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Reading Landscape in Beyoglu and Tarlabasi: Engineering a 'Brand New' Cosmopolitan Space, 1980–2013

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Abstract

This article discusses the intricate relationship between cultural identity formation and the urban landscape using an example of urban modernization in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district. The area under scrutiny is called Tarlabaşı and is currently the site where the state is executing a judicially contested gentrification project. The project is based in an area which housed an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous composition of middle- and working-class groups until the 1960s, became dilapidated from the 1970s onwards and was stigmatized by the Turkish government at local, metropolitan and national levels. It was portrayed by the media as an area of social and cultural deprivation, allegedly home only to the most marginal members of society. This article will discuss the relevance of landscape as a useful category in historical research. Secondly, it will discuss how and why dominant representations of Beyoğlu's urban landscape have developed and been instrumentalized in modern Istanbul from the 1980s onwards. Finally, this article shows how successive attempts of socio-cultural engineering by local governments, in order to reform or 'modernize' the urban landscape, had a strong impact on the physical and imaginary landscape of Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı. It will be argued that local Istanbul and Beyoğlu governments, inspired by neoliberal ideas of urban planning and city marketing, have attempted to reshape the cultural identity of Beyoğlu

and Tarlabaşı in order to legitimize drastic interventions in the area's urban landscape and socio-cultural composition.

Keywords: cultural representation, Istanbul, neoliberalism, Tarlabaşı, Turkey, urban landscape

Introduction

The Beyoğlu district in Istanbul historically was known as the European or 'cosmopolitan' district of Istanbul. Situated on the northern shores of Istanbul's European side and surrounded by the Golden Horn on the left and the Bosphorus on the right, the district still holds a pivotal geographic position in metropolitan Istanbul. The district's heyday in the nineteenth century can be attributed to the growing influence of France, Great Britain, the German Empire and Italy in the Ottoman Empire, whose embassies, companies, banks and residences were concentrated in this part of the Ottoman capital. Following the foundation of the Republic of Turkey and the choice of Ankara as the nascent republic's modernist capital, the significance of Istanbul decreased somewhat.[1] The nationalist policies implemented by the Kemalist regime would, however, have a much stronger impact on Istanbul and Beyoğlu from the 1930s onwards.[2] City modernization policies in the second half of the twentieth century and neoliberal policies from the 1980s onwards provided another push to dramatically change the district from a sociocultural and spatial point of view. Previous research has indicated, moreover, that starting in the late 1980s, the metropolitan and local municipalities' desire to stimulate the urban economy and tourism sector provided an important incentive to engineer a 'reinvention' or 'rediscovery' of the district's alleged cosmopolitanism.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the intricate relationship between cultural identity formation and the urban landscape from the

perspective of a problematic example of city modernization in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district. The area under scrutiny is called Tarlabaşı and is currently the site where the state is executing a judicially contested gentrification project. The project is based in an area which housed an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous composition of middle- and working-class groups until the 1960s. The area became dilapidated from the 1970s onwards and was stigmatized by the media and the Turkish government at local, metropolitan and national levels as an area of social and cultural deprivation, allegedly home only to the most marginal in society.[3] Faced with staggering property values following the increasing popularity and gentrification of the historical parts of the Beyoğlu district, local authorities decided to speed up the gentrification process in Tarlabaşı. The area is directly adjacent to the most valued land plots of the Beyoğlu district, which surround the historical district's main artery, İstiklal Street. Contrary to the area around İstiklal Street, the area of Tarlabaşı was considered to be 'lagging behind'.

This article will first discuss the relevance of landscape to historical research. Secondly, it will discuss how and why dominant representations of Beyoğlu's urban landscape have developed and been instrumentalized in modern Istanbul from the 1980s onwards. Finally, it will be shown how successive attempts of socio-cultural engineering by local governments in order to reform or 'modernize' the urban landscape had a strong impact on the physical and imaginary landscape of Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı. It will be argued that local Istanbul and Beyoğlu governments, inspired by neoliberal ideas of urban planning and city marketing, have attempted to reshape the cultural identity of Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı in order to legitimize drastic interventions in the area's urban landscape and socio-cultural composition.

Reading Landscape in History

Space and place have started to receive increasing attention from historians, especially from those with an interest in cities.[4] Inspired by geographers, the so-called spatial turn suggests that to understand the internal dynamics of social, political and cultural identities, it simply does not suffice to analyse phenomena through time. In his book *Streetlife*, Leif Jerram asks his fellow historians to think critically about

the 'where' in their research. Historians, he claims, should avoid using the spaces and places of their research as mere settings.[5]

Although Jerram's critique is justified and the debate on the spatiality of historical surroundings remains a problematic issue, significant steps have been made in the field of urban history for the past twenty-five years.[6] An important example is the work of Judith Walkowitz, who has shown how identities are historically and spatially established. In her recent research on Soho, she highlights how the London district was the product of converging mental and material processes that produced a cosmopolitan 'space'. Moreover, she shows how urban development can affect the social, cultural and economic identity of neighbourhoods.[7]

Landscape is a particularly useful means for scholars to analyse the 'where' in historical research. Denis Cosgrove argues that thinking about landscape is particularly significant in History and Geography, as it connects 'geography most closely to history and the humanities'.[8] In *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* Cosgrove puts forward the view that landscape should not only be considered a way of envisioning the visible world or as the connection between human and natural phenomena which can be verified by scientific enquiry. An important task, he argues, is making the connection between the two categories and understanding landscape as a complex cultural and social product. Landscape is the relationship between 'land and human life' and as such can help historians to understand why the 'where' can have a significant impact on the 'how' and 'why' in history.[9] Cosgrove describes the process elsewhere as landscape's capacity to 'naturalize' the deeply cultural.[10] A striking example is Denis Cosgrove and Daniel Atkinson's analysis of the Vittorio Emanuele II monument in Rome. They use the Vittoriano to demonstrate how a building or monument can function as a concretized and performed transference of official rhetoric to the urban landscape.[11] The monument shows how the spatiality of the city can – in part – be produced by the 'complex interweaving of empire, memory, modernity, geopolitics and the gendered bodily presences'.[12] Analysing the degrees of conservation, destruction and modification of urban landscapes as well as its imaginings can therefore provide important insights not only into the political actors active in the urban landscape, but also into the particular dimensions of history and cultural identity they wish to retain or destroy. In the following sections this process will be discussed in the context of Beyoğlu in general and Tarlabaşı in particular.

Instrumentalizing Beyoğlu

Beyoğlu, or Pera as it was more commonly known until the mid-1920s, remained the diplomatic, economic and cultural centre of the Ottoman capital and the Ottoman Empire until its dissolution in 1923. Although Ankara became the capital of the newly founded Turkish Republic, Istanbul remained of critical importance, and Beyoğlu retained its central position in the city. Discriminatory policies would change the district dramatically, most notably the wealth tax (*varlık vergisi*), which hit the non-Muslim communities in Istanbul in 1942 in a highly discriminatory fashion and imposed taxation rates of up to over twice the value of citizens' fixed assets.[13] Following the introduction of the tax, many non-Muslim communities left the country and settled elsewhere, leaving their former homes behind. Moreover, discriminatory educational policies had a detrimental impact on the quality of education at Armenian and *Rum* schools, while nationalist campaigns, particularly the 'Citizen, speak Turkish!' (*Vatandaş, Türkçe konuş!*) campaign, decreased the numbers of non-Muslim communities in Istanbul drastically.[14] The process was particularly accelerated by the pogrom in the night of 6 and 7 September 1955 against the properties of non-Muslim communities which, apart from material damage, had a devastating effect on the demographics of Beyoğlu and drastically altered the district's sociocultural identity.[15] From the 1960s onwards, these deserted properties were gradually repopulated by migrants from Anatolia seeking jobs in a rapidly industrializing Istanbul.

The radical changes in Beyoğlu's sociocultural makeup leads Ayfer Bartu to conclude that Beyoğlu is 'of no lands and of all lands… it both has a place, and is a place, in many histories'.[16] She argues that how Beyoğlu used to look in the past, how and for which parts of society it should be 'revitalized', and what it represents have become major political issues. What should be revitalized, for whom and where is indeed a crucial question. The current population of Beyoğlu and Istanbul is a migrant society in the sense that the vast majority of the current residents have roots in a different Turkish city or village. Their stories of Istanbul are therefore often intermingled with the stories of a different city or village and a mixed sense of belonging. Thus, questions as to 'who is from Istanbul and who is not' and who can claim Istanbul's and Beyoğlu's landscape feature prominently in local cultural and social

memory. Yet in a city which can, if anything, be defined by social and cultural plurality, it is impossible and implausible to reach an answer. Ayşe Öncü indicates that 'the Istanbulite' is a myth, with 75% of the city's population being born somewhere else.[17]

This demographic change has been represented as the city's 'ruralization' and, particularly in the case of Beyoğlu, the transformation of a district of 'high culture' to one of 'low culture'. This change incited a feeling of 'loss' among some residents in the 1980s, a tendency to frame a once-cosmopolitan and fancy Beyoğlu as polluted and lost to peasants. Edhem Eldem criticizes this tendency to over-represent the district historically as a somehow bourgeois, posh and 'cosmopolitan' environment. Since the 1990s this particular imagining, however, has proven to be appealing to municipal governments, and various private stakeholders have instrumentalized to the extent that it has become the dominant discursive interpretation of Beyoğlu's historical landscape and identity.[18] An important side note is that the non-Muslim communities that feature so prominently in this imagining of Istanbul's alleged cosmopolitanism had by the 1980s diminished to a number that made up less than 1% of Istanbul's total population.[19]

Apart from dismantling Beyoğlu's reputation for being the cosmopolitan quarter of the Ottoman city, Eldem briefly reflects on the origins or position of these specific cultural representations in the present.[20] He argues that during the 1980s, Istanbul's 'cosmopolitan past' was rediscovered, but to an important extent also reinvented. By the 1990s, nineteenth-century 'cosmopolitan' Beyoğlu had become a prominent object of study and imagination in scholarly, literary and popular circles.[21] In the wake of this rise of interest, the gentrification of Beyoğlu skyrocketed and the nostalgia for an imagined multiculturalism and high culture were exploited by what Eldem describes as the 'stakeholders in the area', namely the municipality, real-estate owners and local businesses. Concomitantly, museums and cultural centres started to be named with references to the district's 'former social and topographic nomenclature'.[22] Eldem, as well as Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, point out that the reinvention of cosmopolitanism was in large part a consequence of the desire to stimulate the urban economy and tourism sector.[23]

The transformation of Beyoğlu's profile as a zone of culture, trade and commerce to one which was perceived to be increasingly valuable for its potential as a tourist and recreation area followed the rapid

growth of Istanbul and a reshuffling of the functions of Istanbul's districts from the 1990s onwards. Inspired by neoliberalism, local and national governments started to launch new policies which resulted in a radical makeover of the district's landscape. While most of the area gradually gentrified, the area of Tarlabaşı, directly adjacent to the part of the district which was considered to be the historic centre of Beyoğlu, followed a different trajectory. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s it remained a refuge for communities that are considered to be, and from the perspective of socioeconomic welfare and political rights indeed are, at the very bottom of the socioeconomic scale. Following the introduction of new legislation, however, the local municipality's options to redevelop Tarlabaşı and include it within the borders of a Beyoğlu of 'prosperity, culture, tourism', and as the centre of a reinvented and instrumentalized celebration of the district's 'cosmopolitanism' have considerably widened. Existing stigmatization of the area continued, but now reframed in such a way that it legitimized drastic interventions in the urban and socio-cultural texture of the district. In the following section I will discuss how the effects of the area's discursive representation had a decisive impact on the residents of Tarlabaşı and the built environment.

At 'The Borders of Beyoğlu': Representing and Remaking Tarlabaşı, 'The Poisoned Prince of Istanbul'

The neighbourhood of Tarlabaşı is situated in the middle of the current administrative Beyoğlu district, on the north-western side of İstiklal Street.[24] Historically, the neighbourhood was populated predominantly by the Pontic Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities of the working and lower-middle classes. The area was initially a part of Ottoman Constantinople's sixth district, which comprised the neighbourhoods of Pera, Galata and Tophane.[25] Pera had by 1871 substantially expanded towards the north and north-west. Tarlabaşı became the neighbourhood inhabited by those who were slightly less well-off than the higher-middle classes and upper classes who were predominantly living in the remainder of Pera and Galata on the slopes facing the Bosphorus.[26]

The discriminatory policies and ethnic violence described earlier and the subsequent departure of Beyoğlu's non-Muslim communities

resulted in large amounts of empty building stock in the Tarlabaşı neighbourhood. Particularly following the expulsion of Greek citizens in the wake of the Cyprus Crisis in 1964, many properties changed hands in Tarlabaşı and in other parts of Beyoğlu. This created a new group of landlords who took ownership of the buildings, providing a stable income from rent for themselves and an affordable place to live for working migrants.[27] Following Istanbul's increasing industrialization from the 1950s onwards, the exodus of the former residents was met by incoming working migrants from Anatolia.[28] Some of the houses changed hands while others were rented out to the newcomers by the owners or simply squatted.[29] A lack of attention of the municipality towards Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu led to the gradual deterioration of the building stock and infrastructure throughout the course of the 1960s up until the present day. This may in part have been due to the fact that successive nationalist governments, driven by a conception of Westernization and modernization, cared little for the remnants of the Ottoman past.

Despite the area's socio-economic deterioration, the urban landscape of Tarlabaşı remained largely intact until the mid-1980s. From that period onward, however, Tarlabaşı was subjected to a socio-cultural engineering offensive which heavily impacted the urban landscape as well. The newly installed metropolitan mayor of Istanbul, Bedrettin Dalan, announced plans to 'clean up the dirt' in Beyoğlu.[30] The mayor envisioned a radically transformed Beyoğlu urban landscape, and, as will be indicated in this article, his words would provide the precedent for a recurring theme of 'urban cultural cleansing'. Arguing that Tarlabaşı 'does not belong to our culture', he disqualified the building stock of Tarlabaşı as insignificant, since most of it was once owned and built by the Ottoman non-Muslim communities. He thus reiterated the racist and exclusionary discourse of Turkish nationalism and projected it onto Tarlabaşı's urban landscape.[31]

Between 1986 and 1988 a new six-lane motorway, Tarlabaşı Boulevard, was constructed as part of a bigger plan of the metropolitan municipality to improve the traffic circulation between the northern and southern part of the European peninsula.[32] Zeynep Çelik indicates that the urban reform programme intersected with a desire to 'clean up' the city. Voices urging the municipality to preserve the historical buildings in Tarlabaşı were ignored. Çelik describes the muncipality's philosophy

with regard to the buildings of Tarlabaşı as reminiscent of the major urban reforms in Paris under the supervision of Hausmann on the pretext of *nettoyer par le vide*. The nineteenth-century building stock was not considered to be of any historical importance for Istanbul by the municipality and the relatively unadorned residential building stock of Tarlabaşı in particular was not considered worthy of a restoration project of any sort.[33]

In order to create a construction zone for the motorway, over 370 historic buildings were destroyed. Objections made by the Turkish Chamber of Architects and others were dismissed by Dalan, who stated, 'we will implement the plan [to build Tarlabaşı Boulevard] and if needed, we are ready to undertake any penalty. There are no historical buildings in Tarlabasi, at least the ones we have demolished are not historical'.[34] According to the metropolitan municipality, or Mayor Dalan at the very least, the heritage of the former Ottoman non-Muslim communities had no place in the Turkish historical paradigm and in a Turkish urban landscape. The destroyed buildings and the motorway that replaced them created a vast rift in Beyoğlu's urban landscape. What Mayor Dalan probably did not envision was that the motorway would create a radical socio-economic and cultural divide running through the heart of the Beyoğlu district, isolating the Tarlabaşı area from its direct surroundings along the İstiklal Street. Following the expressions made by the Beyoğlu Municipality to 'clean up' Tarlabaşı and 'regularize' the urban landscape, the municipality envisioned a new chapter for Beyoğlu in the 1990s and 2000s.

As heavy industry moved away from the vicinity of the city centres, space was created for new financial and service centres. As part of the central government's strategy to attract more capital, city marketing became a crucial tool in positioning Istanbul as an attractive site for tourism, business and international organizations.[35] The central government therefore adopted an interventionist policy, developing a new act for the 'promotion of tourism' and by 1994 had declared 40 areas as 'tourism and business centres.[36] As Beyoğlu lost its importance as a centre for business and finance to the districts further up north, the government decided to actively develop this area as a new area for mass tourism and culture. The construction of Tarlabaşı Boulevard, moreover, allowed for the pedestrianization of the district's main axis, İstiklal Street. The pedestrianization of this street can be considered as

the first and decisive step in a process of a state-instigated reorientation of the district's profile.[37] The area directly alongside İstiklal Street gradually developed into the most expensive and popular part of the city. Active interventions to promote the municipality as well as private initiatives drastically changed the socio-economic and cultural profile of the area.[38] In contrast to Mayor Dalan's conception of the historical heritage of non-Muslim communities, municipal governments after the 1980s considered the 'cosmopolitan' background of the district to have great marketing potential. Major investments were made to redefine the area around İstiklal Street as an attractive tourist space, with many cafés, restaurants, art galleries and cinemas providing the setting for music, theatre, cinema and art festivals.[39]

What Dalan probably also did not expect in the 1980s was that the Tarlabaşı Boulevard created a dramatic socio-cultural rift in Beyoğlu. Though the municipality had declared the desire to clean up all of Beyoğlu, Tarlabaşı, particularly along the western side of Tarlabaşı Boulevard, which was spatially separated from the remaining area along İstiklal Street, was left virtually unattended. As the social and economic standards of the communities in Tarlabaşı degraded, the previous cultural imagining of Beyoğlu's landscape as a place of backwardness and decay appeared to converge towards Tarlabaşı. The area was marginalized within the larger context of the Beyoğlu district, despite its direct adjacency to the part of the city that was witnessing both state-led transformation and gentrification by private parties and real-estate developers. The municipality's programme of socio-cultural engineering ensued haphazardly, however, as shown in the build-up to the Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul between 3 and 14 June 1996. Here, the heads of state and government of the participating countries declared in an ambitious document the 'commitment to better standards of living in larger freedom for all humankind', the desire to promote 'the conservation, rehabilitation and maintenance of buildings, monuments, open spaces, landscapes and settlement patterns of historical, cultural, architectural, natural, religious and spiritual value'. Furthermore, they stated that 'as human beings are at the centre of our concern for sustainable development, they are the basis for our actions as in implementing the Habitat Agenda. We recognize the particular needs of women, children and youth for safe, healthy and secure living conditions'.[40]

Meanwhile, however, the metropolitan municipality again decided to 'clean up' the Beyoğlu and Şişli districts. Police forces warned the transsexual and transvestite communities in the area, particularly situated in Tarlabaşı and Cihangir, to move away from what was regarded and framed not as their legitimate place of residence, but as 'the conference area'. Those who did not move away voluntarily were taken away by force to the peripheries of the city, together with pedlars, street children, glue sniffers, stray cats and dogs.[41]

Nur Bahar Sakızlıoğlu and Justus Uitermark reveal the pervasiveness of the discourse on Tarlabaşı and explain that in contemporary media the area is still framed as 'an "uncivilized" place', inhabited by people who could not or do not want to adjust to city life or are simply criminals. The current population of Tarlabaşı is made up of a highly heterogeneous composition of stigmatized and socially discriminated communities, including Kurds, Roma, African immigrants, transsexual sex workers and other informal workers, all of whom are frequently framed as 'marginal communities' by the state and media.[42] The Beyoğlu municipality and its partners have actively contributed to the representation of the entire area as one in need of renewal. The idea of renewal obviously refers to the building stock, but because of the position of Tarlabaşı's communities – at the very lowest position from a socio-economic and political perspective – and the lack of an institutionalization of their rights, the point of 'renewal' may indeed be read as a socio-cultural engineering offensive.

One of the major issues is that the communities often have no other place to go when they arrived in Istanbul and had no alternative but to settle down in either a squatter area or an area like Tarlabaşı. The residence, however, is in the majority of cases based on (illegal) tenancy agreements, a situation which severely limits their possibilities to claim social and cultural ownership of Tarlabaşı. The Kurdish political migrants from the 1990s are a case in point. Whereas migration in relative numbers towards Tarlabaşı between the 1960s and 1980s shows that a significant majority came from Central Anatolia, the balance shifted from the mid-1980s onwards.[43] Due to the political conflict between the Turkish army and the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, Kurdish Worker's Party), many Kurds were forced away from south-easterm Turkey starting in 1984 and peaking in the 1990s.[44] Those who came to Istanbul saw that their options were limited to squatter neighbourhoods

or the run-down historic neighbourhoods, of which Tarlabaşı is one of the prime examples.[45] The position of this group, which were technically domestic political refugees, was even more complicated than the earlier waves of migrants who still were able to maintain ties with their socio-cultural surroundings in the rural areas of descent. In most cases, however, the social and economic connections to the hometowns of the new waves of migrants were eradicated.[46] Tansı Şenyapalı indicates that the economic and social reality in their new environments is that this group has become the 'absolute poverty group' of Istanbul.[47]

The representation of Tarlabaşı as a socio-culturally marginal place, bringing together many of the stereotypes of Beyoğlu's supposed 'dark side', i.e. poverty, prostitution, criminality and marginal communities, has had a decisive impact on its cultural imagining. One of the most notable effects is the construction of borders in Tarlabaşı. The socio-economic and political reality experienced by Tarlabaşı's community becomes visible spatially by means of the imagined and physical border, i.e. Tarlabaşı Boulevard, between Tarlabaşı and 'another Beyoğlu'. Nil Mutluer has described this process of border construction through her personal experiences of exploring the area during fieldwork. When explaining to a local audience that she would be working on and in Tarlabaşı, she was frequently asked how she would dare enter the area. As Mutluer points out, the verb to enter (in Turkish: *girmek*) is highly significant in this context, since it reflects a physical passage from one area to the other. It indicates the discrepancy and indeed the psychological and socio-cultural borders between Tarlabaşı and the surrounding area. One does not just 'go' to Tarlabaşı, but rather 'enters' it.[48] Since the creation of Tarlabaşı Boulevard, Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı appeared to have been established as radically different in the cultural imagining of the urban landscape.

Reconfiguring the history of Tarlabaşı's urban landscape continued with the urban renewal project that is now known as 'Tarlabaşı 360'. In the course of the 2000s, new legislation further reinforced and institutionalized the municipality's capacity to claim and socio-culturally engineer residential places. A set of new regulations enabled local municipalities to implement major urban transformation projects in their districts. In particular, the law on Housing Development, which was implemented in 2004, and the Law of Local Authorities of 2005 granted new and expansive legislative powers to the municipalities

and the newly founded Public Housing Administration (Toplu Konut İdaresi – TOKİ). Previously, legislation from Ottoman times, which had been transferred to the legislative system of the Turkish Republic, had protected monumental structures, but the law was expanded to include civic structures as well in 1971.

By 1980, however, none of the conservation work had been implemented due to a lack of financial resources and the centralized hierarchy of the responsible council, resulting in a situation whereby it took an excessive amount of time before conservation plans were compiled and areas could be secured. Though the system was changed and decentralized in 1983 with the transfer of the authorities of the Council of Historical Assets and Monuments to a newly formed Council for the Conversation of Cultural and Natural Assets, İclal Dinçer argues that the new council also lacked financial resources to implement preservation.[49] New amendments to the legislation in 2004 directed a part of property tax directly to the preservation of historical sites and enforced the employment of experts to monitor the conservation process.[50]

The development of this project followed major legislative turnovers in Turkey's recent history. The Law on the Protection of Deteriorated Historic and Cultural Heritage through Renewal and Re-use disrupted this process abruptly and drastically. It granted local municipalities the full authority to declare and develop, or release a tender for development, an area which has been indicated as a historic preservation area. Dinçer, Enlil and İslam note three major shortcomings of the law: a singular focus on the physical environment, wholly disregarding the community of the renewal area, the lack of a possibility for participation by the local community to reshape and develop the area, and contributing to the area's cultural identity and the violation of property rights.[51] The law empowers the municipalities to disown anyone in the area who is not willing to leave his or her property. This means that in the process preceding the start of the urban transformation there are three options for property owners: they either become a partner and cooperate with the municipality, they sell their property or take another property on a different location in the city or, as a third 'option', become disowned by the municipality and are forced to leave.[52]

One of the implications of these judicial developments is that the municipality has the power to impose a specific cultural identity onto a neighbourhood. What is striking in this context is that, as Dinçer rightfully

argues, the municipality shows a total disregard for the communities currently living in Tarlabaşı and instead opts for a version of the area's alleged historical 'cosmopolitanism', in line with neoliberal strategies to increase tourist potential and profit optimization.[53] The urban renewal project initiated by the Beyoğlu Municipality, called Tarlabaşı 360, is marketed as the way to end the division between Tarlabaşı and Beyoğlu. In a commercial advertisement for the project, the voice-over reiterates stereotypes about Tarlabaşı and ends with the phrase that 'those who say that at the place where Tarlabaşı ends, Beyoğlu begins, are not wrong'.[54] This is a revealing example of the way the municipality frames the urban landscape as socially and culturally divided between Beyoğlu and Tarlabaşı. Through projects such as Tarlabaşı 360, the municipality is trying to integrate the Tarlabaşı area into the reinvented 'cosmopolitan' Beyoğlu. This has proven to be an excellent discursive framing for the valourization of Beyoğlu's landscape.

In order to push this radical socio-cultural and urban transformation of the area forward, the municipality decided to have a specified area declared as a zone for urban renewal. This area consisted of nine blocks and 278 plots with 70% of the area consisting of listed buildings. All buildings have been demolished starting from 2011 onwards, while some of the façades have been preserved or will be reconstructed. As Aksoy and Robins indicate, this attitude towards restoration is particularly telling: the goal is less to restore and preserve the historical heritage of the problematically celebrated communities, but rather to provide something which looks historical.[55]

A significant difference in the case of Tarlabaşı 360 to previous periods of municipal efforts for socio-cultural engineering is that, besides the municipality and media, the construction company which won the tender, GAP İnşaat, is also an active player in the process of what might best be defined as a 'neoliberal civilizing offensive', reworking the district's cultural identity in order to optimize profit potential.[56] Sakızlıoğlu and Uitermark describe how GAP İnşaat categorized the occupants of the properties which required dislocation, which shows how the municipality and GAP İnşaat imagine Tarlabaşı can be made 'compatible' with the profitable cultural identity of Beyoğlu. The first category was composed of, among others, Assyrian and Armenian communities, which were considered to have a right to continue living in the area. The second category, that of shop owners and other small business owners,

was seen as a more ambivalent category. A baker was allowed to return as long as it would cater to the demands of the new residents, while a teahouse would not be allowed to return, though a café was considered suitable to return to a renewed Tarlabaşı.[57] The third category, 'the urban poor', was considered to be the most problematic one, as most of their properties were in a dilapidated state and used for both housing and informal business. GAP İnşaat (and the municipality) considered this category to be out of touch with the prospective new cultural profile of Tarlabaşı and would push these people to sell off their properties.

Within the indicated framework of the municipality and GAP İnşaat, the majority of the residents, the tenants, are not mentioned. Özlem Unsal and Tuna Kuyucu point out that they make up the vast majority (75%) of Tarlabaşı's community. As indicated previously, the position of these residents is particularly complicated, since their residency is often in large part based on illegal agreements or squatting. Sakızlıoğlu indicates that the tenants were severely underrepresented in the neighbourhood association, in part because the municipality had already severely violated and ignored the rights of the property owners deemed as incompatible with the new Tarlabaşı.[58] The municipality did not intervene on behalf of the tenants and did not attempt to find substitutive accommodation for the tenants, placing many into a new limbo of homelessness or illegal renting.

Despite disconcerting accounts and reports from residents, the Turkish Chamber of Architects, other NGOs and scholars, the rhetoric of the municipality appears to be quite effective. In 2013, the Tarlabaşı 360 Renewal Project was awarded the International Property Award in the category Best Commercial Renovation/Redevelopment.[59] On the occasion, Mayor Demircan was quoted as saying:

> With Tarlabaşı Urban Renewal Project, new architecturally attractive areas are created just like in other developed countries while preserving the history. Thus the houses of Tarlabaşı people gained value, and a brand new tourist destination is established right at the centre of Istanbul. And sociologically, Tarlabaşı is not a depressed region of Istanbul anymore, but a region in harmony with [a] future dominated by modern life. Our goal is to reintroduce the cultural richness, brotherhood and modernism that Tarlabaşı had in the past. Tarlabaşı is the poisoned prince of Istanbul, and with this project we will awaken our prince and introduce him to Istanbul public.[60]

On behalf of the municipality, the mayor presented the entire area as a depressed region and promised to remake Tarlabaşı. He promised to add value to the properties of the Tarlabaşı people, but the municipality disregards those who would, as residents, be entitled to call themselves the people of Tarlabaşı. The municipality has shown its unwillingness to let even many of the official owners return to the site of Tarlabaşı 360, let alone the current residents who live there as tenants or squatters. Tarlabaşı's cultural identity is not redeveloped for its residents, but for the optimization of profit. Those who can afford it can live in Tarlabaşı and have a role in shaping its landscape. The mayor's statements show that Tarlabaşı in its current state is culturally degraded, devoid of 'brotherhood' and backward. Although with a different strategic appreciation of Beyoğlu's 'cosmopolitanism', mayor Demircan frames Tarlabaşı in a similar fashion as former Istanbul mayor Dalan framed all of Beyoğlu in the 1980s. Both were considered a backward place in need of a profitable clean-up and, in the case of present-day Tarlabaşı, in need of reconnection with the cosmopolitan legacy that Dalan was eager to destroy.

Conclusion

This article has explored the ways in which discursive representations of Beyoğlu, in combination with increasing legal powers of municipal governments, has resulted in major interventions in the urban landscape of Beyoğlu and essentialist impositions of Beyoğlu's and Tarlabaşı's cultural identities. The image of a Beyoğlu as a once-bourgeois, cosmopolitan district that has lost its essence and requires reinvention has proven to be a powerful marketing instrument and discursive tool to legitimize socio-cultural engineering.[61] A considerate discrepancy between the legitimation for urban reform of municipal governments in the 1980s versus the 1990s and 2000s exists. The metropolitan municipality under Mayor Dalan mainly stressed Beyoğlu's alleged backwardness and disqualified its heritage as incompatible with the idea of Istanbul as a world city to facilitate urban transformation.

A major consequence of Dalan's effort to modernize the city and construct Tarlabasi Boulevard was a rapid increase in cultural and social segregation within the Beyoğlu Municipality. This in turn provided an

important foundation for ensuing problems in Tarlabaşı.[62] Contrary to Dalan, his successors in the Beyoğlu and metropolitan municipalities became aware of the marketing potential of the district's historical heritage in the urban landscape and encouraged, together with private parties, the alleged historical 'cosmopolitanism' of the district. The 'dirt' and backwardness that was until then a prominent part of the public discourse on Beyoğlu appears to have been increasingly diverted away from Beyoğlu's image and towards Tarlabaşı. Encouraged by the increasing value of properties and the popularity of Beyoğlu among tourists, the municipality in the 2000s started to direct its attention to Tarlabaşı as well. They aimed to reintegrate Tarlabaşı in the landscape of Beyoğlu, embracing the district's 'cosmopolitanism' in order to optimize its profit potential.[63] As shown in this article, however, many of the residents fail to be represented in this 'cosmopolitan' representation of Beyoğlu. The overt focus on Beyoğlu's physical environment ignores the area's current socio-cultural composition. The example of the urban renewal project Tarlabaşı 360 shows how this has affected the inhabitants of Tarlabaşı, how they are denied the right to contribute to the area's cultural identity and how the Beyoğlu municipality uses a particular strategy of socio-cultural engineering. Disregarding the communities of Tarlabaşı, the district's cultural identity is framed and employed in such a way that it legitimizes streamlining Tarlabaşı's urban landscape into 'new architecturally attractive areas' and a 'brand new tourist destination'.[64]

Notes

1 Murat Gül, *The Emergence of Modern Istanbul: Transformation of a Modern City* (London, 2009), 72–91.

2 Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve "Türkleştirme" Politikaları* (İstanbul, 2000); Aktar, '"Turkification" Policies in the Early Republican Era', in Catharina Duft (ed.), *Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory* (Wiesbaden, 2009) 29–62.

3 Bahar Sakızlıoğlu and Justus Uitermark, 'The Symbolic Politics of Gentrification: the Restructuring of Stigmatized Neighborhoods in Amsterdam and Istanbul', *Environment and Planning A* 46:6 (2014) 1373.

4 Simon Gunn, 'The Spatial Turn: Changing Histories of Space and Place', in Simon Gunn and Robert John Morris (eds), *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since* 1850 (Aldershot, 2001) 9–11.

5 Leif Jerram, *Streetlife: The Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2011) 1–13.

6 Gunn, 'Spatial Turn', 9–11. Some of the influential works which had a significant impact on urban history are: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991); David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Baltimore, 1985); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Oxford, 1989); Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley, CA, 2002); Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1984).

7 Judith Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven, 2012) 286. Other excellent examples are Walkowitz's *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago, 1992); Leif Jerram, *Streetlife: The Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2011); Chris Otter, 'Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City', *Social History* 27:1 (2014) 1–15; Simon Gunn, 'People and the Car: the Expansion of Automobility in Urban Britain, *c.*1955–70', *Social History* 38:2 (2013) 220–237.

8 Denis Cosgrove, 'Landscape and Landschaft', *GHI Bulletin* 35 (2004) 58.

9 Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1998 [1984]) xxx, 1–68.

10 Cosgrove, 'Landscape and Landschaft', 68.

11 Daniel Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove, 'Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870–1945', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88:1 (1998), 46.

12 Atkinson and Cosgrove, 'Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities', 46.

13 Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi* and '"Turkification" Policies in the Early Republican Era', 29–62.

14 Aktar, '"Turkification" Policies', 47–8.

15 Dilek Güven, *Nationalismus und Minderheiten: Die Ausschreitungen gegen die Christen und Juden der Türkei vom September* 1955 (Munich, 2012).

16 Ayfer Bartu, 'Who Owns the Old Quarters? Rewriting Histories in a Global Era', in Çağlar Keyder (ed.), *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local* (Lanham, 1999) 43.

17 Ayşe Öncü, 'Istanbulites and Others: The Cultural Cosmology of Being Middle Class in the Era of Globalism', in Çağlar Keyder (ed.), *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local* (Lanham, 1999) 95.

18 Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, 'Changing Urban Cultural Governance in Istanbul: The Beyoğlu Plan', *KPY Working Paper* 1 (2011) 5–7.

19 Edhem Eldem, 'Istanbul as a Cosmopolitan City: Myths and Realities', in Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani (eds), *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism* (Malden, Oxford, 2013) 226.

20 Eldem refers to Galata and Pera, the historical quarters which are currently situated in the Beyoğlu municipality. Pera was the more commonly used name of Beyoğlu until the mid-1920s. Eldem, 'Galata-Pera between Myth and Reality', in Ulrike Tischler, *From 'Mileu de Mémoire' to 'Lieu de Mémoire': The Cultural Memory of Istanbul in the 20th Century* (Munich, 2006) 24–9.

21 Eldem, 'Istanbul ', 225.

22 Eldem, 'Istanbul', 226.

23 Eldem, 'Istanbul', 226 and Aksoy and Robins, 'Changing Urban Cultural Governance', 4.

24 Bahar Sakızlıoğlu indicates that the area referred to as Tarlabaşı consists of eight smaller neighbourhoods: Sururi, Kamer Hatun, Kalyoncu Kulluğu, Hüseyin Ağa, Bostan, Çukur, Bülbül and Şehit Muhtar. Bahar Sakızlıoğlu, *A Comparative Look at Residents' Displacement Experiences: The Cases of Amsterdam and Istanbul*, unpublished PhD thesis, Utrecht University, 2014, 163.

25 Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993) 38–9, 70.

26 Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul,* 38–9, 70; 'Urban Preservation as Theme Park: The Case of Soğukçeşme Street', in Zeynep Çelik, Diane Favro and Richard Ingersoll (eds), *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994) 83–4.

27 İclal Dinçer and Zeynep Enlil, 'Eski Kent Merkezinde Yeni Yoksullar: Tarlabaşı, İstanbul', *Yoksulluk, Kent Yoksulluğu ve Planlama*, Kasım Dünya Şehircilik Günü 26. Kolokyumu, TMMOB Şehir Plancıları Odası Yayınları 8 (2003) 415–24.

28 Dinçer and Zeynep Enlil, 'Eski Kent Merkezinde Yeni Yoksullar', 415–24.

29 Sakızlıoğlu, *A Comparative Look*, 165–6.

30 Beyoğlu Aylık Dergi, 'Beyoğlu Güzelleşiyor', *Beyoğlu Aylık Dergi* 2:17 (1987) 7.

31 Bartu, 'Who Owns the Old Quarters', 35.
32 Çelik, 'Urban Preservation as Theme Park', 84.
33 Çelik, 'Urban Preservation as Theme Park', 84.
34 Ibid.
35 Enlil, 'The Neoliberal Agenda', 15 and Asu Aksoy, *Küreselleşme ve Istanbul'da Istihdam* (Istanbul, 1996) 11.
36 Enlil, 'The Neoliberal Agenda', 15.
37 Ibid., 20–2.
38 Ibid.
39 Zeynep Enlil, 'Yeniden İşlevlendirme ve Soylulaştırma: Bir Sınıfsal Proje Olarak Eski Kent Merkezlerinin ve Tarihi Konut Dokusunun Yeniden Ele Geçirilmesi', *domus m* 8 (2000) 46–9.
40 'The Habitat Agenda Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements', http://www.un.org/ga/Istanbul+5/declaration.htm, accessed 5 May 2015.
41 Pınar Selek, *Maskeler Süvariler Gacılar* (Istanbul, 2007); Özlem Sandıkcı, 'Strolling through Istanbul's Beyoğlu: In-between Difference and Containment', *Space and Culture* 18:2 (2015) 206.
42 Sakızlıoğlu and Uitermark, 'The Symbolic Politics of Gentrification', 1373.
43 Dinçer and Enlil, 'Eski Kent Merkezinde Yeni Yoksullar', 415–24.
44 Sakızlıoğlu, *A Comparative Look*, 170.
45 Ibid., 148.
46 Tansı Şenyapılı, 'Charting the "Voyage" of Squatter Housing in Urban Spatial "Quadruped"', *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (2004) 34.
47 Ibid. and Sakızlıoğlu, *A Comparative Look*, 148.
48 Sakızlıoğlu, *A Comparative Look*, 74, Oğuz Işık and Melih Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetlese Yoksulluk* (İstanbul, 2001).
49 İclal Dinçer, 'The Impact of Neoliberal Policies on Historic Urban Space: Areas of Urban Renewal in Istanbul', *International Planning Studies* 16:1 (2011) 46.
50 Ibid., 47.
51 Ibid., 3.
52 İclal Dinçer, Zeynep Enlil and Tolga İslam, 'Regeneration in a New Context: A New Act on Renewal and its Implications on the Planning Processes in İstanbul', Bridging the Divide: Celebrating the City. ACSP – AESOP Fourth Joint Congress. July 6–11 (Chicago, Illinois, 2008).
53 Eldem, 'Istanbul', 226; Aksoy and Robins, 'Changing Urban Cultural Governance', 4.

54 Beyoğlu Belediyesi, 'Tarlabaşı Kentsel Dönüşüm Videosu', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8V_ZlVR-7Y, accessed 1 June 2015.
55 Aksoy and Robins, 'Changing Urban Cultural Governance', 7; Dinçer, 'The Impact of Neoliberal Policies on Historic Urban Space', 54–55.
56 GAP İnşaat is a company owned by Çalık Holding Group, which is known for its close ties with the AKP-government. See: Özlem Ünsal and Tuna Kuyucu, 'Challenging the Neoliberal Urban Regime: Regeneration and Resistance in Başıbüyük and Tarlabaşı', in Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal and İpek Türeli (eds), *Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of* Europe (London, 2010) 67.
57 Sakızlıoğlu and Uitermark, 'The Symbolic Politics of Gentrification', 1374–5.
58 Sakızlıoğlu, *A Comparative Look*, 234.
59 'About the International Property Awards', http://propertyawards.net/about/, accessed on 10 June 2015.
60 'Europe's Best Urban Renewal Project!', http://www.calik.com/onderhalisdemir.aspx/PressReleases2013/2013/10/01/europes-best-urban-renewal-project?id=bcfbcdcc-bdf3-42bc-91dd-215eeed867db, accessed on 10 June 2015. The event was organized by a dedicated organization, sponsored by private companies such as Jaguar, Mercedes Benz, Bentley Motors and HSBC Arabia.
61 Eldem, 'Galata-Pera', 24–9; Eldem, 'Istanbul', 226; Aksoy and Robins, 'Changing Urban Cultural Governance', 4.
62 Sakızlıoğlu, *A Comparative Look*, 166.
63 Aksoy and Robins, 'Changing Urban Cultural Governance', 7.
64 'Europe's Best Urban Renewal Project!', http://www.calik.com/onderhalisdemir.aspx/PressReleases2013/2013/10/01/europes-best-urban-renewal-project?id=bcfbcdcc-bdf3-42bc-91dd-215eeed867db, accessed on 10 June 2015.

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