertation examines the creation of *mahalle* space in Istanbul through cultural practice. Historically, *mahalle* boundaries in Istanbul were flexible and subject to interpretation (Behar 2003, 4). Today, their boundaries are not drawn on official maps, and mental maps drawn by residents reveal *mahalle* boundaries to be ambiguous.

Mahalle identity is important in Istanbul, however. Relationship to one's place of origin and *mahalle* of residence is central to how people introduce and identify each other.⁵

This identity is defined by the conventions of social practice as well as the narration of events and characteristics of place. The *mahalle*, then, is not a static and bounded unit of the city, but is the spatialization of the relationship to place as a locator for identity.

The neighboring (*komşuluk*), and expressions of knowing (*tanımak*) which create networks of support between neighbors and in resident-owned shops and businesses define the contemporary *mahalle*.⁶ Examining neighborhood space as a product of cultural practices (in reference to the trajectory of geographic thought developed in the works of Henri LeFebvre 1991 and Michel deCerteau 1998) not only reveals the power relationships at work in the process of producing space, but opens the study of spaces in

⁵ The suffix –lu or –li, when attached to a place name, means ‘of’ or ‘from’ the place. Someone from Kuzguncuk is a ‘*Kuzguncuklu*’.

⁶ While striking temporal and geographic differences exist, the close social ties in Istanbul *mahalles* resemble those in the *darb* of Morocco (Eickelman 1974) and the *murabba*’ in Cairo (Ghannam 2002).

the Middle Eastern city beyond seeing *mahalle* as a bounded, mappable district. The *mahalle* emerges as the urban space of closeness and familiarity⁷.

Mahalle life, in Istanbul, by the early twentieth century, reflected a culture of cosmopolitanism, of blending and intermediation between religious and ethnic cultures within a single city. Sami Zubaida characterizes cosmopolitanism in the Middle East as an urban space characterized by fluency in a variety of languages and cultural practices; such a conversance with multiplicity of cultures depended on the mutual recognition of difference as well as an urban cultural system of sharing the same neighborhood space (Zubaida 1999). By the end of the twentieth century, the cosmopolitan quality of cultural spaces in Istanbul was lost with the departure of most of Istanbul's historic minorities. The culture of the *mahalle*, as a local, lived space, became Muslim and Turkish.

Collective Memories of Landscape

The historic restoration of Kuzguncuk's landscape is the creation of architectural forms that signify the collective memory of the *mahalle*. The collective memory of Kuzguncuk, with its tolerant cosmopolitan neighborly relations and past urban civility

⁷ Today the strongest neighboring ties in Kuzguncuk are among its older migrants. My ethnographic conclusions suggest that perhaps migration patterns and migrants' social networks of support, rather than Islam, produced the *mahalle* spaces characteristic of regional cities. The historic 'Islamic City' model sought a common feature to cities in dominantly Islamic societies. But besides Islam, these cities were all affected by a long history of migration patterns for: trade routes and international markets; networks of administration of empire; the pilgrimage to Mecca (the *hajj*); the travel of scholars to historic university centers in cities like Cairo and Damascus; and refugee populations created by wars. Migrants formed ties to place in new urban environments with support from fellow migrants.

lived out on the streets of the *mahalle*, reveals the collective memory as a site of nostalgic remembrance. This landscape reveals a crisis of identity pervasive in Istanbul culture emerging not only from the nationalist project that resulted in the emigration of thousands of non-Muslim minorities, but also from the attendant problems of rapid urbanization and increasing polarization of wealth (see Bonine 1997 and Keyder 1999). The collective memory can be read for how it manifests a profound cultural sense of loss of relationship to place.

I employ the idea of collective memory to explore what it reveals about urban culture after the loss of cosmopolitan *mahalle* life. In its inception, the idea of collective memory was a geographic concept in that it was always bound to place (Halbwachs 1980; Nora 1998). As a shared imagination of the past, collective memory is grounded in location. Christine Boyer brought the collective memory to an analysis of the urban landscape. She describes a postmodern urban landscape characterized by the use of material forms that recall a collective memory of the past, such as recreated 'historic' landscapes or new buildings constructed with an amalgam of old architectural forms (Boyer 1996). Nostalgia for a past way of urban life is signified by the recreation of an architectural form that recalls the collective memory. The landscape of collective memory is an attempt to bring the nostalgia to form, to make the past way of life 'real' once again, and so signifies cultural mourning for a loss.

My work lies in the interstices of three spheres of contemporary theory in geography: the production of space; the relationship between landscape morphology and representation; and the relationship between landscape and collective memory. I

employ the theoretical methodologies of contemporary landscape studies which examine the signs and symbols of meaning in landscapes (Cosgrove 1998) and interrogate the link between the production of the cultural landscape and its representation (Mitchell 1996). The production of meaning surrounding the landscape in its representation, and the actual making of the physical cultural landscape, are examined as codependent parts of a cultural, political, and economic process. Don Mitchell's work aligned a labor history perspective alongside a study of the California agricultural landscape to expose the hidden histories of migrant workers unsignified by popular representations of the landscape. My work brings the place narratives of minority and migrant communities to a reading of the relationship between representations of the romanticized *mahalle* landscape and its production through gentrification in Kuzguncuk.

Methodology

The remaining Greeks, Jews, and Armenians of Istanbul are usually closed to Muslim Turkish researchers. Non-Muslim academics also face difficulty in collecting oral histories of their own communities, either because people are afraid to talk about contentious history or do not want to stir up painful memories (Bali 1999). The stories I gathered depended on my identity as an outsider and my cultural status as a foreign woman.

My ethnographic methodology consisted of two parts: participatory observation and structured interviews⁸. I performed ongoing visits with three groups in the neighborhood where I participated in conversations and observed how people relate to each other and talk about the neighborhood. Two groups were almost exclusively female, and one group was of mixed gender. These visits varied in length from a few hours to as long as an entire day. The first group of women was predominantly of Black Sea origin and lower-middle socio-economic status. The second group of women centered in the home of an older Jewish woman. The third group of neighbors was not defined by proximity, but by their membership in the neighborhood organization. They included descendants of Black Sea migrant families as well as professionals and artists who arrived in Kuzguncuk relatively recently. I also conducted arranged interviews with a diversity of people connected to Kuzguncuk by ties of residence and family, including Greeks, Jews, and Armenians and Muslims of a variety of economic and political backgrounds, and academics, intellectuals and activists involved in urban issues or minority history.

As geographers pay attention to questions of identity formation, place is viewed as central to the formation of identity (Keith and Pile 1993). The meanings of places can

⁸ Feminist geographers discuss the positionality of the researcher and the researched in the creation of knowledge (Hanson 1992). For these geographers, meaning is produced in a spatial, as well as social or cultural context; the location of interviews can oppress or empower the interviewer or interviewee. For this reason, I invited my informants to choose the interview site, and conducted most interviews in homes. A few exceptions include interviews at the churches, synagogue, and local café when I was interviewing men. Meeting with people in places of their choosing placed our interactions within the realm of normal conversation and allowed me to develop relationships of trust.

work to reinforce or subvert the power relations of the social activities that create place; place can be appropriated and reinterpreted as a means to contest hegemonic power relations. One of the means by which power relations are challenged is by the telling of narratives of place, or the writing of history, in ways that legitimize or naturalize differences of origin, ethnicity, class, or gender. Stories of Kuzguncuk history assert Kuzguncuklu identity for the teller, and each story aligns the narrator in relationship with other members of the same group or in opposition to others in the neighborhood. Kuzguncuk, as a place, exists within the network of the actions and stories that layer it with meaning and create its identity.⁹ Contrasting stories of place trace the complexity of Kuzguncuk's cultural map. The narratives together demonstrate that tension surrounds remembrances of the past, in spite of the harmonious collective memory.

The oral histories I gathered are not 'objective' accounts of 'history', but testimony to what is relevant about the past for the informant's current life (Thompson 1998, 301). When people did not want to be recorded, I took notes. The long hours I spent in living rooms and kitchens helped me establish being a '*tanidik*', one who is 'known'. I could not ask directly about topics such as contemporary intracommunity social relationships and contentious memories of the past. Stories on these topics were often told in the course of long group conversations with people who weren't "able to remember" information on these topics during a private interview. Gathering these stories would have been impossible with an approach other than this flexible, qualitative

⁹ Place is a "moment in such intersecting social relations, nets of which have over time been constructed, laid down, interacted with one another, decayed and renewed" (Massey 1995, 182).

methodology. Though I always identified myself as a researcher, during these visits I became a friend and neighbor. I am grateful to everyone who visited with me. I relate their stories with pseudonyms and have altered identifying information to protect my informants' privacy.

I initiated my first contacts in the neighborhood during the summer of 2000. I returned to Kuzguncuk in June of 2001. After a brief return to the United States to obtain my research visa, I moved to Kuzguncuk in the beginning of October 2001, where I lived until March 2003, when I moved to the European side of Istanbul. During my last six months in the city I continued my visiting relationships to Kuzguncuk, but spent more time participating in academic symposia and finishing library work. I returned to the United States in August 2003. I lived in Kuzguncuk for seventeen months; my total fieldwork time in Istanbul was 25 months.

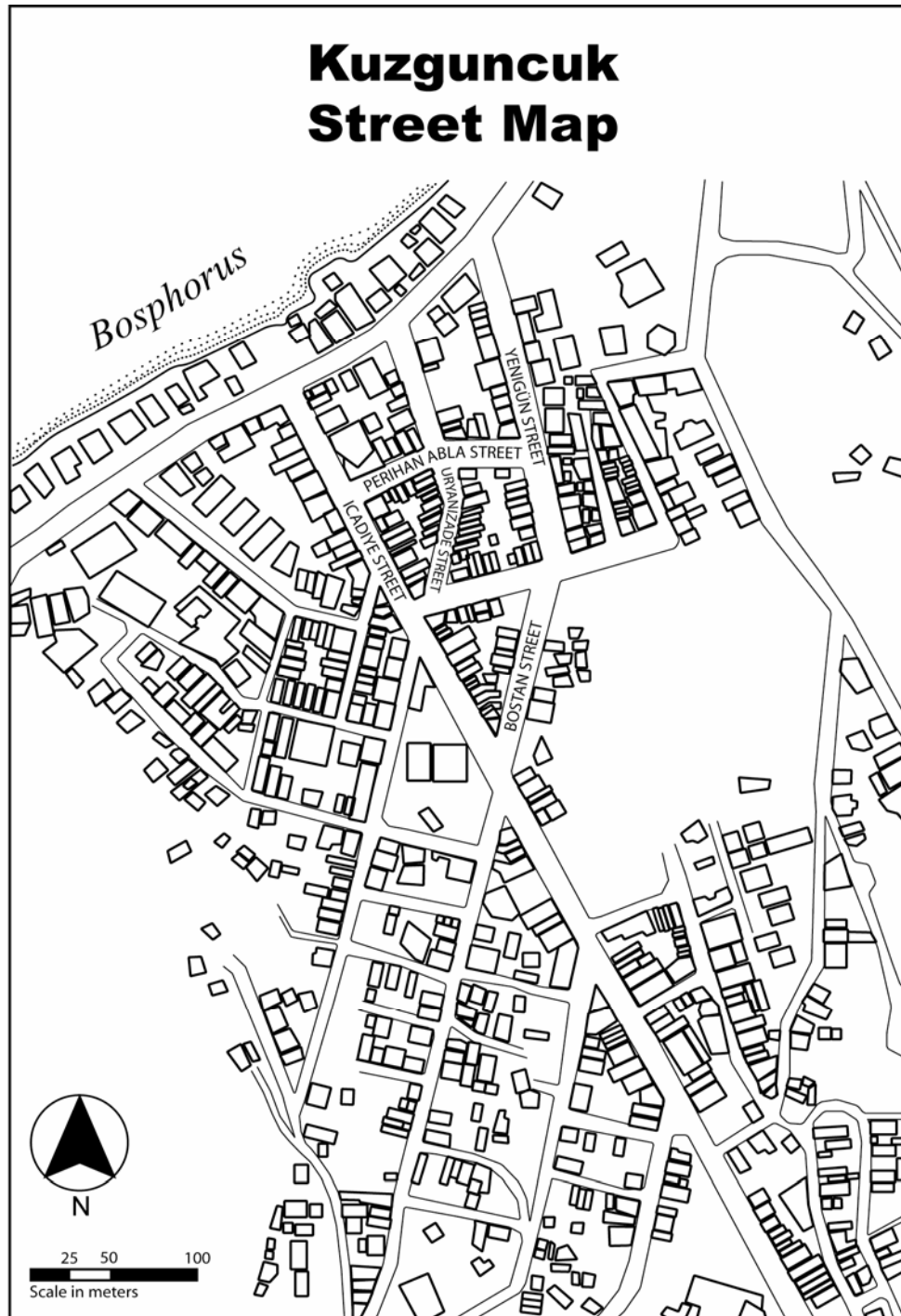
Streets of Memory

Streets are the pathways into the *mahalle*. They provide the theater of life and situate the cultural landscape. Streets connect spaces of proximity (“your *mahalle*, my *mahalle*”) and distance (“upper *mahalle*, lower *mahalle*”). Streets are the literal and figurative connecting spaces of the narratives. The inner chapters of the dissertation center on specific streets, where contesting narratives of the same street or place are aligned to reveal contemporary social dynamics at stake in remembering the past (see Fig.1).

Chapter One situates this *mahalle* study within the history of cosmopolitanism in Istanbul and its decline with Turkish nationalist policies and the departure of the

city's minorities. Chapter Two relates the story of the Kuzguncuk Neighborhood Association's struggle to save a historic market garden alongside the story of the descendant of the Greek family that used to own the market garden. Though these narratives oppose each other's claims, all justify 'Kuzguncuklu' identity. Chapter Three, Uryanizade Street, is centered on Kuzguncuk's restored 'historic' street. This street came to typify Kuzguncuk's landscape as that of the *mahalle* of collective memory in the Turkish cultural imagination. Chapter Four, Icadiye Street, is the setting for nostalgic memories of past cosmopolitanism. These narratives are filled with tension because they elide the violence of the riots which shook this street in 1955. This chapter explores how the collective memory of Kuzguncuk obscures this tension with stories of extraordinary multiethnic tolerance. Chapter Five, New Day Street, relies on my participant observation in the ongoing neighborhood visits between women to define the *mahalle* as a social space created by the cultural practices of neighboring. This chapter uses a focus on the gendered character of neighboring to explore the impacts of urban change in Istanbul on the spaces of local life.

Fig.1 Streets in Kuzguncuk¹⁰



¹⁰ Maps for this dissertation were created by K. Maria D. Lane.

Chapter One

Cosmopolitan Kuzguncuk

When the Turkish Republic was declared in 1923, it was defined by a linguistically and ethnically Muslim Turkish national identity. In spite of massive reforms toward secularization, national identity remained Turkish and Turkish identity was irrefutably Muslim.¹ Between 1923 and 1939, ongoing policies and practices of Turkification proceeded in the territory of the Turkish state (Bali 1999) (see Fig. 2), and were successful in achieving relative demographic homogenization.²



Fig.2 Map of Turkey³

Istanbul was Turkey's principal cultural and economic center, and it was historically characterized by a large Greek, Jewish, and Armenian bourgeoisie. Nationalist policies, such as the 1942 Property Tax, the state-initiated 1955 Istanbul riots, and the

¹ Religion appeared on identity cards, and the designation 'Turk' was commonly restricted to Muslims (Lewis 2002, 357).

² In 1906, one in five people were non-Muslim, yet by 1927 the number dropped to one in forty (Aktar 2000, 62).

³ Online map collection. Perry-Castaneda Library, University of Texas at Austin.

deportation of Greek citizens in 1964, caused most of Istanbul's minorities to emigrate.⁴

Turkish scholarship on minority history in Istanbul has only recently begun to emerge.

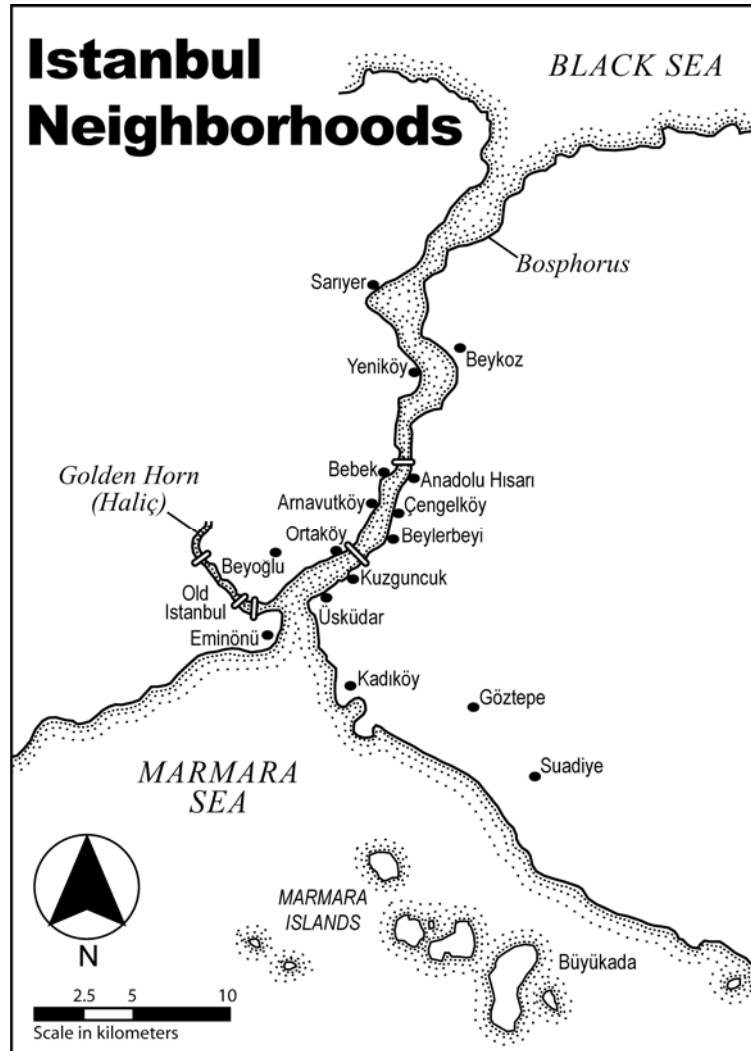


Fig.3 Istanbul Neighborhoods

⁴ However, any underlying intention of these policies to cause emigration, or a characterization of the policies as representative of an ongoing effort to nationalize or 'Turkify' the city, is generally denied in academic and popular discourse in Turkey. Historic research has idealized relations between non-Muslims and Muslims in Turkey as exceptionally tolerant (Bali 1999), although tensions and differences between minorities and Muslims existed (Bali 1999, 18 and Aktar 2000, 18). Critical research on these topics in Turkey is prohibitively difficult due to censorship, closure of archives, and denial of research permission.

The Kuzguncuk Mahalle

Historic settlement in Istanbul clustered in the old peninsula and in Kadıköy and Üsküdar (see Fig 3). Outlying, provincial settlements existed on the Asian side and on the Bosphorus. Proximity to the imperial city influenced the growth of Asian-side villages, although they were not linked to the expanding city of Istanbul until the late nineteenth century. Kuzguncuk was a small fishing and artisan village that lay in a valley on the Asian side, just north of Üsküdar. It was connected to Üsküdar by road, and Kuzguncuk's market garden products were sent to this port for transport to Istanbul. Kuzguncuk's tradesmen, craftsmen, builders, and artisans depended on the production and service of materials to be sent to Istanbul. (see Fig.4)

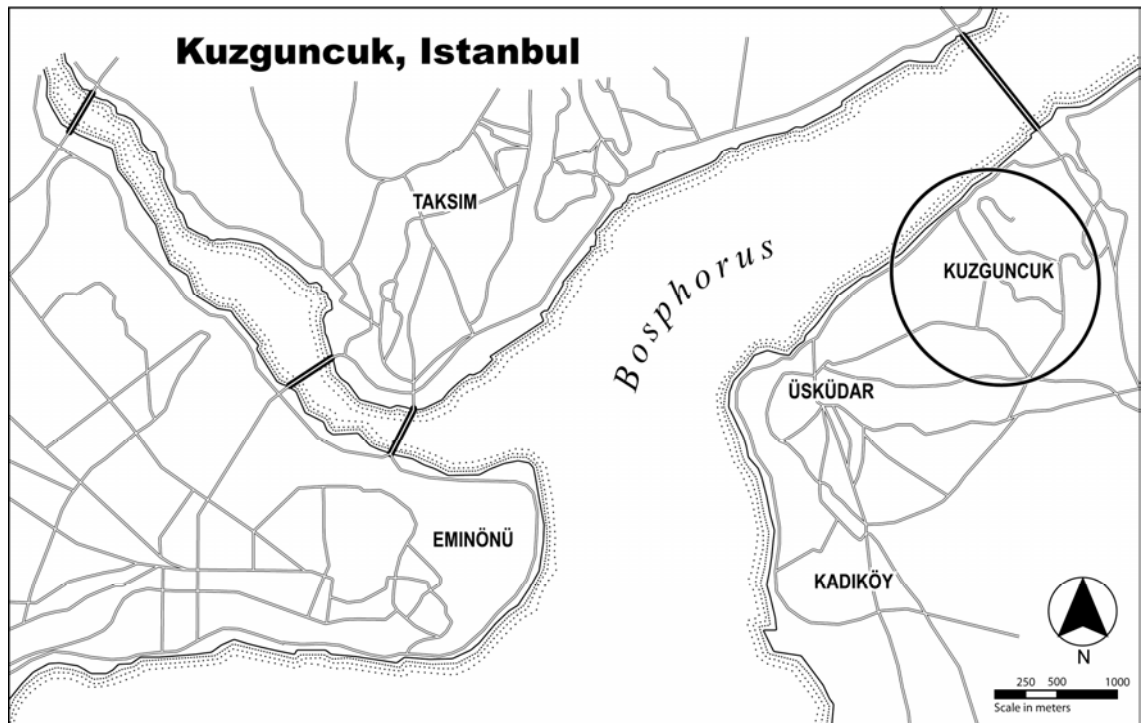
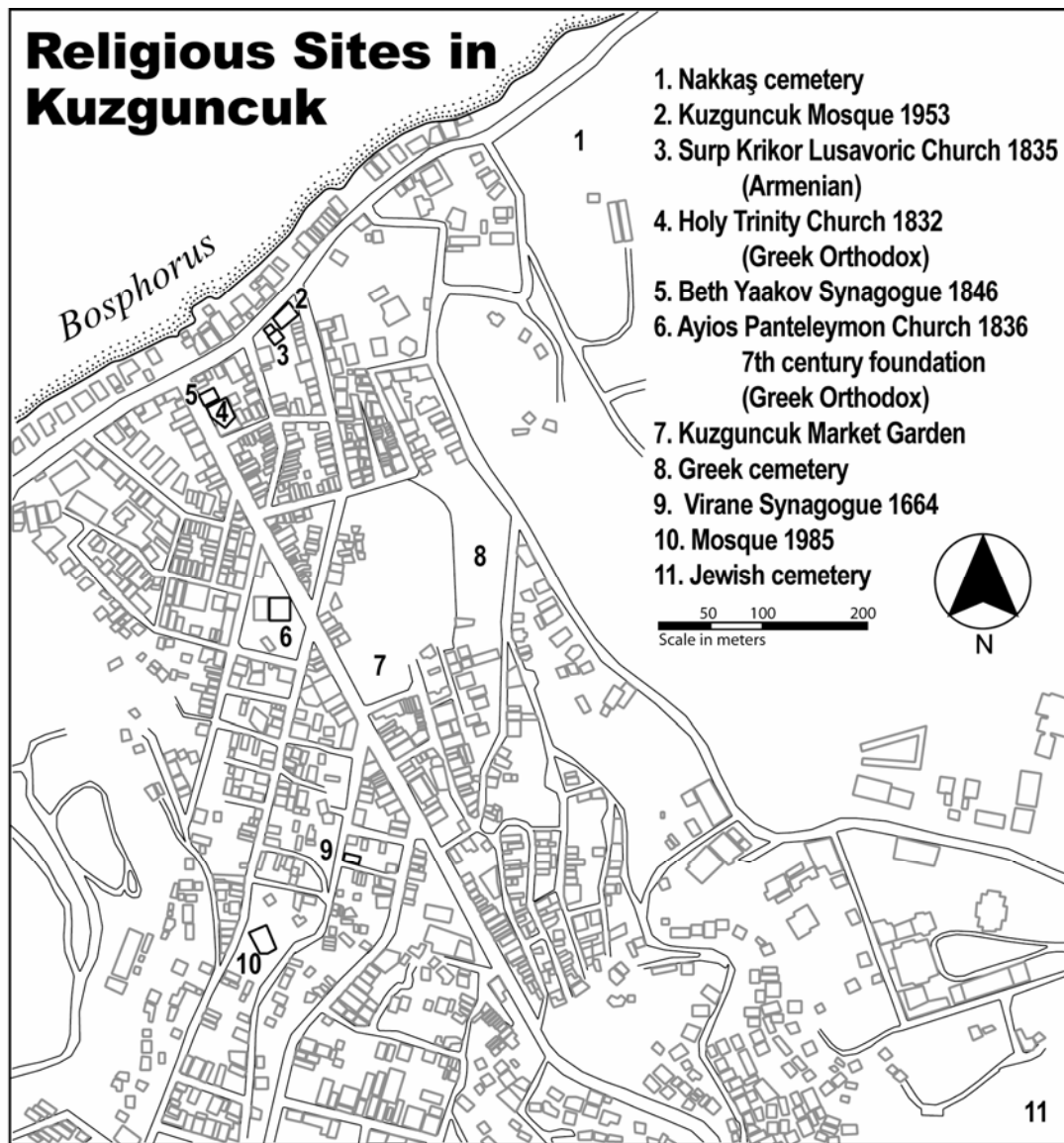


Fig.4 Kuzguncuk, Istanbul

The foundations of Kuzguncuk's earliest Greek Orthodox church date back to the seventh century. In its early history, Kuzguncuk was possibly a Byzantine settlement connected to a monastery called the Hermolaos Monastery (Deleon 1998, 86).

Fig.5 Religious Sites in Kuzguncuk



Early homes in the neighborhood were built around a creek that flowed into the sea. Kuzguncuk's name traces back to its old Greek name of Kotsinitza or to the legend of Kuzgun Baba (see Fig.5). In 1492, when Jews were expelled from Spain, the Ottoman Empire welcomed these new exiles. Kuzguncuk is a historically important place for Jewish history in Istanbul (Kastoryano 1992, Shaw 1991) and the graves in the Jewish cemetery there date back to its early Sephardic migrants of the sixteenth century. Literature on Bosphorus history and popular memory refer to this cemetery as the holiest and most preferred burial place for Jews of old Istanbul. Legend states that this cemetery was the last stop on European, Jewish pilgrimages to Jerusalem (Aksoy 1997). Kuzguncuk's oldest synagogue, Virane Synagogue, was built in 1664. It is located in the 'upper' part of the neighborhood on the edges of Kuzguncuk's historic settlement core. This synagogue served the 'farming mahalle' of Jews who lived in this boundary area, whose population grew through the 1800s⁵ Kuzguncuk's larger Beth Yaakov Synagogue was built in 1846 (Banoğlu 1966, 81).

According to the travel narratives of Ghukas Inciciyan (1758-1833), Kuzguncuk was a mixed settlement of Greeks, Jews, and Armenians, with a population so small that "a large part of Kuzguncuk is a cemetery, and those buried there number more than the live inhabitants" (Inciciyan 2000, 151). Its population grew significantly in the eighteenth century. The Ottoman policy of *sürgün*, forced exile of some groups

⁵ A request to expand the synagogue by one floor to accommodate the growing population was submitted in 1870. Başbakanlık Arşivi, Cevdet Adliye #1073 23 Ş 1287. Interviews indicate that Jews continued to live in this area until the 1950s in the small houses that stand there today, which were built by Jewish families in the early 1900s. Thanks to Christine Philliou for identifying this document.

(including Greeks and Jews) from provinces to Istanbul, aimed to boost population and improve the economy in the capital. Voluntary economic migration from the east to the imperial city increased in the mid 1800s due to opportunities created by the central bureaucracy and the boosts of foreign investment in Istanbul (Clay 1999, 5).

Between the 1840s and 1880s Istanbul's population increased from 400,000 to 800,000⁶. The proliferation of churches and synagogues during this period indicates that Kuzguncuk's population increased as well, with Greek, Jewish, and Armenian migrants from Anatolia. Migrants in Kuzguncuk, like others in Istanbul, built new congregations affiliated by common origin, language, and confessional tie⁷. The increase in religious buildings in Kuzguncuk during the nineteenth century reflects this type of migration pattern.

Ohannes Amira Serverian completed Kuzguncuk's Armenian church, St. Gregory the Illuminator (Surp Krikor Lusavoriç), in 1835 (Tuğlacı 1991, 169). The architect hailed from the Anatolian city of Kayseri, and the church was built for a group of Kayseri migrants. According to local knowledge, the church was built for workers of the Beylerbeyi palace. Reportedly, the church in Bağlarbaşı was so far away from

⁶ Census data for Kuzguncuk is not available. It is collected only by the local *muhtar*, or headman, and his records are closed. The national census does not organize population data by *mahalle*.

⁷ Migrants from provinces frequently built new religious buildings, recreating with new congregations the localities they left behind. It was not unusual for a single *mahalle* to contain more than one congregation of the same *millet* but of different origin (Augustinos 1992, 39). Yet all *mahalle* residents lived within an administrative structure, subject to local religious leaders in legal matters. Their membership in the *millet* provided important connections for social life in terms of social or economic opportunities that lay beyond the *mahalle*.

Beylerbeyi that the head worker was late to work every morning because of his daily visit to church. The pasha gave the architect money and his permission to build a church closer to the palace, so it was built in Kuzguncuk. This community grew, and in 1868 they requested an addition of a priest's room to their church⁸.

The two Greek Orthodox churches in Kuzguncuk were built by people from Kayseri, as well. The smaller church, Holy Trinity Church, was built in 1832 with financial support from a sailor and a fisherman originally from of Sinesos, a village near Kayseri. This church was rebuilt from its foundations in 1871. The larger church, Ayios Panteleymon, was built in 1836 (and restored in 1911) on the foundation of a much older church. These restorers were from Sinesos and Konya⁹.

In 1865 a fire swept Kuzguncuk and burned five hundred shops along the main street. When the market area was restored, the Şirket Hayriye company built a boat station in Kuzguncuk for new steam boat service to Istanbul (Banoğlu 1966, 81). Steamboats connected Istanbul to Anatolia, calling in at provincial cities such as Trabzon along the Black Sea coast. People road these vessels to Istanbul, not only from Black Sea areas but also from the southeast of Turkey. Many settled in the Bosphorus villages like Kuzguncuk, as they weren't all able to find work in the city (Clay 1999, 14). Among the significant migrant communities to arrive in Istanbul were Christian craftsmen, artisans and construction workers from the east (ibid., 6). Kuzguncuk's Armenian population grew significantly during this time.

⁸ Başbakanlık Arşivi, Cevdet Adliye #2000 16 M 1284 (1868). Thanks to Christine Philliou for identifying this document.

⁹ Thanks to Christine Philliou for reading and translating the inscriptions.

The steamboat integrated Kuzguncuk into Istanbul's urban fabric, and the urban elite built residences there. The hills above Kuzguncuk and the shores of the Bosphorus provided views for the summer mansions and waterfront yalis of pashas and wealthy Ottomans. Kuzguncuk's earliest Muslim population is from this elite community (Çelik 1986). The Uryanizade family, descendants of Cemil Molla Pasha, constructed a small mescit for this Muslim minority on the seaside.

In Kuzguncuk, in 1914, there were 1600 Armenians, 400 Jews, 70 Muslims, 250 Greeks, and 4 foreigners (Banoglu 1966, 81). Kuzguncuk's population fluctuated greatly with the migrations of the nineteenth century. In 1914, Kuzguncuk had a large Armenian population. This community declined shortly after that as Armenians in Kuzguncuk began to leave, many of them to resettle in the hills above the neighborhood in nearby Bağlarbaşı¹⁰. The early twentieth century character of Kuzguncuk became cosmopolitan as stronger ties to the city impacted its local culture. The French-Jewish association, the Alliance Israelite Universelle, founded French-language boys' and girls' schools in Kuzguncuk. There was also an Armenian school on Yenigün Street, and a Greek school on Behlul Street. A Jewish charity, La Unyon, provided aid to Kuzguncuk's poor (Kastoryano 1992). Greeks, Jews, and Armenians worked locally as tradespeople and craftsmen, and also operated shops along the main street, including pastry, pudding and sweet shops, pharmacies and doctors' offices, family-run corner stores, and a shoe store. Others commuted to the old city for work via steam ferry.

¹⁰ In 1896 Armenian workers were expelled from Istanbul (Clay 1999, 11); Kuzguncuk's carpenters, builders, and artisans might have started to emigrate at this earlier date.

By the 1940s, migrants from villages near the Black Sea cities of Inebolu and Rize began to arrive in Kuzguncuk. They built a mosque next to the Armenian church in 1952¹¹. They built new houses and grew food in gardens by their homes and began to work for the minority-owned shops on Kuzguncuk’s main street or on fishing and ferry boats. Women sewed or cleaned homes. Popular memory of this period describes a truly cosmopolitan culture in which it was not uncommon for residents to speak a little Ladino (Spanish spoken by Sephardic Jews), Greek, Armenian, or French. Kuzguncuk’s older residents remember the special qualities of different religious holidays and sharing them with their neighbors. A mix of social classes shared the spaces of the main street, but most people in Kuzguncuk lived by humble means. Kuzguncuk was known as a warm and folksy place, and sayings about the neighborhood reflect this place identity: “In Beylerbeyi, the *mahalle* is polite; In Kuzguncuk, if they’re polite, they’re famous.”¹²

And in a story about a steam ferry captain and why he was always late coming back from the Bosphorus line compares Kuzguncuk to the nearby elite neighborhood of

¹¹ Local folklore cites the presence of this mosque next to the Armenian church as physical evidence of exceptional tolerance because the church ‘gave’ the land to the mosque to be built. Such a transfer of property would have been legally impossible. In fact, a Jewish family owned three houses along the coast road there, and this property was sold to a Muslim who donated or sold it to provide space for the mosque. It took some time for the mosque to be built and there was some contention over its presence next to the church.

¹² “Beylerbeyi eğerce mahalli kibar olur. Kuzguncuğun kibari fakat namdar olur.” (Banoğlu 1966, 81).

Beylerbeyi: “What can I do, sir, what with all the politeness in Beylerbeyi and all the pushy crowds in Kuzguncuk, I can’t take off on time”.¹³

Turkification

The period of the first wave of rural-urban migration in Istanbul happened just as the most significant anti-minority actions were enforced and non-Muslims left the city by the thousands. Turkification of the 1940s-1960s has its roots in earlier policies which emerged, in part, from Turkey’s political relationship with Europe after the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The following section briefly describes this early history to provide historic context for the topic of the dissertation.

The growing presence of European powers in the nineteenth century created resentment against non-Muslims because many of them had economic or political ties to Europe (Schroeter 2002, 106). State leaders were concerned that Europe would meddle in Turkey’s affairs through its minorities (Aktar 2000, 42). Tension between Muslims and non-Muslims, which existed during late Ottoman rule, continued through the early years of the Turkish republic and manifested on a larger political scale in the program of Turkification. Turkification was an economic, political, and cultural movement founded in the ethnic and linguistic identification of the new state as Turkish and Muslim. Istanbul was particularly affected because of its long status as the cultural and economic heart of Turkey and the significant presence of Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and foreigners in the city who gave it its special cosmopolitan quality. The emergence of

¹³ “Ne yapayım efendim, Beylerbeyi’nin teşrifatından, Kuzguncuk’un da haşaratından iskelelerden zamanında kalkamıyorum ki...” (Ayverdi 1976, 377).

Turkish nationalism had devastating consequences for cosmopolitan urban culture, not only in Istanbul, but across the entire region (Meijer 1999, 2).

Turkish national identity as ethnically Turkish and Muslim was threatened by the minority claim to place in the nation through territory and property. The beginnings of Turkish nationalism in homogenizing territory lie in the wars (the Balkan Wars, the First World War and the Turkish Revolutionary War) that preceded the emergence of the state, especially in the extermination and forced emigration of Armenians in Anatolia in 1915. Before World War I, Turkey's non-Muslims constituted 20% of the entire population, but this percentage decreased to merely 2.5% after the war (Keyder 1987). After the Lausanne agreement in 1922, Greece and Turkey agreed on a population exchange with the desire to "give greater unity and cohesion to the nation and the fatherland" (Lewis 2002, 354). The population exchange between Greece and Turkey witnessed 1,200,000 Anatolian Greeks relocated to Greece and the exchange of 400,000 Muslims from Greek territory to Turkey (Aktar 2000, 17).

Turkification in Istanbul

In spite of the sweeping demographic changes of the early 1920s, Istanbul Greeks were retained a special status as a place of minority culture. The high concentration of minority residents made Istanbul a particular target for later Turkification policies (Aktar 2000), to dramatic effect on the city's cultural landscape. Greek writers believe that Turkish policies towards Greek minorities has been fueled with intent to force the community to leave, and cite the near total disappearance of Istanbul's Imbriot and Tenediot Greek communities as evidence (Bahcheli 1990, 171).

Others cite the targeting of Istanbul Jews as evidence of Turkification policy in Istanbul: A report made to the general assembly after the population exchange stated that while the population exchange solved the Greek minority problem for Turkey, Istanbul remained a problem because there were over 30,000 Jews there and “it would be better if there weren’t” (Aktar 2000, 41-42).

Since the beginning of the republic, Turkey’s leaders wanted to increase the participation of Muslims in the economy and reduce minority influence in the economy, especially in Istanbul (Bahcheli 1990, 172). Turkey’s economy was dominated by Greeks, Jews, and Armenians in trade, shipping, industry, the professions, and in banking (Issawi 1999, 5). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Istanbul’s population was one million but only 44% of the population was Muslim. Public services were dominated by Muslims, but only 15% of people working in trade were Muslim (Bali 1999, 196). During the teens and early 1920s, boycotts against non-Muslim businesses and the expulsion of minorities from hundreds of jobs where they had dominated resulted in thousands of non-Muslims leaving Istanbul¹⁴. By 1929 70,000 non-Muslim people had left Turkey (Bali 1999, 231).

¹⁴ See (Bali 1999, 198; Aktar 2000, 59). In 1922, the National Turkish Trade Association was founded to determine which businesses were Turkish. The association discovered that 97% of the import-export trade in Istanbul, and all shops, stores, restaurants, and entertainment centers in Beyoğlu, were owned by minorities (Aktar 2000, 56). This survey was a precursor to actions taken with the aim of Turkifying the city’s economy; in 1923, non-Muslims were expelled from trading jobs and insurance companies (Bali 1999, 211). In 1924 minorities were barred from service jobs, bars, restaurants, coffeehouses, as well as trades such as boat captain, fisherman, and streetcar driver, jobs previously dominated by non-Muslims (ibid., 214). In 1934 a law identified further minority-dominated professions to be prohibited to foreigners (ibid.,

Turkification policies in the 1920s and 1930s in Istanbul targeted not only property and economic rights, but also non-Turkish language and culture¹⁵. In 1928 the “Citizen Speak Turkish” (Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş) campaign forbade speaking any other language than Turkish¹⁶. The campaign aims were posted on fliers and in newspapers around Istanbul, arousing violent protests. In 1935 teaching any language in schools besides Turkish was prohibited (Bali 1999, 306). The policy provoked violence between Jews, Armenians, or Greeks who defiantly spoke other languages in public spaces and ripped down campaign flyers, and nationalist Muslim Turks who intervened.

In spite of Turkey’s proclaimed neutrality during the Second World War and the acceptance of many escaping German Jewish intellectuals to Turkey, the 1930s and early 1940s witnessed the influence of European fascism in Turkey¹⁷. This political atmosphere combined with the decades of growing anti-minority sentiment.

228). Over 9,000 people were left out of work and most of them migrated to Greece. Greek, Bulgarian, Spanish and Italian Jewish citizens began to leave Turkey, and their property was taken by the Turkish state (Aktar 2000, 60).

¹⁵ The Istanbul *milletvekili* (governor), Hamdullah Suphi, stated that minorities cannot be true Turks, and a clause to the constitution was added, formally initiating the cultural Turkification movement¹⁵ (Bali 1999, 103). He made statements that Muslims shouldn’t mix with minorities, and that Jews, because of speaking Spanish, faced a barrier to “becoming true Turks” (ibid., 107).

¹⁶ A speech to the general assembly in 1924 indicates that the campaign was founded on the perceived ‘problem’ of so many people speaking Greek in Istanbul (Aktar 2000, 44).

¹⁷ Anti-semitic groups formed in Turkey. They published magazines and handed out swastikas to university students (Aktar 2000, 72). The Struma boat incident of 1941 (during which hundreds of Jews fleeing Nazi Europe were not permitted to land on their way to Palestine, and died) also reflected anti-Semitism in state policy (Bali 1999).

The Property Tax

The 1942 Property Tax, the Varlık Vergisi, was levied most heavily against the non-Muslim minorities of Istanbul. The fact that there had been an ongoing cultural, economic and political movement of Turkification since the early part of the century suggests that the Varlık Vergisi was much more than merely a poorly administered tax for wartime, which is the usual rationale for its implementation. The wartime tax had a political and cultural aim (Aktar 2000, 135). In 1942, a committee was formed to determine the rates of taxation. The committee used a subjective assessment of last names to determine which minority groups people belonged to, and minorities were taxed to a level outrageously disproportionate to the amount of property they actually owned (Ökte 1987). The tax resulted in state confiscation of much minority property in Istanbul as well as a massive wave of minority emigration, especially of Jews.

Only 13% of the Varlık Vergisi was paid by Muslims, and 97% of all properties sold to pay the tax were sold by non-Muslims (Aktar 2000, 154)¹⁸. The richest Muslim Turks were taxed at negligible rates while Jews, Armenians, and Greeks of less wealth

¹⁸ Payment was required in 15 days, and non payers were sent to work camps (Lewis 2002); nearly all the people in work camps were Jews (Akar 2000). People over 55, even men as old as 75 and 80 years old, were sent to work camps, and sick people were taken from hospitals and sent as well (Bali 1999, 455). The majority of Jews in Istanbul during the 1940s were not wealthy but belonged to the lower- and middle-classes (ibid., 437). Many sold their possessions at far less than their value to pay the tax (ibid., 444). The municipality set up centers for the sale of personal items to pay the tax, and some property was confiscated by the government if the owners couldn't pay; in this way property was transferred to the state (Aktar 2000). The only archival research on the Varlık Vergisi was done by Ayhan Aktar who studied records in the (now closed to researchers) Deeds and Records Halls (Tapu İdaresi) for the Istanbul districts of Beyoğlu-Şişli, Eminönü, Fatih, Kadıköy, and the Marmara Islands.

were taxed to the extreme. According to Aktar, “Many famous places in Beyoğlu important to the building complex of Istanbul’s cultural and social map, with the goal of paying the tax, changed hands with the movement of a pen” (ibid., 204). The press at the time spoke directly of ‘nationalizing’ the landscape, for example in the transfer of an especially beautiful building by the Turkish state Sümerbank (Aktar 2000, 205). This discourse was also extended to discussions of ‘Turkifying’ Beyoğlu (ibid. 206). The tax caused more minority emigration: in 1948 30,000 Jews left for Israel.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Cyprus conflict had pressing impact on the situation of minorities in Istanbul. The island of Cyprus was leased by the Ottoman Empire to Britain in 1878 and became a British colony in 1915. In 1954 the Greek government claimed the island as part of Greece, and Turks claimed it should be returned to Turkish sovereignty. On the 6-7 September 1955 the conflict impacted Istanbul locally when a state-led riot against Greek owned-properties swept the city. The incident was provoked by reports that Atatürk’s birthplace in Salonica had been bombed. It was later discovered to have been a state-led riot. The massive destruction of minority (particularly Greek) property, and the violence created fear. After 1955, thousands of Greeks left Istanbul. This event represents the beginning of the nearly total exodus of this historic community from Istanbul (Bahcheli 1990, 173; Pope 1997, 115).

Deportation of Greeks

Greeks of Istanbul were again victimized by Turkish-Greek relations in 1964. After the ‘Bloody Christmas’ massacres of ethnic Turkish Cypriots in December of 1963, the İnönü government exacted revenge by targeting Istanbul’s local Greeks. The

Prime Minister canceled a 1930 treaty with Greece that granted Greek citizens residence in Istanbul. These people were born in Istanbul; many of them were elderly and had never been to Greece. They held Greek passports only because their ancestors came from provinces of the Ottoman Empire that were incorporated into Greece after 1830 (Alexandris 1983). Nine thousand people were legally affected (Bahcheli 1990, 174), but thousands more were related to them by marriage. The total emigration was 40,000 (Pope 1997, 116).¹⁹ The emigrants were only permitted to take twenty kilos of property and \$22. Their property was confiscated by the Turkish state (Bahcheli 1990, 174)²⁰; the Turkish treasury benefited with property valued between 200 and 500 million

¹⁹ Another source argues that the population of Greeks in Istanbul, only a small number of which were actually Greek citizens, decreased from 120,000 to three thousand after the decision (Demir and Akar 1999, 190).

²⁰ One of the most disputed areas of this history concerns the status and consequences for what happened to the property Greeks and Rum (local Greeks of Turkish nationality) left behind in 1964. People took whatever options available at immediate notice. As a result, legal situations concerning these properties are very complex, making it impossible to generalize as to their fate and status. Some people left property to local Greek foundations or to Turkish friends who remained in Istanbul. Old property deeds in Istanbul are complicated by inheritance laws that split property among family members in shares. In order to inherit or sell property, all family members and their inheritors on the deed must agree on the sale and be present. Sometimes dozens of people are involved and they reside in cities all over the world in diaspora. Lawsuits to reclaim property can be difficult because of the lack of clear birth and death records or the absence of surnames on old Ottoman property records. According to Demir and Akar, properties that are abandoned, if no one comes forward to claim them for ten years, are legally claimed by the state Treasury (the Hazine); *forty percent* of the properties abandoned in 1964 were lost to the Turkish state this way (Demir and Akar 1999, 160). In 1988 Greeks who had abandoned property during the 1964 deportation were allowed to return to Istanbul to resell their properties, but a law passed after the deportation, freezing bank accounts and real estate transactions (Demir and Akar 1999, 190), rendered property transacted in this way valueless in 1988 (ibid. 161) when Greeks were allowed to return to sell and claim property. This deportation made cheap formerly minority-owned properties available for sale and appropriation.

dollars (Pope 1997). Other property owned by Turkish citizens married to Greeks was left in an ambiguous legal status²¹. The fear generated by the forced deportation²² caused many more to leave. The largest waves of emigration of Greeks from Turkey coincided with the most strained periods between Greece and Turkey.²³

In 1974, Turkey occupied and declared the founding of the Turkish republic of Cyprus in northern Cyprus. Cyprus continued to be a bone of contention which placed minority citizens in Istanbul at risk²⁴. The Turkish government continued to exercise tight control of Greek church-owned property; for example, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate wasn't able to secure permission to repair damage done in a 1941 fire until 1987 (Pope 1997, 117). As late as in 1988 Foreign Minister Hasan Esat Işık stated, "There is no direct connection between the Cyprus problem and the Greek minority and the patriarchate", but he added "if Athens refused to deal with Ankara over Cyprus this would have its effects on the Greek minority in Turkey" (Bahcheli 1990, 175).

Today Turkey is 99.9% Muslim. Ayhan Aktar argues that this is a result of the 1942 tax and the 1955 riots: "From a cultural perspective, the result of these important

²¹ The landscapes of neighborhoods (e.g. Tepebaşı, Galata) which were primarily Greek reflect this ambiguous legal status as many empty buildings continue to stand unrenovated, unable to be purchased or sold because owners are resident in Greece or untraceable.

²² Demir and Akar refer to how it caused suicides and insanity (1999, 183)

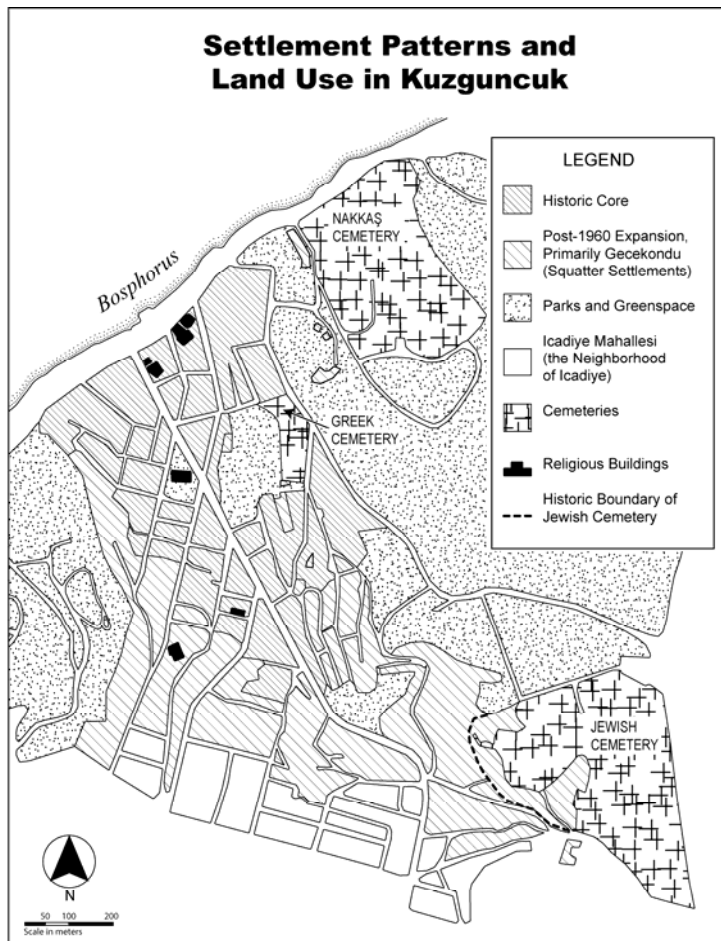
²³ The Greek population declined from 100,000 in 1923 to 5000 in 1988 (Bahcheli 1990, 176). By the 1990s, Istanbul's old elite Greek community was reduced to approximately 2,500 old and poor residents (Pope 1997, 118).

²⁴ At the time of writing, however, negotiations are underway to bring a peaceful resolution to the conflict and bring both parts of Cyprus into membership in the European Union. Turkey is eager to be conciliatory with hopes of also joining the European Union.

developments is that the non-Muslim minorities, the Ottoman world's treasure to the republic, were erased from the scene by a few decisions of the state" (Aktar 2000, 208). In Istanbul the loss of minority populations caused remaining non-Muslims to leave old neighborhoods and recluster in new areas. After the decades of anti-minority policies, the "frequently encountered" tropes of "tolerance" and "living together in peace" (Aktar 2000, 208) in memories of cosmopolitan Istanbul betray a certain irony.

Kuzguncuk Today

Fig.6 Settlement Patterns and Land Use in Kuzguncuk



Today's Kuzguncuk remains in close proximity to and connected administratively to the municipality of Üsküdar, which is now a large economic and transportation center. The historic core of Kuzguncuk is concentrated along its main street which was formed by covering the old creek that flowed down the valley into the sea. The upper part of Kuzguncuk, where the creek originated on the hill, is where the historic Jewish cemetery forms a border on one side and the *mahalle* of Icadiye meets it to the other. Kuzguncuk is bordered to the north on the seaside by (Muslim) Nakkaş Cemetery and a military area which was formed in 1973 to protect the first Bosphorus bridge. To the south is the Fetih Paşa Korusu, a small park with walking paths which surrounds the historic mansion of Fetih Paşa. Because of its valley location and the relative lack of boundaries with neighboring residential areas, Kuzguncuk has an enclosed geography which has helped preserve its historic fabric. Kuzguncuk has a large population of new migrants, however, who built squatter settlements on the neighborhood's periphery, including: on the old Jewish cemetery; next to the Fetih Paşa Korusu where they also built a mosque in 1985; and near Nakkaş cemetery (see Fig.6, Settlement Patterns and Land Use in Kuzguncuk).

The Jewish and Christian families resident in Kuzguncuk number merely a handful. Most of them are intermarried to Muslims, signifying the true decline and near disappearance of the cohesiveness of their identities as religiously and linguistically defined communities. The churches and synagogues are maintained largely by people who live in other neighborhoods and return to Kuzguncuk to attend weekend services

and maintain the buildings. The Kuzguncuk synagogue's congregation, for example, lives mostly in Gayrettepe, Şişli, Caddebostan, and Bostanci. The Armenian church is only open on special prayer days. Its congregation is very small, and there is almost no Kuzguncuk Armenian community left.²⁵

Today Kuzguncuk's historic landscape is famous because it is the setting of numerous television shows, films, and commercials that romanticize the *mahalle*. The old Greek and Jewish houses are being rebuilt by Muslim artists, engineers, and intellectuals. Today the largest population group in Kuzguncuk is Muslim, from the Black Sea region. The next chapter opens with stories told by these Black Sea Muslims, the Muslim artists and intellectuals, and the descendant of an old Greek family. These narratives of place are sited in the Kuzguncuk Market Garden.

²⁵ In 2001 I identified three Armenian people over the age of 60 of Kuzguncuk origin.

Chapter Two

Garden Street/*Bostan* Sokak:

Narratives of Contested Place

“Our soul, our pride, our everything, our garden”¹¹

I first traveled to Kuzguncuk on a warm summer day in 2001. A friend and I boarded a crowded bus from Üsküdar, and as we made the short trip along the coast road, I wondered whether Kuzguncuk would resemble any of my mental images of its old-fashioned character. We were going to a neighborhood party, a *şenlik* organized by the neighborhood organization to raise awareness for their struggle to protect an historic market garden from development. As I walked up tree-lined Icadiye Street into Kuzguncuk, I became aware of a separate, intimate space I never saw from the bus stop.

The main street was full of cars parked along its narrow shoulders and people talking in groups on the sidewalks. I heard music as we turned onto Garden Street and saw a scene alive with activity and collective energy. There were people from various new civil-society organizations (*sivil toplumsal kuruluşları*) in Istanbul, chatting up the passersby and collecting signatures for various causes. As we stood among the crowd my friend pointed out that the garden (the *bostan*) was behind us, behind a low concrete wall. The wall was covered with bright child-painted splotches of purple, orange, yellow, and green, with words in wobbly capital letters that pleaded, “don’t destroy our

¹¹ “Canımız, gururumuz, herşeyimiz, bostanımız” was a slogan on signs carried by children in the neighborhood of Kuzguncuk during protests in the year 2000 against building on the local neighborhood garden.

green!” and “the garden belongs to the people of Kuzguncuk!”. It was a vivid and glorious claim to conserve a place (see Fig.7).



Fig.7 The Garden Belongs to the People of Kuzguncuk²

At the start of my research, my relationship with the neighborhood was largely defined by the friendships I formed with core members of the Kuzguncuk Neighborhood Association (the Kuzguncuklular Derneği). I only later realized the extent to which their perspectives on neighborhood issues were to shape my own assumptions. I attended their meetings every week and each time met acquaintances who always welcomed me and pulled my chair closer into the circle around the formica table. Sometimes, after the meetings, I sat with younger members of the group. We set chairs on the sidewalk to enjoy the cool breezes and admire the trees in the garden

² All photographs in this dissertation were taken by the author.

across the street. My new friends told me childhood stories about playing in the garden and listening to its nightingales. They wanted to protect this place of memories for future generations of Kuzguncuk kids. They told me about why the garden was threatened by development, and shared their dreams of building an organic garden project there with an educational activity center for children. They asked me if I could help them apply for a grant for this project from the European Union. These people were passionate about urban issues in Istanbul, and were excited by encouraging contacts they'd made with organizations across the city, as well as with large international groups, such as the American Friends Service Committee and Habitat for Humanity. Their kindness and their political identification as a green, grassroots organization made me sympathetic to their cause, no matter my espoused objectivity as a researcher.

The most active people in the neighborhood association (hereafter referred to as the *dernek*) were Kuzguncuk-born, young members of Black Sea migrant families who began moving to the neighborhood in 1938. They worked closely with a group of highly educated professionals and artists who moved to Kuzguncuk after 1980 to purchase and restore historic houses. The organization drew even broader support from the neighborhood during signature campaigns. This social mix is fairly uncommon in Istanbul. Not everyone supported *dernek* activities, however, including residents who were afraid of potential turbulent political activity, people who lived in peripheral, poorer settlements in the neighborhood, and the religious institutions that represent

Kuzguncuk's near-vanished non-Muslim communities.³ The *dernek* represents dominant visions of the past and future cultural geography of Kuzguncuk. The discourse surrounding the garden reveals it to be a powerful place for the people involved in the movement; with their activities there, the *dernek* inscribes their 'Kuzguncuklu' identity in the neighborhood landscape.

Fieldwork, however, revealed the garden to be a contested place. The Turkish state confiscated the garden in 1977 from a Greek family; its title deed provides an undisputable example of illegal dispossession of private property by the Turkish Ministry of Foundations. Dimitria Teyze is the last remaining member (and inheritor), in Istanbul, of the Greek family who owned the garden. For her, it represents proof of her identity as a 'real' 'Kuzguncuklu'. It also represents her loss of property as an Istanbul Greek. Throughout this chapter I read the *bostan* as a place filled with emotion

³ The *dernek* struggle has not been easy. In the words of Kuzguncuk Residents' Association members and on their website, "Kuzguncuk halkı karşı çıktı", "the people of Kuzguncuk came out in resistance", implying that the struggle was unified from the beginning. In fact, not everyone came out in protest at first. Some were afraid of political action because of what happened to one resident who openly opposed an illegal parking lot in Kuzguncuk and was badly beaten, allegedly by the mafia (Erdem 1999). Other residents resisted joining the *dernek* for other reasons. Shopowners hoped their stores would benefit from the development, although they later joined the *dernek* cause. (Tankuter 1992, 6). Even today some people view any political activity as dangerous and undesirable. In 2001 a *dernek* member said that when he distributed fliers about the community garden project, an old friend accused him of being communist. Such a perception is extremely negative in Turkey, because of political violence during the 1970s which polarized communities in Istanbul. Neighborhood organizations continue to face these perceptions. The Kuzguncuklular Derneği membership remains fairly small. Most meetings had no more than five members, and the largest meeting I witnessed had approximately 20 members. Often the meetings were cancelled because no one attended. Official membership, however, is 80. The population of Kuzguncuk is over 6000.

and memory as well as an integral part of the neighborhood's cultural landscape.

Memory narratives of this place serve in different ways as identity markers for groups of people who share the same neighborhood space but stake oppositional claims to being 'Kuzguncuklu'.

Saving the Bostan

Kuzguncuk's historic market garden lies in the heart of the neighborhood. This *bostan* is remembered fondly by residents for its fresh fruits and vegetables and for its owner, Ilya, whose Greek name evokes a time when Greeks, Jews, and Armenians had a significant presence in Kuzguncuk. During the 1980s, the garden was abandoned for a time, and residents picked figs and allowed their children to play. In practice, its status was in limbo, like many of the other Vakıf-owned properties previously belonging to minority families. It suffered the fate of similar spaces and was sometimes used for unregulated purposes, such as the seasonal slaughter of animals for the sacrifice feast, or for dumping trash. In retrospect, however, it was valued by residents who treasured the open, green, quiet space in their neighborhood's center.

Opposition to the planned development of the *bostan* began in 1992 when the Ministry of Foundations (the Vakıflar) rented it with a ten-year lease to Mehmet Haberal, the director and owner of the Turkish Organ Transplant Foundation (Turkiye Organ Nakli ve Yanik Tedavi Vakfi). Haberal immediately announced plans to build a private dialysis center on the property.⁴ One resident told me about a confrontation she

⁴ Several years later, when his plans for a hospital were thwarted, Haberal tried to build a private school. The Bosphorus Planning Ministry unexpectedly changed their regional

had with him while she was walking in the garden and he was there, assessing the space. She told him they wanted to keep the *bostan* green; he told her they were mere women who couldn't stop him from building the hospital no matter how they tried. In mobilizing to prevent his plans, residents had to raise awareness of the problem of the potential illegal building in the neighborhood and in the city and to identify their options for action. They worked to persuade other residents that the stakes were high enough to be worth risking political action. They argued the hospital would create poisonous air pollution, physical waste, and traffic congestion, and also crowd the neighborhood center. They collected over a thousand signatures in a door-to-door signature campaign from local residents who demanded that the building project be stopped. The core group of activists (the initial activists were local and foreign-born highly educated professionals) defined specific roles to be managed by people who had useful or particular skills. One resident who lived close to the garden watched it daily and informed others immediately of any activity. A local writer connected to the press used all of her contacts to get articles about the issue published as widely as possible. Another resident wrote dozens of *dilekçes*, official letters of request for action from local and national governmental bodies.

One of the most important avenues pursued by the neighborhood association involved research into the legal status of the garden. Residents worked together to

master plan and gave permission for a school, in spite of the violation of zoning laws. The proposed school was two blocks away from the existing school in Kuzguncuk which consistently ran under capacity. The school was not necessary and would not have benefited the neighborhood.

compile a file about the history of the *bostan* and its legal status. One person researched its history and obtained a copy of the original property deed explaining how it was acquired by the Ministry of Foundations. Local architects obtained a map of the Bosphorus plan that marks the garden as an agricultural area (*tarım alanı*) and thus protected by the Culture and Nature Preservation Committee (Kültür ve Tabiat Varlıklarını Koruma Kurulu) as a historic green area unavailable for development. Another resident lawyer obtained a copy of the 2960 Bosphorus Law stating that all sites along the Bosphorus are protected from any new building. Residents also discovered that, according to building codes, the space was too small for development. By 2000, Haberal changed his tactics, deciding instead to start planning a private school for the site. The *dernek* consolidated their arguments against building in a lawsuit filed against the Bosphorus Planning Bureau because the bureau changed the Bosphorus Master Plan to approve a school, and granted a building permit, in spite of the multiple illegalities of such a decision. The Kuzguncuklular Derneği sent a copy of the legal file they created to all the leaders of local political parties and to the local and national offices of administration responsible for the site. Because Haberal's lease started in 1992, and was good for ten years, the association prepared for the window of opportunity that would open when his lease would end in February of 2002. In 2001 they founded a cooperative (*Kooperativ*), which has different legal status than a *dernek*, for the purpose of potentially renting the garden for an organic farming and community education project.

In 2000 the association held a neighborhood festival to raise awareness for their cause. They organized music and food and invited people from other neighborhood associations in Istanbul as well as friends and media from all over the city. Newspaper and magazine articles showed photographs of angry residents with protest signs (“Keep our garden green!” “The *bostan* belongs to the people of Kuzguncuk!”). They experienced a huge, although tenuous, victory in 2002 when Haberal decided to give up his lease. The *dernek* organized a party that drew over 200 people to the *bostan* for music, picnicking, and celebration.

The Kuzguncuklular Derneği wanted to rent the garden, but the Vakıflar raised the rent to 2 milyar TL, an exaggerated price of about \$1400 per month. The *dernek* suspected it was set deliberately high and argued that because it was marked as an agricultural site on the Bosphorus Plan, the price must be accessible to someone who would use it for such a purpose. It was rented to a landscaping company. Their presence in the garden is the best possible compromise for the Kuzguncuklular Derneği. The *dernek* is proud of its victory, but they must remain vigilant. Their lawsuit against the planning board for approving the building of a school has not yet reached conclusion. Should the landscape company decide to leave the property, the *dernek* will have to find another ‘green’ tenant. There is no official legal decision the *dernek* can rely on to preempt illegal development in the future. Ongoing success in keeping the garden green depends on the *dernek* members. Their victory is an excellent example of how a small neighborhood association can fight irregular building practices in Istanbul.

During their struggle, the Kuzguncuk Neighborhood Association became known as among the most politically active of Istanbul's neighborhood organizations, along with the Arnavutköy Neighborhood Initiative (Arnavutköy Semt Girişimi) which was working to prevent the building of a third Bosphorus bridge that would destroy their neighborhood, and the Human Settlements Association (İnsan Yerleşimleri Derneği), a group that aimed to form a network to share information among new civil society organizations concerned with urban issues. After the August 1999 earthquake, local political activity centered on a sense of civil responsibility to preserve, protect, and inform city residents of their rights to a safe environment. Disaster preparedness became an important issue for the Kuzguncuklular Derneği, and with support from a foreign NGO (the American Friends Service Committee) they started gathering emergency supplies and educating residents on mitigating the effects of disaster. When they formed a disaster plan, one of the arguments for not building on the garden became the need to preserve an open space where the community could gather to distribute medical aid, information, and supplies in the event of a future earthquake. In a press release by the Kuzguncuklular Derneği they linked this need back to the problem of the corrupt system: "Last year, we saw how few are the available places to gather in the event of an earthquake.... Before even one year has passed since the recent huge earthquake disaster, another eye fell on another greenspace that is under protection along the Bosphorus. First as a 'cheap open area' and then as a 'private school' this mentality was forced on us."⁵ Kuzguncuklular Derneği members feel that protecting

⁵ "Geçen yıl, bir deprem anında sığınacağımız açık alanların ne kadar az olduğunu

Kuzguncuk is their collective responsibility; they act out of a new sense of their own accountability in Istanbul's future.

The post-earthquake civil society movement was a fragile, but important moment of change in which local residents began to feel safe in their new convictions that they had the right to protect their environments. They were also angry at the corrupt construction and building practices which caused such extensive earthquake damage. The *bostan* issue for the Kuzguncuk Neighborhood Association also concerned corruption, because throughout the ten years of his lease, Haberal's actions marked him as powerfully connected politically and above normal legal and bureaucratic procedures.

Kuzguncuk residents had never been shy about speaking out about their suspicions regarding the political connections behind the building project. When bulldozers entered the garden to test the soil for the foundation of the building, citizens gathered and protested, crying as they chanted a rhyme written by famous resident poet Can Yücel:⁶ "The cows have entered the garden". The poem appeared in a newspaper essay in which Yücel accuses the government of being undemocratic and despotic, making direct associations between government leaders and illegal profiteering. In another essay regarding corruption and the struggle for the garden, Kuzguncuk resident

gördük. ... Büyük deprem felaketinin üstünden daha bir yıl bile geçmeden, yine yeşil bir alana Boğaz'da koruma altındaki bir alana göz dikilmiştir. 'Ucuz arsa' peşindeki bu zihniyet, bu kez 'özel okul' tabelası ile karşımıza çıkmıştır." (Kuzguncuklular Derneği 2000)

⁶ "Dandini dandini dasdana/danalar girmis bostana" (Yücel 2002, 37). This rhyme refers to a children's lullaby.

and Boğaziçi University professor Uğur Tandoğan bitterly laments the fact that such a beautiful green space will likely be destroyed because Turkey’s laws are not enforced. He says soon the garden will be gone, and “don’t ask why, because in the words of Güngör Uras, ‘brother, this is Turkey’,”⁷. The tone of frustration resonates with countless conversations with people in Istanbul in which they lament with hopelessness about how corruption has ruined the city and destroyed the system that is supposed to prevent the future loss of historic or green spaces. “Congratulations. We ate Istanbul and finished its greens. We made Istanbul a cement city. Those who go to civilized countries and cities know it. In those cities, the color that strikes the eye most is green. But in our country, green causes an allergy. ... In our country, it cannot be said that those in the municipality and other foundations charged with protecting these spaces are using appropriately the laws founded to protect our areas of cultural and historic value. If those concerned with this job of protecting had done their jobs in the past, Istanbul would not be in this situation today.”⁸

Urbanization’s nostalgia and the garden struggle

The frustration with corruption and unplanned urbanization underlying the Kuzguncuk movement was often expressed with nostalgic memories of the past and a

⁷ “... Sanıyorum yakında bu bostan olmayacak... Nasıl olur demeyin. Çünkü, Güngör Uras’ın deyimiyle, ‘Burası Türkiye abicim’. Her şey olur.” (Tandoğan 2000).

⁸ “Gözümüz aydın. İstanbul’u yedik, yeşili bitirdik. İstanbul’u ‘beton şehir’ yaptık. Uygur ülkelerin, uygar şehirlerine gidenler bilir. Bu şehirlerde gözünüze en çok çarpan renk yeşildir. Ama yeşil, ülkemizde alerji yapıyor.” ... “Ama ülkemizde, kültür ve tarihi varlıklarımız koruma için kurduğumuz kuralların, belediyelerin ve değer kurumların da koruma görevlerini hakkıyla yaptıklarını söylemeyiz. Eğer bu ilgililer, görevlerini hakkıyla, üstendikleri tarihi görevin bilinci içine yapsalardı, İstanbul bu durumda olmazdı.” (ibid.)

vision for a better future. An article in *Nokta* magazine reported that “[Kuzguncuk residents] watched how cement masses surrounded Istanbul’s green and treed places with sadness. Now they don’t want the redbud trees in their garden covered with cement.”⁹ The *bostan* became a symbol of what was lost for Istanbul, and what will be lost for Kuzguncuk should the *bostan* be developed. The *bostan* became a “treasure chest”, a “cultural heritage that carries the greenness, the produce and all of Kuzguncuk’s memories. ... Now, inside this treasure chest, in our days, Ilya’s garden which is as valuable as gold with all its characteristics, will shortly be claimed with screams of panic that nothing will remain anywhere. Furthermore, our [places] we will claim, the places we are afraid of losing, our values, our culture, with the loss of our memories ... Ilya’s *bostan* has become a symbol of all of this.”¹⁰

Along with the longing for the greenness of Istanbul’s past was a deep nostalgia for a time of closeness and familiarity in small neighborhoods, when everyone knew everyone else. The garden became a symbol for the good old days and motivation to protect it came from a desire to bring this idea into the future. The discourse surrounding the struggle transformed the *bostan* from a green space into a beloved place filled with memories. A local youth is quoted in a newspaper article on the *bostan*

⁹ “Son 20-30 yılda İstanbul’un yeşil ve ağaçlık alanlarının beton yığınlarla çevrilmesini üzülerek izlemişler. Şimdi de bostandaki erguvanların da betonla kaplanmasına katlanmak istemiyorlar.” (Daniş and Değer 1992, 42).

¹⁰ “Şimdi, bu hazine sandığı içerisinde, gönümüzde, tüm özellikleriyle altın değeri taşıyan İlya’nın Bostanı’ndan, çok kısa bir süre sonra sahip çıkılacak hiçbir yerin kalmayacağı paniğiyle sahip ciğlikleri atılıyor. Artık sahip çıkacağımız, kaybetmekten korkacağımız yerlerimizi, değerlerimizi, kültürümüzü, anılarımızı gittikçe grileşen mavimizi ve yeşilimizi içinde barındırmasıyla tüm bunların simgesi haline dönüştü İlya’nın Bostan’ı.” (Özden 2000,13).

issue: “All of our childhoods passed in this garden. It was a playground for all of us. It was until recently... until the hospital’s influence, and a fence was put around it... The garden is Kuzguncuk’s lungs. Kuzguncuk takes its breath from it. They should donate the garden to us... Kuzguncuk has a warm neighborhood quality to it. This quality is lost in Istanbul now. All of my friends here are friends of mine from childhood. We grew up on the same streets, studied at the same schools. The corner store grocer, the butcher, the vegetable seller, the driver, the painter, the mover, the doctor, the teacher.. we are like a family here. Building a hospital will destroy this special quality in Kuzguncuk. How sad!”¹¹ This young person identifies himself as Kuzguncuklu by describing himself as part of the extended family of the mahalle. The *bostan*, as a place, carries the body of this family – the *bostan* is its lungs, the *bostan* gives it life. In framing the *bostan* this way he inscribes his own identity as Kuzguncuklu and the *bostan* an inseparable part of the landscape to which he belongs.

Nationally famous comedy actor and television series director Uğur Yücel, who was born in Kuzguncuk, explains: “Kuzguncuk is one of the most important places along the Bosphorus. This area carries very huge meanings for me. If a hospital is built here, people can’t walk around on the streets. In the old days they used to call this place

¹¹ “Hepimizin çocukluğu bu bostanda geçti. Burası hepimizin oyun alanı oldu. Yakın zamana kadar da öyleydi. Ta ki hastane yetkilileri, bostanın etrafına tel bir örgü çekene kadar... Bostan, Kuzguncukluların akciğeri. Kuzguncuk, oradan nefes alır. Bostan bize bağışlansınlar... Kuzguncuk’un sıcak bir mahalle yapısı var. Bu yapı artık İstanbul’da kalmadı. Buradaki bütün arkadaşlarım, çocukluk arkadaşlarım. Aynı sokaklarda büyüdük, aynı okullarda okuduk. Bakkalı, kasabı, manavı, şöförü, boyacısı, hamalı, doktoru, öğretmeni... biz burada bir aile gibiyiz... Hastanenin kurulması Kuzguncuk’un bu yapısını da bozacak. Yazık!” (Kaynar 1992).

'little Paris'. This place's trees and flowers, in short, all of its values, must be protected."¹² The website of the Kuzguncuklular Derneği passionately laments the destruction of Istanbul's places and vows not to let this happen in their neighborhood: "Those before us lost their generations, their open spaces, and didn't make a noise. Their pines, sycamores, redbuds were cut down, and they didn't make a noise. They were buried in cement masses without any aesthetic or architectural value, and they didn't make a noise. The beautiful buildings were burned and destroyed, and they didn't make a noise. The identity of their streets was lost, and they didn't raise their voices. But we, whatever the cost of our last stand, we have decided to protect our *bostan* and never to submit."¹³ Their resistance throughout was a vigilant and passionate staking of a claim to the future of their place.

Markedly absent from the *bostan* struggle are the remaining non-Muslims of Kuzguncuk. While they are small in number, they are linked to the larger and active groups of Greek and Jewish Kuzguncuklu families who moved out of the neighborhood to other parts of Istanbul. These people return to the neighborhood on weekends to attend services in its church and synagogue. Minority communities are interested in

¹² "Uğur Yücel duygularını, 'Kuzguncuk Boğaz'ın en önemli yerlerinden biridir. Bu alan benim için çok büyük anlamlar taşıyor. Buraya bir hastane yapılırsa insanlar sokaklarda dolaşamaz. Buraya eskiden küçük Paris derlerdi. Buranın ağaçlarını çiçeklerini, kısaca bütün değerlerini korumak gereklidir' diyerek anlatıyordu." (Daniş and Değer1992, 42).

¹³ "Bizden önceki kuşaklar meydanlarını kaybettiler, sesleri çıkmadı. Çamların, çınarlarını, erguvanlarını kestiler, sesleri çıkmadı. Estetik ve mimariden yoksun çirkin beton yığınlarına gömüldüler, sesleri çıkmadı. O güzelim binalar bir bir yakıldı, yıkıldı, sesleri çıkmadı. Sokakları kişiliğini yitirdi, sesleri çıkmadı. Ama bizler, ellerimizdeki son kalelerimizi ne pahasına olursa olsun savunmaya ve artık teslim olmamaya kararlıyız." (www.kuzguncuk.org 2 May 2002)

Kuzguncuk's past -- at the time of writing, the Jewish community was collecting materials to celebrate Kuzguncuk's history with a festival in the neighborhood. However, they do not try to protect the *bostan* as a historic space or other elements of the contemporary landscape of Kuzguncuk, and they do not move back to Kuzguncuk to buy and restore historic houses. While the churches and synagogue have organized congregations, they do not affiliate themselves with the Kuzguncuklular Derneği, even though they share some similar aims¹⁴. So the multi-ethnic and greener past of Kuzguncuk that motivates historic preservation and the protection of the greenspace is the subject of nostalgia among Kuzguncuk's newer and dominant communities, not the people of its past.

Dimitria Teyze's claims to place

The very day I heard the news that Haberal had given up his lease on the garden, a friend brought me to our arranged interview with Dimitria Teyze. As we rode the ferry across the Bosphorus I told my friend about my excitement for the *dernek*. My friend's only reaction was to raise her eyebrows in a way that let me know she wasn't sharing my enthusiasm. Then she prepared me for our meeting and told me that although Dimitria Teyze no longer lives in Kuzguncuk, she is the last descendant living in Turkey of the family that used to own the Kuzguncuk *bostan*.

¹⁴ I attended a service at the synagogue where I heard a discussion about earthquake preparedness. The Kuzguncuklular Derneği has focused on earthquake preparedness for the neighborhood since 1999. These communities don't join forces in community initiatives.

I met Dimitria Teyze in her apartment in Taksim and at the home of our mutual friend several times during the spring and summer of 2002. Meeting Dimitria made me realize how deeply I had overstepped my own critical boundary as a fieldworker regarding the community I studied. The difference between her relationship to the *bostan* and that of the Kuzguncuk community that fought to protect it resonated throughout my entire project. It quickly became clear to me that I had unconsciously begun to share in a cause, in a variety of Kuzguncuk-identity-making, that threatened my perspective. I had forgotten how to be the researcher in favor of being a friend, association member, or neighbor, all roles I had come to play every day so well they felt like my own clothes. Encountering Dimitria Teyze was disturbing and exhilarating because she lives so deeply in the very past so discussed and remembered by others -- the past that I, too, had come to imagine vicariously as my own remembrance.

Dimitria's house is full of her family's beloved but broken inheritance. A large mirrored cabinet displays cracked goblets of shimmery glass, and worn, velvet chairs wait next to little tables draped with bits of rusty handworked lace. Dimitria's small rooms are stuffed to the ceiling with grand, old furniture that evokes the past civility of the large airy houses along the Bosphorus for which they were made. In her proper Istanbul accent, Dimitria says *yavrum* (darling), eat, as she brings handmade pastry to the table. She serves us Turkish coffee together with almond liqueur after dinner, and sits just long enough to smoke a cigarette and read my coffee fortune. Dimitria cooks her labor-intensive, old-fashioned foods in a circa-1950s plug-in oven which was a modern convenience when most women were sending their pastries to the local

neighborhood oven. Although Dimitria's family is generations-old Kuzguncuklu, they no longer live there. Her identity is bound up with her attachment to her family's historic property; as such, it is rooted in the past.

The dominant topic of conversation every time we met was the material, financial, and emotional loss experienced by her family as Istanbul Greeks of former great wealth who were tragically dispossessed. Dimitria Teyze's family once owned several small dairy farms and market gardens. They had a successful business shipping their products to the old city of Istanbul. Their wealth included mansions in several neighborhoods on the Asian side including in Üsküdar, Salacak, Çengelköy and Kuzguncuk. The family lost most of its property. Dimitria's claims that they were all taken illegally by the Turkish state may be true: the property deed of the *bostan* in Kuzguncuk provides evidence of at least one such illegal confiscation.¹⁵ Dimitria

¹⁵ The Kuzguncuk market garden once belonged to the Greek Orthodox Şoro and Dode families which were related by marriage. The property was parceled into nine shares. Eight of them passed at unknown times under unclear legal circumstances to the Ministry of Foundations (Vakıflar Müdürlüğü) (Özden). The last share of the *bostan* passed to the Vakıflar in 1977, when the *bostan* became the property of the state. The last family gardener to own a share was Ispiro Şoro, who died in 1951. After his death, the share should have passed to his son, Ilya, who continued to work the garden until his own death in 1984. But the property share was not transferred, and in 1977 the Vakıflar appropriated it, using a law that cites the abandonment of the property. The property was never abandoned, however; Ispiro and his son Ilya both worked on the garden until their deaths. The transfer of the property to the Vakıflar was inappropriate and illegal for two reasons. First, the transfer was based on its having been 'abandoned', although the inheritor of the last property share never left the neighborhood. Secondly, this law's original purpose was to regulate the transfer of Armenian properties 'abandoned' after the massacre of 1915; it was not intended to be used in transfers of Greek properties in Istanbul in the 1970s. Furthermore, even if it had been abandoned, abandoned minority properties normally passed to the Treasury (the *Hazine*); this property mysteriously passed to the Vakıflar. By the time the property was rented in 1992 its status and history

resents the *dernek*'s claim to the *bostan* which, she says, rightfully belongs to her family.

The day we met, Dimitria was excited by my interest in Kuzguncuk and told me she was going to prepare a report for me about her family and Kuzguncuk's history. Months later, she gave me a booklet filled with handwritten information she collected by talking with old relatives, which she translated from Greek into Turkish for me. This narrative starts with a description of what is known about the neighborhood's very distant past and explanations for how it earned its name. It continues with a history of its churches and well-known people, and ends with her own family and the history of her grandmother. For Dimitria, Kuzguncuk's history is the history of herself and her family. Her identity is still powerfully bound to the neighborhood, but it is now tempered by her physical displacement from the neighborhood to which she now rarely returns (although it is only a 40 minute bus and boat trip from her home). For Dimitria, Kuzguncuk is lost. The loss is made more painful because of the contrast between her personal continued financial failures and the increase of wealth in the neighborhood, brought by the people who have adopted her family's place as their own, investing in and beautifying it.

In her written narrative about the history of Kuzguncuk, Dimitria writes about what happened to the Greeks: “_’s daughter’s gardens are lost. A Turkish family lives in her house now. They have a property deed to it in their hands, but it’s not known how

were obscured by the complicated and corrupt transactions concerning the deed, rendering the potential success of a lawsuit to reclaim it unlikely. Indeed, Dimitria Teyze has had a lawsuit concerning this property pending for years.

they obtained it. ... The house across from the Greek church is run as a restaurant now and owned by the mafia. ... Turkey's laws transferred Greek property to Turkish hands, and with their leaving and forced migration Kuzguncuklu Rum properties were lost in various ways in 1944, 1955, and in the Cyprus events of 1964¹⁶. Dimitria's words about what happened to the Greek community in Kuzguncuk speak to the larger history of the city. Her place in this history is fundamental to her construction of her own identity. In the mental map of Kuzguncuk I asked her to draw on the first day we met, she labeled the *bostan*, "Green *Bostan* Belonging to the Şoro Family" ("Yeşil *Bostan* Şoro Ailesine Ait"). She inscribed her family name on the map, revealing that for her, the *bostan* and its history is personal and individual (see Fig.8).

¹⁶ “_ kızı Constantiniya bahçeleri metruktur. Evi ise şu an bir Türk aile oturmaktadır. Elinde günün tapusu vardır. Nasıl aldı bilinmez. ... Şu an Rum kilisen karşısında mor sarmaşıklı kırmızı tuğlalı ev lokanta olarak mafya sahiptir. Türkiyenin kanunu Rum malına el koyup - mutezori üzerlerine geçirmek bir çok Kuzguncuklu böyleci 1944, 1955 (6-7 Eylül), 1964 Kıbrıs çıkarmasıyla terk ve göç zorlandığı için malları mülkleri çeşitli yollarda el değiştirmektedir.”

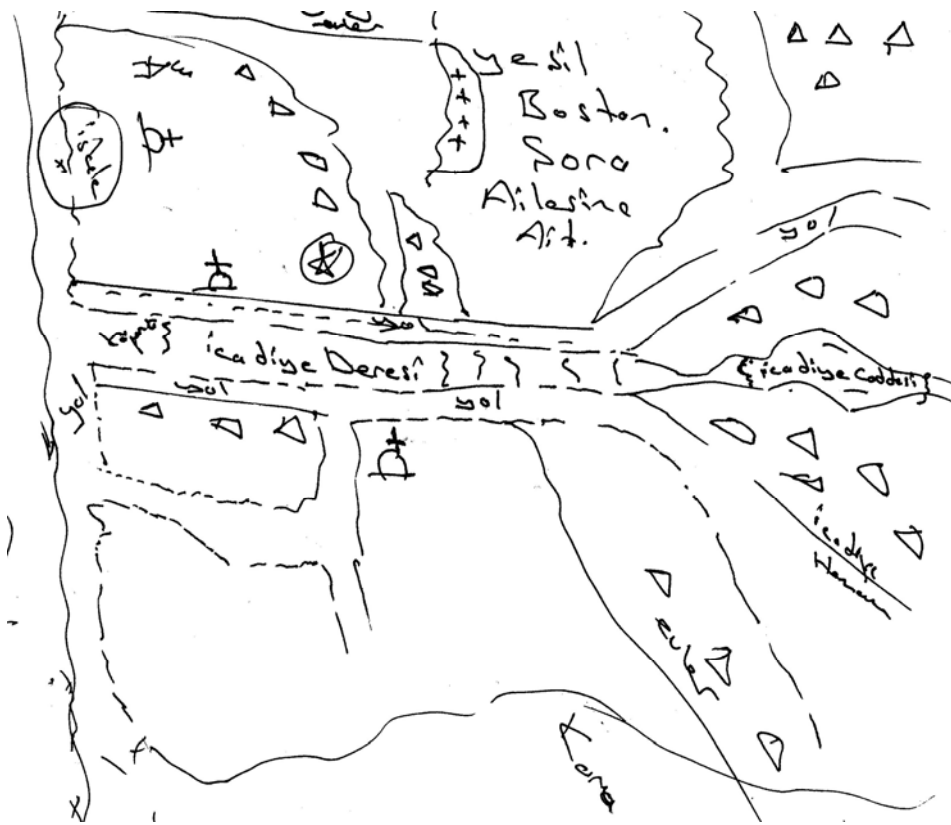


Fig.8 Dimitria Teyze's Mental Map

Dimitria's identification with Kuzguncuk is dependent on having truly been displaced from it, a result of her family's dispossession. She has almost no lived relationship with Kuzguncuk now. Although Dimitria told me about the *bostan*, I first encountered a photocopy of its property deed in the offices of the *dernek*, where it had been left by members who were examining its legal status. The deed reveals Dimitria's identification with place as not only historic, but also dependent on *absence* from contemporary Kuzguncuk. In marked contrast, the Black Sea migrants (some of whom are core members of the *dernek*) identify with Kuzguncuk through a lived relationship to its history, by bearing *witness* to its social transformation.

Competing Narratives of Place and Identity

In a seeming paradox, Black Sea Kuzguncuk residents, those whose families migrated to Kuzguncuk in the very late thirties and early forties, identify themselves as ‘real’ Kuzguncuklu with their memories of sharing the neighborhood with minorities. The interactions between Dimitria Teyze and Black Sea origin Kuzguncuklu residents I observed were among the neighbors we both visited at the home of the mutual friend who introduced us. I never saw her interacting with members of the neighborhood association¹⁷.

The Black Sea community remembers living with Kuzguncuk’s minority residents, although the memories are located in the past and never brought into the present with stories of their departure. Unlike Dimitria, for whom the departure from the neighborhood is the primary theme in her narratives of Kuzguncuk, for contemporary residents the departure is over and never discussed in detail. Though memories of living with past neighbors are clear, the circumstances of their departure

¹⁷ Dimitria Teyze had a brief relationship with the neighborhood association several years before I met her. One member of the association tried to help her with legal research to build a lawsuit to reclaim her property (hoping to take it from the *Vakıflar* and perhaps help the *dernek*). According to him, Dimitria wouldn’t trust him, thinking he wanted to get the property away from her. Another association member told me separately that he wasn’t aware of anyone from the *bostan* family ever coming forward, and that the *dernek* hoped the family never would, because if the family reclaimed ownership they could interfere with the association’s plans for the garden. Dimitria herself told me that she wasn’t on speaking terms with people at the association anymore because they had wronged her. When I first encountered the situation in fieldwork I naively assumed that she and the association might be able to accomplish something mutually beneficial if they shared efforts. It became obvious that their claims to the *bostan* are incompatible.

remains clouded in ambiguity. Ayşe, a neighbor who was born in Kuzguncuk to a Black Sea family in the 1950s, says that the later rural migrants ‘took all the Greeks’ houses’. She remembers knowing Greek and Jewish adults as a child, and her mother talks freely about the neighborly relations she shared with minority neighbors. The leaving, though, is eclipsed, and invisible in the narrative. The words of this middle-aged Muslim woman are typical of Muslim narratives of this history: “Bir den biri gittiler”, meaning “all of a sudden, they left”. When I asked her to tell me more about what happened, she changed the subject. As another longtime resident told me in answer to the same question, it’s known, but never discussed.

Dimitria Teyze’s opinions that the people in the *dernek* have no right to her garden, that they are all occupying homes that really belong to ‘her’ people, legitimize her claim to place as a ‘real’ Kuzguncuklu. However, this claim is challenged when she interacts with people of Kuzguncuk’s Black Sea migrant community. One hot July evening I went to Zeynep’s house to play a tile game called *okey*. Zeynep’s middle-aged neighbors have Black Sea regional origins and were born in Kuzguncuk. They represent the community of people who witnessed Kuzguncuk’s transformation and who have inherited its history as the old-timers. Ayşe came downstairs to play with us when Dimitria Teyze arrived unexpectedly and agreed to be our fourth player. Dimitria and Ayşe are strong personalities who share a mutual dislike. The game involves taking and discarding a tile on each turn, slapping it down on the corner in a pass to the player on the right. Dimitria and Ayşe sat next to each other, and as Dimitria passed tiles to Ayşe, she spat on each one to wish her bad luck, a move made in jest but with bitterness that

affected our game. Ayşe tried to open a conversation with Dimitria and said, “I saw your house in Çengelköy, the furniture still inside. Are you going to be able to get it?” Dimitria explained they are working with a lawyer to rescind the illegal sale done via ‘a mafia deal’. A few turns pass, tiles smack on the table.

Ayşe spoke up again, asking about the condition of the house and its history, concluding that “it was really wrong, what happened to the property of the non-Muslims.”

Dimitria said it happened a lot, to all of them.

The game moved on and some other conversation passed and then Ayşe says, “Well, they were all minorities (she uses the old-fashioned word ‘*ekaliyet*’), and there aren’t any left.”

Dimitria said, “Yes, there are.” Zeynep and I exchange glances over the tension in the game and the conversation.

Ayşe said, “They’re all in Maslak and in other places on the other side (of Istanbul).”

Dimitria replied, “There are lots of them left.”

Ayşe said, “Well, they all left Kuzguncuk, they’re not *here* anymore, there aren’t any *ekaliyet* left in Kuzguncuk is what I’m saying”, and Dimitria retorted,

“Well, if you’d seen the 6-7 Eylül olayları (she refers to the riots of 6-7 September, 1955) you’d have left too!”

Ayşe said, “I know, they explained it to us.” Silence fell with tense faces and Dimitria Teyze got on her feet and went out the door.

For Ayşe, the minority life of the neighborhood is a thing of the past, it’s gone. For Dimitria it’s still a living issue. There are, indeed, a handful of Greek families living

in Kuzguncuk and many more who now live in other parts of Istanbul. Ayşe identifies herself as Kuzguncuklu by acknowledging the past and sharing the ‘witnessing’ of it by saying, I know, they told me, meaning her mother and her older neighbors. But Dimitria sees herself as the ‘real’ Kuzguncuklu because her community actually experienced the events of 1955 and the deportation of 1964 and they continue to experience the effects of those events.

When Dimitria Teyze visits another time, she meets Ayşe again, this time with Ayşe’s mother Emine Teyze. Emine sees that Dimitria is one of the old community. She starts like her daughter did before, trying to empathize as a fellow Kuzguncuklu by saying, “When all those people left, so did the beauty of Kuzguncuk.” They walked down memory lane together, although they hadn’t met before, and Emine Teyze asked if Dimitria remembered Marko who sold vegetables. She talked about Ispiro’s garden and Dimitria explained it was once her family’s. They talked about an old neighbor whose father was Turkish but had an Armenian mother, and about Rebeka and the other Jewish neighbors and their holidays, and how in general the olden days were so beautiful with wonderful neighbors and now nothing is left. Interestingly, though, Emine Teyze and Ayşe kept supplying the names and memories and Dimitria kept saying,

“That sounds familiar, but I don’t really remember” (“hiç yabancı gelmiyor bana”).

In this encounter, Emine Teyze was the ‘real’ Kuzguncuklu. Dimitria left Kuzguncuk as a child and grew up in other parts of the city. With Emine she referred to herself as ‘Çengelköylü’ and ‘Beylerbeyli’. Her identity as the ‘real’ Kuzguncuklu she

portrayed to me in her written narrative shifted in this context to being more specifically of a Kuzguncuklu family, but of other neighborhoods. The conversation reflected a competition for authority of who really ‘knows’ the past. Emine’s naming all the old neighbors she really remembers and misses is an articulation of a ‘lived’ identity as Kuzguncuklu versus Dimitria’s identity which is related to family and property of generations. I was struck, as I was on so many other occasions, by how the story-remembering of the good old days revolves around the citing and describing of the non-Muslim people by name, as if their names carry the identity of Kuzguncuk as it was in the past, as if the names are the stuff of its history, even for the Black Sea community.

For the Black Sea community, Kuzguncuk is a home place, and their witnessing of the past and ability to remember its history places them in Kuzguncuk, making them ‘Kuzguncuklu’. Their stories of neighborhood history are part of their own personal histories. During a conversation with a friend called Reyhan, I asked her why was it that the Black Sea people came to Kuzguncuk and not another neighborhood, like Çengelköy for example. Her father poked his head out from another room to say that 90% of them came here because *we* came here. His own father came here because there was someone they knew who’d come to Kuzguncuk on holiday and liked it and bought a place. His father’s friend saw the house for sale that his own father eventually bought. After that, they helped others come, and so they used to know everyone in the entire neighborhood. But he said, now, "we don’t know the newcomers, and they don’t know us" (‘yeni gelenler tanamıyoruz, bize tanamıyorlar’). They distinguish themselves as the

Kuzguncuk Black Sea community pioneers, different from later migrants, asserting primary claim to place in Kuzguncuk.

Forming landscapes and attachments to place

Geographer Doreen Massey argues,

The past of a place is as open to a multiplicity of readings as is the present.

Moreover, the claims and counter-claims about the present character of a place depend in almost all cases on particular, rival, interpretations of its past. ...

What are at issue are competing histories of the present, wielded as arguments over what should be the future.” (Massey 1995, 185)

The *bostan* in Kuzguncuk is a rich place, a piece of the neighborhood landscape full of meaning for Kuzguncuklular. Its history anchors the identity of Dimitria Teyze who claims to be its rightful owner. Its history makes it worth preserving, in the eyes of the Kuzguncuk Neighborhood Association, who claim it for their future in the neighborhood. The contesting narratives of place, of contemporary and past Kuzguncuklular, reveal tension concerning interpretations of its history and the future of the neighborhood. Places are created by layers of actions over time, and by the telling of narratives that endow them with emotion, memory, and vision. Kuzguncuk’s contemporary and dominant communities stake their claim to the neighborhood in their struggle to save Ilya’s *bostan*, even as his descendant remains displaced and her family history forgotten.

Chapter Three

Uryanizade Street/Uryanizade Sokak:

Gentrification and the Landscape of Collective Memory

“The exercise of imagination that conjures... representations...[is] intimately connected to the ongoing work of landscape production ‘on the ground’.”¹

The Theater of Mahalle

On my last day in Kuzguncuk I walked down Icadiye Street toward the bus stop and stopped to watch the crowd of people on the corner of Perihan Abla Street. The bakery on that corner has loaves of bread lined up in the window, with a carved wooden placard hanging outside that reads “Bread Boat” (“Ekmek Teknesi”) (see Fig.9). Local, family-owned businesses such as bread ovens are trademark features of the *mahalle* in popular culture. This shop blends seamlessly into Kuzguncuk’s neighborhood landscape. The crowd around Bread Boat was watching two men having an animated discussion in front of the shop. It was an unremarkable and typical scene that normally wouldn’t attract an audience. However, these people were well-known actors whose faces appeared regularly on the new and popular *mahalle* television series called “Bread Boat”. And the *mahalle* place which set the scene was none other than the local kebab restaurant, its façade redecorated to resemble a traditional bakery.² Film crews were such a common sight in Kuzguncuk throughout my stay that I came to be surprised at the crowds of onlookers who appeared every time the cameras and lights set up along the main street.

¹ Don Mitchell. *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*. Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1996. 1.

² There are two genuine bread bakeries in Kuzguncuk, but the filming of the show necessitated a more ‘authentic’-looking bakery front than the ones that exist in reality.

The film set of Ekmek Teknesi contributes to the show's popularity because it successfully conveys the warmth and friendliness of the popularly imagined cultural space, the *mahalle*.

Fig.9 Ekmek Teknesi



The street called Perihan Abla which intersected the main road to form the corner where “Bread Boat” is located is named for the most famous *mahalle* television series in Turkey. *Perihan Abla* (“Sister Perihan”) was filmed in Kuzguncuk in the mid 1980s and starred Perran Kutman in the role of Perihan. In fact, today's Perihan Abla Street is not the street where the character Perihan lived in the television series. Rather, Uryanizade

Street, the most carefully restored street of historic homes in Kuzguncuk, was the primary focus of the program³. The setting for *Perihan Abla* established the standard for a long and continuing series of *mahalle* television shows. The theater of *mahalle* life as it is portrayed in the programs corresponds to the landscape of a typical *mahalle* as this space is commonly understood in Turkish popular culture. (see Fig.10)

³ The resident architects and intellectuals of this street rejected a name change in favor of recognizing the television show, and so the neighboring street was renamed.

Fig.10 Uryanizade Street



The fictional representation of Kuzguncuk's *mahalle* landscape in Perihan Abla grew popular because the wooden houses and their entrances onto the street provide an 'authentic' feel of a traditional *mahalle* (Tanrıöver 2002, 94). There are old wooden houses with interior spaces connected to public places along the main street in a blending of public and private space created through community interaction that characterizes *mahalle* life

(ibid.). The character Perihan lived in a traditional wooden house, and the problems and scenarios of the *mahalle* that center around her are lived out primarily on the neighborhood street in front of her house as well as in the public spaces of the neighborhood.

As the friendly, collective life of the *mahalle* became increasingly represented and popularized in television shows and in other media, it began to produce a collective memory, or a shared imagination of Istanbul's past. Kuzguncuk's historic landscape began to be cited as evidence of the 'reality' of *mahalle* life, thus legitimizing the collective memory, and spurring the creation of new, yet seemingly historic, *mahalle*

elements on the ground. The merging of morphology and representation is eerily evident in the creation of the film set for the “Bread Boat” television show; the representation of a historic *mahalle* necessitated the creation of a setting “more real”, that is, more evocative of the collective memory, than Kuzguncuk’s actual bread ovens. The neighborhood of Kuzguncuk became the theater for the *mahalle* life of collective memory in the popular imagination.

The collective memory of the *mahalle* and its cultural landscape in Kuzguncuk have become dependent upon each other for their cultural reproduction. This cycle of creation and representation is conditioned by cultural politics that structure the “lived relations of places” (Mitchell 1996, 2). As Kuzguncuk’s landscape became popularized through media representation, increasing numbers of people moved to the neighborhood seeking the associated values of *mahalle* life. Paradoxically, the arrival of these newcomers altered the socio-economic composition of the neighborhood in ways that fragmented the stability and consistency of neighborly relations in the *mahalle*.

Creating a Historic Landscape

It is no coincidence that by the time of filming *Perihan Abla*, Kuzguncuk’s landscape had already felt the impact of its first wave of historic restoration. Cengiz Bektaş is an internationally known architect (2002 winner of the Aga Khan Architectural Prize) personally responsible for beginning historic renovation in Kuzguncuk. He started in 1978 by purchasing and restoring an old house on Uryanizade Street. He takes credit for initiating a movement, and has argued that the success of his project inspired others to

patch up their old houses.⁴ While there is no doubt that some old, long-term Kuzguncuk residents were inspired by his work, the dramatic changes in Kuzguncuk's historic landscape were made by the artists and professionals that moved there to restore old houses. Bektaş began by bringing friends from his own circle of artists, architects and engineers to the street. One artist explained to me that when a house went up for sale Bektaş would bring a friend in, and the resident artist community would contribute help if the friend couldn't afford to buy. Today most of the residents of Uryanizade Street are connected by relations of friendship and acquaintance preceding their move to Kuzguncuk. This restoration movement was a precursor to a larger wave of gentrification, in the 1990s, by others not in their group and whose efforts focused largely not on the restoration of existing wooden structures but on their total destruction and recreation in cement with wooden facades.

For Cengiz Bektaş, neighborhood life and neighborhood space are dependent and intertwined. Cengiz Bektaş used historic renovation in Kuzguncuk as a vehicle for specific aims and goals intended to create community and a sense of belonging in local neighborhood life. I was introduced to Bektaş soon after my arrival in Kuzguncuk.⁵ He explained the approach behind his 'project' in Kuzguncuk. He worked first to help residents care about their environment by asking everyone to help paint a wall on Uryanizade Street. Later he initiated community-oriented activities in neighborhood

⁴ Cengiz Bektaş. *Hoşgörünün Öteki Adı: Kuzguncuk*. [The Other Name for Tolerance: Kuzguncuk] İstanbul: Tasarım Yayın Grubu, 1996.

⁵ Our interview was brief; he loaned me a copy of *Hoşgörünün Öteki Adı: Kuzguncuk* and invited me to come back and visit. Successive attempts to contact him for an interview throughout my fieldwork were unsuccessful, however.

spaces, hoping to nurture a sense of bonding among residents. These projects are described in *Ev Alma, Komşu Al (Don't Take a House, Take a Neighbor 1996a)*. They included a small children's library, an open-air theater on Bereketli Street where outside stairs formed a natural amphitheater, and helping fellow neighbors with plans to refurbish their old houses. Bektaş claims that he made a broad effort to interact with local residents in projects of his own design, though the extent to which the projects were successful over a long term remains unclear. To my knowledge, none of them were ongoing during my residence in Kuzguncuk. Bektaş wrote himself into the history of the neighborhood, saying that he has been working for twelve years to help people learn to live together again. He believes he has been successful (Bektaş 1996b, 94). In a brief speech at Kadir Has University in May of 2003 he said, "I am a Kuzguncuklu", claiming his own identity as bound to Kuzguncuk. He characterized his project in Kuzguncuk as a life passion, explaining that although he started in 1978 the idea occurred to him as early as 1965.

Throughout his writings and public lectures, Bektaş emphasizes the importance of tolerance at the center of his work. He aims to revive the tolerance of Kuzguncuk's multicultural past. "Holding a face against the destruction of community identity as members of a place of common origin, [Kuzguncuk is] an interesting settlement given the social life of today's Istanbul which has begun to resemble a migrant's relationship with the environment. For hundreds of years, people of four different beliefs lived amongst each other here (Muslims, Jews, Armenians, Greeks)... That is, until some things were broken with those who came from outside.. in the riots of 6-7 September (1955) ... But

still today, even if their numbers ... are changed, these people of four beliefs still live together in Kuzguncuk”.⁶

Bektaş argues that this history has created a special culture of community in the neighborhood. He selected Kuzguncuk for his project of community building through historic restoration because of the neighborhood’s history of multi-ethnic tolerance. “Come, I say, love the shared space you have; before everything, a person must know to love their geography. Our geography of course is made of people. ... Otherwise why would I have come to Kuzguncuk? It’s a place where the whole *mahalle* is lived like an extended family. ...”.⁷

For Bektaş, the tolerance of Kuzguncuk’s multi-ethnic past is embedded in its landscape. His descriptions of Kuzguncuk’s landscape mixes past and present with a tone of nostalgia adopted by the many magazine and newspaper articles about the neighborhood’s tolerant history. In *The Other Name for Tolerance: Kuzguncuk*, Bektaş conveys a rich sense of the life of the main street, describing the old Armenian pudding

⁶ “Hemşehrilik duygusunun yokolmaya yüz tuttuğu, çevre ile ilişkilerin göçebelerinkine benzemeye başladığı günümüz İstanbul’unda ‘toplum yaşamı’yla ilginç bir yerleşmedir. Yuzyillardır, dört ayrı inaniştaki kişiler (Müslümanlar, Yahudiler, Ermeniler, Rumlar) bir arada yaşamışlar burada... hoşgörü ortamında bir arada yaşanabileceği kanıtlayabilmişler... Ta ki dıştan elenler, bir şeyleri kırıp dokunceye dek... 6-7 Eylül olayları, bağnazlık, gözlerini korkutuncaya dek... Bugün de, sayıları, oranları çok değişik olsa da bu dört inanişin insanları bir arada yaşıyorlar Kuzguncuk’ta.... (Bektaş 1996b.)

⁷ “Gelin diyorum sizde sevin ortamınızı, kişi her şeyden önce coğrafyasını sevmeyi bilmeli. Bizim coğrafyamız da elbette insanlardan oluşur. Kendi gelişmemizin özü, içerisinde bulunduğumuz ortam için vereceğimiz savaşa bağla olarak gelişir. Ayrıca neden gelmiştim Kuzguncuğ’a? Bütün bir *mahallenin* büyük bir aileymiscesine yaşadığı bir yer. Orada edinilmiş ‘hemşehrilik’ duygularıydı yolun başı besbelli. Kimilerine göre ne denli ilkel kaynaklardan gelirlerse gelsinler, yaşamın o doyulmaz uzakinlikleriydi, sıcaklıklarıydı.” Bektaş’s unpublished writings (quoted in Aksoy and Yalçintan 1997, 38).

maker, the synagogue and churches, and the shops and coffeehouses. He describes the funeral of Barber Muzaffer, attended by all the *mahalle*. A photo of sober men gathered around the coffin in front of the barber's helps us imagine the sense of community in the neighborhood, as well as the photograph of the inside of the shop where the walls are covered with photographs of Kuzguncuk people (Bektaş 1996b, 28). Bektaş's narratives of Kuzguncuk emphasize that this place has not lost its sense of community as other places of Istanbul have.

Kuzguncuk is exceptionalized not only in Bektaş's works, but also in other media which merge representations of Kuzguncuk's historic landscape and its unusually integrated life. In one article, the neighborhood is described as the most beautiful on the Bosphorus: "The mansions protected until today, the historic boat station and the people tightly bound by neighborly relationships, make Kuzguncuk possibly the most beautiful neighborhood on the Bosphorus. The work there to protect the old structures is done with the aim of creating a new way of life. More than protecting the old structures, is the true desire to protect the relationships, the love and understanding between people.

Kuzguncuk people are making decisions for themselves, trying to prevent Kuzguncuk from becoming foreign."⁸

⁸ "Günümüze kadar korunmuş yalıları, komşuluk ilişkilerine sıkıca bağlanmış insanları ve tarihi vapur iskelesiyle Kuzguncuk, belki de boğazın en güzel semti. Kuzguncuk için yapılanlar, eskiye özlemi yansıtmıyor. Eskinin iyilerini koruyup, yeni bir yaşama biçimi yaratmak olarak kabul etmek gerek yapılanları. Eski yapılar onarıp korumaktan çok, ilişkileri, insanlar arasında karşılıklı sevgi ve anlayış ortamını onarmak, korumak asıl yapılmak istenen. Kuzguncuklu yabancılaşmamayı, kendileri için kendileri karar vererek, kendi ölçülerinde birşeyler yaratmayı temsil ediyor İstanbul'da" (Aksoy 1997, 38). See also Bayındır 2001 for another typical example of nostalgic representations of Kuzguncuk in news media.

Ugur Yücel is a nationally famous comic actor and television series director who was born in Kuzguncuk. He speaks and writes often about how his own identity is tied to the neighborhood he was born in (Daniş and Değer 1992), and at a talk in January of 2002 in Kuzguncuk at a local organization he referred to himself as a ‘*mahalle çocuğu*’, or a ‘local kid’ of Kuzguncuk. He said “I belong here, I’m not speaking here as a foreigner”. “The *mahalle* doesn’t push away neighborhood children from the warmth of life. For me, Kuzguncuk was a cinema. It had a wonderful character. . . . I left here nourished by my experience of the people here.”⁹

His personal identity as a Kuzguncuklu underlies his vision behind the programs he produces for television, most recently in *İkinci Bahar*, a popular television program filmed in the historic neighborhood of Samatya. The show centers on a Romeo-Juliet type love story around two local shops on the main street. In my interview with him, Yücel claimed that Samatya resembles Kuzguncuk in terms of *mahalle* life.¹⁰ He looked at approximately fifteen neighborhoods for the filming of the show, and if he hadn’t been able to work in Samatya, he probably would have gone to Kuzguncuk. Yücel said that the extended social family relationships of *mahalle* life don’t exist as they used to, however, citing the Portuguese word, *saudade*, which, he said, means “something you miss from the past that wasn’t actually lived”. Like nostalgia for *mahalle*, I asked? He shrugged. He said even if old Istanbul life is gone, Kuzguncuk still has the *mahalle havası*, the *mahalle*

⁹ “*Mahalle*, semt çocukları hayatın sıcaklığından uzaklaşmıyorlar. Benim için Kuzguncuk bir sinemaydı. Muazzam bir karakterler resitalıydı. Bir ilkokul arkadaşım ‘Biz hayatı yaşamışız, sen seyretmişsin; o yüzden oyuncu oldun’ demişti. Ben buradan çıktım ve buranın insanından beslendim.” (Karaçizmeli 2002,13).

¹⁰ Interview in Taksim, January 2002.

atmosphere. Media reliance on Kuzguncuk as the best example of *mahalle* atmosphere has given it a primary place in the popular imagining of the city.

Perihan Abla and the Spaces of Mahalle Life

When Kuzguncuk was chosen as the setting for the Perihan Abla television show, its historic landscape became known not only for its physical beauty but also as the theater for the acting out of *mahalle* life in the popular imagination. In each episode, a problem touches several members of the community and *mahalle* residents come together to solve it, demonstrating the interconnectedness of *mahalle* relations. Characters refer to Kuzguncuk as '*bizim mahalle*' (our *mahalle*), and all *mahalle* members are treated as one of the community. Everyone knows everyone else's business and most of the show takes place in the *mahalle* spaces of the streets and shops where news of fellow neighbors is the subject of discussion. An important part of this familiarity is the goodness of people in helping each other. When Perihan and her friends get lost on a boat trip and eventually return back to the *mahalle* after a series of adventures, the entire neighborhood meets them and embraces them at the boat dock. Episodes often start and finish on the street. Fundamental to the structure of social life in the show is this landscape, in which streets and shops become an extension of private space of the home or transitional between private and public spaces. Scenes that take place inside the home continue as the character moves out onto the street and her interactions with others continue through this space into the next space of the corner store (Tanrıöver 2002). There is no break, as in American television shows, where the narrative moves back and forth abruptly between different settings. The social space in the television show is continuous; outside spaces,

as well as inside spaces, set the scene for intimate and personal interactions between characters.

In the episode called “The Gift” (“Hediye”), the role of street space in the complex interconnectedness of neighbor relationships is a major theme. In the beginning of the episode, Perihan’s dress is ruined by a rich business associate of her husband’s who splashes mud on it when he drives away from the curb. He feels obliged to give her a new dress in compensation. However, a series of misunderstandings between his wife, his secretary, Perihan’s neighbors, and her sister, culminate in a street scene in which the rich businessman’s wife accuses Perihan’s neighbor, mistaking her for Perihan, of having an affair with her husband. During the fight we see scenes of men talking at the fruit stand, telling passersby ‘there’s a fight, a fight!’. The barber looks out the window to see the fight with the other neighbors looking out their windows. Eventually people come onto the street and break up the fight. The private matter becomes public because of the spreading of rumors and the constant observation resulting from living in small neighborhood space. The misunderstanding is resolved collectively as neighbors contribute their observations. The story is acted out in the public space of the residential street with all neighbors’ participation.

In the episode “The Novice Gambler” (“Acemi Kumarbaz”) Perihan’s fiancée Şakir succumbs to a gambling habit. The whole *mahalle* gradually becomes aware of it because he starts to borrow money, first from his mother and then from the barber. Then he misses payments on his bill at the local appliance shop owned by another friend. He is also observed looking for money in his friend’s taxi. *Mahalle* residents start to share

concerned comments about Şakir's strange behavior and they follow clues he leaves behind to discover his gambling habit. The *mahalle* bands together in a plot to cure him by setting up their own card game where they plan to cheat him out of everything, thus embarrassing him enough to want to quit, but in a safe way so they can give him back the money. Perihan is urged to leave him if he doesn't give it up, and she makes this threat in front of all the neighbors as he stands on the front stoop in his pajamas. Close neighbor relationships are demonstrated in the lending of money and in the communication of news and concern about Şakir, and the community acts as a collective in addressing what has become a community problem.

Perihan Abla is known today as the show that most successfully represents 'typical' or 'old-fashioned' *mahalle* life. The characters represent typical Istanbul residents, as well: they are middle-class and Muslim. According to Hülya Tanrıöver, the broadcasting of Perihan Abla in 1986 was important, not only for starting an era of family-*mahalle* series, but also for "transforming [the *mahalle*] by the masses into a beloved modern legend" (Tanrıöver 2002, 94)¹¹. The *mahalle* television show became such a popular concept that by 1997 the *mahalle* was the context of almost all Turkish television serials. Tanrıöver argues that the *mahalle* space of the Turkish television serials is popular precisely because it so closely simulates a kind of reality common to how Turkish people imagine everyday life, because the *mahalle* is a determinant concept of the collective identity of Turks, and yet it is also imbued with a nostalgia and romanticism for the past (ibid., 95).

¹¹ "modern bir efsaneye dönüşecek kadar geniş kitleler tarafından beğenilmek."

Tanrıöver also argues that the *mahalle* provides the most convenient type of place for the narrative structure of the serials because the characters can meet in a realistic and natural manner in public places. The landscape of the *mahalle* is ideal because it offers a possibility of transition from interior to exterior spaces without disturbing the audience. A character can “leave her apartment, greet a neighbor, and go to the grocery, without the sudden jump from bistro to house like in ‘Western’ serials” (Tanrıöver 2002, 95). The *mahalle* presents a unity and renders possible a natural transition from one space to the other, and “with its resemblance to real life gives the audience a feeling of security”¹². On television, *mahalle* life is dependent on a landscape which is constituted by the places necessary for its performance. These places include the semi-private residential streets of homes as well as the *mahalle* places of public interaction among neighbors, like the corner store (bakkal), the coffeehouse (kahve) and other common meeting places in the traditional neighborhood. These places form the landscape of collective memory.

The Place of Collective Memory in Istanbul’s Urban Landscape

Why is the *mahalle* of collective memory popular in Istanbul now, and what does it reveal about contemporary urban culture? Christine Boyer analyzes the practice of architecture in cities for how it uses historic architectural forms and “insert[s] these fragments into contemporary contexts that are controlled by vastly changed circumstances and desires” (Boyer 1996, 1). She analyzes these historic forms to explore not what they meant in the past, but rather what they mean for the contemporary context that makes use of them. Whether Kuzguncuk’s historic *mahalle* landscape is *accurate* in

¹² “gerçek yaşamla sunduğu benzerlik dolayısıyla bir güven duygusu yaratır.”

terms of its representation of past life in Istanbul is immaterial; significant is what the landscape *signifies* for people living in and participating in contemporary urban culture. Boyer's analysis is ironic. The uncontested value of the restored, 'historic' *mahalle* landscape is an integral part of a larger environment full of contradictions and unpredictable forms. "When juxtaposed against the contemporary city of disruption and disarray, the detached appearance of these historically detailed compositions becomes even more exaggerated and attenuated" (ibid.). The *mahalle* can be read as a benchmark of a particular desire or value produced by, indeed part of, the cultural context of the greater urban milieu.

What is the role of representations, such as those of Cengiz Bektaş, in this larger Istanbul culture? In one of his volumes he sketched the Bosphorus from a northern-facing Kuzguncuk hill. In the center of his view is Kuzguncuk's most often-cited image: the Armenian church next to the mosque. Bektaş challenges his audience: "Don't the Armenian church and the Muslim mosque, with their domes mingling amongst each other, explain themselves the idea of tolerance?"¹³ Kuzguncuk's landscape, in the narrative, becomes actual *evidence* of the ethnic inclusion of the living *mahalle* of collective memory. Boyer argues that such historic landscapes transform our sense of what is real. "Momentarily arresting disruptive and energetic forces, representational forms become succinct records of what we consider to be present reality. These aesthetic models transform our sense of the real, for the image of the city is an abstracted concept, an imaginary constructed form" (Boyer 1996, 32). The church and the mosque suggest

¹³ "Kubbeleri birbirine karışan Ermeni kilise ile Musluman Camii insanlara hoşgörüyü anlatıyorlar mı?" (Bektaş 1996b, 34).

that cosmopolitanism is alive and well in Kuzguncuk; what remains unspoken is the fact that the congregation of the nineteenth century church is gone, replaced by the people who attend the twentieth century mosque.



Fig.11 Church and Mosque

The landscape of collective memory is so effective in conveying the images of *mahalle* closeness that it stands unchallengeable, its physical form becomes irrefutable evidence that the *mahalle* is not a memory, but ‘real’ (see Fig.11).

In Istanbul’s crowded, chaotic, and fractured environment, where close relations are the exception, the collective memory is the subject of longing. The landscape is a clue to what is absent in the contemporary city; it

“bears witness again and again that something has vanished from our present-day cityscapes that we seek to regain and to review” (ibid.). It is desired because it triggers a nostalgic feeling, an *affect*, to compensate for what is absent in contemporary Istanbul culture.

Advertising takes advantage of this desire by using the *mahalle* concept to create name-brand images that signify familiarity and community. In September 2002, in a

television commercial by the telecom firm Aria, the logo in the ad is “communication is an art” (“iletiřim sanattır”). We watch a handsome, young male artist painting a large scene of Beyođlu, a formerly minority-dominated neighborhood in Istanbul which is the subject of much contemporary nostalgic interest. The artist listens to an old man talking about the good old days. The theme of the commercial, and the man’s conversation, is communication. We hear nostalgic music as the old man says, “in our days, there were nice conversations, there was wonderful neighborliness... where has it gone, where has it gone?”¹⁴ The young man nods and smiles, understanding and respecting his older friend. The point of the commercial is that Aria, with their art of communication, can restore good relationships in today’s city like in the old days.

Another commercial that uses the concept of the collective memory is for HSBC. Although HSBC is a foreign bank, its advertising targets local community and local customs. The commercial uses the *mahalle* concept to market HSBC, ironically, as the ‘local’ banking option. A young boy has a hand-held camera and he’s making a video to introduce us to his neighborhood. “This is our *mahalle*”, he says. We see the streets of upper-class Niřantařı (again an old minority neighborhood) and its old, European-style apartment buildings. He introduces us to one of the old people who recognize him as a local neighborhood kid. He shows us the local corner store. Then he says, “this is our bank”, and the ad focuses in on HSBC.

¹⁴ “Bizim zamanimizda... guzel sohbet vardi, guzel komusluk vardi... simdi nerede, nerede?”

Gentrification Makes Mahalle Landscapes

The desire to vicariously participate in the collective memory *mahalle* with various acts of consumption is nowhere more manifest than in the ‘lifestyle’ centered around gentrification¹⁵. In this way, the collective memory changes Istanbul’s urban landscapes by creating landscapes that evoke its atmosphere¹⁶. Sociologist Nil Uzun has identified a new urban cultural group of the 1990s that identifies with living in an old neighborhood. Her research on gentrification in Istanbul, in which she compares the neighborhoods of Cihangir and Kuzguncuk, illustrates the social differences embedded in the creation of historic, nostalgic landscapes in the city. She examined gentrification as a process driven by globalization, most especially the economic restructuring of the 1980s, when professionals and moneyed intellectuals moved into devalued historic neighborhoods, “attempting to distinguish themselves in space by imbuing their new place of residence with new status connotations” (Uzun 2001, 19). Uzun collected and

¹⁵ Kuzguncuk had an ample supply of old housing stock because it had never been a wealthy area, and so it was not very vulnerable to the real estate speculation during the 1960s and 1970s which resulted in replacing houses with apartments. In 1983, new legislation concerning the historic areas along the Bosphorus required the protection of building facades and the prohibition of new construction in these areas. The new legislation ensured that after 1983, Kuzguncuk’s landscape would be maintained within certain parameters. Although Bektaş’s early renovation project worked with repairing existing structures, most of the later ‘restoration’ has meant tearing down and rebuilding ‘historic’ homes in concrete with painted wooden facades. Several such concrete houses were created during my fieldwork. They characterize gentrification in the area during the 1990s.

¹⁶ The most popular *mahalle* television serials, for example, have boosted gentrification in the old neighborhoods where they take place, not only in Kuzguncuk, but also in Çengelköy (the set for *Süper Baba* / “Super Dad”), Emirgan (set for *Babaevi* / “Father’s House”), and Samatya (set for *İkinci Bahar* / “Second Spring”) (Tanrıöver 2002).

analyzed written and visual material, interviewed with key informants, and conducted a survey among a sample of the gentrified population.

Uzun aligns herself with Christine Boyer by situating her study within the postmodern cultural shift of the 1970s and 1980s, when renewed interest in the past spurred historic preservation and the recycling of past architectural styles (Uzun 2001, 24). She describes the aestheticization of urban life, and the process by which the refurbishment of old houses became a lifestyle preference of a particular population. Uzun's surveys reveal that Kuzguncuk's gentrifiers form a cohort with consistent characteristics. They consist mostly of nuclear families, with lower numbers of children than their surrounding communities. They have a high percentage of household heads born in urban environments, in contrast to the rural origins of their surrounding communities. (ibid., 130-131). A high percentage of the gentrifying group in Kuzguncuk has university education, compared to residents of the nearby neighborhood of Icadiye where the percentage of respondents with high school education is equal to the percentage of respondents with primary school level education. A high percentage of households have both spouses employed in wage-earning labor outside the home, with a high percentage employed in prestigious and high-status occupations. Further, nearly 70% of Uzun's respondents declared their reason for choosing to live in Kuzguncuk was the scenic quality of its environment. Kuzguncuk's gentrifying population also watches more news programs and documentaries, reads more newspapers and hires more outside help to do cleaning with much higher frequency than people in the surrounding area (ibid., 137-147). Uzun concludes that Kuzguncuk's gentrifying population has life style

indicators that emphasize its “connection with the outside world and their engagement in more elite activities” (ibid., 150). So, for the community of people moving to Kuzguncuk and restoring houses there, their choice of neighborhood is part of a lifestyle identity as a highly educated cultural elite.

Moving to Kuzguncuk for a lifestyle choice differs, of course, from the original aims of Cengiz Bektaş in restoring community by restoring neighborhood environments. Yet Kuzguncuk’s gentrification landscape has come to symbolize an image. For Ebru, Kuzguncuk’s neighborhood of set-apart houses was the defining factor for her move to the neighborhood in the mid-1990s. The desire for community was not as strong as the desire to live independently apart from the responsibilities and eyes of nearby neighbors. Ebru is an artist who works with film productions in Beyoğlu. She moved to Kuzguncuk in 1994, destroying and rebuilding in concrete an old house she bought from a Greek who lives in Athens. She moved to Kuzguncuk to escape city crowds of the city. She confessed that she would have preferred to live in the more upscale neighborhood of Arnavutköy, but it was too expensive. She rejected the idea of living in a new gated community, although she acknowledged that these areas (called *sites*) are popular now because of their associated status. She argued that for artists like herself, gated communities are unattractive; she wanted an ‘old’ house. She doesn’t maintain relationships with her neighbors and said that while the old people who grew up in Kuzguncuk maintain these relationships, she works and goes out in the evening. She also indicated that these kinds of relationships might be invasive to her privacy. For Ebru, the quiet of Kuzguncuk made it desirable to live there, and her ‘old’ house, a completely new

house built of cement that boasts a historic façade, expresses her individual identity as an intellectual¹⁷.

As popularity of the initial restoration efforts drew more people to Kuzguncuk, Kuzguncuk's property values increased. The television show brought it to national observation and Kuzguncuk "became a model for the conservation of a valuable social and physical environment through modern democratic processes like participation, integration of local initiative, transparency, mediation, and cooperation" (ibid., 24). By 1999 the number of gentrified houses in Kuzguncuk increased to about 50 (ibid., 122). As gentrification manifests the spatialization of class differentiation in Istanbul, Kuzguncuk has become a very popular real estate market (see Bayındır 2001). Ali Akay speculates on the meaning of the *mahalle* for the city, reflecting that "*Mahalle* is now a postmodern cultural concept, a socio-cultural unit based now not on religious difference, as it was in the past, but upon social-class difference."¹⁸

The Mahalle is Fragmented

Although Kuzguncuk's landscape has come to represent *mahalle* community life, the rips and tears of economic, social, and political difference within the neighborhood render impossible a truly cohesive *mahalle* collectivity. Participant observation in

¹⁷ Uzun (2001) argues that artists in Istanbul have a special identity which is most compatible with living in gentrified neighborhoods of the city.

¹⁸ "*mahalle* neticede iklim şartlarına göre oluşmuş bir yerleşim olmaktan çok bir 'ictimai kültürel biçimdir'". Osmanlı millet kültürü gibi, postmodern *mahalle* de 'kültürel' bir biçim olarak karşımıza çıkar gibi durmaktadır. Eskiden olduğu gibi 'farklılıklara rağmen bunlar muhatab olurlar'. Bu farklar, artık günümüzde artık dinsel tercihlere değil, sınıfsal konuma ve gelir düzeyine bağlı olarak belirmektedir." (Akay 2002, 78).

Kuzguncuk reveals that the gentrifying landscape of the *mahalle* is not successful in obscuring the social tensions created by its new geography.

In spite of the socio-economic changes brought by restoration, in only one interview did anyone ever question the representations of Kuzguncuk and its landscape as that of a typical *mahalle*. A woman who worked on television film crews asked me about my project, and I told her I was living in Kuzguncuk and interested in *mahalles*. She immediately said that Perihan Abla was really the finest show of all the *mahalle* television serials, but that *mahalles* like Kuzguncuk are ‘fake’ (she used this word in English). She said they are not real *mahalles* anymore, and the houses aren’t real because they’re torn down and rebuilt from the ground up. The Jews, Armenians and Christians aren’t there anymore, and all the Bosphorus neighborhoods have been ‘lost’ this way. She points to the destruction of community life that is part of gentrification.

Cengiz Bektaş’s efforts to improve community in Kuzguncuk and become part of the neighborhood have not met universal acceptance. A neighbor, during a group conversation over coffee, told me a story about what happened after ‘the Bektaş people’ (as she refers to the people on Uryanizade Street) moved to Kuzguncuk. This neighbor is a middle-aged woman who was born in Kuzguncuk to Black Sea parents. She has always lived in modest economic circumstances. She said she hasn’t talked to Cengiz Bektaş since a conflict years ago over the issue of electricity brownouts caused by the computers and pottery kilns the “intellectuals” brought with them when they moved to Kuzguncuk. She gathered signatures from all the people in her ‘*mahalle*’, that is, everyone in her immediate surroundings, and petitioned the electric company to install a second electric

generator for her part of the neighborhood which bordered Uryanizade Street. When they finally received permission and the electric company began installing the generator, she said ‘the Bektaş people’ became agitated. They contacted people they knew in the planning ministry with claims that the generator would destroy the street’s historic character and create environmental health problems. According to her story, my neighbor had been reading Bektaş’s books, and so she went to him and asked, “After all this talk about komşuluk (neighborliness), why did you not come to us but instead go behind everyone who signed the petition to the people you knew in the government?” According to her, Cengiz Bektaş denied being directly involved and didn’t want to talk about it. She argued with some of the women who lived on that street and hasn’t shared a greeting with any of them since. She is still angry.

Other women in the same group of neighbors as the informant cited above referred to the people who live on Uryanizade street as “the intellectuals” (*enteller*). They were suspicious about the “meetings” the “intellectuals” have. They also complained about the rising rents¹⁹. One neighbor’s corner store, a rented space, was threatened when the building went up for sale and the prospective buyer, an architect, planned to evict them to build his own office. As renters, the corner store family had few rights after the legal period of notification of change of ownership passed. In the end, a neighboring resident purchased the space for the corner store.

¹⁹ Local real estate agents acknowledge that rents went up significantly since the late 1980s, that houses for sale are very hard to come by because of the tight market and high demand, and that rents are often demanded in Euros or dollars.

The unity of the neighbors on Uryanizade Street is sometimes perceived as exclusive, or ‘unlike’ the old Kuzguncuklular. Members of the Kuzguncuklular Derneği told me they conflicted with Cengiz Bektaş because he wanted to direct everything and wouldn’t work with others’ ideas. This resentment is likely related to the unintended socio-economic and political effects of gentrification. The growth of the artist and architectural community has meant not only a rise in property values, but the loss of older, public spaces such as local shops and the opening of newer spaces that are exclusive and private, such as architecture studios. This gentrification, for all its claims to be preserving the landscape of the *mahalle*, brings with it a loss of communal *mahalle* spaces.

However, community in Kuzguncuk fails not only because of gentrification, but simply because the same social and political divisions that fragment Istanbul society are also present in Kuzguncuk. I interviewed a member of the early artist community who has lived in Kuzguncuk for more than fifteen years and invested a lot of time in trying to help the neighborhood through the neighborhood organization. This person was angry about an article in a radical Islamist newspaper which claimed that intellectuals and artists (the article also accuses these people of alcoholism) had raised property values in Kuzguncuk, making it impossible for ‘good Turks’ to be able to buy a house. Islamists are present in Kuzguncuk like they are throughout Istanbul although their presence is denied in popular representations of the neighborhood²⁰.

²⁰ Chris Houston’s work on the Islamic political movements in Istanbul is founded in fieldwork in Kuzguncuk with members of the local Islamist group. He argues this group is engaged in the project of creating an “alternative locality” in the neighborhood. They meet to read the Koran together and refuse to go to the local mosque. Their identity exists in opposition to the larger Islamist party in power in the Üsküdar municipality, as well as

Representations of the Landscape Confront the Actual Lived Mahalle

Kuzguncuk is taken so automatically in media representation to be the true theater for *mahalle* life, that sometimes the actual neighborhood of Kuzguncuk and the ideas of *mahalle* embedded in collective memory become blurred. Media articles about the neighborhood reflect disappointment when the usual narrative of *mahalle* closeness is betrayed by a disappointing social reality. In a brief newspaper article in June of 1999, for example, it was reported that the residents of the street on which Perihan Abla was filmed did not join the neighborhood-wide cleanup campaign. While “hundreds of Kuzguncuk residents joined hand-in-hand to clean their streets from end to end”... “those who live on the street that was the site of the Perihan Abla show were not seen all day”. The Kuzguncuk residents said, “If Perran Kutman (the star of Perihan Abla) had seen this situation, she would have been very saddened”.²¹ Here the writer links the real social space of Kuzguncuk with the Kuzguncuk as it was portrayed in the television series, scolding the artists on Uryanizade Street for not joining in a cleanup campaign, marking their social difference and separateness from other neighbors. In statements that Perran Kutman (the actor who played Perihan in the television show) would be saddened as an individual to see the lack of neighborhood unity in Kuzguncuk, the television persona and real life personality merge, reflecting the extent to which the ‘real’ Kuzguncuk has

the other social groups in Kuzguncuk, including the community of artists and intellectuals (Houston 2001).

²¹ “Yüzlerce Kuzguncuklu, elbirliği yaparak oturdukları sokaklarını baştan sona supurup temizledi... Bazı sokaklar ise hortumlarla yıkandı... Bir sokak kaldı. Perihan Abla dizisine mekan olan ve bu nedenle Perihan Abla adı verilen sokakta oturanlar ise gün boyu ortalıkta görünmedi... Kuzguncuk sakinleri, “Bu durumu eğer Perran Kutman görseydi inanıyoruz ki çok uzulurdu” dedi...” (Yazgan 1999, 3).

become defined by its representation in the television series. A collage of photographs accompanies the article: a scene of a fictional group of neighbors from the television show is posited next to photographs of local residents sweeping streets. The ‘real’ Kuzguncuk landscape and its representation meld together. Its real social tensions mar the image of neighborly cooperation so significant to its media representation.

This article is not the only example of disappointment over whether the ‘real’ Kuzguncuk matches its romantic representation. An article in the book review section of *Radikal* newspaper in March of 2002 criticizes a new novel, Mehmet Ünver’s *Kuzgun Bir Yaz*.²² Ünver’s Kuzguncuk describes a mischievous childhood, and the reviewer finds some of the descriptions to be too negative, as he quotes the book’s back-cover summary: “The [book is colored] with descriptions of the novel’s heroes fighting with children from other neighborhoods, or defecating in the backyards of unpleasant neighbors”.²³ Other depictions in the book, however, have to do with describing the kinds of social change in the 1960s, including the author’s reaction, as a child, to the behavior of his new rural migrant neighbors and their poverty and, to him, strange lifestyle. These non-conformist images describe unpleasant aspects of social change that are smoothed over by the preferred nostalgic narrative.

²² The title, A ‘*Kuzgun*’ Summer, plays on the name of Kuzguncuk, which means little crow. The word for crow also means dark, or black.

²³ “Kahramanlarımız başka *mahalle*lerden çocuklarla savaş yapıp onları döverek ya da kendilerini hör gören hüysüz komşularının bahçelerine kakalarını yapıp kaçarak tatillerini renklendirirlerken,” (Barbarosoğlu 2002, 10).

Conclusions

What is important about the relationship between landscape representation and landscape morphology in Kuzguncuk is what remains unsaid. Even while the minorities are the subject of valuing and nostalgia, in claims that the landscape of the Armenian church and the mosque next to each other indicate the tolerance of the neighborhood, minority history is able to become a topic of popular interest only because these minorities are almost totally absent.

Uryanizade Street, the street with which Bektaş began his historic restoration movement, begins at the shoreline on the corner where the Armenian church sits. The church was built for the workers who were building the Beylerbeyi Palace. Some residents of Kuzguncuk suspect that the houses along Uryanizade Street belonged to these workers. If Uryanizade Street was the home of an Armenian artisan community, this is a past that has faded out of memory. These houses were made available for restoration in the 1980s in part because of the very cultural transformation of the neighborhood in which non-Muslims departed and their properties went up for sale. The nostalgic movement to ‘bring this history to light’, such as in Cengiz Bektaş’s works, does not actually work to bring out their history. The former residents of Uryanizade have slipped voicelessly into nostalgia; only the current owners of the houses and their legal representatives are allowed to view property records. No one is in a better position to do research on the fate of the residents of Uryanizade Street (and even if they were not Armenian builders, they were most definitely a minority or foreign community) than the group of people who live there now. An account of when and why they left Kuzguncuk,

or commemoration in the landscape of their history, would empower the historic voices of this community more than building restoration or nostalgic narratives.

Paradoxically, even as Cengiz Bektaş writes of the extended family of Kuzguncuk, the very movement he started created a social divide in the neighborhood. Neighborhood relations split further as the neighborhood comes to symbolize the collective memory *mahalle* of close relations and tolerance. The *mahalle* on the ground becomes more fragmented, divided, more like the conflicted postmodern city of Istanbul, as the *mahalle* in the imagination becomes more popular, more synthetic, more romantic, and perfect. However unintentionally, the narrative of peace and tolerance embedded in the landscape of collective memory *mahalle* works to support the nationalist historic narrative of Istanbul life in that it obscures the traumas and events that pushed out the minority communities. While the landscape acts like a ‘real’ representation of history, it obscures the tensions of the past with a narrative of seamless community. The relationship between the landscape and its representation in Kuzguncuk structures social relations in terms of contesting claims to place. Why is it that the narrative of tolerance first promoted by Bektaş and then by others, which attempts to preserve and remember minority history and its idea of tolerance, rarely involves speaking directly to the nature of the change in Kuzguncuk’s cultural geography? Because minority claims to place in the city, now, are denied.

Don Mitchell argues that “[the production of landscape] is a hugely mystified, ideological project that seeks to erase the very facts of its (quite social) production” (Mitchell 1996, 6). The creation of a landscape that looks so ‘real’ and ‘historic’ signifies

the nostalgic history embedded in idea of collective memory. Yet, “one of the purposes of landscape is to make a scene appear unworked, to make it appear fully natural. So a landscape is both a work and an erasure of work. It is therefore a social relation of labor, even as it is something that is labored over” (ibid.). One of the purposes in creating the historic Kuzguncuk landscape by ‘restoring’ (rebuilding) wooden houses is to make it appear as the natural theater of the collective memory of the *mahalle*. It is both a creation of the landscape, and an erasure of the minority family history embedded in it. The connection between landscape creation and representation is significant when the historic landscape uses the ‘reality’ of the images it signifies to obscure traumas of the past. Bringing the study of collective memory back to the production of space reveals a political economy in the production of this collective memory: populations are displaced and new social groups with new identities articulate their claim to place with gentrification. The historic landscape of Kuzguncuk stands as ‘evidence’ of the collective memory it signifies because of its material reality²⁴.

²⁴ Maurice Halbwachs writes that a historic landscape has the capacity to suggest that, in spite of events of political violence, nothing has changed for residents of a city: “The districts within a city and the homes within a district have as fixed a location as any tree, rock, hill, or field. Hence the urban group has no impression of change so long as streets and buildings remain the same. ... The nation may be prone to the most violent upheavals. The citizen goes out, reads the news, and mingles with groups discussing what has happened. ... Some inhabitants attack others, and political struggle ensues that reverberates throughout the country. But all these troubles take place in a familiar setting that appears totally unaffected. Might it not be the contrast between the impassive stones and such disturbances that convinces people that, after all, nothing has been lost, for walls and homes remain standing? Rather, the inhabitants pay disproportionate attention to what I have called the material aspect of the city. The great majority may well be more sensitive to a certain street being torn up, or a certain building or home being razed, than to the gravest national, political, or religious events. That is why upheavals may severely shake a society without altering the appearance of the city.” (Halbwachs1980).

Chapter Four

Icadiye Sokak/Icadiye Street:

Nostalgia

There remains the question, so much discussed these days ... of what people do not even wish to remember, the forgetting that comes to our aid in dealing with pain and unpleasantness in life. Memory, then, is far more complicated than what historians can recover, and it poses ethical challenges to the investigator-historian who approaches the past with one injunction: Tell me all.¹

The narratives of Kuzguncuk together form a collective memory of life in the good old days. Collective memory narratives are yarns that weave together to form a tapestry, looped over and over along the same warp so that from a distance the woven image appears clear and consistent. These threads reinforce each other as they reinforce the larger image; narratives conform to a particular perspective on history. Yet individual narratives which support the collective memory contain gaps in-between the weaving where threads escape and fray. Individual narratives, from Muslims and non-Muslims alike, sometimes diverge from the collective memory with silence, or loop back unexpectedly to retrace parts of the story with contradictions. Moments of tension, silence, or denial in individual narratives indicate historic elements that challenge the collective memory. Other narratives, less often told, contest the nostalgic memory directly with emphasis on ethnic tension and loss. The business of collecting memories

¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty. "Memories of Displacement: The Poetry and Prejudice of Dwelling" in *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*. Chicago: UP, 2002, 115.

is unpredictable because of what people choose to remember in the telling. The multicultural sharing of neighborhood spaces in Kuzguncuk's collective memory exist alongside a violent history. And so all narratives confess, whether subtly or deliberately, to trauma surrounding the riots of the 6th and 7th September of 1955.

Accounts of daily life on the main street celebrate the interfaith relationships of the past. Icadiye Street, the main street of Kuzguncuk, is the scene of nostalgic memories of summer promenades and community gathering for holidays and funerals (see Fig.12).



Fig.12 Icadiye Street

This is the remembered space of neighborly kinship in which ‘there was no religious difference’ and ‘we were all brothers’. The 1955 riots shook this very street with

violence as rioters broke glass, pillaged shops, burned the church, and invaded the homes of Greeks, Jews and Armenians. Although these riots were state-led, the narratives collected here suggest that they amplified the already existing sense of social difference between Muslims and non-Muslims, in spite of the denial of such difference in the collective memory. It is popularly believed that the riots did not happen in Kuzguncuk (that they could never have happened in a neighborhood of such brotherhood between Muslims and non-Muslims). The narratives here suggest that it is the pain of remembering and the need to conform to the collective remembered history that makes accounts of these events rarely heard. These narratives, as a body, indicate what's at stake in the collective memory of the *mahalle* in terms of how it serves the contemporary cultural moment.

Neighbors Are Close – Yet They Are Not

During my first summer of visiting Kuzguncuk (in 2000), I began to suspect that narrative images of Kuzguncuk contained more than was immediately obvious. One afternoon in June, I sat with a new Kuzguncuklu friend in the Çınaraltı Café after he gave me an introductory tour around the neighborhood. This tea house by the bus stop on the waterfront is the meeting spot in Kuzguncuk. In the summer its outside tables are packed with men and women talking and reading newspapers, young people puffing on endless cigarettes, scruffy intellectuals, and late breakfasters eating grilled cheese sandwiches or scrambled eggs with spicy sucuk sausage. In the winter the Çınaraltı's glass doors close and it becomes a warm, smoky haven from the wet cold outside. My

new friend was introducing me to Kuzguncuk in the place where we could see and be seen.

During our walk, he emphasized that Kuzguncuk was known for its exceptionally close neighborly relationships. He told me (I was to hear this example many times during my fieldwork) that it took him a half hour to walk to the boat station because of all of the greetings he shared with people on Icadiye Street. However, later in our conversation, he contradicted himself. He said relations in the past were much closer. He told me about the open-air cinema he loved as a kid. After everyone watched the movie together, they strolled down the main street to the seaside, eating melon seeds, flirting, and enjoying the summer evening. My friend said that today, however, no one goes out. The cinema is closed and everyone is inside watching television. People aren't interested in each other and the practice of neighborly relations, *komşuluk*, is lost.

This story struck me because the contradiction embedded in it was so natural and yet so inconsistent. The meaning of this little narrative became clear over the course of hearing many more stories. Issues of familiarity and neighborliness are very important in Kuzguncuk, even if they no longer exist, or perhaps because of their very absence. This is nowhere more evident than in the narratives of Kuzguncuk's past, especially in stories of its cosmopolitan daily life.

Collective memory narratives reinforce a perspective on history agreed upon by a cultural group (Fentress and Wickham 1992). When people of Kuzguncuk recall Kuzguncuk's rosy past, they position themselves as members of the *mahalle* collective,

and thus as ‘truly’ Kuzguncuklu. The seamless and nostalgic collective narrative, however, is betrayed by the tensions of individual narratives. These knotty bumps in the larger tapestry always concern the issues of belonging, familiarity, and interfaith harmony, and are bound to the cultural concepts of *mahalle* and *komsuluk*. The individual stories also assume an ‘us/them’ stance which positions the teller in relation to others: as an early migrant and not a later migrant, or as a Muslim and not a non-Muslim, each division contesting the claim of ‘other’ individuals to true belonging in the neighborhood. I read the nostalgia of the collective memory as a symptom of cultural ‘nervousness’ surrounding past and contemporary fractures in communal Kuzguncuklu identity.

“The Olden Days Were So Beautiful”

The narratives nearly always start with the words, “Kuzguncuk in the olden days was so beautiful, our neighborly relations were so wonderful.” The following narrative segments are chosen because they are particularly typical representations of the overall nostalgic story and yet also contain elements of tension ². Common elements of these stories are the beauty of the neighborhood, emphasis on the presence and friendship with minorities by name, a gentler pace of life, the participation in social activities in outside street space as a group, and the familiarity of everyone knowing everyone else. This collective memory is filled with longing for what once was. In this way, the narratives are telling us not about history, but about what’s important in the

² I write these fragments in quotations when I recorded an interview, and I narrate them as I remember hearing them if I relied on handwritten notes.

contemporary cultural moment of *now* (Halbwachs 1980; Nora 1998; Stewart 1988).

The communal *mahalle* identity is the element most greatly missed in the contemporary culture of the neighborhood, and it is missed by Muslims, Greeks, and Jews - by everyone who remembers the past.

A Greek woman over sixty years old said that in the old days there were no Muslims. The first Muslim who came was the man who eventually became the *muhtar* (he migrated in 1938 from the Black Sea region and served as the *muhtar* for sixty years). She talked about the wonderful relationships with her neighbors, and explained there were Jews and Armenians as well as other Greeks who lived on their street. When it was time to ring the church bell, all the kids would go together to participate in doing it, not just Greeks. In the evening they sat outside with the neighbors and sang songs. Her family invited their Muslim friends for *iftar* (the evening meal to break the fast during Ramadan). Her parents told her not to chew gum outside during Ramadan because the others were fasting. In this narrative, by talking about the arrival of Muslims, the teller identifies herself as non-Muslim. Her story also emphasizes, however, the civility and mutual respect between Muslims and non-Muslims, as in the example of respecting those fasting for Ramadan. Her emphasis suggests that such interfaith respect is no longer characteristic of Kuzguncuk culture.

Another old Kuzguncuklu, this one a middle-aged Muslim man, also remembers relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. "There used to be Turks (Muslims), Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. On Sundays everyone would walk side by side on Icadiye Street. It was very pleasant. They were all one, all being Kuzguncuklu. There

are a mosque and church next to each other in Kuzguncuk. ... There used to be an old Armenian watchman responsible for the security of the whole neighborhood. ... My teacher was Greek, he had to go back to Greece but he didn't want to. We saw troubles... They [the non-Muslims] were quality people. There was a good Greek restaurant, and Greeks and Jews played in the theatre. We had a football team and played football together. The team was mixed Jewish and Armenian, but because there were many more Greeks they made up their own team. Kuzguncuk changed a lot. No one is left. It was a mosaic, but not one beautiful thing remained." While this narrative also emphasizes friendships, the teller emphasizes more his sadness at the departure of the Greeks. He acknowledges 'troubles', but doesn't detail them, focusing instead on the quality of what was lost.

Another Muslim man told me that when his family arrived in the early 1940s, Muslims were a very small minority in Kuzguncuk, and that they lived as brothers with the Jews and Armenians and Greeks who were already here. They went to weddings at synagogues, they visited and helped each other with deaths and went to the church, synagogue, or mosque for each other, and never had any problems. His neighbors were Greek and his mother visited the women there. When the call to prayer rang out for prayer time, the Greek family set up a prayer rug in an area of the house for their Muslim friends to pray. When the creek was covered over (to pave the main street) there remained a tunnel underneath it. As children they wore bathing suits, teenagers, boys and girls together of all religions, and jumped in one end of the tunnel and came out the other end into the sea. No one's family said anything if the girl or boy was from

a different religion. All the shopkeepers used to be Greek or Jewish or Armenian, like the fruit seller and the barber. People wore fine evening clothes to walk along the sea at night. Kuzguncuk was like a theater. Everyone knew each other. It was isolated, and everyone was tied together by love. Everyone loved to help each other. ... There were strawberries on the hills in Baglarbasi ... It was green and beautiful. His friend in Greece who grew up in Kuzguncuk calls him every Bayram at the end of Ramadan, and he calls his friend every Christmas, and they wish each other happy holidays. This generation of people was close and tolerant. ... Everyone used to sit in front of their houses at night and sing songs, visit, have fun, and collect fireflies. This was what passed for entertainment in those times – each other.

This Kuzguncuklu similarly emphasizes the outside activities between neighbors and the mixing of people. He maintains relationships with old friends in Greece, explaining that “this generation of people was close and tolerant”, suggesting that new generations, in today’s Kuzguncuk, are not so tolerant.

Similar themes are present in the narrative of this old Greek woman: “In the past Kuzguncuk was a mosaic. Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, there were a mosque, churches, a synagogue – there’s only one place like this in the world, no place else like this existed. The churches would empty out. The Armenians would walk out from their church. Everyone would walk together, it was famous, all together in a promenade. ... Kuzguncuk was a village. In those days it was all Greek. Dimitro the hairdresser was Greek. The vegetable seller, the corner stores. Toman had the restaurant, now it’s a shoe store. The corner store across from the church was Evripides. The pharmacy was Koco.

On Easter we carried candles from the church on the main street to our homes and made a cross above the door. ...Kuzguncuk was a small place. ...It was chance. It was all a mosaic.” Her description of Kuzguncuk as a mosaic makes it exceptional in her memory, when she says that no other such place in the world exists. She remembers the minority shops by name and their social life. For her, this mosaic is gone.

The following narrative also describes good interfaith relationships. This Muslim woman describes the people of her daily life who were not Muslim like herself. “The unleavened bread for the Passover holiday was made by hand. A family friend would make a neat little packet of it for us. That Jewish family took care of me. At that time everyone was together, there was no difference except in a name. When someone from the [Christian] community died, Muslims would go to the church.

I knew a Russian woman who came to Turkey during the time of the Bolsheviks. Her daughter Yorgi was my age. They had a garden and they’d collect beans, tomatoes, and peppers in a basket. They called me ‘daughter’ because I looked like Yorgi, and they gave me vegetables, chocolate, and food they made. Everything was good [with people] from the beginning, without asking for anything.

The Jews and Greeks did the best embroidery. The women did it in their homes.... [A Jewish neighbor] would ask me to come and talk to her so she wouldn’t fall asleep while she was working, and I would finish the edges for her or read aloud a novel. We’d sit three or four nights in a row.” This story’s emphasis on good relations between Muslims and Jews, which typified past neighborliness, relies on a common understanding that such relations would be exceptional now.

In the following narrative told by a Jewish man in his late forties, the quality of community relationships with other Jews, and Greeks and Armenians was part of a slower pace of life.

“When we went to school we all wore short hair, and who would we go to but Dimitro. Our father would say hey, let’s go see Dimitro. In Kuzguncuk there were two barbers, both Greek. The doctors were also non-Muslim. There was one called Minasyan, and doctor Giorgio Vargarit. Karmona, he was Jewish, the other two were Armenian. They’d sit in the coffeehouse, playing games. ... This doctor Ohanes, he was someone who enjoyed life, and would love to play in the coffeehouse, and when a patient came someone would run and tell him and he’d say, coming right away! Coming right away! There’s a patient dying over there! (laughing) There were these kinds of people, there wasn’t any rushing. People weren’t always motivated to earn more money, the pace of life was slower, more patient, more comfortable. There was another corner store owned by a rabbi. He was a sweet man, to the last degree a nice person. When we went, he’d write our debts in a notebook or papers, then he’d lose them, then he’d forget, and put cheese and potatoes on someone else’s list... can you imagine such a storekeeper?”

The warmth of neighborly relationships, as well as the beauty of the neighborhood’s environment, though, contrasts with the change that took place in the neighborhood when minorities departed and Muslims arrived in greater numbers. The loss and the tension in the narratives surrounding the religious difference between people, in spite of the emphasis on sameness and neighborliness, is not only a minority

narrative, but the narrative of old Kuzguncuk residents who feel the pain of the changes that eventually ruined social relations in the neighborhood.

“In those days the main street was a creek, it was a clean place. ... We used to walk around along the seaside. There were Greeks and Jews, all friends together, everyone was close and loved to help each other. ... We had close Jewish friends, but they all sold their houses and went. When they were going to Palestine they were on a boat and someone exploded the boat and they all died. We were all very sad about it. [the narrator refers to the Struma incident] We loved those Jewish people. When they were sick we went to them. When you were sick, they would always come to you. ... In those days ... everyone knew each other on the street, everyone visited, there was neighborliness. Today no one comes to the door. We celebrated Jewish holidays and ate unleavened bread with them. We also celebrated Easter with Greek friends, and went to the church to light a candle. There were also Turks in the neighborhood but fewer. We didn't go to the synagogue. The Jews didn't go there much either, they didn't take people there. But everyone went to the church. ... It changed after all the people left. The houses remained but the beauty didn't remain. When I visit, I look out of the window, the houses look uncared for. The clean beauty of the past is gone, everything has totally changed, only the name has remained”.

This sense of loss is also present in comments about the environment. “The magnolia tree in front of our house, in the church garden, was as old as the church itself. When the flowers of the tree bloomed, all of Kuzguncuk was perfumed with the fragrance of magnolia. Every time I go to Kuzguncuk I anticipate that smell. I don't

know if my senses are dulled or if that tree isn't speaking to nature anymore, but I can't smell that tree in Kuzguncuk anymore."³

Yet although the narratives emphasize the 'goodness' of past relations, they also suggest that religion was, in reality, an issue of difference. The following informant, an elderly Muslim man, clearly feels regret concerning the departure of the old non-Muslim neighbors and the immigration of other Muslims, although he did not want to talk about any specific events or circumstances. Every time his narrative moved toward an unpleasant memory, he shifted back to a nostalgic memory.

"They went to Israel, Greece, America. We had such good neighbors. We went to the church for weddings. We'd go to the synagogue, they'd come to the mosque. My neighbor went to Greece, and they came back later to visit us. They were good people. Our renter was Greek, he had five or six children. Religion never separated us, we always got along well. If we needed something we'd go to them. Or our Jewish neighbors would come to us. We shared meat. Still they call us from Bostancı [this neighborhood is only 20 minutes away by car, yet the neighbors don't return for visits]. Most went to Israel, most Greeks to Greece. About 85% of them left. ... Civilization went with the minorities when they left. They took it with them, they took politeness. All has changed, this respect ended in a bad way. When the old people come here they

³ This unpublished memoir, by Zahiré Büyükfırat, was shared with me by friends at the Greek Orthodox church. "Evimizin önündeki tarihi Rum kilisesinin bahçesindeki manolya ağacı kilise kadar yaşlı. Ağaç çiçek açtığı zaman tum Kuzguncuk manolya kokardı. Kuzguncuğa her gidişimde o kokuyu duyumsamak istiyorum. Benim mi duyu organlarım eskidi, manolya mi doğaya küs, bilemem. Artık o kokuyu duyamıyorum."

don't know anyone anymore. Kuzguncuk is still beautiful, we help each other, we were all brothers, but then there became a difference, it was divided.”

In this narrative, the speaker confuses present and past ‘good relations’ in saying Kuzguncuk ‘was divided’. He contrasts the politeness of the past with the rudeness of the present. The good neighbors of the past are unlike those who came later, even as the teller then says there continues to be good neighborliness. Even though he doesn't describe the 1942 property tax or the 1955 riots, the loss of his neighbors was clearly painful for him and shapes his narrative.

The social difference between people of different religions is denied by most narratives, except in the few told to me by some Greeks and Jews who said that if there was neighborliness between families it was usually between families of the same religion. The state-led local violence that shattered neighborhoods across Istanbul in 1955 is an event made ethnic difference visible and divisive when Greeks and other minorities in the city were targeted and their property violated.

The Events of 6-7 September 1955

The riots of 1955 started simultaneously in separate parts of the city after an evening newspaper announced that Ataturk's house in Salonika had been bombed. They occurred during a heightened period of tension between Greece and Turkey concerning Cyprus. It is now known that the Turkish government planned the riots, in spite of initial claims that ‘communists’ were responsible. The following brief segments from foreign press (Turkish press was censored) help us imagine how the violence could violate a basic sense of safety and spur minority emigration from Istanbul.

“After news of the bomb outrage in Salonika had been received here a crowd, mostly young men, demonstrated before the Greek consulate and then marched through the main streets, shouting anti-Greek slogans. ... Thousands of people carrying Turkish flags and portraits of the late President Kemal Atatürk wrecked hundreds of Greek-owned stores and houses here to-night. Shouting Atatürk’s name and ‘Cyprus is Turkish’ they destroyed shops and their merchandise on Independence Street with stones and iron bars.⁴”

“Middle-aged persons recalled the destruction of Izmir, then called Smyrna and largely a Greek town, in 1922. Old people recalled earlier massacres of Christians.⁵”

“Greek churches, tombs and sacred ossuaries were rifled and wrecked, as well as the stores along the famed Avenue of Independence. A sea of olive oil flooded the streets before one large grocery store; spilled paints and dyes made the street a nightmarish rainbow before a paint store nearby. One aging priest was burned alive in his bed, another scalped. By next morning, Istanbul was quiet again, its rubble-strewn streets the property of prowling cats and patrolling soldiers, but a reporter from London... compared the debris to the worst in England during Hitler’s blitz.”⁶

“There is still a scarcity of food in Istanbul, and restaurants are unable to supply their customers. This is because most of the dealers in food are Greeks whose premises were destroyed or looted.”⁷

⁴ *London Times* 1955.

⁵ Sedgwick 1955.

⁶ *Time Magazine* 1955.

⁷ *London Times* 1955.

“More than 4,000 shops, mostly Greek or Armenian owned, were totally wrecked by the rioters the night of Sept 6. Seven hundred homes were damaged...No non-Turkish witness to whom this correspondent talked during five days in Istanbul believes the riots were entirely spontaneous. The most widely accepted theory is that the Turkish Government quietly encouraged a demonstration in favor of Turkish claims on Cyprus and that it got completely out of hand. Observers of the early hours of the disturbance are unanimous in reporting that the police did nothing to interfere for some time.⁸”

Remembering Conflict

The 6-7 September events are significant because they were a state-organized act of violence that relied on already existing prejudices and resentment for its implementation. This reality of social prejudice, which led to violence, underlies all narratives of the 6-7 September events, which is precisely why stories of Kuzguncuk’s past are conflicted on this topic. The interviews that touch on the 1955 riots are important because these events are popularly denied in Kuzguncuk, and they remain, largely, unspoken. This is clearly an event whose (un-)remembering is significant because it undermines the values of equality and tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims in the collective memory of the past. The moment of contradiction hinges on the neighborly relationships – that in a neighborly place like Kuzguncuk such a thing couldn’t happen, yet it did. That there was no difference between religions, and yet,

⁸ Hoffman 1955.

there was. The italicized emphases in the following interview fragments are intended to emphasize important points of contradiction or tension for the teller.

An old Muslim woman told me, “*The 6-7 Eylül Olayları didn’t happen in Kuzguncuk*, but I heard about it. They stole... vandalism... it happened in [the districts of] Beyoğlu, Eminönü, and Sultanahmet. Our people (Muslims) put them (minorities) out on the street. Oh, the things that happened, the things that happened... Sounds of tanks were heard here. The noise carried from the other side of the city. On the other side there were gazinos [casinos, bars with music] and we heard the music from them across the water. On that night they destroyed the churches... I had three or four Christian friends and I protected them, they stayed in my house. Then after that the Greeks began to leave and go to America, my friends left. My close friends. ... during the bad times they stayed with me for fifteen days. ... After the 6-7 September riots, they began to look for reasons to make the Greeks and Armenians leave. The Greeks felt themselves part of Turkey, they said Greece doesn’t want us, they cried we are Turks, where do we go? Will they kill us? Some went to the islands. The Greeks sold their houses cheap. Jews went to Israel”

Much later the teller returns to the events, this time contradicting her statement that the events did not happen in Kuzguncuk, by starting to describe them. “Turks, Jews, Armenians were not separate in those times. There was no anger at each other. It was when the doctor was killed in Cyprus that it got bad here [this is her explanation for why the 1955 riots started]. Then *those who came from Anatolia did it to us*. They took their goods, they hit the churches, there were Turkish houses next to the churches. It

was the people who came from Anatolia who did it. They broke into the houses, they tied the tanks' wheels and tore fabrics in the houses... *We heard sounds* ... they cut the rugs, they ruined things, they took the mattresses of the beds and cut them and threw the wool out of the windows. They broke the glass. *One of them sat in front of the jail,* wearing several layers of clothes, putting on shoes from a pile of shoes there. *What sins were committed here.* When they saw the Greeks they turned the other way". ... And then the speaker tries to rationalize what happened by saying it was a war time. "We would have given our clothes, books to the poor, if a guest came there was a place on our head for them, we protected and respected everyone. We killed those who did bad things to us. We protected those who were good. In war it wasn't a normal time."

Two Greek women told me that during the 6-7 September events their Muslim friends protected the church and hid their Greek friends under their beds. But they say this "neighborliness has disappeared. *After the 6-7 September events, places died.* In the old days there was civilization. Between Jew, Armenian, and Greek, there was no rudeness. Then when they began to come (the rural migrants) it got ruined. There used to be 200,000 Greeks in Istanbul, but everyone has left. Jews went to Israel. The shops all used to be Greek, Jewish, Armenian. Kuzguncuk used to be a beautiful place. They were good people in our village." ... Our interview took place in a group. Everyone in the room started to talk about how and why Kuzguncuk changed, and the topic returned to the 6-7 September events. Then people disagreed over what exactly happened. A man in his sixties said they broke in and took what was in the houses, and that's how they got rich. Then a woman said that didn't happen here, they broke some glass on the

houses (on her own house for example) but they didn't take what was inside. Someone else mentioned that a mob came with red and white (the Turkish flag). It was agreed, though, that after this event Greek people became afraid and began to leave Kuzguncuk in numbers, and that this event marks the moment of change in the neighborhood.

In another interview, this one with an old Muslim man, the speaker referred to the 1955 riots and spoke directly about later occupation of non-Muslim property by Muslims: "Menderes came to power in 1944. Houses were destroyed. Bad things happened. Between 1950 and 1955 houses were destroyed. The 6-7 September riots were very bad. They, Muslims, came from the other side, from areas where houses were ruined like in Findikli, and moved to this part of the city *to occupy newly evacuated non-Muslim houses* here. In the 1955 events destruction happened against the Greek people in Kuzguncuk."

In other narratives, however, the events are discussed but the local goodwill between Muslims and non-Muslims in Kuzguncuk is emphasized, retaining the value of the collective memory: "The 6-7 Eylül events were against the Greeks and Armenians. Those who did it came from outside. The Turks hid their neighbors in their homes. Those who came were the attackers. *Those who protected the minorities were all Turks.* They broke into a shop and broke the refrigerator. They ripped up people's fabrics. The event was influential in these people's leaving Kuzguncuk." and "During the 6-7 September riots everyone went into their houses and sat. They (the rioters) broke all the glass on the shops and on the church. Our *civilized* Turkish friends were embarrassed, still are embarrassed at the event."

The following recollection of a Jewish interviewee is full of tension between the statements of good relations and intracommunity tension. He said he heard from his parents that the 6-7 September events were “very dramatic, very sad in Kuzguncuk, and Jews were also affected by these negative events. But in Kuzguncuk Greek houses were pillaged and vandalized with stones and it was done by people who came from Anatolia, although *some of the Turks here showed them the way*, saying this house is Greek, throw it over there, this house is Jewish, don’t throw a stone here. These are sad things but they were *done by those who came later*. In Kuzguncuk, whether Muslim, Greek, Armenian, Jewish, there was a good relationship between them, there was a good feeling of brotherhood. This was a very sensitive time.” While this teller describes tension between Muslims and non-Muslims, saying the Turks (the Muslims) showed the rioters the way to minority homes, and that it was done by recent migrants to Kuzguncuk, he pulls back from this idea to emphasize the good relationship between neighbors of different religions, preserving the collective memory.

While some old Muslims’ narratives betray social tension between religious groups, even if they contradict it later, any deliberate acknowledgement of difference between Muslims and non-Muslims happened in conversations with Greeks or Jews. In one conversation with a non-Muslim couple, older friends of mine, I commented on the departure of so many non-Muslims from Kuzguncuk, and my friends said “an entire world left” (“bir dünya gitti, bir dünya!”) with them. They said that old Istanbul is completely gone with the people who left. I asked whether it was after the 6-7 September events that people left, and the husband said it was a terrible event that

happened all over the city. The riots were not just near Beyoğlu like people think, it was a mad, crazy violence that happened in Kuzguncuk, too. His wife told me what they did to people in the neighborhood was horrible, that terrible things happened to girls in their homes, that she was 12 years old and she remembers how scary it was. She said that after that, anyone with money left Kuzguncuk. A Muslim neighbor came to the door while we were talking and the husband put his finger to his lips to tell me to stop talking about it. His wife whispered that I shouldn't talk to my Turkish friends about these things. In this case the memory of the events is definitely from a minority perspective, and they are telling me because I am American and Christian, not Turkish and Muslim.

Tensions of Difference in the Narratives

While there existed inter-community civility in neighborhood life, religious difference was important. In spite of the usual assertion that religion never came between people, narratives make it clear that on an individual level religion was an important marker of identity. This is especially true concerning the issue of interfaith marriage. While interfaith marriages happened, couples who did it were likely to be marginalized. Interfaith love relationships were aggressively discouraged.

In an unpublished memoir, Zahiré Büyükfırat (she is Muslim) writes about a conversation with her Greek friend Kornı. She touches on the issues of love and identity between Muslims and Christians.

“‘Kornı’, I said, one day. ‘If only you were a Turk.’ He was three or four years older than I.

‘Me’, he said. ‘I am a Turk.’

‘Nooo, not like that’ I said. He looked at me strangely.

‘I understand’, he said. ‘Okay, would you be a Greek?’

‘No way’, I said.

‘Okay, then why would I be a Muslim?’

Muslim, Greek, Turk. I first learned these three categories, embarrassingly, from Korni.

The next day I said:

‘Korni, I love you anyway even if you’re not a Turk.’

And after that day we never spoke of the subject again.”

Büyükfirat’s story brings out the issue of religion and national identity, and the default categorization of ‘Turk’ as Muslim. She reveals her own shame in realizing that she not only speaks from the majority identification as Muslim, but that she has belittled her friend’s identity as a Greek, even if she did so accidentally and through a confession of affection. The story is subtle in its tracing of boundaries of ethnic difference, even if the consequences of such difference are significant in terms of how they shape social relationships.

An older Greek woman described to me how, years ago, there used to be a boy, a Turk, who fell in love with a Greek girl. Her family forbade it and they moved to Athens. He was heartbroken and she eventually died of a long illness. The dramatic stories of lost love and broken hearts deny the collective memory by reflecting the social difference, based on religion, within the collectivity of the neighborhood. On another occasion, an elderly man who works at the Kuzguncuk synagogue told me that he doesn’t have a daughter anymore, that he disowned her because she “took a Turk”.

He was explaining to me how painful and yet important it was because their community was dying out in Kuzguncuk. He said most of the Jews left in Kuzguncuk were married to people of other religious groups, mostly Muslims. The importance of marrying within the religious community becomes ever more significant as the community dwindles in number and suitable marriage partners are difficult to find. The high rate of intermarriage among the Jews left in Kuzguncuk is a marker of how their community was impacted by migration out of the neighborhood. For this man, interfaith marriage can never be acceptable.

When people say, “in the past we were all like brothers”, “everyone celebrated everyone else’s holidays”, what goes unsaid are statements others have told me: “we were never very close to Muslims. Our close friends were always Jewish like us.” “Sometimes we heard things like ‘korkak Yehudi’ (scared Jew)” and “sometimes Muslims called us ‘*gavur*’ (heathen)”. When people say, well, all those people left one day and we don’t know why, attention is deflected from the significance of religious difference in terms of how they form relationships of belonging, not just to the neighborhood, but also to the nation. The fact that the Turkish state confiscated the property these people left behind is denied, as is the fact that they left because they were scared or forced to leave. In the *mahalle* of collective belonging and good neighborly relations, non-Muslim Kuzguncuklu people began to feel not-at-home.

Memories of Change in Kuzguncuk

The migration of non-Muslims out of Kuzguncuk (and out of Istanbul) that began in the late 1940s and continued through the 1960s occurred simultaneously with

migration to Istanbul. The incomers were not only Muslim but rural. Religious difference was heightened as non-Muslim communities in Kuzguncuk became true demographic minorities at the same time that the state was initiating persecutory policies against these communities by divesting them of their property and rights to residency and safety. The nostalgic memories of the past contrast sharply with the narratives that bemoan how contemporary Kuzguncuk has been ruined by the new and unpleasant people and their ways of life. The newcomers become scapegoats, in the narratives, for the problems of the ruined environment and the breakdown of good neighborhood relationships.

The narratives thus reveal the urban bias against the cultural changes of rural migration that dominate contemporary discourse about Istanbul and its problems (see Erder). In the words of an Armenian informant, “The traders and jewelers used to be Jews. Then they became the Laz’s⁹ ... everyone was such good neighbors. Now there’s nothing like that. Because cultured, enlightened people wouldn’t do things like this. All the people on the street now, they’re all Laz, conservative, their women are covered. They came to Kuzguncuk and now they’re settling, they’re coming from uncared for places where there is no school or civilization.”

A Greek woman tells it this way: “Then the villagers came. After the 1960s they came with lots of possessions and were brought here by their relatives and friends. .. In the old days the animals would never have been standing in the garden for the sacrifice,

⁹ The Laz, an ethnic group from the Black Sea region, are sometimes the subject of jokes or discrimination in Istanbul.

would Ilya do such a thing?” (Our conversation was during preparation for the upcoming Muslim Sacrifice holiday, and there were animals in the market garden waiting to be cut the next day).

Paradoxically, however, the very people whose presence is vilified in accounts by older migrants who condemn the immigration of rural people as destructive for Kuzguncuk’s ‘civilized, urban culture’ share the same collective memory of the past and an identity as Kuzguncuklu. When I met a couple who migrated from Sivas in 1972 to live in one of Kuzguncuk’s squatter settlements, and told them I was doing research on Kuzguncuk, they immediately launched into the same, predictable narrative: “In the old days Kuzguncuk was so beautiful, there used to be lots of Jews and Christians but they are gone now. There used to be a summer theater we used to go to, it was wonderful. It was so green, there was no one, but now it’s full of houses. The apartment buildings across from us weren’t there, it was all green, it was so beautiful. Now people we don’t know throw trash in front of our house after the garbage truck has already gone and it smells. They throw cigarettes in the grass next to our house. This is a fire hazard because the grass dries in the summer. People don’t think, they’re so impolite. Kuzguncuk has changed, it used to be so beautiful.” By adopting the collective memory, these migrants claim their own place in the neighborhood, and identify themselves as Kuzguncuklu.

The Place of the Narrative in Collective Memory

Narratives of Kuzguncuk, with their tension concerning social difference in origin, class, and religion, center on issues of belonging. The nostalgic narratives

always mention the life of the main street, the same street which became the site of violence during the 1955 riots. These riots forever fractured the sense of neighborliness and belonging by destroying the property and safety of non-Muslims. They made visible the difference that had always existed underneath the commonality of neighborhood life.

The silences regarding the riots in the collective memory indicate not that it is insignificant or forgotten; rather, that the shame of it has made it deeply ingrained in memory (Pennebaker and Banasik 1997, 10). The emphasis on the friendship and brotherhood is a language with which to talk about what was lost, what was destroyed by this event and the changes that came later. While the shared nostalgic collective memory of the past fosters social cohesion among Kuzguncuklu residents now, the ‘silent memories’ are also divisive for those who feel excluded from the collective (Paez et al 1997, 147). Those who are willing to remember aloud the events in Kuzguncuk contradict the story that the events couldn’t happen in Kuzguncuk because of the exceptional brotherhood and interfaith neighborliness. One confirms oneself as Kuzguncuklu with the nostalgic narrative and the sense of longing for the past. Narratives that describe the 6-7 September riots are unusual, and they transgress the norm. What remains emphasized is the neighborliness and the past is remembered as a ‘civilized’ time. Not talking about painful events “plays an important social role in legitimizing a current society. In short, forgetting is one of the main processes found in collective memory (Paez et al 1997, 148)”.

Remembering (or un-remembering) the anti-minority violence of the past serves in different ways to articulate Kuzguncuklu identity for the teller. For the older Muslim residents of Kuzguncuk who remember the early days of migration and the dominance of minority culture in the neighborhood, remembering their presence, reciting their names and describing their holidays, ‘authenticates’ the identity of the teller as true Kuzguncuklu, by placing herself as a witness to the loss of these communities. For the remaining few Jews and Greeks, however, the loss of these people represents much more, a loss to claim to place and membership in a larger community, and evidence that they are ‘other’, or ‘minority’ in a Turkish nation and a now Muslim neighborhood¹⁰.

In a poem called “Odise”, Kuzguncuk-born writer Reza Suat Gökdel starts by describing the Greek caretaker of the old Greek cemetery. The caretaker laments that no one comes anymore as he looks at the stones. He remembers his love of a girl called Despina. “Greek, Jew, Turk, Armenian, we were all together as one. Before our state, our society was Ottoman. We danced together at my wedding. We walked down to the sea together to watch the moon. The stormy love affairs, the evenings in the

¹⁰ Andre Levy remarks, regarding his research on the Jewish community of Morocco, “researchers in all social sciences generally tend to neglect studying the effects of emigration on those who stay behind.” (Levy 2003, 365) For the remaining Greeks and Jews, what’s at stake in remembering, is a claim to the past of the neighborhood. Levy’s work treats a very similar mass emigration of Jews from Morocco between the 1950s and the 1970s. He argues that the memory of Jews in Moroccan society in the past makes Jews present *in their very absence* even while the actual Jews who are left are marginalized and no longer visible in Moroccan culture. “A tangible absence accompanies the physical disappearance of the Jews. It is as if Jews continued to exist there but as a shade, a feeble yet lingering national and personal memory. Those Jewish individuals who do remain seem to embody the past. There is an irony here, in that Morocco’s Jewish absentees remain present in the landscape, whereas present-day Jews appear to be absent (ibid.)”

coffeehouses and in the streets, the groups of men and women, the close friendships from the philosopher to the porter, the neighborly relationships that relied on loving to help each other, were watched with tolerance and beloved in Kuzguncuk. They gave us pleasure in life. Around 1960 it was confused by those who came and went. Kuzguncuk changed, became filled with other people. Some of them already knew how to live together but most of them ruined its beauty. First the Jews left quickly, and the Greeks left right behind them. Those honorable people, who were of different origins but who knew how to live together, were lost. So even the polite Turks watched the loss in a wave of silence. Most of them also took their hands and feet away from Kuzguncuk... Those old Kuzguncuk people who are still left, those who go slowly and painfully up their stairs, watch me. They remember Doctor Josef, Minasyan, and Postman Muzaffer. Those people keep their Kuzguncuk memories and their honor in their hearts¹¹”.

“Memory, which also includes forgetting, should not be taken literally. It is to be understood in its ‘sacred context’ as the variety of forms through which cultural

¹¹ “Rum, Yahudi, Turk, Ermeni bir aradaydik. Milliyetimizden önce toplumuz Osmanlıydi. Dügünümde beraber oynadık. Aynı şarkıları söyledik. Deniz sahili severken Ayı beraber, indirdik...Hoşgörüyü izlenen Fırtınalı aşklar, akşamları cadde ve kahvehanelere taşan, kadınlı erkekli gruplar, düşünüründen hamalına seviyeli yaklaşımlar, ince yardım seven komşuluklar, Kuzguncuk’u nazlı nazlı okşuyordu. Bizlere yaşam zevki sağliyordu. 1960’a doğru, yeni gelenler ile gidenler belirgin oldu. Kuzguncuk değışti, Başka insanlar doldu. Ancak bazıları birlikte yaşamayı biliyordu. Ama çoğunluğu güzellikleri bozuyordu. Önce Yahudiler hızla azaldı. Arkadan Rumlar kaçtı. Ayri kökenden, ama seviyeleri eş düzeyde o saygın kişiler, yeni potada kayıp olup eridiler. Belli hüzünden kaçıp, gittiler. Efendi Türkler de, olan biteni, sessiz bir kaygı ile izlediler. Onların da çoğu Kuzguncuk’tan ellerini ayaklarını çektiler. ...O eski Kuzguncuklulardan hala kalanlar, ağır ağır çıkarken merdiveni, izlerler beni. İçlerinde buruk ani, Hatırlarlar Doktor Josef’ı, Minasyan’ı, ve Postacı Muzaffer’i. O insanların saygınlığı, ve Kuzguncuk anıları ile ferahlik kaplar içlerini” (Gökdel 1991, 122-127).

communities imagine themselves...(Kritzman 1998, ix).” Memories of Kuzguncuk’s past are what makes Kuzguncuklu people who they are. Those who tell the narrative count themselves as part of the Kuzguncuk mahalle. The collective memory of mahalle life, however, has a cultural politics that produces it, that forms the context for its remembering. Who holds the collective memory of the mahalle, and who and what are the subject of nostalgia? Selim Ileri, in a book of essays on Istanbul, writes that “Koco was famous then, too, but he wasn’t ‘nostalgic’”¹². Placing the burden of nostalgic memory on the names of Istanbul’s old minority populations, by valuing them especially in the collective memory of Istanbul’s tolerant multiculturalism betrays, in the end, a continued underlying sense of social difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, Turk and non-Muslim. Istanbul’s Greeks, Jews, and Armenians are present in the contemporary remembering of the past precisely because they are no longer there.

Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty wrote an essay about Hindu and Muslim memories of Indian society during the Partition of 1947. In his analysis of narratives about intercommunal violence, he discovers an underlying value of what attachment to place means for those who are remembering. While his article examines the idea of home in Bengali culture, his conclusions could be transferred to this discussion of the *mahalle* in Istanbul. “... what speaks of shared cultural values in the essays .. also speaks, ultimately, of prejudice. In treating the Bengali Muslim’s ethnic hatred as something inherently inexplicable, and hence, profoundly shocking, the essays refuse to acknowledge their own prejudice. I say this to underline the intimate relation that

¹² “Koco o zaman da unluydu, ama ‘nostaljik’ degildi.” (Ileri 2001, 14)

necessarily exists between values and prejudices. When unattended by critique, and in moments of crisis, not only do our values play a role in producing a sense of home, a sense of community among ourselves and with others, but they can also stop us from hearing what the other might be saying to us at that moment. ... “Poetically, man dwells...” – true, but *within the poetry lies the poison of inescapable prejudice, all the more unrecognizable because it comes disguised as value*” (Chakrabarty 2002a, 137 emphasis mine).

The collective memory of mahalle life narrates the past with the language of “we were all brothers” because Turkish nationalism cut apart the spheres of difference in daily life. These spheres no longer overlap to constitute a cosmopolitan culture, but cohabit the city in a fragmented way, with unacknowledged friction and the potential of future violence. I read the collective memory of life on Icadiye Street for how it produces an imagined cultural space that refers not to the past, but to what is happening now. It has become necessary to remember a tolerant multiculturalism in order to cope with the fracturing of the *mahalle* in contemporary life. Nostalgic memories of the minority neighbors of the past erase minority claims to place by denying the social difference that grew into injustice and dispossession. “By now, traditions have been so thoroughly ‘invented’ or homogenized, and ‘history’ so absolutely marketed or commodified, misrepresented, or rendered invisible, that any oppositional potential rooted in collective memory has been eclipsed completely” (Boyer 1996, 5). There is, today, no space for alternative narratives of Kuzguncuk.

Chapter Five

New Day Street/Yenigün Sokak:

Neighborliness and Knowing

Although my move to Kuzguncuk brought me into the physical neighborhood, it wasn't until I was made a neighbor that I entered the *mahalle*. The *mahalle* is the space of belonging created by the actions of daily life that link neighbors together in bonds of sharing, support, and reciprocity. The word refers not only to the neighborhood as a whole but also to the immediate space around the home. A neighbor distinguishes one end of the street from the other by saying 'my *mahalle*' and 'your *mahalle*'; the *mahalle* is a place defined by its proximity to home. *Mahalle* life has many places of interaction, including the male space of the coffeehouse and the community spaces of the local corner store and bakery, where consistent patronage creates familiarity between neighbors in the *mahalle*. The residential street of the *mahalle* blends the spaces of the public arena of the main street and the inside of the house and links neighbors and their homes. This particular space depends on the cultural practices of women for its reproduction. A woman called Zeynep was the first person to make me a neighbor, and our ongoing friendship taught me about the roles of women in creating Turkish neighborhood space.

Zeynep introduced me to *komsuluk*, neighborliness, by initiating the habit of ongoing and reciprocal visiting. The responsibility of visiting frequently enough to demonstrate membership in the community, and the ways of visiting (talking, reading coffee fortunes, drinking tea, eating, helping prepare food or interacting with children,

or keeping company while someone does chores) with other women, is a significant characteristic of traditional neighborhood life. Doors are always open to a visiting *komşu* (neighbor). Most visitors come without calling first. *Komşuluk* is related to the cultural value of preferring being with people over being alone¹, and traditional *komşuluk* depends on women staying at home during the day while their husbands are out. Visiting in homes keeps neighbor women company with each other.

By linking the insides of homes to streets, visiting makes the residential street of the neighborhood an extension of private space. In deCerteau's well-known study of everyday life, Pierre Mayol situates the role of the neighborhood for dwellers in urban space as the link between public and private space created by specific actions, or "tactics" (Mayol 1998). My ethnography in Kuzguncuk confirms the significance of social practices in creating neighborhood space. The neighborhood is, in fact, defined only by the social relations and actions that inscribed it as a place in the urban environment. Performance of these social practices inscribes one's identity as bound in place. The feminist geographic methodology employed in my study reveals the gendered dimensions of these practices.

The idea of 'knowing' (*tanımak*) is what defines neighborhood quality: everyone 'knows' each other, or is 'known' in the neighborhood. Pierre Mayol's study proves this to be true, too, for the French neighborhood. However, for the *mahalle*, the 'knowing'

¹ Farha Ghannam's ethnography of Cairo makes a similar claim about the gendered nature of spatial practices in everyday life. According to Ghannam, women in the popular quarter she studied also prefer to be with other people rather than to spend time alone. The space of nearby apartments in the development is an intimate one much like the Turkish *mahalle*. (Ghannam 2002).

depends in great part on the actions of women that link homes and families together, which necessitate women being at home during the day. Because of the gendered dimensions of producing Turkish *mahalle* space, changes in gender roles in Turkey have combined with rapid urbanization to erode the cohesiveness that characterized traditional neighborhood life.

For historian Işık Tamdoğan, the word ‘*mahalle*’ signifies a collective identity, a ‘we’ (Tamdoğan 2002, 66) particular to Turkish culture. She cites newspaper articles that use the phrase “our” neighborhood (“*bizim*” *mahalle*) and other phrases, indicating the idea of collectivity embodied in the *mahalle*. Her argument is grounded in historic research on the legal discourse concerning *mahalles* in Ottoman cities. People were responsible to the state as a collective social unit, as well as to each other as neighbors. Tamdoğan argues that although these legal frameworks no longer exist, they left cultural traces in the practice of *komşuluk* and in propriety. She cites other examples in Turkish popular culture that use symbols to signify the collectivity of *mahalle* space, like the *mahalle* figure in the traditional *Karagöz* puppet theater (see Fig.13). The puppet is an unmoving group of ‘neighbors’ under an umbrella. It was used to indicate, for example, when news traveled throughout the *mahalle* and became known to the group (ibid. 69). For Tamdoğan, *mahalle* means collective identity in the Turkish cultural imagination.



Fig.13 Traditional *Karagöz Mahalle* Puppet²

The *mahalle*, then, is not merely a bounded administrative district of the city, but rather a flexible cultural space that depends on cultural practices for its production. This chapter

explores both the practices that create this collective identity in place as well as the tensions that have threatened its disappearance from larger Istanbul society. My ethnography reveals that female members of the new and gentrifying community of Kuzguncuk, for example, are ambivalent regarding *mahalle* life. While some long for this *mahalle* sense of community and belonging, they are excluded from it. Others desire familiarity and privacy, incompatible with traditional *mahalle* life. The lifestyles of this new upper class represent a cultural change in gender roles as well as relative material affluence which are incompatible with the traditional gender roles that create the *mahalle* space. These women are not part of the *mahalle*; their examples illustrate a larger shift in Istanbul culture in which the collectivity of the *mahalle* has nearly disappeared among younger generations and the upper class.

² Image from: Işık Tamdoğan-Abel. “Osmanlı Döneminden Günümüz Türkiye’sine ‘Bizim Mahalle’” *Istanbul Dergisi*. January 2002. p. 69.

Being in the Neighborhood, Connecting Homes and Selves

My friend Zeynep was in her late twenties when we met. She identifies outwardly as a modern and secular woman, critical of conservative Islam and the practice of wearing a headscarf, and she is interested in American and European cultures and ways of life. She enjoys studying English and reading western literature in translation, and she loves American eighties pop music. Zeynep has two children (the first one was born before Zeynep was twenty years old) and her highest priority is to provide them with good education so they can escape the economic difficulty she faces every day. Zeynep has family from Kuzguncuk. Although she grew up in a neighborhood nearby, she has lived in Kuzguncuk for several years. Her generous and outgoing personality, combined with a socio-economic situation similar to her neighbors', have helped her form strong neighborly connections with nearby women in spite of not being a life-long resident. Zeynep's living room is a central place for neighbors who visit regularly and seek advice. They ask Zeynep to look at their coffee fortunes, and they tell her their problems. The women who visit her meet other people in her house when they visit and thus expand their networks of support.

On my first visit, Zeynep made me some Turkish coffee. After I drank it she taught me how to invert my cup and let it cool so she could read my fortune (*fal*) in the grounds. I became a frequent visitor to her home where I met many people from the same street as well as neighbors' family and friends from outside the neighborhood. Zeynep's acceptance of me as a neighbor and friend in her everyday life made the women who visit her accept me as well, enabling me to participate in a neighborhood

life that is disappearing as urbanization and modernization create new social spaces with changing gender roles. *Komşuluk* exists primarily among the older community, and is the subject of longing for those who no longer share it.

Reading coffee grounds, or ‘looking at *fal*’, is an activity almost exclusive to women, although women may look at *fal* for male family or friends. Although stereotypes associate fortune-telling with Gypsies, reading coffee is not specific to particular classes or ethnic groups in Istanbul. I have seen independently wealthy women and well-educated professional women, as well as poor women living in basements and women who sell knickknacks on the sidewalk look at *fal* in coffee grounds or ordinary playing cards. It is an activity common throughout the Mediterranean and is part of Turkish culture.

In Kuzguncuk, reading *fal* does not necessarily indicate a belief in the supernatural. It is common, in fact, for women, while reading, to say, “I don’t know anything, I only say what I see in the coffee.” Specific shapes are said to bear specific meanings, and so the burden of interpretation is alleviated if one claims merely to be reciting what is objectively obvious in the coffee. Some people who practice Islam with devotion do not participate, and I met some avid *fal* readers who pretend they aren’t interested in coffee fortunes in front of someone who appears to be religious. Yet, if the call to prayer is heard during a *fal* reading, some believe it indicates a particularly significant reading. Many say they don’t ‘believe’ in *fal*, but enjoy it because it is a vehicle for participating in the network of emotional support and personal contact this activity creates. Looking at *fal* is a common everyday activity. I discuss it here as one

of the social practices performed by women during group visiting. As a means of forming networks of support in the homes of neighboring women, it is a cultural practice that creates neighborhood space.

The first time Zeynep looked at my coffee *fal*, she drew me into her personal space by addressing private subjects such as my family, stresses of life including work and money, and my emotions. “Your work is very heavy right now, you’re going through a period of difficulty and sometimes feel very stressed, but this period will soon end and your work will go very smoothly.” By raising these topics she placed herself in the realm of my friendship and offered supportive words of comfort, although I had not articulated any specific worries. By addressing what she saw in my coffee grounds, Zeynep offered a gesture of friendship, forming a tie with me and making me a neighbor. She looked at my coffee countless times over the next year, and on almost every visit I met other women. Zeynep also taught me how to read coffee *fal* and asked me to do it for people she wanted me to form friendships, like her mother or her grandmother. In this way Zeynep made me part of her community.

Sometimes women came to Zeynep at difficult times because ‘they had a need’; looking at *fal* functions like therapy. It is an acceptable way to discuss difficult issues, like problems with finances, children, health, or husbands. The *fal* creates a space of intimacy in which women share information and emotions, and receive support. Once an old friend of Zeynep’s came to visit Zeynep and immediately started crying and asking Zeynep to look at her coffee and give her advice. Though we’d never met, my being there made me a neighbor too, and she asked me for advice, as well. The

boundaries of knowing and not knowing someone intimately are overcome by neighboring with the practice of *fal*.

Looking at coffee *fal* is part of women's ongoing reciprocal visits that link houses and families to form neighborhood space. Visiting is never planned, but is a natural part of daily life, making the inside sitting or visiting space of the home always open to visitors, extending this interior but semi-'public' space onto the street. Those who live nearby are known as neighbors and are welcome to visit, and much of the conversation during visits involves topics concerning the neighborhood and other neighbors. Although people experiencing illness or poverty receive help from neighbors in the *mahalle*, directly asking for such help is difficult. This kind of community support depends on ways of communicating problems indirectly. Visits between women make known the needs of others ("her mother is sick this week, you know", reminds others to bring food and company). Visitors also involve offers of advice on practical matters like cooking or cleaning, shopping and economy, as well as dealing with a difficult family member or neighbor. These visits create the "knowing" of everyone by everyone else, one of the primary defining qualities of the Turkish *mahalle*.

The cultural practices of *mahalle* not only form links and spaces of familiarity and belonging, but also inscribe one's identity with place as a neighbor to others through relationships. Pierre Mayol uses the word "propriety" (Mayol 1998, 15-23) to describe the behaviors of neighbors that create belonging to community and the definition of insiders and outsiders to the neighborhood. Participation in *mahalle* life expresses one's identity as Kuzguncuklu and defines others as outsiders. The cultural

practices that create neighborhood space in the Turkish neighborhood identify those who perform actions or receive them as neighbors by, I argue, creating a vocabulary of ‘knowing’ (*tanımak*), meaning the familiarity of shared connections articulated through conformative and expected social actions as a neighbor which continually retrace neighbor relationships. This is true also for Mayol’s study of Paris. For Mayol, propriety is the understood code of behavior for the neighborhood that is performed for the purpose of the expected ‘benefit’ of belonging. In the Turkish *mahalle*, this ‘knowing’ goes beyond the patronage of local corner grocers and other local businesses and the walking along the main street discussed in the French study (though these are also very important elements of *mahalle*-making). The ‘knowing’ between neighbors is most directly created by the performance of *komsuluk*.

Reciprocal visits make the street an extension of the home. For Mayol, the French neighborhood is an extension of the private into the public sphere. However, he does not describe the kind of fluid boundaries between the inside of homes and the street created by continual daily visiting present in Turkish neighborhoods³. The continual presence of women at home, and their observation of the residential street from the window, acts as a form of consistent policing or regulating of actions that create safety for children and reduce the potential discomfort of prying eyes of strangers (see Fig.14).

³ In her article questioning the idea of an Islamic city, Janet Abu-Lughod describes a sense of ‘otherness’ she feels walking along a residential street in India. For her, there is a semi-private quality more distinct in such cities not characteristic of the neighborhood in Mayol’s study, for example (Abu-Lughod 1987).

Fig.14 Neighbor Women – From the Window to the Street



The ‘knowing’ created by this observation of neighborhood space, and the sharing of information between women in continual visiting occupy a delicate balance between creating familiarity and invading private boundaries of space and knowledge⁴. Changing, ‘modern’ notions of privacy have begun to influence lifestyle desires of Istanbul people of younger generations. Some cite the invasion of privacy of *mahalle* life as a reason to

leave the *mahalle*.⁵

The closeness of *mahalle* life, while it creates a space of safety and familiarity, also includes the potential for a negative neighbor to abuse the connected neighborhood space by violating privacy by spreading information or manipulating others. This potential makes cultural propriety, and conforming to the neighborhood in practice,

⁴ Farha Ghannam, in her Cairo study, describes the difficulty of explaining how privacy works in Cairo, for example, where a similar set of cultural practices excludes an understanding or practice of privacy as is understood in the American context (Ghannam 2002).

⁵ One of the perceived advantages of the single-family private home in the new gated communities of Istanbul (called the *site*) is the ability to live according to one’s desires and not have to think about neighbors’ perceptions and judgments.

very important. Neighbor *Ayşe*, for example, was universally disliked among other neighborhood women. She sat at her window and ‘policed’ the street, commenting later on the comings and goings of neighbors. Zeynep often complained that *Ayşe* visited too often, stayed too long, and asked questions too personal. Mayol’s notion of ‘propriety’ suggests that *Ayşe* was insensitive to the unstated conventions of neighborhood life that balance the connection of private space and the protection of privacy. This propriety maintains that Zeynep’s house always be open to visitors. It would have been unthinkable for her not to invite *Ayşe* in for visits. When I first started visiting Zeynep, other neighbors warned me not to get involved with *Ayşe* or tell her anything about myself.

Ayşe’s dissonance emerged most visibly during the winter of 2001-2002. This was at the height of the dire economic crisis affecting everyone in the city. Winter weather made natural gas prohibitively expensive for some residents. The local neighborhood administrator (the *muhtar*) of Kuzguncuk distributes coal to very poor people in the neighborhood, and maintains a list of who was entitled to receive it. This is sensitive information because even though everyone’s financial situation is more or less known to others, the open acknowledgement of poverty is shameful and embarrassing. So when *Ayşe* discovered that a nearby elderly, single male neighbor wasn’t taking his share of coal (he has a natural gas system and no way to use coal), she tried to get him to sell it to her so they could both profit. When he refused, she went directly to the *muhtar* to try and obtain his share of coal in his place. This extraordinary abuse of the system shocked the neighbors, and several people told me the story to illustrate her un-neighborliness.

Women of younger generations express frustration regarding the close observation of *mahalle* space. The actions that regulate conforming *mahalle* behavior, or the cultural practices of ‘propriety’ in Kuzguncuk, became particularly visible during one group interview with older neighbors. During our interview, the group directed the conversation, and collectively lectured me on the ‘propriety’ of neighborhood life⁶. The

⁶ While this was an exceptional experience it is representative of the type of interaction I had most often with people I identified as ‘informants’. It reveals the unique value of a flexible, qualitative methodology. Trust must be established to share a conversation in the first place, and even after trust and familiarity are established enough to be able to arrange a ‘formal’ interview with a specific time and an agenda to gather information, the format of the situation is always subject to cultural notions of propriety. Especially in groups, people direct and censor information and so may not even ‘hear’ certain questions, pretending to ignore the interviewer if they didn’t like the topic or question. People also often decide what it is you ‘should’ be told and so they often dictate the entire topic and flow of an ‘interview’, often rendering planned questions and arenas of inquiry absolutely moot. This means that surveys, for example, have no useful value for gathering certain kinds of information in Turkish neighborhoods. Only the most flexible of qualitative methodologies, such as a phenomenological approach, work in these types of cultural situations. Further, feminist geographers have argued for the importance of recognizing the role of context in creating knowledge with interviewing. Surrendering my ‘control’ as the researcher and allowing the informants to ‘take over’ was the only way to gather information in this situation. It took place in the home of the informant; my consent to their inviting numerous neighbors to participate in the helped empower the informant to control the situation. The interview I describe here was arranged at a prior time where I stated my interest in asking questions and gathering information about the history of Kuzguncuk. I had met my informants before casually over several months, and the interview was arranged by a family member of my informants. When I arrived the room was full of people and more continued to gather throughout my visit. Most of the time everyone in the room spoke simultaneously, and my every attempt to ask a question was co-opted by a dominant talker in the group. In spite of the seeming disorganization of the interview, it was one of the most valuable experiences I might have had as a researcher in Kuzguncuk. It was not a disorderly cacophony of neighbors; it was, rather, a very deliberate social situation used by those people to convey to me very specifically as a community what they wanted me to know and to do with my study, and to warn me about what would be improper or wrong for me to write about as a researcher. A survey, or a directed individual interview where I ‘successfully’ asked a preplanned set of questions and directed the conversation would not work in this

daughter-in-law of one of my informants was invited to join us for tea. When she realized that I wanted to hear about *mahalle* life, she sat next to me and began to talk with frustration. She was born in Kuzguncuk, and married someone also born in Kuzguncuk, and she plans to live in the neighborhood all her life. However, she said that because everyone knows everything, there is no private life. “Because we’re all in the same place, the neighbor across from me knows everything about me, like as my financial situation, or what my kids do. If you lose your job everyone knows about it and sometimes that’s really annoying. I have two small children and if one of them does even the smallest thing I hear about it immediately. Everyone will tell me. You’re always under observation and you have to always be careful about your behavior. For example, I can’t wear shorts in Kuzguncuk because it’s like a village. When I go to visit my friend in Göztepe (a newer, more ‘modern’ neighborhood), though, I can wear them over there.” She told me that during the two years she dated her husband before they got married they were careful not to be seen walking or talking together because it would create rumors and problems for her and her family.

This woman feels frustration regarding her mobility and behavior in the neighborhood, although she visits friends in other neighborhoods, free from observation. Her words caused a reaction on the part of the older women in the group (everyone in the room was Muslim) who joined in together to talk about the positive

situation for the type of information and ideas I was interested in gathering. This incident alone speaks to the value of a flexible, qualitative methodology grounded in feminist geography for geographic research. The information here cannot be quantified or statistically analyzed.

elements of Kuzguncuk life: “For example, if you don’t have money on hand you can still pick up things at the corner store or get a ride in the local taxi. When someone dies everyone learns about it because the imam reads the prayer for the dead over the mosque speakers and people come down to the boat station to see the name posted there. Because everyone knows their neighbors, everyone attends the funeral. People who come to Kuzguncuk are very surprised by this because they don’t even know their neighbors at all.”

This interview involved a deliberate narration of what neighbors wanted me to know and hear about Kuzguncuk. As a group, neighbors’ stories confirmed and reinforced each other. This kind of censoring of dissonant information is important for preserving community and making the system of visiting and perceived equality in *mahalle* life work. It is what Mayol terms the ‘miniscule oppressions’ of propriety (deCerteau 1998, 17). This works to silence a gossip like the neighbor *Ayşe* mentioned above, and it was being employed here towards me to silence any potential negative things I might mention about Kuzguncuk as I write about my research. Their hospitality was a way of interacting with me as a neighbor, and ensuring my compliance with propriety. As a foreigner, and especially a researcher, I could potentially threaten the master narrative. The group warned me not to do this in a fascinating conversation regarding a recent book about Kuzguncuk published by a man who grew up in the neighborhood.

A member of the group brought out the book by Mehmet Ünver released several months before (Ünver 2001). One of the elements recounted in the book is the migration of rural people to Kuzguncuk in the 1960s. The author describes their cultural

differences, their poverty, and their strange ways of life as he perceived them as a boy. During the conversation, one of the neighbors asked me directly, “Do you know what ‘speaking too openly’ (fazla açık konuşmak) means?” She said the author wrote about things that shouldn’t have been said, that he should have written ‘closed’, but he didn’t. It shouldn’t have been advertised, not as a book about Kuzguncuk, but as a book specifically about Ünver ’s own private life because of the things he said that he shouldn’t have talked about publicly. These neighbors enforced, with me, the same policing of knowledge the younger woman complained about earlier. The control of information and the group censoring of unconforming ideas is one of the ways *mahalle* space is made ‘known’ and ‘familiar’. Being a neighbor and ‘known’ means restricting deviance and protecting the collectivity.

While the practices that create this interconnection and knowing are sometimes a source of frustration for residents like the young woman described above, they are always valued as ‘typical’ of *mahalle* life. Even the woman above acknowledged later that the safety and belonging of ‘everyone knowing everyone else’ is too valuable for her ever to leave Kuzguncuk. The ‘knowing’ that creates *mahalle* space is under threat from urbanization and migration from outside the neighborhood as well as changes in gender roles that have brought new lifestyles to the city. While some Kuzguncuk residents describe the familiarity of the neighborhood by saying, “It takes me half an hour to get down the street because everyone comes out and I have to say hello with them”, and, “My kids are safe because everyone knows them and looks after them on the street”, others say “It’s changed, no one knows me when I go back”, and, “I don’t

know anyone anymore”. These changes originate partly from the pace of the massive migration to the city and between old and new neighborhoods that means the breakdown of a stable population in one place over a long period of time. More than that, however, is the tension between new desires for freedom of mobility and personal space alongside increasing desire for and consumption of Euro-American cultural objects and values.

The *mahalle* as it’s practiced among people and in places such as the older communities of Kuzguncuk is threatened. As a place created by the practices that inscribe one’s identity as part of a community in place, the *mahalle* is the Turkish urban lived relation to place in a traditional sense. It still exists in traces throughout the city, even in newer areas, in the practice of ‘knowing’ a certain corner store or occasionally helping one’s nearby neighbors. However, most people remark that even these relationships have become unusual, and there are parts of the city where they are not present at all. The close-knit geographically small area with neighbors who perform the cultural practices of *mahalle* life is now fairly rare, but it remains an important, present idea in popular culture. It is acted in Kuzguncuk among the older community and has become the subject of much nostalgia, despite some of the aspects where it causes tensions for newer and more modern lifestyles. Paradoxically, it is perhaps most beloved and missed by those whose lifestyles are made possible by its passing. Because it is popularly known to be a ‘real’ *mahalle*, Kuzguncuk attracts people who want to live in and recreate *mahalle* life. Women in this new community, because of their modern identities and lifestyles, are not easily accepted in the *mahalle*.

Who Belongs in the Mahalle?

The actions of *tanımak*, of everyone knowing everyone else, depend partly on lived relationships to place over time. Many people on the particular residential street Zeynep lives on were born in the neighborhood, or married to other people whose families are also from the neighborhood. *Mahalle* life in Kuzguncuk belongs to the older communities, the non-Muslims that are left in Kuzguncuk as well as the families of people who migrated fifty or sixty years ago. The long habitation in place and the practices that continuously form connections between neighbors creates difficulty for newcomers in acquiring the status of a neighbor. In this context, foreigners (whether Turks new to the *mahalle* or foreigners like me) are very visible as outsiders. New people are the subject of curiosity (and sometimes suspicion). As a foreigner I was especially subject to curiosity, and over time in Kuzguncuk I witnessed the exclusion of other people who were considered newcomers, even though some of them lived in the neighborhood for over twenty years. Being ‘foreign’ to the neighborhood, then, reflects elements of difference that are articulated through lack of identification with place although they really represent differences in economic mobility and lifestyle. Just as the creation of ‘*tanımak*’ through ‘*komşuluk*’ is dependent on the cultural practices of women, it is the women who have transgressed traditional gender roles who suffer the most from lack of membership in the *mahalle*.

The community of artists and intellectuals who moved to nearby Uryanizade Street in the early 1980s were viewed as outsiders by older neighbor groups in Kuzguncuk. Their origins outside of Kuzguncuk, as well as their financial comforts and professional

lifestyles, made them different and the subject of suspicion. It is difficult for new women residents to participate in *komşuluk* if they don't share similar socioeconomic status. Women who transgress the kind of home-family boundaries of traditional life of older residents may be threatened with isolation in Kuzguncuk if they don't find connections to others like themselves. Although there exists familiarity in shops on the main street, Kuzguncuk is a *mahalle* (in terms of neighboring practice) primarily for its oldest communities, not the newcomers. This is a paradox because some women move to Kuzguncuk because they desire mahalle life, and yet this is inaccessible to them. The *mahalle*, as an abstract cultural idea, attracts people to older neighborhoods precisely when urbanization and changes in gendered social roles have disrupted traditional ways of relating to place. It is in the context of social changes that people long for the way life used to be and *mahalle* becomes a collective memory of communitarian social life. Yet because of the ways it is threatened by new urban lifestyles (new social actors like single women and the post-1980 upper class), the *mahalle* has become exclusive, not inclusive.

Arzu faces these problems in Kuzguncuk. I met Arzu at the neighborhood organization. She was obviously eager to make connections, and when she heard I was interviewing Kuzguncuk residents, she was eager to talk to me. I met her a few times at her home and learned that her husband was an engineer. She used to work in a bank but retired early (she was only in her mid-forties) because she wanted to pursue personal interests. Her family moved to Kuzguncuk over a year previously after much restoration on their house. After they bought it, they added an extra floor and a new kitchen. They

had hobbies, which included painting (in the added room upstairs) to old Bob Ross paint-along videos from American public television which were broadcasted over Turkish state television. Having hobbies in a segregated part of the house is unusual in Istanbul, and indicates enough wealth to provide space and time alone: Arzu's family has a non-traditional lifestyle and use of space.

In spite of her 'modern' house, which affords privacy, community is very important to Arzu. She said that when she lived in an apartment in an expensive, newer area of Istanbul, neighbor relationships never went beyond simple greetings. "*Komşuluk*", she said, "exists a little bit more in these older neighborhoods, and Kuzguncuk especially has better *komşuluk* than other places". One day, as I walked by Arzu's house, she was in her garden and she waved me over to have tea. When I told her I was interviewing old non-Muslim people of Kuzguncuk, Arzu told me that her house once belonged to a Jewish family (though it had an intermediate Muslim owner from whom they purchased the house). She said the one next door might still be Jewish, because there was a 'foreign' name on the electric and water bills. I was surprised that after living in Kuzguncuk for over a year, Arzu still did not know her next door neighbor. She told me that in Yugoslavia, people sit outside at night in the summer and visit with their neighbors. I said that old people told me Kuzguncuk used to be like this, and Arzu suggested we start it again. She suggested the neighborhood association meet at the local tea house on the first of the month to get to know other people in the neighborhood.

Clearly Arzu, who moved to Kuzguncuk to be part of neighborhood life, and who claims that Kuzguncuk has more of a neighborhood quality than other parts of the city, is missing neighborhood community. Her private single-family home lifestyle with a gate and a garden, the fact that her children are grown and so she doesn't know neighboring mothers, and her experience working outside the home and living in an income bracket where she no longer needs to work, make her different from the neighbors around her. She lives within two blocks of Zeynep and the neighbors that visit each other but she's never met any of them. She misses the *mahalle* networks of emotional support and belonging, and joined the neighborhood to form neighbor relationships.

Another woman I met at the neighborhood organization joined to form neighboring relationships because traditional ways of participating in neighborhood life were closed to her. She was a single woman who migrated to Istanbul to seek education. She moved to Kuzguncuk because she wanted to be part of the group of artists she knew lived there. She complained to me later, though, that forming relationships with them had proved impossible. Her attempts to form friendships through the art gallery or artists who had workshops in the neighborhood failed. She lived alone, and her migration to the city alone from the village where she grew up, as a young woman, was very unusual. She did not follow the traditional home-to-marriage path, and remaining unmarried differentiated her from the other women on her street. She was not in the same financial or professional class as the artists in the neighborhood and wasn't accepted by their community. She came to this particular neighborhood in Istanbul

because she thought it would be in a place like Kuzguncuk where she could be accepted as a single person and find community.

Urbanization and loss of mahalle

These stories indicate that the ‘known’ space of *mahalle* is dependent on women being at home with family. While *mahalle* practices support women in their traditional roles as wife and mother, they cause tension because of the changing of gender roles and intracity mobility. Urbanization disrupted the familiarity and belonging of neighborhoods which had had slower paces of demographic change, making the *mahalle* the subject of nostalgia for a past relationship to place. This nostalgia attracts newcomers to old neighborhoods, including women who seek the support of neighbor relationships of *mahalle* life. Increasing freedom of choice in profession and lifestyle has not brought a corresponding new social system of support for women. The changes of gender roles and their affects on traditional neighborhood life is a process similar to the changes in neighborhood life brought by modernization in the United States as well as in other parts of the Middle East. However, I argue that women’s experiences concerning *mahalle* life in Kuzguncuk are particular to contemporary culture in Istanbul.

The changing roles of women in *mahalle* spaces of everyday life ties into the pervasive religious-secular and traditionalist-modernist discourse on the proper place of women in society and in the city. Women are not liberated, either by religionists or secularists, because their bodies remain the sites of debate. Women with increased mobility and education experience an indirect kind of oppression because traditional

expectations of women remain the same while the daily networks of support previously inherent to gender-divided daily life in the *mahalle* have eroded. The current nostalgia for *mahalle* reflects not only the fragmentation of community in urban space, but also tension over the places of women and family in locality. Kuzguncuk is one *mahalle* where traditional practices are retained among some neighbors. Yet, paradoxically, the people who maintain its exceptional image (“better *komşuluk* than other parts of Istanbul”), and preserve its nostalgic landscape, do not perform *mahalle* practices.

Conclusion

Reading the Cultural Landscape

The Jewish Cemetery

There are landscapes that tell counter narratives in Kuzguncuk, but they are never included in the popular representations of the neighborhood. One such landscape is Kuzguncuk's historic Jewish cemetery. In the seventeenth century, this cemetery was mentioned in travel narratives as a famous holy place for European Jewish pilgrims. 350 years ago families visiting their dead here would have seen finely carved marble stones, wild strawberry plants and the beginning of the creek that flowed through Kuzguncuk. Down the hill were market gardens, the small synagogue and cluster of houses, and the open turquoise waters of the Bosphorus. Last year I treaded into this same cemetery with difficulty, because the gravestones are overgrown with grass and garbage. They shift unexpectedly with a careless step. They are illegible, desecrated with spray paint, and broken (see Fig.15). The people they commemorate are unknown.

Fig.15 Gravestones in the Jewish Cemetery



This cemetery was destroyed by a squatter settlement built on top of it by rural migrants in the 1960s. At that time, Jews of Kuzguncuk were afraid to speak out, and they

received no help from the municipality. Several years later a wall was built – by cementing stacks of gravestones together - around what was left of the cemetery to prevent further building.



Fig.16 *Gecekondu* in the Cemetery

Walking along the cemetery edge I saw more gravestones used as doorsteps or to support walls. The roofs of the helter-skelter houses are made of tin. The houses look like they were built yesterday, and the people who live there are gardening and keeping chickens, as they did when they first migrated to the city (see Fig.16). Most of the current residents of the area, which is known as

the Sivas Neighborhood, are related to the original migrant group from Sivas. Rugs air on the cement walls, and mothers stand in front of the houses, calling to children playing soccer on a cleared edge of the cemetery. These people fill the landscape with life and color, in contrast to the cemetery landscape of forgetting, carelessness, sadness and loss. The layers in this landscape tell of the end of Kuzguncuk's long Jewish history and the beginning of migrant history in Kuzguncuk.

An equally significant but perhaps less visible layer of Kuzguncuk's cultural landscape is the absence of its historic minorities. Their departure was an integral part of the processes that shaped the city landscape of fissures, inconsistencies, and contrasts¹, elements which are usually explained by lack of proper urban planning, corruption, or unenforced laws and regulations (e.g. Çeçener 1995). These wounds are not accidental or chaotic, but rather, are traces that manifest social trauma in the city. Although interethnic political tension in Istanbul was far more subtle than in Beirut, or Kosovo, for example, where the cultural landscape was literally destroyed by physical violence, the rapid exodus of most of Istanbul's minorities left dramatic gaps in the landscape. Formerly minority-owned properties became the property of the state, or were stolen, sold or otherwise transferred to private Muslim ownership (Keyder 1999b), or were abandoned and subject to squatting.

A cultural reaction to this same trauma is the movement to produce nostalgic forms in the urban landscape by renewing old, formerly minority-dominated neighborhoods.² The restored wooden houses in Kuzguncuk create an affect of community and belonging because they signify the collective memory of the *mahalle*. However, anti-minority events in Istanbul's past continue to shadow contemporary

¹ One formerly Greek-owned Ottoman house, with its stairs removed, is surrounded on all sides by a parking lot in the Bosphorus neighborhood of Çengelköy; another old wooden house has a restored façade on its upper floors, but its basement was gutted out and glassed in for a fancy car dealership in Çiftehavuzlar; Kurdish refugees squat in the old luxury apartment buildings which are abandoned and fallen into disrepair in the formerly Greek neighborhood of Tepebaşı, for example.

² Rifat Bali writes of nostalgia for Istanbul's past and the corresponding increase in the beautification of neighborhoods that embody a sense of 'old Istanbul' (Bali 2002, 15).

relationships between Muslims and minorities in the city, even as popular nostalgia values past cosmopolitan spaces.

Cosmopolitanism is identified with the truly 'urban'. Rural migration caused a perception of a loss of 'Istanbul'-ness in the urban landscape, and a perception of a threat to urban culture as migrants brought their village culture to the city (Erder 1996, 1999). The population increase and the corresponding crowding and pressures on infrastructure caused not only a desire among elites to escape to more 'ideal' housing developments on the city periphery (Öncü 1997a), but necessitated a redefinition of the urban. The cosmopolitan "Istanbullu" (Öncü 1999) emerged as the citizen "patriot of the city" (Keyder 1999a), a personal identity bound to an idea of the urban, with an appreciation of the city's cosmopolitan past.

From Trauma to Nostalgia

And so emerged the *mahalle* of collective memory, the space not only of belonging and familiarity, but the space of true cosmopolitan urbanism. This space tells perhaps of an effort to connect Istanbul's history again to Europe - not only in replacing some of the city's cultural heritage in the names and places of European minorities - but also by democratizing the imagining of the city by allowing alternative members of its history to reemerge. If we read the nostalgia embedded in this landscape for meaning, what does it tell us about urban culture in Istanbul and the processes shaping landscapes?

Nostalgia for Istanbul's old Muslims, Greeks, Jews, and Armenians attempts to recover the (perhaps both imagined and real) tolerance of cosmopolitan life because

Istanbulers are not able to properly mourn their departure with historic commemoration. Narratives of multicultural life in Kuzguncuk usually skip the most traumatic events, revealing them to exist as ‘aberrations’, too painful to make sense of or incorporate into historic narrative.³ However sweet its affect, nostalgia signifies pain and loss.

The nostalgia for the *mahalle* of collective memory reveals that Istanbul is experiencing a moment of cultural crisis. In the words of anthropologist Kathleen Stewart,

Postmodern culture is a wave we ride in the disorganizing and all pervasive economy of late capitalism. Awash in a sea of faces, we look back nostalgically to the shore in a sudden memory of a ground already lost... Now, threatened with a deadening pluralism that makes us all just an other among others, ... *nostalgia becomes the very lighthouse waving us back to shore, the one point on the landscape that gives hope of direction.* (Stewart 1988, 229 emphasis mine)

Yet all cities, of every place and time, are characterized by their incessant change and the reshaping of the now in the image of the future. Like Boyer’s city of collective memory (Boyer 1996), which recycles historic forms to create a sense of place, the

³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his essay about Hindu Bengali narratives that remember with nostalgia the harmony between Hindus and Muslims before the violent partition of 1947, states that, “These [essays] are more like the unwilling and uncontrollable recall of a victim overtaken by events and less like the reminiscences of one in narrative control. And this, I suggest, is the first important distinction to be noted between history and memory... History seeks to explain the event; the memory of pain refuses the historical explanation and sees the event as a monstrously irrational aberration.” (Chakrabarty 2002a,119)

collective memory of the *mahalle* creates an imagined collective relationship to place during a frightening moment of insecurity.

Nostalgic literary representations of Istanbul's past multiculturalism, as well as the materiality landscapes such as the mosque and church, are cited as 'evidence' of a tolerant past. Gentrification passes for the preservation of cosmopolitan *mahalle* history, no matter how synthetic its forms. This cycle of landscape representation and morphology, though it relies on nostalgia for Istanbul's minorities, paradoxically works to hide their history. The nostalgia for tolerance and close community relations of the *mahalle* of collective memory betrays a deep and polarizing difference in identity. Minorities are the subject of narrative and nostalgia only after they have abandoned the city. In this way, they are present in contemporary urban culture only in their very absence. Yet the city is not permitted to acknowledge the violence of nationalism that created its vast settlements of politically and materially impoverished Kurdish refugees, just as the city has not been allowed to truly mourn the passing of its non-Muslim communities. The nostalgic *mahalle* of collective memory works by deflecting attention from contesting claims to place in the Turkish nation, claims reflected in which narratives of the city prevail and which remain unsaid.

Nationalism fractured the complex cosmopolitan urbanism of the Middle East by replacing minorities into new 'homelands'. Efforts to bring the *mahalle* back into cultural circulation by recreating its landscape and consuming it through cultural forms that evoke it contest such nationalisms that desire a rigid homogeneity and 'natural' claim to place. One of the characteristics of this moment in Istanbul, again a result of

migration and the defining of the 'urban', is the cultural divide between Islamists and secularists who compete for claim to public space in the city. As Turkey grapples with the presence of political Islam in its urban spaces, and secularists and leftists are concerned about political intolerance, the *mahalle* emerges as the space with which to imagine a better future for Turkey, one of tolerance and belonging defined not by ethnic definition of the nation, but by the exchanges and shared moments of daily life in local place.

APPENDIX

Historic Timeline

326 Constantine chooses Byzantium for the imperial capital, it becomes Constantinople.

1453 Mehmet the Conqueror takes Constantinople. It becomes Istanbul, the Ottoman imperial capital.

1492 Jews expelled from Spain. Many migrate to Istanbul.

1839 Tanzimat reforms create the *millet* system.

1869 Tanzimat reforms create all Ottoman subjects equal regardless of religion or language.

1915 Armenian massacre; Cyprus becomes a British colony.

1922 National Turkish Trade Association founded.

1923 Turkish Republic is founded, Ankara is declared the capital. Greece and Turkey exchange populations.

1924, 1934 minority-dominated professions are banned from minority workers in Istanbul.

1928 Citizen Speak Turkish campaign is begun.

1930 Treaty grants Greek citizens residency in Istanbul.

1941 Struma incident.

1942 The Property Tax levied heavily against non-Muslims in Istanbul.

1954 Greek government claims Cyprus as Greek territory.

1955 6-7 September riots damage non-Muslim properties in Istanbul.

1964 Treaty of 1930 is revoked, Greek citizens are deported from Istanbul.

1974 Turkey declares the Turkish Republic of Cyprus.

GLOSSARY

6-7 Eylül Olayları – The state-led, city-wide riots of 6-7 September, 1955 in Istanbul.

azınlık, ekaliyet, or gayrı-muslim – Terms meaning a non-Muslim minority.

bostan – market garden.

dernek – association.

dhimmi/zimmi – The word means “protected” and refers to the status of a non-Muslim in Ottoman society before the Tanzimat reforms. Dhimmis paid taxes and lived with some humiliating disabilities in return for freedom to practice religion.

fal – Fortune read in coffee grounds or with playing cards.

gavur – Heathen, a derogatory term for non-Muslim minority.

gecekondu – a squatter settlement. Literally, “built overnight”.

komşu – Neighbor.

komşuluk – The practice of neighboring.

mahalle – The Turkish term for ‘neighborhood’; Turkish urban cultural space of belonging and familiarity; a residential district of the Orientalist ‘Islamic City’ model.

mescit – Muslim house of worship for daily prayer, distinguished from a mosque which is the larger gathering place of Friday prayer.

millet – Ottoman religious community (e.g. the Greek Orthodox millet).

milletvekili – governor.

muhtar – headman, or elected local administrator of a *mahalle*.

-li - a suffix meaning ‘of’ or ‘from’ a thing or a place (e.g. Kuzguncuklu means someone from Kuzguncuk).

sivil toplumsal kuruluşları – civil society organizations formed after the August 1999 earthquake.

sürgün - forced exile of some groups (including Greeks and Jews) from provinces to Istanbul, aimed to boost population and improve the economy in the capital.

tanımak – to know, be familiar with.

Tanzimat – Nineteenth century Ottoman reforms created the *millet* system which made Ottoman subjects equal regardless of religion or language. The reforms created a hierarchical structure, with a religious leader in charge of the *millet*. The *millet* system shaped local life in that *mahalles* were governed by a local religious leader.

Varlık Vergisi – The Property Tax of 1942-1943 levied in Istanbul to a disproportionately high level against non-Muslim minorities.

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