

URBANIZATION AND URBANISM

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Turkey's urbanization started in the post-World War II era. "Over 3.3 million people were added to the urban population during the 1950s, more than twice as many as in the previous quarter century" (Danielson and Keleş, 1985: 27). This "rapid urbanization" brought major transformations of society, challenging the ideals of the modernization project of the Republican elite; it introduced new problems and challenges prevail today, albeit changed in their nature. These challenges affected various aspects of society, ranging from housing to job markets, from cultural hierarchies to politics, and from rule of law and private property to land rent. "Unregulated and unauthorized housing and job markets" and "unplanned urbanization," along with "populist politics," "rurality in the urban," and "invasion of land" came to be the elements of the discursive production of urbanization in the Turkish context. Accordingly, the "integration"/"assimilation" of rural migrants into urban society, their "illegal" (yet sometimes legitimate) *gecekondu*s, the rent appropriation from *gecekondu* land, the bargaining power of *gecekondu* residents with politicians, and their *arabesk* culture came to be the main problems identified in the Turkish urbanization process, reflecting the top-down approach of the urban elite.

In the rest of the chapter, the defining characteristics of urbanization in Turkey are first described briefly. Then, the urbanization experience of Turkey is introduced, divided into two periods: 1950–80, during which the national developmentalist model prevailed; and the 1980s up to today, during which time neoliberal policies have been introduced, restructuring the society and transforming its cities. Finally, "urbanism" and "urbanity" are discussed in the Turkish context, in an attempt to unravel their contested meanings.

The defining characteristics of Turkish urbanization

Urbanization in Turkey can be concisely defined as "urbanization without industrialization"; different from the Western experience, Turkey's urbanization took place as the result of its attempted integration into the emerging capitalist markets in the 1950s. Intervention in the agricultural sector caused mass rural-to-urban migration at a time when cities lacked enough industry to employ displaced peasants; unlike the urbanization in Europe in the nineteenth century, that in Turkey was not the outcome of industrialization necessitating the transfer of a labor force from agriculture to factories located in cities. "Third World urbanization" in

general, and Turkey's urbanization in particular, were implicitly stigmatized due to their deviation from the Western model. Such terms as "rapid urbanization," "over-urbanization," and "distorted urbanization" (*çarpık kentleşme*) came to define Turkish urbanization as problematic. Although Turkish scholars recognize the need to understand "Third World urbanization" in the capitalist world system context, according to Wallerstein's world-system theory, in Turkey, taking the West as its model, the discourse of Western urbanization is still powerful.

Turkey's tale of urbanization is also the tale of *gecekondu*, which literally means "houses that land in the night." *Gecekondu* as the "informal," "unregulated," "unauthorized," "self-help" housing of the urban poor characterize Turkey's urbanization experience. Rather than the working-class districts of the industrialized West that were formed as the result of urbanization, in Turkey, as in other under-industrialized societies, *gecekondu* settlements were built on the cities' peripheries to accommodate the influx of migrants from the countryside (Kıray, 1970). Similarly, informal job markets developed in cities as the result of the massive influx of people from the countryside. As a consequence, informality put its stamp on Turkish metropolises (Keyder, 2000).

Another characteristic of Turkish urbanization is its uneven nature. Western Anatolia, particularly the Marmara region, is highly urbanized. Of this region's population of 17,365,027, individuals who live in cities number 13,730,962, comprising 79 percent of the total, the highest percentage of urban population in any region in Turkey. In contrast, the Black Sea region and eastern Anatolia remain largely rural. Of the 6,137,414 inhabitants in eastern Anatolia, 3,255,896 live in cities; of the 8,439,213 inhabitants in the Black Sea region, 4,137,466 live in cities, so that with 49 percent, the Black Sea region has the lowest percentage of urban population (State Planning Organization, 2006). Moreover, the Marmara region is home to 26 percent of the nation's people, making it the most populous region, while eastern Anatolia, with 9 percent of the national population, has the fewest inhabitants (State Planning Organization, 2006). A few cities in western Anatolia are "over-urbanized," while the cities in the east, which have been losing their populations to the larger metropolises, are under-urbanized. In this uneven urbanization, Istanbul, with a population of 12,915,158 (17.8 percent of Turkey's population) and an area of 5,712 square kilometers, stands out as the "first city," followed by Ankara (with a population of 4,650,802, or 6.4 percent of the country's total), İzmir (3,868,308, or 5.3 percent), Bursa (2,550,645, or 3.55 percent) and Adana (2,062,226, or 2.8 percent) (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2010). Moreover, regional economic disparities between the western and eastern parts of the country, as well as between the urban and rural areas, characterize Turkish urbanization, impelling people to move to the large cities in the west in order to take advantage of job opportunities and better facilities and services (Danielson and Keleş, 1985; Keleş, 2008).

An historical account of urbanization in Turkey

The urban population,¹ which was 16.4 percent of the total population in 1927, reached 18.5 percent in 1950, 25.1 percent in 1960, 33.3 percent in 1970, 45.4 percent in 1980, 50.9 percent in 1985, and 55.4 percent in 1990 (SIS population censuses in Keleş, 2008). It was 60.9 percent in 1995, and 65.03 percent in 2000 (State Planning Organization, 2006). While in 1950, 5,244,337 people lived in cities and towns, this number had increased to 54,807,219 by 2009 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2010). The urban population is predicted to be 69.7 percent of the total in 2010, 74.0 percent in 2020, 77.7 percent in 2030, 81.1 percent in 2040, and 84.0 percent in 2050 (UN Population Division, n.d.). With this as background, the following section focuses on the

process of urbanization in Turkey, contextualized in the socioeconomic and political conditions of the two periods in question.

The 1950–80 period

Turkey's urbanization occurred in the postwar era, during which the world's economy and politics were in the process of restructuring within a bipolar system. The United States, as the hegemonic power of the capitalist world, endeavored to integrate "Third World" societies into the market economy. In this context, structural transformations were carried out in the agricultural sector in Turkey, largely supported by US funding under the Marshall Plan. Tractors, along with fertilizers, irrigation systems, and new agricultural products, were introduced to improve productivity in agriculture; new highway systems were developed to transport agricultural products to the emerging markets in the cities. This intervention, made with the intent of mechanizing the agricultural sector, also resulted in the migration of large numbers of peasants, many of them sharecroppers, tenants, day laborers, and small-scale farmers. In their search for a new livelihood, they moved to cities, particularly large urban centers, and above all to Istanbul and Ankara, traveling on the highways built to connect the agricultural countryside with market towns. In marked contrast to the Western experience, this process consisted of "urbanization without industrialization." Although the large cities were experiencing an increasing degree of industrialization, it was not sufficient to absorb the influx of people from rural areas. Consequently, a large informal job market developed, as newcomers tried to make a living as street vendors, porters, construction workers, and the like. Moreover, the cities were not ready to accommodate the newcomers: the housing stock of the cities lagged far behind the housing needs of migrants. So here, too, informality prevailed, with a large informal housing market developing as newcomers increasingly built their shanties on land that, in most cases, belonged to the state. Soon, *gecekondu*s were sprawling out around cities. This was the beginning of the "*gecekondu* problem," which would occupy a central place in Turkish politics.

The newcomers initially built their homes in sites that were geographically undesirable but nonetheless relatively close to city centers (e.g., Altındağ in Ankara), where they might find jobs. In Istanbul, the first *gecekondu*s were built around factories, for example in Zeytinburnu-Kazlıçeşme in 1946. The fact that some private sector industrialization was taking place, especially in Istanbul, thus creating a demand for cheap labor, played a role in relaxing the enforcement of laws against "illegal" *gecekondu* development (Şenyapılı, 1982).

The 1950s were also years of democratization: Turkey adopted a multiparty political system in 1946, and the Democrat Party, known for its liberal economic policies, came to power in the 1950 elections, ending the one-party rule of the Republican People's Party. In this period, when politicians' interest in gaining the votes of this large number of newcomers coincided with industrialists' needs for cheap and unorganized labor, populist politics became the order of the day, giving a degree of bargaining power to *gecekondu* dwellers. Clientelism thus became the dominant pattern for the relationship of the *gecekondu* population with politics. In the 1960s, characterized by centralized economic planning, the state directed its resources primarily to national industrialization, and so did not allocate sufficient funds to solving the housing problems of the urban poor. More significantly, politicians, in their search for power, were unwilling to solve the *gecekondu* problem: they wanted to preserve their bargaining power over the *gecekondu* population by selectively implementing services and legalizing illegally constructed houses in return for votes (Öncü, 1988). Thus, the development of Turkish cities was left to market forces; unplanned cities and unregulated urbanization were the outcomes. The fact that the Turkish state inherited large tracts of land from the Ottoman Empire made possible such

tolerance of *gecekondu*s, many of which were built on public land. The proportion of *gecekondu* inhabitants in the urban population rose from 4.7 percent in 1955 to 16.4 percent in 1960, 23.6 percent in 1970, 26.1 percent in 1980, and 35 percent in 1995 (Keleş, 2008). Today it is estimated that about 12 million people live in 2.5 million *gecekondu*s. We can argue that *gecekondu* housing functioned as a safety valve for the tensions created by the challenges resulting from this type of urbanization, taking place as it did in a country with relatively scarce resources that were being channeled primarily to industrialization.

As the pioneer migrants—mostly young, single men who came to look for jobs—increasingly brought their families to the city, the image of the metropolis as the “land of opportunity” attracted more and more villagers. Following in the footsteps of the early arrivals, they too moved to the city, seeking support from their co-villagers. In their struggle to survive and cope with the challenges of their new lives in an unfamiliar environment, they established informal networks based on their places of origin and relied on mutual aid. This was bound to happen in the absence of state efforts to regulate migration and respond to migrants’ needs. Through chain migration, migrants from a given region or province tended to cluster in the same locality on the city’s periphery, creating, in some instances, neighborhoods of shared ethnicity and/or sectarian origin (e.g. Alevis). They began living community-centered lives (Gökçe, 1993); they helped each other find jobs and participated in the construction of each other’s *gecekondu*s. As Suzuki (1964) argues, these networks based on common origin played a positive role in the adaptation of migrants to the city by fulfilling the economic and social, as well as the psychological needs of the newcomers. In this way, they did not feel isolated or alienated in the unfamiliar city environment, but instead, in their *gecekondu* communities, they were respected and connected (Erman, 1997). A “peasant-like city” distinctly characteristic of “Third World” societies was the outcome (Suzuki, 1964). Many rural migrants continued their relations with the village, which provided both economic and psychological support. Such networks, built upon rural connections both in the village and in the city, allowed migrants to still feel “rural” and identify themselves with their places of origin (Erman, 1997). The statement “I would never deny my origins” encapsulated what came to be a major concern on the part of migrants; such notions exerted pressure on them to remain within their rural-based communities. Interestingly, while preserving their rural identities, many rural migrants were also open to the influences of urban society: they wanted to “improve” themselves by learning from urbanites (Erman, 1997). In their attempt to integrate into urban society despite their exclusion from the sociocultural realm of the city, they were willing to participate in the domestic market, contributing to the economy not only as providers of cheap labor but also as consumers (Şenyapılı, 1982).

The transformation of *gecekondu*s from shanties to established neighborhoods gained a legal basis in 1966 when Law No. 775, the “Gecekondu Law,” was passed. It offered a tripartite solution to the *gecekondu* problem: those *gecekondu*s that were in poor condition and built in undesirable locations would be demolished; those in good condition would be improved by supplying infrastructure and services; and new *gecekondu* construction would be prohibited. While the second measure was widely implemented, the other two were not. Consequently, settlements comprising *gecekondu*s, which were once shanties built on no man’s land, turned into established neighborhoods. By bargaining with local authorities for infrastructure and services and contributing their collective labor, *gecekondu* residents were able to obtain roads, electricity, and running water in their homes, although this infrastructure was of much lower quality than that found in established middle-class areas of the city. Cooperation among *gecekondu* dwellers was extensive in the early years of *gecekondu* settlement formation. However, this cooperation in many cases gave way to competition once *gecekondu* settlements turned into established

low-density neighborhoods that were recognized by the authorities. Moreover, as residential density in city peripheries increased with successive waves of migration from the countryside, communities formed by people from various places of origin grew up in close proximity created an increase in conflict. Güneş-Ayata (1990/91) argues that *hemşehri* communities, in addition to their positive roles in the lives of migrants, can also be the source of negative outcomes. As observed in the field study she conducted in Ankara, first, different *hemşehri* communities may contest with each other for control of the neighborhood, fragmenting it and contributing to feelings of mutual hostility; second, a given community may try to monopolize certain jobs, not allowing those from a different place of origin to work in that sector (e.g., outdoor market vendors, long-distance truck drivers, apartment caretakers); and third, they may exercise strict control over their members, oppressing young women in particular.

In brief, as migrants became established in the city, communities with conflicting interests appeared, fragmenting the urban periphery. This fragmentation would intensify in the 1980s, when the society as a whole underwent a radical transformation. In the 1970s, land speculation in *gecekondu* settlements became a significant issue (Şenyapılı, 1982). *Gecekondus* became a commodity in the hands of *gecekondu* brokers and speculators—informal yet organized interest groups in the *gecekondu* market. They enclosed peripheral land and parceled it into plots to sell, even placing ads in newspapers to reach prospective *gecekondu* owners (Payne, 1982). As a result, a huge informal market developed, in which houses and land were bought and sold according to its own rules, and in which the use of force was occasionally present. Interestingly, the *gecekondu* mafia, despite its negative image in society, would in some cases serve as the leader of an emerging *gecekondu* community, bargaining with authorities and bribing or intimidating them if necessary, as well as taking care of the needs of the community's families, for instance arranging marriages.² Nevertheless, *gecekondu* settlements, with their own rules, culture, and social relations, remained as “parallel societies” in relation to mainstream urban society until the 1980s, when they began to be incorporated into the formal housing market.

The 1980–2010 period

The 1980s were years of neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish economy, which had significant outcomes for Turkish cities, and especially for the *gecekondu* communities located at their peripheries. The military coup of 1980 opened the door to major social, economic, and political transformations of society. When the national developmentalist model was abandoned for the neoliberal model, and import-substituting industrialization was accordingly replaced by an export-oriented market economy, the relationship of the state with the *gecekondu* population changed (Pınarcıoğlu and Işık, 2001). Real estate became one of the main engines of the economy. The private sector, which had in the earlier period of state-protected national industrialization engaged in manufacturing, began to seek profit in the housing and land markets. One response of the government to the private sector's increasing interest in urban land was to integrate *gecekondu* housing into the formal housing market: through a series of laws and amendments made between 1983 and 1987, the government attempted to solve the legal status of *gecekondus*. Law No. 2981 permitted the construction of up to four-story apartment buildings on *gecekondu* lots once a master plan for the area was completed. *Müteahhits* (small-scale contractors) would be the main actors in this physical transformation. The law killed two birds with one stone: on the one hand, it opened peripheral land to commercialization under the sway of market forces; and on the other hand, as Şenyapılı (1998) argues, it prevented social unrest by providing economic gains to the urban poor, who had become highly disadvantaged in the course of the economy's liberalization.

The other and more recent response to *gecekondu* housing, which indicates a radical shift, is the “zero *gecekondu*” policies of local governments. In the face of demand for land on which to build luxurious housing for the affluent classes, along with shopping malls, sports complexes, office towers, and the like, the clearance of *gecekondus* from peripheral land featured increasingly on the agendas of local authorities. As Keyder (2000) argues, populist *gecekondu* policies are bound to erode under the new regime of neoliberal urban development. This “zero *gecekondu* regime” is now complemented by urban transformation projects (UTPs) carried out by municipalities in partnership with the Prime Ministry’s Mass Housing Administration (Toplu Konut İdaresi, TOKİ), which aim to transform *gecekondu* areas into high-rise apartment complexes equipped with social amenities. The outcome of UTPs for *gecekondu* residents is a mix of gains and losses: while those who have only limited bargaining power with *müteahhids*, for example because of the disadvantageous location of their *gecekondus*, can now own an apartment in the buildings built by TOKİ, those who might have had a chance of getting several apartments from *müteahhids* in return for their *gecekondu* land have to settle for a single, standard apartment in TOKİ’s projects. The issue here is about the possibility of extracting value from *gecekondu* land, which has turned *gecekondus* into commodities to be exchanged in the market. More importantly, those without formal title to their land, as well as *gecekondu* tenants, lose access to affordable shelter. Many *gecekondu* dwellers also experience displacement as a result of UTP practices. UTPs are criticized for dislocating the urban poor and forcibly relocating them to distant locations, for opening former *gecekondu* neighborhoods to megaprojects that target the better-off classes, and for the new functions of cities as sites for consumption, entertainment, and tourism (Karaman, 2008).

A process of counterurbanization may be expected to occur, as cities lose their pool of low-skilled labor and *gecekondus* disappear. However, the government’s policy, in line with EU conditionalities, to limit the agricultural sector to 10 percent of the economy is an impediment to migration back to the villages. Moreover, the generations who have grown up in the cities are not familiar with agricultural tasks. The fostering of agriculture-related industry in rural areas is being proposed as a solution to the problem (Ministry of Public Works and Settlement, 2009). Large-scale development projects, such as the Southeast Anatolia Project (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi, GAP), are envisioned as the new agents that may change the direction of migration, so that it will proceed from western metropolitan areas to eastern rural regions. Despite this, migration from eastern Anatolia to the large cities in the west has continued to occur since the 1990s.

Urbanization in Turkey gained a new dimension in the 1990s. Distinct from the economic migrants of the previous era, villagers of Kurdish origin, who lost their livelihoods during the ongoing armed struggle between Kurdish rebels and the Turkish army in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, began to migrate in large numbers to the metropolitan areas in the west—a movement termed as “forced migration.” Accordingly, a second wave of urbanization took place, at a time when peripheral land was being commercialized and *gecekondu* construction was strictly prohibited. Consequently, forced migration created a “new poverty” in the cities (Keyder, 2005). Moreover, ethnicity became visible in *gecekondu* districts, politicizing rural migrants even more and introducing acute political tensions and disputes into the spaces of the urban poor. Additionally, people in eastern Anatolia increasingly evacuated their villages to move into nearby provincial and subprovincial centers, mostly for security reasons (Ersoy and Şengül, 2002). This new urbanization movement brought with it significant problems, such as chronic unemployment, overcrowding, health problems, crime and delinquency, social disintegration, and political unrest, which today pose serious difficulties for the country.

“Urbanity” and “urbanism” as the basis of cultural hierarchies

As cities are transformed by the new economic regime and by political challenges, and as the processes of urbanization take on new forms and dynamics, so do the social constructions of “urbanity” and “urbanism.” Urbanism, in the sense of the urban way of life, and urbanity, as comprising the characteristic features of urbanites, are sociocultural constructions that are much contested in the Turkish context. The asymmetric relationship between the established urbanites and rural migrants, and the nature of the debate over the question of who is an urbanite and what such an individual should be like, along with what urban living and urban culture mean, have varied between the most recent period and the one just preceding it, as elaborated below.

1950–80: the discourse of urbanity as the domination of the urban elite over the “peasants in the city”

In order to be able to make sense of the terms “urbanity” and “urbanism” in the Turkish context, one must understand the role given to the city in the Turkish modernization project. In line with the outlook that regarded the city as the engine of modernization, the modernizing Turkish state expected the city to play a significant role in socializing people to the new ways of life desired by the modernizing elite.

Urban living was promoted as the ideal, the goal of the national commitment to social and economic progress in its entirety. To be a townsperson was to be perceived as modern; to be a villager, or worse still, a peasant or a nomad, was to be traditional and probably not a full contributor to the country’s advancement (Beeley, 2002: 45).

Ankara, in particular, as the capital of the new Republic, was regarded as the cradle of modernization: the city’s modern buildings and public spaces, and the modern way of life of the bureaucratic and military elite would set the example for the rest of the society to emulate (Bozdoğan, 2001). However, it did not take long for “peasants” to make their appearance in the spaces of Turkish metropolises, including Ankara. The urban elite reacted to this occurrence by calling it a “peasant invasion,” reproducing the social construction of the rural as inferior to the urban in Turkey’s modernization project. Migrants were looked down upon as the “rural Other,” and portrayed as “ignorant, culturally backward, and lacking manners” (Erman, 2001: 991). The first move of the single-party government was to prohibit the entrance of people who looked like peasants into the capital city, as ordered by its mayor and governor, Nevzat Tandoğan (1929–46), but this coercive attempt to keep the city free of peasants was bound to fail. In the following years, as more and more migrants from the countryside built their *gecekondu*s, spreading out around the city’s periphery, the visual and social character of the city was radically altered. Consequently, the reaction of the urban elite grew stronger. In their imagination, the “peasants” were not only ruralizing the city and undermining the urban and modern way of life, but, by means of the *gecekondu*s mushrooming on the city’s outskirts, they were also disturbing the dream of planned cities as beacons of modernity (Erman, 2001). Moreover, they were violating private property rights—defined as a cornerstone of Western democracies—and hence were enemies of law and order. In early studies of the *gecekondu*s, the data collected on the educational level, fertility rate, and family size of *gecekondu* dwellers, as well as on their rate of participation in modern forms of communication and entertainment (e.g., reading newspapers, or going to movies, plays, and concerts), helped reproduce the image of migrants as “peasants in the city,” portraying them as failing to change their habits in order to fit into an urban way of life (Erman, 2001).

This early negative reaction of the urban elite persisted to a large extent over the subsequent years, although in some cases softened. In the 1960s and 1970s, under the influence of Marxism, a quite positive view of *gecekondu*s as the “legitimate” habitat of the urban poor emerged; *gecekondu* residents were seen as humble people from Anatolia exploited by the system (the “disadvantaged Other”) (Erman, 2001). Yet, this notion of “innocent *gecekondu* people” would erode rapidly under the influence of discourse concerning the “illegal wealth” made by urban land rent. The view of rural migrants as “peasants in the city” continued its hegemony in society. In brief, the social constructions of “urbanity” and “urbanism” remained under the control of the urban elite in this period.

Despite this elite discourse of urbanity and urbanism, rural migrants, by preserving rural values and practices within their communities in *gecekondu* neighborhoods, were able to “resist assimilation.” They made themselves visible in cultural production (e.g., through their *arabesk* music) by taking advantage of market mechanisms, and gained some power in politics (especially in local politics) by capitalizing on their voting potential. Thus, they became major actors in shaping cities, their spaces, and their culture, without openly challenging the discursive rule of the urban elite and the cultural hierarchy built upon the rural-urban axis.

Since the 1980s, however, as major changes have continued to take place in society, and as cities have continued to undergo transformation in the process, the hegemony of the urban elite over the definition of urbanity has begun to be challenged, dialectically producing stronger negative images of the *gecekondu* population.

1980–2010: the contested urbanity

In this period, which witnessed the transformation of the urban periphery through its commodification, the view of *gecekondu* people as the “undeserving rich Other” became predominant (Erman, 2001). The economic gains some rural migrants obtained in the commercialization of *gecekondu*s, as for example when they became owners of several apartments in return for their *gecekondu* land, led to complaints: they had built their *gecekondus* in a night, and now they were becoming millionaires in a day.

More significantly, the view of migrants as the “rural Other” began to be replaced by a view that defined them as the “threatening Other,” unruly masses opposed to the political and cultural establishment (Erman, 2001). The public discourse that connected reactionary movements and radical Islam to *gecekondu*s, and that paradoxically also connected revolutionary and Marxist activities to *gecekondu*s, portrayed *gecekondu* communities as a serious threat to the main tenets of the Republic. Moreover, rural migrants began to be seen as eroding the cultural establishment: no longer humble peasants in the city waiting for the guidance of urbanites to integrate them into urban society, they were now challenging the dominant cultural hierarchies. They were not willing to change; instead, they were making claims for their “*arabesk*” way of life and even making fun of the natives of Istanbul, calling them “*entels*,” or sterile intellectuals (Özbek, 1996: 222). In particular, those rural migrants who had experienced upward mobility thanks to the neoliberal policies of the 1980s came to be seen as the “cultural problem,” polluting the city with their “tasteless over-consumption” (Öncü, 1999). While the social categories of the “urban poor” and “culturally inferior rural migrants” had overlapped in the past, this began to change, as globalization and the liberalization of economy undermined the economic power and cultural control of the urban elites. As the socioeconomic distance between rural migrants and urbanites diminished in some instances, the boundary-drawing practices of the established urbanites intensified. Istanbul, as Turkey’s most globalized city, became the site of this contestation over the city and its meanings. The established urban classes, in their attempt to

redefine the cultural boundaries between the “real Istanbulites” and the “invading outsiders,” came to use the word *maganda* to designate a cartoonish figure, who, by his “brute strength, hairy body, and unbridled sexual appetites ... infects and pollutes the cultural atmosphere of the social settings he appears in” (ibid.: 111). The *maganda*, always depicted as a man and ethnically Kurdish, became the “absolute Other” in the new cultural landscape of the city (ibid.: 112). In addition to the challenges made to the cultural hierarchies by the *nouveau riche*, the new generation of local politicians, who had rural origins, posed another threat to the power of the urban elite (Erder, 1999).

In reaction to this negative perspective on the new heterogeneity in Istanbul, interpretations of it as the “new cosmopolitanism” also developed. Arguing against elite urbanity, this alternative view celebrated the “cultural diversity” of the city—for example, the coexistence of McDonald’s fast food outlets with kebab houses.

Since the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Prime Ministry’s community centers (*toplum merkezleri*) located in *gecekondu* districts, along with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have appeared as new agents of intervention into the lives of the “rural” population in the city by offering instruction and training as well as social and psychological support to locals in programs that aim to “integrate” them into urban society. These “new practices of governmentality” exercised upon the urban poor, although not yet studied in sufficient detail to understand the attitudes therein displayed toward them, seem to hold out the possibility of significantly transforming this segment of society.

Conclusion

Turkish urbanization, while sharing some similarities with that in other “Third World” societies, has some unique characteristics. The Turkish modernization project with its center-periphery dichotomy, the country’s integration into market mechanisms, and its populist politics and multiparty political system, as well as the availability of public land, have all made their mark on the urbanization experience of Turkey. In the other direction, the urbanization process has itself demonstrated transformative power, acting on the country’s politics, society, and economy, as well as on its cities. Today, as Turkish society undergoes radical transformations, it is important to investigate how these changes are affecting urbanization, as well as the meanings of urbanity and urbanism, in a context in which cities and their populations are more diversified than ever in terms of class, ethnicity, and religious sect (*mezhep*), as well as culture and ideology, and in which these diverse elements have the ability to make themselves visible as never before in the public realm. Such an investigation would require new paradigms, particularly ones that would recognize the roles of NGOs.

Notes

- 1 Official Turkish statistics identify settlements with a population of more than 10,000 people as urban.
- 2 Personal interview, March 2009.

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