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Basaksehir: The role of religiosity in the making of a new town

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Introduction

In this article, I want to share and discuss the first findings of the research that I conducted in Basaksehir, Istanbul. This research is a part of Global Prayers, an international project deals with the question "How do religious movements and groups effect the transformation of global cities[2]?"[3]To search for an answer for this question I preferred Basaksehir as the case study because of its distinctive history and characteristics: First Basaksehir started to be built as one of the leading projects of Islamist Welfare Party (WP)[4] in 1994, when the current Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan won the local elections and became mayor of Istanbul. Since it was the first experience of WP in the big city municipalities, Basaksehir was introduced as the urban model of Islamist politics in the case of Istanbul. Second, while political Islam was getting its part in the political sphere of Turkey and transformed by having power and interruptions Basaksehir also mirrored the political and social process and progress of Islamism in daily life. For example, while the first stage of Basaksehir was built as social housing project by municipal construction company, KIPTAS for lower and middle classes, the last stages of the town are built in the form of gated communities for upper middle class families in collaboration with some companies those are parts of Islamic business networks. And third, Basaksehir represents not only the evolution of the Muslim families but also different perceptions about the new Muslim middle class being spot of many public discussions related to Islamism and its daily life preferences and constructions. For instance in the secular media Basaksehir appeared as a sort of "penthouse town of rich Muslim businessmen"[5] and by this way it is also a symbolic territory of fragmentation of different life styles

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1   I arrived to a city / I saw the city is still built / I also built myself there / In between stones and soil.
2   Saskia Sassen introduces the term global city essentially as the "geography of globalization" based on her mainly economic and political analyses. She differentiates "global cities" from "world cities" stressing out mainly four new characteristics of global cities: "First, as highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy; second, as key locations for finance and for specialized service firms, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading economic sectors; third, as sites of production, including the production of innovations, in these leading industries; and fourth, as markets for the products and innovations produced." (Sassen, 2001; pp.3-4) She counts New York, London, Tokyo, Frankfurt, and Paris as the global cities focusing on the first three. In addition, Mark Abrahamson develops a set of criteria to identify global cities: Economically, a transforming economy from industrial to postindustrial mode recruiting knowledge/information based sectors; culturally, experiencing the hyperrationality, hyperconsumption, dedifferentiation etc. (Abrahamson, 2004)
3   Global Prayers - Redemption and Liberation in the City is a transdisciplinary, transregionally comparative research and cultural project that examines and discusses the transformation of cities through religious movements. The project was initiated by metroZones – Center for Urban Affairs e. V. and is executed jointly by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt and the Europa-Universität Viadrina in collaboration with metroZones e. V. It is a project at the Forum für Transregionale Studien, which also significantly funds it. The project Global Prayers receives additional funding from the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, and the Goethe-Institut.
4   WP was founded by Necmettin Erbakan in Ankara in 1983. It was in continuity of Milli Gorus (National Vision) doctrine represented before National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi) and National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi). All those parties were banned from politics. WP spent a short period at central government in 1996. However, it had to leave government because of the army intervention using media and some NGOs against the WP. Then, the actors of WP found the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi), but it was also banned in 1999. JDP (Justice and Development Party) is formed by young generation of the Milli Gorus ideology in 2002 (while Tayyip Erdogan was in jail and banned in politics) leaving the traditionalists and radical Islamists behind. Since Necmettin Erbakan was also banned from politics, Happiness Party (Saadet Partisi) formed by those groups. However, following the lift of ban from politics Erbakan wanted to be leader of party and the party divided in two one more time. Now, the Milli Gorus ideology is represented partly in Saadet Partisi and HAS Parti (Voice of People Party).
5   Nuh Gonultas, *"Mahremiyet Okulu"* (The School of Privacy), "The proportion of divorcing and hidden marriages are dramatically increasing among religious families. Some of the neighborhoods of Istanbul are started to be mentioned as the places, where those people making hidden second marriage live in. Basaksehir is the example… Basaksehir is the place, most of conservative people have a hidden second marriage prefer to live in…" Bugun daily

based on religious acceptances, practices and habits.

Methodology of field research

To conduct this research I lived in Basaksehir for 6 months between September 2010-March 2011. During the first months of my stay in Basaksehir I was only trying to get in the town. However, because of the gated community structure and the lack of public space it was really hard to meet with people. Then, I started to work as a journalist for the local magazine Mesela Basaksehir. During that period I made participant observations and in-dept interviews. The magazine helped to me find another way to collect information and ideas about Basaksehir. I wrote and published some of the problems of the city as well as observations in this magazine and throughout that way I opened a sort of public discussion among the "elites"[6] of the town. Thus, by this way I had information and observations not only about the daily life but also the inhabitants' ideas and criticisms about Basaksehir. So the journalism became a sort of tool for my research. Another tool of my research especially on the process of the formulation of the questions was my own biography.[7] Since I grow up in religious family and I was also part of different religious communities and groups in the past, my main questions were aiming to find out how urban transformation and transformation of Muslim families juxtaposed and fueled each other. Considering the radical transformation of Islamism in Turkey thanks to Islamist politicians changing/sliding place in the political scene from opposition to government and the existence and rise of the new Muslim middle class my questions were inevitably focusing on the comparisons between past and present. Thinking that the period carrying Islamism from the opposition to the government is just 15 years, I wanted to listen and observe those Muslim families evaluating their own evolutions. In the beginning I was getting socialized with only women, because of the structure of the town -men are at their work places during the day- and asking them directly what they think about their own transformation. In addition, I was comparing the changing claims of Muslim groups in the urban context. By this way I could also understood why this gated community life style of de-industrialized Istanbul coincided with the claim of rising Muslim middle class families and individuals.

In this article I will only try to explain the place of Basaksehir and the role of the new religious middle class in the landscape of Istanbul in the wider meaning of the term landscape.[8] In order to do

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newspaper, 16 December 2010.

6   By the term of "elite" I mean for example the representatives of Basaksehir and Istanbul municipalities, school managers and teachers, heads of local charity associations and web sites...

7   During the research process as well as now in the narration level instead of trying to intervene in the field as a sort of "neutral" person, I sometime referred also to my autobiography while asking questions to the interviewees. It can be said that this is a sort "participant objectivation" (Bourdieu, 2003). Instead of placing the interviewee as the object I develop discussions on our "shared experience" about not only being Muslim (because as an official category most of the people living in Turkey are Muslim) but also religious.

8   By the word landscape I actually mean the representation of Istanbul in the global context with its political and historical background. In that sense it has a relativistic and temporal connotation. Ingold describes landscape as "the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them." (1993, 62) On the other hand, Lefebvre refers the representational function of landscape focusing on its relation with the dweller's perception: "The power of a landscape does not derive from the fact that it offers itself as a spectacle, but rather from the fact that, as mirror and mirage, it presents any susceptible viewer with an image at once true and false of a creative capacity which the subject or (Ego) is able, during a moment of marvelous self-deception, to claim as his own." (1991, 189) This connotation of the term landscape is important because of the role of the contestation between different ideological groups over Istanbul. Basaksehir appeared in the landscape of Istanbul as the first urban project of political Islam in Turkey... Hence it was representing the the urban perception of Turkish Islamism. Considering the role of urban poor in the rise of Islamism it is not accidental Basaksehir was planned as a social housing project. However, after nearly two decades the young generation of Islamism is in the power in central government and municipality in Istanbul and the creator of Basaksehir, Tayyip Erdogan claims to build two new cities within the borders of Istanbul openly without any reference to urban poor but demanding the support of new middle classes. Thus it is very open that the meaning and the function of Istanbul also changed in the urban imagination of political Islam by the time. With this wider meaning the term landscape may also serve to

that I will basically used the outcome of my field research referring the conceptual framework that I profit to understand Basaksehir. Considering the limits of this conference and article I will develop my narration around the concept of border[9]. Instead of a deep analyses of what Basaksehir consists of, I will describe the historical, political and social background that created Basaksehir.

Political background of Basaksehir
The decentralization of industry in Istanbul started in 1980s parallel with the liberalization of market economy following the coup d'etat. The programs of the State Planning Department and the local municipalities both were referring to the construction of free trade and industrial zones around Istanbul. In the north of Istanbul, Ikitelli appeared as the new center of industry and trade during that period. In the meanwhile, the relatively tolerant policy on *gecekondu* (informal housing) also changed.[10] Using the opportunity of the construction of the new trade and industrial zones the local and central governments also wanted to create new formal housing settlements. Furthermore, the transformation of city had made the *gecekondu* neighborhoods more central and valuable. Thus the plan for the city at that time was also including the gentrification of the city center (not only the historical, but also the new centers appeared by the formal and informal development of the city). Beyond and before the Islamist claims of WP, the region including Basaksehir[11] emerged as the (planned) housing and life style model of the de-centralized Istanbul [12].

It is not coincidental that the most of the inhabitants of Basaksehir are the members of new/rising Muslim/religous middle class. Until the 1980s the religious conservative segments of the Turkish society were excluded from the welfare distribution mechanisms because of the oppressive secularism of Turkish republic and its elitist economy policy.[13] The Muslimness was seem as an obstacle before the modernization aim by the republican elites of Turkey for a long time.[14] On the other hand, the religious segments of the society were also very critical about the modernization project of Turkey and preferring to be outside of it as much as they could (Arslan, 2010; 187). But, it was not a total rejection. Arslan describes by which ways Muslims tried to intervene in the

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understand the linkage between the reconstruction of the imagination of city and the social and economic transformation of political Islam. Even looking at Basaksehir's picture while keeping in mind the developments in political sphere can show the different levels of political contestation. The first and second stages finished in 1998, and they are relatively modest. The third stage couldn't be built by municipality, because the building process coincided with the "postmodern coup d'etat" in 1997, so instead of KIPTAS some housing cooperatives built the third stage. The fourth stage came at the end of 1990s. However, when it comes to 4th and 5th stages AKP was on the government. The qualification and the structure of the 4th and 5th stages are totally different than the first ones because they are aiming the higher classes rather than lower and middle.

9   With the term of border I refer to those phenomenons differentiate Basaksehir from the other neighborhoods of Istanbul and causes of its identification with the rising Muslim middle class.

10 *gecekondu* was the product of a sort of passive social housing policy since 1960s. Because of the lack of ability to build social housing for the immigrants coming from Anatolia to the big cities, governments and possibilities were simply ignoring the construction of informal neighborhoods around the factories. Even, they were providing infrastructure for *gecekondu*s during the election periods. Parallel to the decentralization of industry in Istanbul, *gecekondu* neighborhoods started to be cited in public agenda as a threat against the future of the city and the tolerance for *gecekondu* dwellers disappeared. For an analyses of the different roles of *gecekondu* in the public discourse see Erman, 2001.

11 Basak means ear, and it was the symbol of WP.

12 Since 1980s the state was always promoting the gated community style of urban plans through TOKI (the Mass Housing Construction Administration) and subsidized housing cooperatives. E.g. TOKI built Ataköy in Istanbul as the housing model for a planned city.

13 For the political and philosophical background of this exclusion see Kurtoğlu, 2005. For the role of this exclusionary policies in the politicization of the Muslim segments of the Turkish society and the current state of Islamism see Keskin, 2009 especially pp. 47-48.

14 For a good summary of this discussion see at Ayata, 1996; For the historical background and different perspectives and discussions on the current situation of Islamism in Turkey, Cizre, 2008, for the relationship between the methodology of Turkish modernization project and the political characteristics of Turkish Islamism Karasipahi, especially the first chapter; for a very interesting discussion and statistical data on the class background of Islamism in Turkey, Meyerson, 2009.

Turkish politics and economy: "a. Political sphere: From the Democratic Party[15] to the WP; b. Education: From the Imam Hatip Schools to the Islamic colleges; c. Economy: From the Islamic finance institutions to securities; d. Media: From the Islamist radios to the televisions" (Arslan, 2010; 187).

However, the liberalization of market let these religious and/or conservative segments of society took their part in economy and politics in a more powerful way comparing the past experiences. While religious groups were increasing their effect, having more visibility and power in the society, secular segments were feeling a sort of threat. The 1997 "postmodern coup d'etat"[16] was one of the peak point of the clash between Islamism and secular elites.

Fences between secularism and religiousity
In 1994, it was the first time an Islamic party came to the power in the big city municipalities and it was the first administrative experience of that Islamic politics. Because of that Basaksehir, as the first urban project of Islamists came to the public agenda as soon as it had been declared. One of the founders of KIPTAS (municipal construction company) and Basaksehir tells why the most of the inhabitants of Basaksehir are (at least in the beginning were) the supporters of former Islamic party WP or one of its current precedents.

> "They (secular groups) couldn't accepted the victory of WP in the local elections and responded in different ways. For example media was making black propaganda against our housing projects. They were claiming that WP was giving those houses to its own supporters... They were thinking that how those "gericiler" (reactionists) take the municipalities of two big cities (Ankara and Istanbul)... Supporters of WP and Tayyip Erdogan saw this project as a matter of "dava" (mission) and struggle. They wanted to support him in this project and bought flats spending all their savings saying 'If Tayyip Erdogan promises he would keep it, we want to help to the party.' Now, they are the people benefited most from this project. The others were telling 'Basaksehir is a ghetto founded by reactionists and supporters of chador.' Because of that, our first clients were conservative families."

Basaksehir is a town formed fence by fence gated communities. However, it is not the fences and gates make Basaksehir a gated community town or "ghetto", rather the virtual fences between the different segments of society defines the place of Basaksehir in the landscape of Istanbul, in this case "secular" and "religious"

On the other hand the political and economic borders of Basaksehir are not immune to be violation of both sides, in fact, Basaksehir appears as an act of violation of the social and political borders those are created during the history of modern Turkey. The KIPTAS manager continues his story telling how some of the institutions expressed their position about this violation.

> "We founded Basaksehir and invited the telephone administration (at that time it was not privatized yet) to link the lines. They rejected saying 'Basaksehir is not included in our plans, we will go there 10 years later'. The electric administration said the same thing. What could we do? They said, 'if you build the main center and the lines, plus if you build housing for also our workers we will bring the connection.' We found Basaksehir under these conditions. There was a form of cliques, they saw us as enemy and couldn't accept."

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15 Democratic Party founded by Adnan Menderes and his colleagues in 1946. It was the first successful opposition to the Republican People's Party (RPP) after a long term of the one party rule. Muslim segments of the society (especially in Anatolia) explained their criticism against the RPP's oppressive laicist policies by supporting DP and brought it to power in 1950. However, DP rule ended with the first cow d'etat of young Turkish republic in 1960.

16 This intervention of Turkish army to the politics is called "postmodern" because of the way of intervention. The high rank army members published a set of declarations in the media instead of directly intervening to the government and parliament. These declarations created an atmosphere as if a real coup d'etat was on the way. Then, the officers representing the army in National Security Council forced the WP-True Path Party coalition to accept some precautions to protect the secular structure of the Turkish state in a meeting made on 28 February including the prolongation compalsory education to 8 years, controlling the private colleges found by religious groups, controlling the Kur'an Courses, prohibition of tarikats, controlling the media representing the Turkish army as the enemy of Islam... Erbakan, the leader of the WP accepted these precautions first, and then he resolved the government.

To understand the story of KIPTAS manager better and put it into the context of this research some background information should be added.

Apparently, the "postmodern coup d'etat" was not able to stop the rise of Islamism in Turkey. Rather, it prepared an environment for Islamism to act more transnational in the spheres of economy and politics. In 2000, I made some interviews with the members of MUSIAD (the network formed by religious businessmen). My main question was how they survived their business following the "postmodern coup d'etat" process. Because as part of the coup d'etat, the army was making meetings with journalists, representatives of NGOs, and members of courts, bureaucracy etc. and giving briefings (Kardas, 2005: 291-2) about which companies led by religious groups (green capital) and urging the Turkish society to stop making business with them. These briefings were quoted in the media almost completely. Thus, I was thinking they must find some alternative ways of business to survive. The businessmen told that they either started to deepen their relationships with the Muslim countries or had certificates to make business with the EU. Though, the obstacles created by the army turned into new opportunities to continue to accumulate capital, power and effectiveness in the society for Islamist businessmen. Furthermore, since the free trade and industrial zones were providing cheaper investment opportunities, they were also replacing their business in these zones relatively easier than the established and big size companies. And one of the most important free trade and industry zone of Istanbul was in Ikitelli[17], the closest neighbor of Basaksehir.

In the urban context there was another development should be taken in consideration to understand the juxtaposition between the urban transformation and the rising Muslim middle class, motivated the emergence of Basaksehir. During 1980s and 1990s many families sold their *gecekondu*s to middle and small scale construction companies and by this way *gecekondu* neighborhoods became the centers of capital accumulation for the urban lower middle class. Considering this background it is very understandable that most of the inhabitants of Basaksehir are the members of Islamic business circles and/or coming from post-*gecekondu* neighborhoods of Istanbul.[18] While rising, this new Muslim middle class also developed new ways of self-expressions in the city. It meant more visibility in the public sphere and new ways of consumption, *tesettur* (veiling) fashion, *helal* food and naturally real estate. Basaksehir became one of the most favorite neighborhoods for the religious middle class families.

Here is another story gives an idea about the image of this border violation from the "others'" side, in this case secular elites.

OYAK (Turkish Army Members Solidarity Fund)[19] is a company formed by the retired soldiers made also a housing project in Basaksehir named Oyakkent.[20] In the beginning the company was planning to sell the houses only to soldier families and people those worked at least 15 years for any branch of OYAK. Coskun Ulusoy, the CEO of OYAK told the project couldn't be started earlier

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17 The contribution of Ikitelli Free Industry Zone to Turkish economy was 7 billion dollar in 2010. Asudu, Ersal; Ozcan Ozgur and Nur, Yildirim, "Being Worker in Ikitelli Organized Indastry Zone", Evrensel Daily Newspaper, 2 August 2010.

18 Basaksehir has different neighborhoods. According to Hayir, 2009 78 percent of people living in Basaksehir came from post-*gecekondu* neighborhoods, pp. 104-5.

19 OYAK (Ordu Yardımlaşma Kurumu, Pension Fund of Armed Forces) Holding. OYAK, founded by the Milli Birlik Komitesi (MBK: National Unity Commity, the main actor of 1960 coup d'etat) on 3 January 1961, by a special law (number: 205). The official reason behind forming this found was declared in the law with these sentences: "This law is issued to found OYAK based on the own financial resources of army members, in order to provide material and emotional peace for and protecting them from the anxiety of future." OYAK is one of the biggest holding companies of Turkey having more than 60 companies and business partnerships.

20 Actually the gated community life style was first experienced by the officers of Turkish army in Turkey's context, because they were privileged by the state in the sense of providing houses. Because of the security reasons, soldier families (especially the high ranks in the big cities, and in small ones almost all of them) live in gated communities.

because of the some problems with municipality in 2003 (the municipality was still JDP).[21] In 2006, OYAK declared the members of army and OYAK would be privileged for buying a flat in Oyakkent but the remaining flats would be sold to nonmembers, too. When I was searching for a flat in Basaksehir, Oyakkent was not in my agenda because it is a little bit outside of the town. However, all the real estate agencies were highlighting Oyakkent is better for a single woman like me. Actually, most of them were seem very unwilling to rent a house to me, because of my singleness. Then I decided to rent a flat in Oyakkent. In the beginning I was thinking that the whole Oyakkent (now it is 2000 houses and in the future it will more than 10.000) is inhabited by the soldiers. But it was not the case. Actually most of the families were religious like Basaksehir. A neighbor of mine told the story (this story is not recorded, but noted after the conversation):

> "OYAK made this housing project for mainly the retired soldiers. But when the project finished, those soldier families didn't want to live in Basaksehir, because they didn't want to live together with us (religious[22] people). When the houses finished they gave them to real estate agencies to rent. However, they had some conditions: The woman of the family shouldn't be used headscarf or chador. During six months nobody rented these houses. There was a demand from religious families, however they were not fitting with the conditions. Then, the landowner soldier families started to sell their houses because they had to pay the bank credits. By this way those conditions were diminished and religious families started to come here. There are only around 200 soldier families living here."

Considering the whole discussions and discourses around it, it is not very interesting seeing that the headscarf comes to the scene as a symbolic border between secularism and religiosity in the context of Basaksehir. In Oyakkent soldier families feel themselves as minority and under the oppression. A soldier neighbor of mine express his feelings (the conversation was not recorded but noted later):

- When I came to here I experienced a sort of cultural shock. I am for example used to go to a bar in early evening between office and home. Here it is impossible. Furthermore, there are two families living in the same floor with me, and the women of these families are using chador. Seeing that makes me unhappy. Even I am afraid.
- Why?
- I am afraid to get used to them.

- Borders within religiosity
Nonetheless, it is not seem possible to go back to the *mahalle* for this rising middle class. Because they also create new borders between these traditional neighborhoods and their new life, too. Being middle class itself draw these new borders among the *different* religious groups. Here is a story told by another businessman living in Basaksehir:

> "I was living in Fatih. I worked hard and bought my first Mercedes in my 26. But, my neighbors didn't welcome my car. They excluded me from their relationships. The youths of the neighborhood scratched it. Though, I put it in front of the police station, but I saw some of a policeman was sitting on top of it. So, I decided to leave the neighborhood, because I wasn't comfortable there anymore with my car. I moved to Bahcelievler. But was also excluded in the apartment. They were not inviting me to the apartment meetings because of the headscarf of my wife... Nobody was visiting us or greeting. One day I went to the meeting although they didn't invite. In the beginning they were distant to me, but by the time they got used to me even enjoyed with my existence in the apartment, because I was helping them to solve their problems in municipality using my connections. However, Bahcelievler got crowded by the time. And I wanted to live together with those people like me. In my new neighborhood neither my car nor the headscarves of my wife and daughters are problem."

Basaksehir as a wider administrative unit has also three gecekondu neighborhoods: One of them is Sahintepe. Here is the perception of Basaksehir in the eyes of a woman living in Sahintepe (The interview is recorded).

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21 Capital Online Magazine, http://proje.capital.com.tr/Haberler/Detay.aspx?HaberID=15737
22 I am very suspicious while using the term religious, however most of my interviewees and those people I had conversation about Basaksehir were using the terms religious (dindar), mutedeyyin (Arabic rooted word means again dindar) and conservative (muhafazakar) interchangingly.

"I have been living in Istanbul for 23 years... I go to Basaksehir just for the hospital... Basaksehir is a good place. Nobody wants to live in a bad place. However, it doesn't mean that I am a bad person because I am living in a bad place. Sometime I go to some places and see those bad people, but they are living such a good houses, then I think maybe I should also be a bad person... I don't want to live in these blocks like Basaksehir. The state does this injustice."

It is very open what she means with the irony of "bad people-bad place" and "good people-good place". What is important for me to know she only goes to Basaksehir for the hospital. Actually these public buildings -municipality, governor office and hospital- were the main interaction spaces between those people living in Basaksehir's gated communities and gecekondu neighborhoods. Observing their relationships in the waiting room of Basaksehir Public Hospital gives a deep idea even bringing the headscarf to the scene with its symbolic background one more time. The waiting room is very wide having 4 lines of chairs, two of them on the edges of the room and the remainings in the mid. The women of *gecekondu* neighborhoods were generally sitting on the chairs in the mid, while the others preferring to sit on those by the edge. It is very easy to recognize *gecekondu* women by their colorful cotton headscarves while the women of gated communities choose the monochrome silky headscarves.

Another public building became a place of interaction between Sahintepe and Basaksehir, in this time the primary school of Sahintepe. In 2009, there was a big flood in this region and one of the primary schools of Sahintepe collapsed. Another inhabitant of Sahintepe tells the remaining of the story:

"We have two primary schools here, one of them collapsed last year, and we wanted to send our children to the schools in Basaksehir. The parents of the children rejected this, they humiliated us and our children. We heard that they did it. We came here before them, but they don't want us here now. If Basaksehir is Muslim, Sahintepe is more. There is only one difference, the people of Basaksehir are rich. They couldn't guest our children in their school for even half semester."

When I asked to the people of Basaksehir that why they preferred to live in Basaksehir there was a standard answer: Together with the reasons related to the needs of security, a more flexible environment to grow children up, almost all people I met were telling "We wanted to live together with those people similar to us."

They use three main definition to identify who are not similar to those people living in Basaksehir. a. Those people using alcohol, b. Kurds, and c. Uneducated people. Nobody told that they don't want to live together with poor people, however another interviewee living in Basaksehir brought a very interesting perspective in that sense (this interview is recorded).

"I left my own house in Esenler and moved here as tenant. Since Basaksehir is a regular town I liked here a lot. In addition I thought those people living here are suitable with my ideas. I am a conservative and nationalist person loving my country. I thought here I could find people conservative like me, praying regularly and plain according to the orders of Kur'an... I fled from Esenler, because the people of Eastern and Southern Anatolia came there. They want to feed even sheep and chicken in their gardens. Instead of integrating in city, they were trying to change the city according to their own life styles. But people of Basaksehir know what is a city and how to live in. Though, Basaksehir is a very beautiful place. I think I went up a higher class coming to Basaksehir."

Gole defines Islamism produced its own "counter-elites", and suggests that they "incarnate paradoxical and ambivalent nature of contemporary Islamist movements" using their professional identity through the modern-secular education system and the visibility through Islamist movements (1997; 54). It seems both modern education and visibility through Islamist movements are recruited as cultural capital by these "counter-elites". In the case of Basaksehir, it can be said that especially the higher class inhabitants of Basaksehir use this cultural capital to differentiate themselves from not only secular segments of society, but also "other" religious crowds.

A theoretical exercise for mapping Basaksehir: Religiousity as capital
After explaining how the borders of Basaksehir are drawn within the relationships among different segments of society, I will try to explain what is the role of religiosity in forming of Basaksehir's landscape.

Bourdieu suggests that there are four forms of capital: Economic, social, cultural (1986), symbolic (1984), and religious (1991). Based on his criticism about Bourdieu's concept "religious capital", Verter suggests another form, that is spiritual capital.

> "…if religious capital is conceived á la Bourdieu as something that is produced and accumulated within a hierocratic institutional framework, spiritual capital may be regarded as a more widely diffused commodity, governed by more complex patterns of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption." (2003; 158)

On the other hand, Verter again places "spiritual capital" in the different forms of cultural capital those defined by Bourdieu:

> "As a form of cultural capital also exists …in the embodied state (as) a measure of not only position, but also dispositions it is the knowledge, abilities, tastes, and credentials an individual has amassed in the field of religion, and is the outcome of explicit education or unconscious processes of socialization… In the objectified state, spiritual capital takes the form of material and symbolic commodities… (and) in an institutionalized state: the power that churches, seminaries, and other religious organizations exercise to legitimate an arbitrary array of religious goods, promote the demand for these goods, and feed the supply by bestowing qualifications on a select group of authorized producers." (2003; 159-160)

When I started to make my field work my main concern was basically finding out the modes of functioning of the religion in the landscape of Basaksehir. In the beginning my questions were directly about religion. However, I discovered placing religion in the center makes Basaksehir more and more religious, because the answers were always coming directly related to the religion. Then, I changed the the formulation of my questions and I tried to focus on the place and importance of religion in the whole package of life style that Basaksehir suggests. By this way, while religion (with its theology and values) becomes less visible in the discursive level, some institutions referring to religion or religiosity became more observable in the organization of the local society and the foundation of social relationships. In addition through this strategy religiosity became more visible in the activities of social, cultural and economic actors -for example in real estate agencies, schools, kindergartens etc.- as a sort of branding tool. Giving a couple of example I will try to show how religion is employed in the forms of capital those Bourdieu and Verter defines.

Religious Communities in the slaughterhouse
In every Sacrifice Fest (*Kurban Bayrami*) Turkey discuss its own image in the urban scene. Since people especially in poor neighborhoods want to sacrifice their animal, the image of city transforms into a big slaughterhouse for a while. Although municipalities try to prevent these scenes by prohibition and fines, especially in those neighborhoods inhabited by religious families none of these precautions work. Basaksehir suggested a solution for this problem creating a sort of consensus between the religious tradition of sacrifice and modern image of city.

The Municipality of Basaksehir founded "the most modern slaughterhouse of Turkey" in this year. People can easily go there, choose an animal to sacrifice, pay with their credit cards and donate a part of it for the poor people who cannot sacrifice an animal during the fest. The religious communities sent their representative to the slaughter house to help people to sacrifice an animal and collect the sacred meat donations of the families to redistribute. However, they were distributing meat to student houses and those poor families belong to the circle of the religious community -mainly not those living in Basaksehir- instead of poor families living in Basaksehir. By this way the religious communities organize the whole distribution of a product deriving from a

religious activity, in this case Sacrifice Fest. However, according to the religious sacrifice tradition, everybody has to make a research in his/her neighborhood to find the right people to donate that sacred meat. It means that one has to know who is poor and deserving this donation. However in the gated communities of Basaksehir it is very hard to find a poor family because of the changing neighboring practices.

Mainly two reasons determine the characteristics of new neighboring practices in Basaksehir. First, the physical neighbors (in the gated communities) are part of similar classes with a relatively higher income and most of them are able to sacrifice an animal for the fest. Secondly, the gated community life style especially in the very high blocks makes people invisible to each other, because it is very hard to get contact with physical neighbors. Although they came to live together with people similar to themselves, they are not very willing to get closer because they don't know the backgrounds of neighboring families and it causes the lack of a shared past and it makes neighboring practices very formal and distant. This distance is filled mostly by the religious communities by the weekly or monthly religious, cultural or philanthropic organized by the NGOs run by these communities or municipality and create a space for people to socialize. Though, it seems religious communities create a sort of social tie among families living in Basaksehir replacing the traditional and more informal ties coming through citizenry and kinship those were more determining in the traditional *mahalle*s (neighborhood) or *gecekondu* areas.

In the case of Sacrifice Fest, this distribution ability of sacred meat makes religious communities indispensable for this religious activity. This process causes mainly four important consequences: Firstly, the sides of religious activities (in this case sacrifice meat donation) become invisible and anonymous to each other. Secondly, the religious communities increase their visibility in the religious activities and through them in the public space. Thirdly, it increases the appearance of the religious communities in the daily life practices with their distribution ability not only in charity but also other economic activities (e.g. finding jobs for young members of the community, creating networks for businessmen want to invent in different cities and countries, even organize marriages between the members). And finally, in continuity with the formers, the religious communities become the main medium and context of the social relationships. Instead of getting socialize their physical neighbors (because of the lack of information and a shared past) families prefer to have contacts with the members of the religious community that they belong, because providing a sort of trust mechanism the religious community becomes a reference point in also social relationships.

Marketing Basaksehir
A teacher living in Basaksehir and working for a private high school (founded by the foundation of a religious community) shares his observations how religiosity appears a sort of branding mechanism in the real estate market:

> "It is about perceptions. Sometimes everything is established on some wrong perceptions and some people profit from it... Especially the actors of real estate market created that perception about Basaksehir, because by this way they think they will have a special client group. Their client group includes those people conservative and found money recently so the people became rich newly... By this way they present Basaksehir as a brand."

However, this perception doesn't always work in a positive way. A young inhabitant of Basaksehir -calling himself directly Islamist instead of only Muslim to express his political acceptances- is very critical about the changing meaning of the brand Basaksehir:

> "Years ago, when the 1st stage of Basaksehir finished and the 2nd stage started the most attractive thing about Basaksehir was its planned urban characteristics and cheapness... However, when the 4th stage started Basaksehir became a house for a new life style. Muslim families met with the features of a modern city first time. And when the 5th stage completed, the elitism effected all the Muslim families and they started to come here for this new life style and comfort. So now, the modern, elitist and at the same time Islamic atmosphere -although they are what opposite of each other- attract people to come to Basaksehir."

Conclusion

Halil Inalcik defines *mahalle* as "a community living around a mosque, church or cynagog; a unit having a peculiar identity" (1974; 234). However looking at Basaksehir, it is very easy to see even the mosque lost its central position. None of the gated communities has a mosque in the center. Actually considering the men of Basaksehir spend their life at their working place outside of the town, the disappearance of mosque from the near environment can be more understandable. The most of the mosques is around Sular Vadisi (Valley of Water), the biggest park of Basaksehir and functioning as aesthetic details rather than praying houses.

Furthermore, the social content of *mahalle* also disappears or change. Alver defines the concept through its connotations:

> "Mahalle as a metaphor comes with the concepts solidarity, neighboring, charity, community, control, security, mutuality, similarity, closeness and belonging. Thus mahalle means commitment and relating oneself into a place. In other words, mahalle is a way to include oneself into the city and being citizen." (2010, 117)

Thinking the virtual borders of Basaksehir together with the changing role and re-establishment of religiosity it is still possible to see these concepts in the making of Basaksehir, but within their changing functions and meanings. For example the membership of nationwide religious communities replace the physical and social closeness in the neighboring relationships even putting distance among the physical neighbors. In that sense being part of a mosque community in mahalle is again replaced by being part of a wider religious network. Similarly, when it comes to the concept of mutuality, it seems this concept also looses its face-to-face characteristics by the intervention of religious communities and NGOs in the local networking processes. As I defined by the sacred meat donation process, intervention of the institutionalized religious communities make the sides of the possible mutual relationships invisible and anonymous to each other. Alver adds the traditional *mahalle* doesn't allow to a concrete stratification between different classes (2010; 133). However in Basaksehir that stratification is part of marketing strategy of the town.

It is not only the needs and claims of religios families but also the urban transformation experienced in Istanbul parallel to global tendencies created Basaksehir. The role of religiosity in the making of Basaksehir mostly determined by the political claims of Islamism in Turkey, because it emerged as a modern urban project of an Islamist party, WP. Similarly, seeing Basaksehir as only the expression of Islamism or religiosity in the urban context will not be enough to understand the place of Islam in the general landscape of Istanbul. It is very open that urban transformation and the transformation of religiosity have some mutual dynamics. To understand these dynamics the focus of the questions to urban context should go beyond taking religiosity as a phenomenon related only to religion. For this religiosity should be addressed in the whole package of transformation of the societies from industrial to post-industrial ones.

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